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Translating Elizabeth Gaskell's "Right at Last" with an Eye on Italian Translations of Gaskell's Works: Problems and Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

On the grounds that my thesis marks the end of my course of studies, I deemed appropriate to focus my research on the areas of study that interest me the most. Since I love English literature, and I love to translate, literary translation was the right option for me. Indeed, my dissertation is aimed at providing a translation of Elizabeth Gaskell's short story *Right at Last* into Italian language.

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) was an English writer who is mainly known for her novels, but she has also written many short stories. In Italy, she is still not yet well-known, because, before the last ten years, there were few translations of her works. However, during the last decade, the interest in Elizabeth Gaskell has grown, and now more Italian translations of her works are available. For example, *North and South*, which is one of her most famous novels, was published in 1855, but its first Italian edition came out only in 2011 (there is a lapse of time of one hundred and fifty-six years between the two editions). Her current "popularity" is probably also due to the fact that at the end of 2013 the Italian television channel *LaEffe* broadcast the dubbed version of the British television serial based on *North and South*. As for me, the first time that I had the pleasure to come into contact with the writings of Elizabeth Gaskell was when I read the Italian version of *North and South*. I was searching the internet to find a book to read, and an online bookshop recommended me *Nord e Sud* based on the other books that I had previously bought. After reading it, I wanted to discover more about her and her other works. That novel greatly impressed me for the way in which the author had dealt with the historical issues of her time, because she had treated the social consequences of the Industrial Revolution, which led to violent conflicts between owners and workers. I became so interested in Elizabeth Gaskell that I decided to make her the object of my dissertation.

Right at Last was published in November 1858. The female protagonist of the short story is Margaret, who is a woman with a strong character. The heroine faces the problems with great determination, because she immediately decides the necessary steps to be taken, and she follows what she thinks is the right thing to do. On the contrary, Doctor Brown, who is her husband, is really weak and indecisive; therefore the text

wants to underline the fact that she is the one who takes the responsibility in their family. Moreover, Margaret is a woman who is not afraid of the consequences, even though she knows that they will create disadvantages and sufferings. In any case, the short story ends with a happy ending. The reading and the translation of *Right at Last* enabled me to better understand Elizabeth Gaskell's ability to show her talent even in her briefer works.

Since I started university, translation process has fascinated me, because, from my own point of view, it is a connection between two worlds. It is a point where theory intersects with practice, it is an act that connects two different languages, two different cultures and two different countries, and it is an operation that brings the work of a writer to a new reading public. A translated text is a new text, but, at the same time, is an already existent text. It is very important to underline the fact that translation process is not only based on reading, writing and revision, but it is also based on research activity. The translator has to gather all the necessary information to gain a proper understanding of the source text and its author and to realise a good translation. This is a work of investigation and consultation aimed at expanding the translator's knowledge. This is the reason why I decided to divide my thesis into five chapters.

The first chapter, called "Early and Mid-Victorian Women Novelists: Elizabeth Gaskell, the Brontë Sisters and George Eliot", shows a general overview of the historical context in which Elizabeth Gaskell wrote, and it provides some information about women novelists of her time (the Brontë Sisters and George Eliot). Moreover, some biographical and bibliographical notes on the author are given. The second chapter, called "Elizabeth Gaskell: the Strong Female Protagonists in *Right at Last*, *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*", explains through examples why Margaret, Susan and Thekla, who are the protagonists of the three short stories, have strong characters. Then, the third chapter, called "A Study of the Translation Strategies Employed in the Italian Editions of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*", deals with my analysis of the translation strategies that the Italian translators of the two short stories used to report the peculiarity of Elizabeth Gaskell's style (strong female protagonist theme, detailed description, metaphors and similes, and literary dialect). Indeed, before starting translating, it is good practice to procure some texts, written in the source and target languages, that are similar and of the same textual type as the one

to be translated. In the fourth chapter, called “An Italian Translation of *Right at Last*”, I presented my translation of the Gaskellian short story, and I inserted some notes that are related to the Italian version (the source text is presented in Appendix). Finally, in the fifth and last chapter, called “*Right at Last: Application of the Translation Strategies Employed in the Italian Editions of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim**”, I indicated the passages of *Right at Last* in which I chose to apply the strategies that the two translators of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* had used, and I explained the reason of my choice.

1. EARLY AND MID-VICTORIAN WOMEN NOVELISTS: ELIZABETH GASKELL, THE BRONTË SISTERS AND GEORGE ELIOT

1.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Queen Victoria ruled from 1837 until her death in 1901, and the period of her reign is known as the Victorian Age. It was a period of great economic change, which had derived from the two Industrial Revolutions. There had been an extraordinary technological development: textile manufacture, steam power, machine tools, and so forth. In that period Great Britain was the most advanced among the European powers, and its economic wealth increased constantly. It had the most developed railway network in Europe and a great fleet, which enabled an important colonial expansion. However, during that period, the economic progress had also led to great social changes. Since more people migrated from rural to urban areas in order to work in factories, there was a population growth in the major cities. In the industrial towns, the members of the working class suffered exploitation, and they lived in slums, which were highly populated areas characterised by poor conditions, disease, high mortality rates and crime. Besides, the polluted air and the terrible working conditions had disastrous effects on health. After strikes and protests, laws in favour of workers were gradually enacted, and there was even a gradual widening of the electorate (the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867 and 1884). Another important point to note is the women marginalisation of that period. Working-class women were exploited in factories, and upper- and middle-class women lived in their houses inserted in a patriarchal family, where everything belonged to the head of the family, who represented the authority. Women could not take an active role in society, because they were relegated to the managing of the house and the education of children. Therefore, the Victorian Age was a complex period: on the one hand, there was great progress, on the other hand, there were social injustices.

1.2 LITERARY CONTEXT

During the Victorian Age, the novel became the most popular form of literature, and it expanded in range and scope; therefore novelists became the literary representatives of that period. The percentage of people with a school education had increased, and so had also the number of readers. They wanted to read for entertainment, but also to enlarge their culture. In that regard it was important that a great deal of Victorian literature was first published in periodicals. By means of their works, many writers promoted culture, which was useful for the purposes of social improvement. They depicted the problems that they saw in society, because they wanted to denounce the social injustices in order to make their readers realise them. The moral and social responsibility that Victorian novelists assumed reflected the changing role of the writer in society.

Despite their state of subjection, several Victorian novels were written by women. Indeed, the main readers of the genre were women, since they spent more time at home than men. Nevertheless, “the Victorians expected women’s novels to reflect the feminine values they exalted” (Showalter, 1982: 7), so they expected women writers to write within certain limits. But the female protagonists of their novels do not act the classical role of victims. Indeed, according to Carter and McRae (2001: 267), the new generation of socially aware women demonstrated their decision-making capacities.

Elizabeth Gaskell, the Brontë sisters and George Eliot are generally inserted in the so-called Golden Age of the Victorian authoress, because they were “female role innovators” who “were breaking new ground and creating new possibilities” (Showalter, 1982: 19). They were all women novelists born in the nineteenth century, who began to publish fiction when the job of the novelist was becoming a recognizable profession. Indeed, they were professional women writers who wanted pay and publication. As women writers, they knew that they also had social responsibilities. Since Elizabeth Gaskell, the Brontë sisters and George Eliot “lived in a society based on an apparently unshakeable belief in the superiority of the male” (Beer, 1974: 25), to their contemporaries, they were women first and artists second.

During the Victorian Age, being both woman and writer was not easy. The English women novelists wanted to participate in the mainstream of literary culture and wanted to see their works published, but they “saw the will to write as a vocation in direct conflict with their status as women” (Showalter, 1982: 19). Therefore, they

decided to use a male pseudonym. At the beginning, Elizabeth Gaskell decided to publish her first writings under the male pseudonym *Cotton Mather Mills*. Therefore, the author hid her identity before declaring her real name. Nevertheless, she used *Mrs. Gaskell*, which was a kind of screen, because *Gaskell* was her husband's surname, and *Mrs.* was a title that expressed her status as married woman. Consequently, she seemed to present herself to readers with a conventional and innocuous image; yet, she was not as submissive as she seemed.

Like Elizabeth Gaskell and many other female writers of the period, Anne, Emily and Charlotte Brontë decided to adopt male pseudonyms. Beer observes that the male pseudonym was the “one weapon which a woman struggling alone in a man's world could employ” (1974: 19). They pretended to be three brothers named respectively *Acton*, *Ellis* and *Currer Bell*. But, unlike Elizabeth Gaskell, their pseudonyms were never officially broken in their lifetime. After the flowering of Elizabeth Gaskell, the Brontë sisters and other female novelists, “Mary Ann Evans felt it advisable to hide behind a male name, *George Eliot*, in order for her novels to reach their audience” (Carter and McRae, 2011: 399). She did not want to draw attention to the fact that she was a woman, because she wanted women novelists to be considered like their male counterparts.

1.2.1 ELIZABETH GASKELL

Elizabeth Gaskell was born Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson in 1810 in London (Chelsea). She was the daughter of William Stevenson, a Unitarian minister. Since her mother, Elizabeth Holland, died when she was thirteen months old, her father decided to send her to the country village of Knutsford to live with her maternal aunt, Hannah Lumb. Elizabeth was raised in a Unitarian middle-class family, and she received a traditional education. In 1832, she married William Gaskell, also a Unitarian minister, and they settled in the industrial city of Manchester. The Unitarian religious community supported tolerance and freedom of thought, and Stoneman (1987: 24) observes that it is important the fact that both William Stevenson and William Gaskell were Unitarians, because Unitarian women were in part released from the prejudice and oppression that other women experienced. Therefore, Stoneman underlines the fact that “Unitarian women had more freedom of action than many Victorian women” (2009: 134).

Unitarians were really progressive, and Elizabeth Gaskell lived in a family environment that was not very patriarchal. Therefore, it is not surprising that she believed that women were rational and responsible human beings and that subordination was contrary to her religion (Stoneman, 1987: 43). Moreover, as a Unitarian, she wanted to take social action in order to create a better world. She believed in education for all, and so she helped her husband with his work, offering support to the poor and giving lessons to children in the Sunday School. Even though she had already published few writings, her literary career began after 1845, when their only son died at the age of nine months. Indeed, her husband encouraged her to write in order to counteract the grief induced by the death of her little boy. As a consequence, Elizabeth Gaskell was not only a wife and a mother of four daughters, but she was also a writer of novels, short stories and a biography. Showalter observes that Gaskell's writing did not detract her from her womanhood, but it was an extension of her feminine role, it was "only one among the numerous and interruptible household tasks of the true woman" (1982: 85). So, as Stoneman (2009: 132) notes, Elizabeth Gaskell's familiar life contrasts with the Brontë sisters and George Eliot's lives. Because of her religious faith, she not only helped the most poor and the most marginalised in her society, but she also employed her writing as social commitment, and therefore she expressed the hardships of the lower classes in her works. Moreover, as Stoneman (1987: 45) underlines, the author lived and wrote in a society characterised by class and gender divisions. She was well aware of those problems, and they left their mark on her works. She observed the problems, and she documented them, because she wanted the society to change.

In 1848, she published *Mary Barton*, her first novel. The story was inspired by what the author saw in Manchester, and so she provided a realistic description of the miserable living conditions of the working class. She reported the poverty, the urban overpopulation and the unemployment, and therefore she made the social injustices the main theme of her work. For her faithful representation, the novel received both positive and negative reviews. It enjoyed great success among writers, and it established Elizabeth Gaskell in the literary world. In particular, it was appreciated by Charles Dickens, who recognised her worth and decided to invite the author to publish her works in his magazine *Household Words* (she continued offering her stories in *All the Year Round*, which substituted *Household Words* in 1859). Her relation with Charles

Dickens is really interesting, because it shows Elizabeth Gaskell's stubborn character. She disagreed with him many times, because they had different points of view on her works. Charles Dickens complained about her delays, and he often wanted to intervene with cuts and changes, but, when she was really convinced of her works, she did not surrender herself to his choices.

In 1853 the novel *Ruth* came out. The story is about the redemption of the female protagonist, who was considered a fallen woman by the Victorians. The author offered her a destiny which differs from the traditional one, because Ruth, a woman seduced and abandoned by a wealthy young man of a higher class, does not become a prostitute. The subject of the novel came from the author's direct experience. Elizabeth Gaskell was well aware of the abjection that coerced too many women into prostituting themselves, and she tried to help that kind of social victims in real life, since they were marginalised. Therefore, as a Unitarian, she wanted to denounce that problem in her novel. But the story caused a great scandal because of the dissolute female protagonist, and it was accused of immorality by the conformists.

In 1855, she published the industrial novel *North and South* in book form, in which she underlined the great difference between upper and lower classes and represented the extreme difference between the industrial and dynamic North of England and the rural and static South of England. The story is set in the fictional and industrial city of Milton, which is clearly based on Manchester. In *Mary Barton* the social conflict had not been resolved, and the happy ending only referred to the private life of the female protagonist. On the contrary, in *North and South* the owner and his workers find a way to dialogue and collaborate, and that was the conclusion that the author wished to happen in real life. Elizabeth Gaskell underlined the social problems of her time, but she was hoping for a compromise between opposing worlds without a revolution.

In 1857 Elizabeth Gaskell published *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. She wrote it after Charlotte Brontë's death, and it was the first biography about the writer. It was Patrick Brontë, Charlotte's father, who urged the author to write this work. Indeed, the two female novelists were friends. She decided to focus her work more on the woman than the writer. In order to preserve her friend's reputation from her moral censors, Elizabeth Gaskell decided to conceal certain episodes of her life (for example, she did

not write about her love for a married professor). According to Showalter, this biography “helped create the myth of the novelist as tragic heroine, a myth for which readers had been prepared by *Jane Eyre*” (1982: 106). Nevertheless, Elizabeth Gaskell showed her courage by refusing to avoid some inconvenient information (for example, when she unveiled the love affair of Charlotte Brontë’s brother). Indeed, it was another Gaskellian work that created a scandal. For that reason, since Elizabeth Gaskell was not present, her husband’s legal representatives withdrew and offered apologies on behalf of her. However, Sestito (1988: 248) wonders if the author would have acted in the same way. Therefore, she was forced to remove and rewrite the controversial parts of the biography.

In 1865 Elizabeth Gaskell unexpectedly died of a heart attack in her home in the Hampshire. She had just bought that house in order to spend her last years in a relaxing place away from Manchester. That purchase shows an atypical behaviour for a Victorian wife, because, without her husband knowing, she had used her earnings to buy and furnish the Hampshire house.

In conclusion, Elizabeth Gaskell was able to represent the world that she knew, namely industrial and provincial environments. Any event inspired her literary creation. Moreover, basing herself on her Unitarian faith, considered her works as a way to shape the moral conscience of her readers.

1.2.2 THE BRONTË SISTERS

The three sisters were born in Yorkshire, in Northern England. Their father, Patrick Brontë, was an Irish Anglican clergyman, who had a strong influence on their artistic inclinations. Their lives were marked by great family losses. Indeed, their mother, Maria Branwell, died in 1821, their two sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, died in 1824, and their only brother, Branwell, who was addicted to alcohol and drug, died in 1848. Their education was not a formal one, because they were mainly educated at home, apart from some periods at school. Therefore, they spent most of their life in contact with nature and isolated from the rest of the world in a remote part of Yorkshire. They read periodicals and books from their father’s library and the local public library. During their childhood, they expressed their creativity in writing chronicles of imaginary countries. In 1846, the three sisters published *Poems of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*, a

volume of poetry, but it was a failure. That was the first time that they used their male pseudonyms. Despite the poor reception, they decided to continue to write. They contributed to create new possibilities for the development of the genre of the novel with their employment of psychological exploration. Moreover, they presented women as central figures in their writings, so they “offered new possibilities for the portrayal of women in fiction”, because they “did much to alter the way in which women were viewed, demonstrating new social, psychological and emotional possibilities for women” (Carter and McRae, 2001: 267, 269).

Charlotte Brontë was born in 1816, and she was the eldest of the three writing Brontë sisters. From 1842 to 1844, she lived in Belgium in order to study French. That experience helped her to write her first novel, *The Professor*. Indeed, in Brussels she fell in love with her teacher, Monsieur Héger. In the novel the male protagonist falls in love with a poor but keen female student, who loves him in return. The two of them face many adversities, but there is a happy ending (on the contrary, the author did not have a happy ending). In *The Professor* there is a detailed psychological study of the characters and there is a vivid description of the environments. Charlotte Brontë’s first novel was refused by many publishing houses, but she was determined, and in 1847 she published *Jane Eyre*, which was immediately successful. It is a novel of growing up, because the female protagonist faces many problems in her life, which build her character. Indeed, Jane grows in maturity and becomes independent. She endures an unhappy childhood as an orphan living first with her aunt’s cruel family and later in a harsh school. When she completes the school, she becomes a teacher. Then she accepts a job as governess in the house of Mr. Rochester, a wealthy owner, and she undergoes other many difficulties, but at the end she marries him, the man she loves. Jane is plain and knows her limits, but she is also strong-willed and takes the responsibility of her own decisions. As Carter and McRae highlight, the author “sends out a signal that ordinary women can experience deep love and begin to take responsibility for their own lives” (2001: 268). Therefore, it is not surprising that in *Jane Eyre* the female protagonist says “Reader, I married him”. Indeed, Jane is the narrator of the story and tells it to the reader directly and with perfect frankness about herself. However, “the relationship between Rochester and Jane, and Jane’s admission of passion for her married employer, could not be accepted” by the reviews (Showalter, 1982: 92). Then she wrote *Shirley* in 1849. This

novel is about Shirley, a young rich woman, who moves to a village where she has inherited various properties. But her personal story inserts itself in the history of that period, which leads to reflect on the consequences of industrial progress, social divisions, marriage and the condition of women. In 1853, she wrote another novel, *Villette*. Like *The Professor*, this work recalls Charlotte Brontë's experiences during her stay in Belgium. In this case the female protagonist, orphan and poor, goes to teach at Villette in order to start a new life. She finds economic wealth, but not love's bliss. Indeed, her lover does not return from a shipwreck. Therefore, *Villette* becomes the place of hope and then loss. The grief is strong, but Lucy accepts her destiny, she endures her pain, because human beings are defenceless against death. The story has another link with the author's life due to recent bereavements in her family. In 1854, she married Reverend Arthur Nichols, but she died in pregnancy the following year. Therefore, she did not finish her last novel, *Emma*.

Emily Brontë was born in 1818, and she published her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*, in 1847. It was not immediately appreciated, because when it came out it was considered immoral by the Victorian public for the violent passion between the two protagonists. The structure of the novel is cyclical, because the story begins in relative peace, then it becomes destructive, and it finally returns peaceful. Indeed, the problems of a generation are solved in the next generation. Since *Wuthering Heights* presents a significant amount of emotional force and contains a "sophisticated narrative structure not seen previously in the history of the English novel", when it came out, several reviewers even thought that the author was a man of uncontrolled temper (Carter and McRae, 2001: 268). A crucial moment of the novel is when Heathcliff, after some years of absence, returns to Catherine and discovers that she is married. From that moment the obsession of his life begins: revenge, the will to destroy, which continues even after Catherine's death. At the end, he lets himself die, because he hopes to meet his lover again in another life. The character of Heathcliff emanates a wild energy, because he is at the mercy of a great love passion and has no sympathy in his revenge. The wild moorland of Yorkshire is accurately described through the characteristics of the landscape and the atmospheric conditions, and it seems to participate to the wild passion between Heathcliff and Catherine and to the tragic events of the story; therefore, the

moorland has a symbolic value. Emily Brontë died of consumption in 1848, the year after *Wuthering Heights* was published.

Anne Brontë was born in 1820. She worked as governess for five years, and that experience inspired her first novel, *Agnes Grey*. It was published in 1847 and it deals with the story of a governess. In *Agnes Grey* the author presented the negative sides of Victorian education. However, the novel was not immediately successful. In 1848, she wrote her second and last novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. It is the story of Helen, a woman who is married to an adulterer and dissolute husband. She wants to reform him through her influence, but she tries in vain, because he does not change. When her husband even tries to deprave their son, she decides to leave him. Therefore, she escapes and brings her son with her in order to create a new life for herself. The personal freedom of the female protagonist happens when she reports in her own diary all the sufferings that her husband had inflicted on her. The protagonist is a woman who courageously fights for her independence, even against the social norms of her time. In any case, according to Stoneman, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* “is a fictional confirmation that woman’s mission can be a futile dream” (2009: 132). Like her sister Emily, Anne Brontë soon died of consumption in 1849.

1.2.3 GEORGE ELIOT

George Eliot was born Mary Anne Evans in 1819 in rural Warwickshire. She received an ordinary education and was raised as an Evangelical. After her mother’s death, when she and her father moved to Coventry, she was influenced by the intellectual circles of the city. Her contact with radical views convinced her to leave her religious faith and to embrace a secular rationalism, even if she continued to believe that people can have moral principles. She was an extensive reader and studied many languages. After her father’s death in 1849, she travelled around Europe and, once back in England, she decided to settle in London, where she contributed to a literary journal, *The Westminster Review*. She worked as a translator, editor, reviewer and writer. In London, she came into contact with many intellectual figures, including George Henry Lewes, an important journalist. They gradually fell in love; yet, since he had a wife and was not divorced, they never married, but in 1854 they decided to live together against social conventions. Indeed, “as the mistress of Lewes, she had put herself outside the

boundaries of Victorian respectability” (Showalter, 1982: 93). It was Lewes who encouraged Mary Anne to write fiction. In 1880, two years after Lewes’s death, Mary Anne married the banker John Cross, who was twenty years younger than herself, but she died some months later.

In 1860, she published the novel *Mill on the Floss*. It is set in the Warwickshire countryside and reports the rural economic crisis due to the introduction of the industrial machines. The author analysed the psychology of each character who has to make choices. She participated and feel sympathy for the weakest, especially women. For that time it was unusual to represent common people’s thoughts and emotions. In the novel there are biographical references (for example, Maggie has a love relationship with a man outside the marriage, and this event recalls the author’s life).

Middlemarch was published in 1872. The novel has a complex plot, but the main stories concern two characters, Dorothea Brooke and Doctor Lydgate. Dorothea is an orphan who marries an old scholar, who becomes a disappointment to her. Finally, after her husband’s death, she marries a cousin of his, who then becomes a successful politician. Doctor Lydgate comes to Middlemarch, works in the hospital and marries a superficial girl. At the end, he is involved in a scandal and dies. The novel is a study of provincial life, it is an analysis of a society in transformation and of the response of people to changes. All social classes are included with their characteristics. The characters are presented through other people’s opinions, and their lives and their choices also depend on other people’s choices. Therefore, they often reconsider their stances. The characters determine their own life even through their self-sacrifice. This author’s concept does not originate from religion, but from her own view of humanity, which is based on love and duty towards the other human beings. A significant theme of *Middlemarch* is the role of women in the family, where the female characters are oppressed by social conventions of the period.

In conclusion, “in the works of George Eliot, the English novel reached new depths of social and philosophical concern, and moral commitment” (Carter and McRae, 2001: 269). The author dealt with her characters’ psychology, and therefore she dealt with their thoughts and emotions. She mainly treated her protagonists’ interior changes rather than the actual events of their lives, because she wanted to present the way in which the events were perceived by the characters. She depicted every individual

as a social being who acted in relation to the environment in which he/she lived, and she represented him/her to the reader through a psychological analysis. George Eliot wanted her narrative to educate readers at the moral level by presenting the thoughts and the choices of the various characters. This author's attention originated from her particular interest in sociology and psychology.

2. ELIZABETH GASKELL: THE STRONG FEMALE PROTAGONISTS IN *RIGHT AT LAST, HALF A LIFETIME AGO AND SIX WEEKS AT HEPPENHEIM*

2.1 *RIGHT AT LAST, HALF A LIFETIME AGO AND SIX WEEKS AT HEPPENHEIM*

Right at Last was first published as *The Sin of a Father* in *Household Words* in November 1858, and it was renamed when published in book-form. According to Sharps (1970: 295-296) “the change of title perhaps implies that the author wished the focus of attention to lie [...] on its moral teaching (that honesty is the best policy)”, and that “together with a satisfactory ethical conclusion goes domestic contentedness: the hero and heroine can live in harmony and happiness, everything is all right in the end”. The short story begins in Scotland, when Margaret tells her uncle, Professor Frazer, that she has accepted Doctor Brown’s marriage proposal. Professor Frazer opposes his niece’s engagement, because the suitor is poor, and he apparently has no relatives. However, Margaret’s determination leads her uncle to give a sort of consent. Once married, the spouses settle in their half-furnished home at London. In the house there are also Christie, a Scottish female servant, and Crawford, a manservant with many skills. The young physician starts to earn good money. Unfortunately, at some point, the notes that he had locked up in his bureau are stolen. Doctor Brown seems completely devastated by the discovery, while his wife does not lose heart, and she reacts immediately by sending for the police. The inspector is convinced that Crawford has committed the robbery, so he takes the manservant with him. Doctor Brown is reluctant to prosecute Crawford, and Margaret tries to discover the reason of his reticence. She admits that she knows the fact that his father was a transported convict, and, consequently, her husband confesses that Crawford is a blackmailer, because he stole not only the notes but also a bundle of newspaper reports about his father’s trial. Margaret urges Doctor Brown to prosecute their manservant, since justice must be done, despite the consequences that will result from the revealing of the secret. Crawford suffers a severe sentence, and they are forced to leave their house and go to a smaller

one. Moreover, they are forced to economise. But the story ends happily, because their economic situation improves, and they have a baby.

Martha Preston appeared in *Sartain's*, and it was rewritten for *Household Words*, where it was published in October 1855 as *Half a Lifetime Ago*. The short story is set in the Lake District (Westmoreland), where the Dixon family, which includes the father, the mother and their two sons, owns a farm. Among the farm workers there is Michael Hurst, whose family and the Dixons are glad about his and Susan's unspoken attachment. At some point, the girl's mother falls very ill, and before dying she asks Susan to look after William, her little brother. The girl assumes the task, and she is determined to honour her promise. Later, when the wedding date is already set, Susan's father falls ill with typhus fever, and he infects both his sons. The illness causes his death, and it leaves William in a state of half dementia. This is the reason why Michael wants to send Susan's brother to a madhouse. So, Michael forces her to choose between himself and William. The girl does not want to leave her brother, and she argues with her future husband due to her firm decision. In the end, Susan breaks off the engagement, and so she starts to live a tough life, because she has to manage the farm by herself, and meanwhile she has to take care of William, who gets worse. However, one day he dies, and Susan becomes the owner of the farm. The years pass, and she is still alone and working, until one winter evening when she hears a man's voice of agony. Susan faces the storm to go and rescue this person, and she drags his body up to her house. With the light of a candle she realises that the man, who is already dead, is Michael. The following morning, Susan takes on the responsibility of informing his widow, and, in the end, she takes the woman and her children to live with her.

Six Weeks at Heppenheim came out in *The Cornhill Magazine* in May 1862. The short story is set in Germany. The nameless narrator, who is also the protagonist of the story, is a young Englishman who stops at an inn in Heppenheim, but he falls ill. During his convalescence, he is nursed by the inn servant Thekla, who is another protagonist, since, as Marroni (1989: 16) observes, her story is the real subject of the narration. He becomes involved in the lives of Thekla and Fritz Müller, the widowed innkeeper. The inn servant tells him that she was brought up with Franz Weber in Altenahr and that their fathers used to talk of their marriage. Moreover, she tells him that the young German man gave her a ring before leaving to work as a waiter at the great hotels on the

Rhine. One day Franz comes back and tells Thekla that he is going home to settle and that he hopes that she will follow him. However, Fritz Müller thinks that the young man is not worthy of Thekla, and he finds out that he himself is in love with her. But Thekla does not love Franz anymore, because he is not the same person she used to know, and she decides not to marry him. The innkeeper asks Thekla to marry him, but she refuses, and she decides that she will leave Heppenheim. Nevertheless, at the end of the story, after the illness of Fritz Müller's son, the girl changes her mind, and she marries the innkeeper.

2.2 MARGARET, SUSAN AND THEKLA

The female protagonists of *Right at Last*, *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* make their own decisions about their life, and they act in accordance to their will. Margaret, Susan and Thekla are three women with different lives, but they have some features in common. Some of these features unite all three female protagonists, while others unite just two of them.

2.2.1 STRONG WOMEN AND WEAK MEN

Rubenius highlights the fact that in Elizabeth Gaskell's works "most of her heroines are strong, equal to a crisis, whereas her men are often weak, liable to break up under heavy mental strain. While allowed to keep up appearances as masters, they are often shown up in almost childish helplessness in problematical situations" (1950: 15). Sharps even asserts that "in general all Gaskellian heroines display greater force of personality than do the men" (1970: 297). Therefore, it is not surprising that *Right at Last*, *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* present this peculiarity.

With regard to *Right at Last*, Foster (2002: 95) affirms that Margaret is stronger than her weak husband, because she shows moral courage, and Bonaparte (1992: 274-275) states that Doctor Brown is more a female than a male, because he is weak and indecisive, and Margaret is more male than he is. Sharps (1970: 297) even asserts that in *Right at Last* "the contrast between the morally strong wife and her apparently irresolute and weak-willed husband" is the only thing that deserves notice. Margaret and Doctor Brown themselves think that she is the strong part of their couple, and he is the weak

one. Indeed, since her husband is poorly affected by the disappearance of money, she understands that she will be the only one to assume control in difficult times. Instead, Doctor Brown admits that Margaret is better than him.

Margaret was infinitely distressed and dismayed by the effect the robbery seemed to have had on her husband's energies. The probable loss of such a sum was bad enough; but **there was something so weak and poor in character** in letting it affect him so strongly as to deaden all energy and destroy all hopeful spring, that, although Margaret did not dare to define her feeling, nor the cause of it, to herself, she had the fact before her perpetually, that, **if she were to judge of her husband** from this morning only, **she must learn to rely on herself alone in all cases of emergency.** (*Right at Last*, p. 290)

"And taken the money," said Margaret, in an instant understanding how it stood. It was a great blow; a great loss, far greater than the few extra pounds by which the bills had exceeded her calculations: yet **it seemed as if she could bear it better.** "Oh dear!" she said, "that is bad; but after all—Do you know," she said, trying to raise his face, so that she might look into it, and **give him the encouragement** of her honest loving eyes, "at first I thought you were deadly ill, and all sorts of dreadful possibilities rushed through my mind—it is such a relief to find that it is only money"—— (*Right at Last*, p. 288)

I do not know. Perhaps I might; for **I am not so brave, so good, so strong as you, my Margaret.** (*Right at Last*, p. 296)

But Margaret is stronger than Doctor Brown for many reasons. First of all, she forces her husband to prepare their new house with just the necessary things. He is worried, because he thinks that Margaret does not like their house, but she reassures him by saying that she will easily furnish the rooms.

When Doctor Brown started for London, to seek and prepare their new home, **she enjoined him not to make any but the most necessary preparations for her reception. She would herself superintend all that was wanting when she came.** He had some old furniture, stored up in a warehouse, which had been his mother's. **He proposed selling it, and buying new in its place. Margaret persuaded him not to do this, but to make it go as far as it could.** (*Right at Last*, p. 282)

Doctor Brown was rather afraid lest Margaret should think the house bare and cheerless in its half-furnished state; for he had obeyed her injunctions and bought as little furniture as might be, in addition to the few things he had inherited from his mother. (*Right at Last*, p. 283)

But she laughed at his alarm lest she should be disappointed in her new home; declared that she should like nothing better than planning and contriving; **that, what with her own talent for upholstery and Crawford's for joinery, the rooms would be furnished**

as if by magic, and no bills—the usual consequences of comfort—**be forthcoming.** (*Right at Last*, pp. 283-284)

Secondly, when the notes are stolen, the female protagonist does not lose heart, but she immediately reacts to adversity. Instead, Doctor Brown is depressed.

While her whole energies were bent on the speedy recovery of the money, and she was rapidly going over the necessary steps to be taken, her husband “sat all poured out into his chair,” as the Germans say; no force in him to keep his limbs in any attitude requiring the slightest exertion; his face sunk, miserable, and with that foreshadowing of the lines of age which sudden distress is apt to call out on the youngest and smoothest faces. (*Right at Last*, p. 289)

Then, Doctor Brown does not answer the inspector’s questions, but it is his wife who replies to them, so later the inspector decides to talk only to Margaret. Besides, her husband asks the policeman if he is forced to prosecute Crawford, and Margaret involuntarily shows him how much she is against his question. Therefore, Doctor Brown says that they give their manservant in charge and his wife asks the inspector what they have to do.

The policeman heard all and said little. Then the inspector came. **Doctor Brown seemed to leave all the talking to Crawford**, who apparently liked nothing better. Margaret was infinitely distressed and dismayed by the effect the robbery seemed to have had on her husband’s energies. The probable loss of such a sum was bad enough; but there was something so weak and poor in character in letting it affect him so strongly as to deaden all energy and destroy all hopeful spring, that, although Margaret did not dare to define her feeling, nor the cause of it, to herself, she had the fact before her perpetually, that, if she were to judge of her husband from this morning only, she must learn to rely on herself alone in all cases of emergency. The inspector repeatedly turned from Crawford to Doctor and Mrs. Brown for answers to his inquiries. **It was Margaret who replied, with terse, short sentences**, very different from Crawford’s long, involved explanations.

At length the inspector asked to speak to her alone. She followed him into the room, past the affronted Crawford and her despondent husband. The inspector gave one sharp look at the charwoman, who was going on with her scouring with stolid indifference, turned her out, and then **asked Margaret where Crawford came from—how long he had lived with them, and various other questions**, all showing the direction his suspicions had taken. This shocked Margaret extremely; but **she quickly answered every inquiry**, and, at the end, watched the inspector’s face closely, and waited for the avowal of the suspicion. (*Right at Last*, pp. 290-291)

“Must I prosecute?” said Doctor Brown, almost lividly pale. “It is, I own, a serious loss of money to me; but there will be the further expenses of the prosecution—the loss of time—the”——

He stopped. He saw his wife’s indignant eyes fixed upon him, and shrank from their look of unconscious reproach.

“Yes, inspector,” he said; “I give him in charge. Do what you will. Do what is right. Of course I take the consequences. We take the consequences. Don’t we, Margaret?” He spoke in a kind of wild, low voice, of which Margaret thought it best to take no notice.

“Tell us exactly what to do,” she said very coldly and quietly, addressing herself to the policeman. (*Right at Last*, p. 292)

Finally, while her husband remains inactive, Margaret proves to be more strong-willed than him, because she strongly tries to persuade him to prosecute Crawford. He weakly tries to convince his wife not to take action, but Margaret disapproves Doctor Brown’s passivity, and she insists on prosecute their manservant.

“I can refuse to prosecute.”

“Let Crawford go free, you knowing him to be guilty?”

“I know him to be guilty.”

“Then, simply, you cannot do this thing. You let loose a criminal upon the public.”

“But, if I do not, we shall come to shame and poverty. It is for you I mind it, not for myself. I ought never to have married.”

“Listen to me. I don’t care for poverty; and, as to shame, I should feel it twenty times more grievously, if you and I consented to screen the guilty, from any fear or for any selfish motives of our own. I don’t pretend that I shall not feel it, when first the truth is known. But my shame will turn into pride, as I watch you live it down. You have been rendered morbid, dear husband, by having something all your life to conceal. Let the world know the truth, and say the worst. You will go forth a free, honest, honourable man, able to do your future work without fear.” (*Right at Last*, p. 298)

Doctor Brown continues to hesitate, and he is still not able to make up his mind. Therefore, it is Margaret who replies to Crawford’s note addressed to her husband, and she says to him that they will not surrender to his blackmail, but rather they will prosecute him. As it can be seen in the following example, the author even wrote the personal pronoun *I* in italics, since she wanted to emphasise it (Trask, 1997: 114). Moreover, Margaret signs the note with just her signature. So, she takes “over the responsibility for moral decisions”, since “her husband is too weak a character to make them” (Rubenius: 1950: 62).

“Stay! May I write it?” said Margaret.
She wrote:—

“Whatever you may do or say, there is but one course open to us. No threats can deter your master from doing his duty.”

“MARGARET BROWN.”

(*Right at Last*, p. 298)

In *Half a Lifetime Ago*, according to Foster (1985:165), the female protagonist is an image of female strength, because she becomes the central controller of events, and her life represents a female triumph in terms of personal choice, even if it seems wasted in the normal sense. While Susan is a strong woman figure, her lover is a weak man. In the following instance, she accuses Michael of being soft, because he dances, while he underlines the fact that the girl is really hard and headstrong.

“And if you can dance a threesome reel, what good does it do ye?” asked Susan, looking askance at Michael, who had just been vaunting his proficiency. “Does it help you plough, or reap, or even climb the rocks to take a raven’s nest? **If I were a man, I’d be ashamed to give in to such softness.**”

“If you were a man, you’d be glad to do anything which made the pretty girls stand round and admire.”

“As they do to you, eh? Ho, Michael, **that would not be my way o’ being a man!**”

“What would, then?” asked he, after a pause, during which he had expected in vain that she would go on with her sentence. No answer.

“**I should not like you as a man, Susy; you’d be too hard and headstrong.**”

“Am I hard and headstrong?” asked she, with as indifferent a tone as she could assume, but which yet had a touch of pique in it. His quick ear detected the inflexion.

“No, Susy! **You’re wilful at times**, and that’s right enough. **I don’t like a girl without spirit.** There’s a mighty pretty girl comes to the dancing-class; but she is all milk and water. **Her eyes never flash like yours when you’re put out; why, I can see them flame across the kitchen like a cat’s in the dark. Now, if you were a man, I should feel queer before those looks of yours;** as it is, I rather like them, because”—— (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 285)

Instead, in the example below, since Michael is not able to change Susan’s mind, he seeks help from Mrs. Gale, his sister. He leaves all the talking to the woman, while he keeps himself aside.

To her surprise, Michael Hurst sat in the house-place. House-place is a sort of better kitchen, where no cookery is done, but which is reserved for state occasions. **Michael** had gone in there because he **was accompanied by his only sister, a woman older than himself**, who was well married beyond Keswick, and who now came for the first time to make acquaintance with Susan. **Michael had primed his sister with his wishes regarding Will, and the position in which he stood with Susan**; and, arriving at Yew Nook in the absence of the latter, he had not scrupled to conduct his sister into the guest-room, as **he held Mrs. Gale's worldly position in respect and admiration**, and therefore wished her to be favourably impressed with all the signs of property which he was beginning to consider as Susan's greatest charms. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 308)

But **Mrs. Gale** was withheld by no such feelings of delicacy. She **had come ready-primed with the case, and had undertaken to bring the girl to reason**. There was no time to be lost. **It had been pre-arranged between the brother and sister that he was to stroll out into the farm-yard before his sister introduced the subject; but she was so confident in the success of her arguments that she must needs have the triumph of a victory as soon as possible; and, accordingly, she brought a hailstorm of good reasons to bear upon Susan**. Susan did not reply for a long time; she was so indignant at this intermeddling of a stranger in the deep family sorrow and shame. **Mrs. Gale thought she was gaining the day, and urged her arguments more pitilessly. Even Michael winced for Susan**, and wondered at her silence. **He shrunk out of sight, and into the shadow, hoping that his sister might prevail, but annoyed at the hard way in which she kept putting the case.** (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 309)

In *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, there are “again the strong woman and the weak man” (Rubenius, 1950: 79). Indeed, the narrator explains synthetically and precisely Thekla and Franz's different characters.

From time to time I thought of Thekla and Franz Weber. **She was the strong, good, helpful character, he the weak and vain**; how strange it seemed that she should have cared for one so dissimilar; and then I remembered the various happy marriages, when to an outsider it seemed as if one was so inferior to the other that their union would have appeared a subject for despair, if it had been looked at prospectively. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 377)

I had been reflecting a good deal on Thekla's story; I could not quite interpret her manner to-day to my full satisfaction; but yet, the love which had grown with her growth must assuredly have been called forth by her lover's sudden reappearance; and I was inclined to give him some credit for having broken off an engagement to Swiss Anna, which had promised so many worldly advantages; and, again, I had considered that, **if he was a little weak and sentimental, it was Thekla, who would marry him by**

her own free will, and perhaps she had sense and quiet resolution enough for both. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, pp. 383-384)

In the following example, Franz is again shown as a weak man, because Thekla tells the Englishman that the young man did not take on his responsibility, but, in a cowardly way, he left her in an awkward situation.

“But you could have told her that you were old friends.”—I hesitated before saying the word “lovers”; but, after a pause, out it came.

“Franz might have said so,” she replied, a little stiffly. “I could not; but he went off as soon as she bade him. He went to the ‘Adler’ over the way, only saying he would come for my answer to-morrow morning. **I think it was he that should have told her what we were**—neighbour’s children and early friends—**not have left it all to me.** (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 383)

2.2.2 ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE

Margaret, Susan and Thekla make significant choices about whom to marry or not. They decide without taking into account other people's expectations. In *Right at Last*, Margaret’s uncle wants her to marry Sir Alexander, but she refuses resolutely.

“Then, Margaret, you will just quietly settle down to be a beggar, for that lad Brown has little or no money to think of marrying upon: **you that might be my Lady Kennedy, if you would!**”

“**I could not, uncle.**”

“**Nonsense, child! Sir Alexander is a personable and agreeable man**—middle-aged, if you will—well, a wilful woman maun have her way; but, if I had had a notion that this youngster was sneaking into my house to cajole you into fancying him, I would have seen him far enough before I had ever let your aunt invite him to dinner. Ay! you may mutter; but I say, no gentleman would ever have come into my house to seduce my niece’s affections, without first informing me of his intentions, and asking my leave.” (*Right at Last*, p. 279)

“So you think—so you think. But who cares for the opinion of a love-sick girl? He is a handsome, plausible young fellow, of good address. And I don’t mean to deny his ability. But there is something about him I never did like, and now it’s accounted for. **And Sir Alexander—Well, well! your aunt will be disappointed in you, Margaret.** But you were always a headstrong girl. Has this Jamie Brown ever told you who or what his parents were, or where he comes from? I don’t ask about his forbears, for he does not look like a lad who has ever had ancestors; and you a Frazer of Lovat! Fie, for shame, Margaret! Who is this Jamie Brown?” (*Right at Last*, p. 279)

Moreover, the female protagonist tells Professor Frazer that she has accepted Doctor Brown's marriage proposal, regardless of her lover's background. The girl asks him to give his consent for her to marry Doctor Brown, but her uncle is perfectly aware that Margaret has already made a firm decision and that his consent is just a mere form. This marriage is against her uncle's will, but she is so in love with Doctor Brown that she has even no problem to dishonouring her family, which she once strongly supported, in order to support her lover. Even though her uncle tries to change her mind, she still believes in her decision, and so he gives a sort of consent. However, the relation between Margaret and her guardians becomes weak.

Doctor Brown was poor, and had to make his way in the world. (*Right at Last*, p. 278)

No one knew particularly who he was, or where he sprang from; but then he had no near relations, as he had once or twice observed; so he was evidently not hampered with low-born or low-bred connections. He had been in mourning for his mother, when he first came to college.

All this much was recalled to the recollection of Professor Frazer by his niece Margaret, as she stood before him one morning in his study; **telling him, in a low, but resolute voice that, the night before, Doctor James Brown had offered her marriage—that she had accepted him—and that he was intending to call on Professor Frazer (her uncle and natural guardian) that very morning, to obtain his consent to their engagement. Professor Frazer was perfectly aware, from Margaret's manner, that his consent was regarded by her as a mere form, for that her mind was made up: and he had more than once had occasion to find out how inflexible she could be.** Yet he, too, was of the same blood, and **held to his own opinions in the same obdurate manner.** The consequence of which frequently was, that uncle and niece had argued themselves into mutual bitterness of feeling, **without altering each other's opinions one jot.** But Professor Frazer could not restrain himself on this occasion, of all others.

“Then, Margaret, you will just quietly settle down to be a beggar, for that lad Brown has little or no money to think of marrying upon: you that might be my Lady Kennedy, if you would!” (*Right at Last*, pp. 278-279)

“Nonsense, child! Sir Alexander is a personable and agreeable man—middle-aged, if you will—well, **a wilful woman maun have her way;** but, if I had had a notion that this youngster was sneaking into my house to cajole you into fancying him, I would have seen him far enough before I had ever let your aunt invite him to dinner. Ay! you may mutter; but I say, no gentleman would ever have come into my house to seduce my niece's affections, without first informing me of his intentions, and asking my leave.”

“Doctor Brown is a gentleman, Uncle Frazer, **whatever you may think of him.**”

“So you think—so you think. But who cares for the opinion of a love-sick girl? He is a handsome, plausible young fellow, of good address. And I don’t mean to deny his ability. But there is something about him I never did like, and now it’s accounted for. And Sir Alexander——Well, well! your aunt will be disappointed in you, Margaret. But **you were always a headstrong girl. Has this Jamie Brown ever told you who or what his parents were, or where he comes from? I don’t ask about his forbears, for he does not look like a lad who has ever had ancestors;** and you a Frazer of Lovat! Fie, for shame, Margaret! Who is this Jamie Brown?” (*Right at Last*, p. 279)

“Hoot! **is that the way for a maiden to speak? Where does he come from? Who are his kinsfolk?** Unless he can give a pretty good account of his family and prospects, I shall just bid him begone, Margaret; and that I tell you fairly.”

“Uncle” (her eyes were filling with hot indignant tears), “**I am of age;** you know he is good and clever; else why have you had him so often to your house? **I marry him, and not his kinsfolk. He is an orphan. I doubt if he has any relations that he keeps up with. He has no brothers nor sisters. I don’t care where he comes from.**”

“What was his father?” asked Professor Frazer coldly.

“**I don’t know. Why should I go prying into every particular of his family, and asking who his father was, and what was the maiden name of his mother, and when his grandmother was married?**”

“Yet I think **I have heard Miss Margaret Frazer speak up pretty strongly in favour of a long line of unspotted ancestry.**”

“I had forgotten our own, I suppose, when I spoke so. **Simon, Lord Lovat, is a creditable great-uncle to the Frazers! If all tales be true, he ought to have been hanged for a felon,** instead of beheaded like a loyal gentleman.”

“Oh! if **you’re determined to foul your own nest,** I have done. Let James Brown come in; I will make him my bow, and thank him for condescending to marry a Frazer.”

“Uncle,” said Margaret, now fairly crying, “don’t let us part in anger! We love each other in our hearts. You have been good to me, and so has my aunt. But **I have given my word to Doctor Brown, and I must keep it. I should love him, if he was the son of a ploughman.** We don’t expect to be rich; but he has a few hundreds to start with, and I have my own hundred a year”——

“Well, well, child, don’t cry! **You have settled it all for yourself,** it seems; so I wash my hands of it. I shake off all responsibility. You will tell your aunt what arrangements you make with Doctor Brown about your marriage; and I will do what you wish in the matter. But don’t send the young man in to me to ask my consent! I neither give it nor withhold it. It would have been different, if it had been Sir Alexander.”

“Oh! Uncle Frazer, don’t speak so. See Doctor Brown, and at any rate—for my sake—**tell him you consent!** Let me belong to you that much! It seems

so desolate at such a time to have to dispose of myself, as if nobody owned or cared for me.”

The door was thrown open, and Doctor James Brown was announced. Margaret hastened away; and, before he was aware, **the Professor had given a sort of consent**, without asking a question of the happy young man; who hurried away to seek his betrothed, leaving her uncle muttering to himself.

Both Doctor and Mrs. Frazer were so strongly opposed to Margaret’s engagement, in reality, that they could not help showing it by manner and implication; although they had the grace to keep silent. But Margaret felt even more keenly than **her lover** that he **was not welcome in the house**.

Her pleasure in seeing him was destroyed by her sense of **the coldness with which he was received**, and she willingly yielded to his desire of a short engagement; which was contrary to their original plan of waiting until he should be settled in practice in London, and should see his way clear to such an income as would render their marriage a prudent step. **Doctor and Mrs. Frazer neither objected nor approved. Margaret would rather have had the most vehement opposition than this icy coldness.** (*Right at Last*, p. 279-280-281)

As already stated, the female protagonist of *Right at Last* is a strong woman, and therefore, as Rubenius (1950: 62) notes, once married, is a wife of strong character. According to Stoneman (1987: 62), the submission of women “takes responsibility for their fate out of their own hands” and, while obedience means silence, “public speech is a claim to participate” and shows the speaker’s authority. Therefore, Margaret is not a passive and submissive wife “who always trusts to her husband’s judgment” (the traditional idea of the time) (Rubenius: 1950: 62). When her husband “has ideas of right and wrong which are different from her own” (Rubenius: 1950: 62), she does not consider “it a crime to criticize” them (Rubenius, 1950: 74). She “acts with a sense of ethical responsibility, following her own concepts of duty” (Sharps, 1970: 297). Margaret is “an independent woman”, and she is “responsible for her own actions and moral decisions” (Rubenius, 1950: 76). Moreover, according to Rubenius (1950: 73), Elizabeth Gaskell made the problems which encounter Margaret in her marriage the central theme of the story.

In *Half a Lifetime Ago*, Susan and Michael’s parents see the two youngsters’ compatibility. They are in love, so it seems natural that they will marry.

Both fathers and mothers cast a glance from time to time at Michael and Susan, who were thinking of nothing less than farm or dairy, but **whose unspoken attachment was, in all ways, so suitable and natural a thing**

that each parent rejoiced over it, although with characteristic reserve it was never spoken about—not even between husband and wife. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 281-282)

“Thou’lt promise me that, Susan, wilt thou? I can die easy if thou’lt take charge of him. But he’s hardly like other folk; he tries father at times, though I think father’ll be tender of him when I’m gone, for my sake. And, Susan, there’s one thing more. I never spoke on it for fear of the bairn being called a tell-tale, but I just comforted him up. He vexes Michael at times, and Michael has struck him before now. I did not want to make a stir; but he’s not strong, and **a word from thee, Susan, will go a long way with Michael.**”

Susan was as red now as she had been pale before; **it was the first time that her influence over Michael had been openly acknowledged by a third person**, and a flash of joy came athwart the solemn sadness of the moment. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 283)

She was tender to lile Will when she was prompt and sharp with everybody else—with Michael most of all; for somehow **the girl felt that**, unprotected by her mother, **she must** keep up her own dignity, and **not allow her lover to see how strong a hold he had upon her heart**. He called her hard and cruel, and felt her so; and she smiled softly to herself, when his back was turned, to think **how little he guessed how deeply he was loved**. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 284)

“And how did you know what I was last night? It was past twelve when I came home. Were you watching? **Ah, Susan! be my wife**, and you shall never have to watch for a drunken husband. If I were your husband, I would come straight home, and count every minute an hour till I saw your bonny face. Now you know what I want you to be. **I ask you to be my wife. Will you, my own dear Susan?**”

She did not speak for some time. Then **she only said “Ask father.”** And now she was really off like a lapwing, round the corner of the barn, and up in her own little room, crying with all her might, before the triumphant smile had left Michael’s face where he stood.

The “Ask father” was a mere form to be gone through. Old Daniel Hurst and William Dixon had talked over what they could respectively give their children before this, and that was the parental way of arranging such matters. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 290-291)

Michael and Susan get engaged, but, since her brother becomes feeble-minded, and she wants to heal him, she postpones her marriage. Her lover does not agree, but she is really resolute.

Michael complained that she never had a word for him, or a minute of time to spend with him now; but she only said she must try, while there

was yet a chance, to bring back her brother's lost wits. As for marriage in this state of uncertainty, she had no heart to think of it. Then Michael stormed, and absented himself for two or three days; but it was of no use. When he came back, he saw that she had been crying till her eyes were all swollen up, and he gathered from Peggy's scoldings (which she did not spare him) that Susan had eaten nothing since he went away. **But she was as inflexible as ever.**

"Not just yet. Only not just yet. And don't say again that I do not love you," said she, suddenly hiding herself in his arms. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 300)

However, she destroys this certainty. Even if Susan really loves Michael, she breaks off their engagement, because her lover does not want to live with her brother. According to Foster (1985: 165), it is an act of "rebellion against male selfishness". Undoubtedly, she goes against the social convection of the indissolubility of an engagement. Nevertheless, she remains an unmarried woman all her life.

"And so I do. And so I ever will do. Lover nor husband shall come betwixt thee and me, lad—ne'er a one of them. That I promise thee (as I promised mother before), in the sight of God and with her hearkening now, if ever she can hearken to earthly word again. Only I cannot abide to have thee fretting, just because my heart is large enough for two." (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 293-294)

"Thou wilt not bide in the same house with him, say'st thou? There's no need for thy biding, as far as I can tell. There's solemn reason why I should bide with my own flesh and blood, and keep to the word I pledged my mother on her death-bed; but, as for thee, there's no tie that I know on to keep thee fro' going to America or Botany Bay this very night, if that were thy inclination. I will have no more of your threats to make me send my bairn away. If thou marry me, thou'lt help me to take charge of Willie. If thou doesn't choose to marry me on those terms—why, I can snap my fingers at thee, never fear. I'm not so far gone in love as that. But I will not have thee, if thou say'st in such a hectoring way that Willie must go out of the house—and the house his own too—before thou'lt set foot in it. Willie bides here, and I bide with him."

"Thou hast maybe spoken a word too much," said Michael, pale with rage. "If I am free, as thou say'st, to go to Canada or Botany Bay, I reckon I'm free to live where I like; and that will not be with a natural who may turn into a madman some day, for aught I know. **Choose between him and me, Susy, for I swear to thee, thou shan't have both.**"

"I have chosen," said Susan, now perfectly composed and still. "Whatever comes of it, I bide with Willie."

"Very well," replied Michael, trying to assume an equal composure of manner. "Then I'll wish you a very good night." **He went out of the house**

door, half-expecting to be called back again; but, instead, he heard a hasty step inside, and a bolt drawn. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 304)

“I ask you,” said Susan, trying to give a crystal clearness both to her expressions and her pronunciations, **“if, knowing as you do how Will is afflicted, you will help me to take that charge of him which I promised my mother on her death-bed that I would do; and which means, that I shall keep him always with me, and do all in my power to make his life happy. If you will do this, I will be your wife; if not, I remain unwed.”**

“But he may get dangerous; he can be but a trouble; his being here is a pain to you, Susan, not a pleasure.”

“I ask you for either yes or no,” said she, a little contempt at his evading her question mingling with her tone. He perceived it, and it nettled him.

“And I have told you. **I answered your question the last time I was here. I said I would ne’er keep house with an idiot; no more I will. So now you’ve gotten your answer.”**

“I have,” said Susan. And she sighed deeply.

“Come, now,” said Mrs. Gale, encouraged by the sigh; **“one would think you don’t love Michael, Susan, to be so stubborn in yielding to what I’m sure would be best for the lad.”**

“Oh! she does not care for me,” said Michael. “I don’t believe she ever did.”

“Don’t I? Haven’t I?” asked Susan, her eyes blazing out fire. She left the room directly, and sent Peggy in to make the tea; and, catching at Will, who was lounging about in the kitchen, she went upstairs with him and bolted herself in, straining the boy to her heart, and keeping almost breathless, lest any noise she made might cause him to break out into the howls and sounds which she could not bear that those below should hear. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p.p 310-311)

In *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, the female protagonist’s feelings are not constant, but, in any case, her inconstancy is the result of the decisions that she makes. Thekla and Franz’s fathers used to talk about the two youngsters’ marriage. Besides, they seemed in love with each other, and the young man even gave a ring to the girl before leaving to work as a waiter. Nevertheless, one day Franz sent a letter to Thekla, and he told her that he wanted to marry a girl. So, she now thinks that Franz probably never loved her and that their marriage will never take place.

“Yes; his father kept the other inn, and our parents, instead of being rivals, were great friends. Franz is a little younger than I, and was a delicate child. I had to take him to school, and I used to be so proud of it and of my charge! Then he grew strong, and was the handsomest lad in the village. **Our fathers used to sit and smoke together, and talk of our marriage; and Franz must have heard as much as I. Whenever he was in trouble, he would come to me for what advice I could give him, and he danced**

twice as often with me as with any other girl at all the dances, and always brought his nosegay to me. Then his father wished him to travel, and learn the ways at the great hotels on the Rhine before he settled down in Altenahr. You know that is the custom in Germany, sir. They go from town to town as journeymen, learning something fresh everywhere, they say.” (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, pp. 375-376)

“Oh, yes; and among inn-keepers, too,” she said. “Most of the waiters at the great hotels in Frankfurt, and Heidelberg, and Mayence, and, I dare say at all the other places, are the sons of inn-keepers in small towns, who go out into the world to learn new ways, and perhaps to pick up a little English and French; otherwise, they say, they should never get on. Franz went off from Altenahr on his journeyings four years ago next May-day, and before he went, **he brought me back a ring from Bonn**, where he bought his new clothes. I don't wear it now; but I have got it upstairs, and **it comforts me to see something that shows me it was not all my silly fancy.** I suppose he fell among bad people, for he soon began to play for money—and then he lost more than he could always pay; and sometimes I could help him a little, for we wrote to each other from time to time, as we knew each other's addresses; for the little ones grew around my father's hearth, and I thought that I, too, would go forth into the world and earn my own living, so that—well, I will tell the truth—I thought that by going into service, I could lay by enough for buying a handsome stock of household-linen, and plenty of pans and kettles against—against what will never come to pass now.” (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 376)

“Oh, yes; the bride furnishes all that is wanted in the kitchen, and all the store of house-linen. If my mother had lived, it would have been laid by for me, as she could have afforded to buy it; but my stepmother will have hard enough work to provide for her own four little girls. However,” she continued, brightening up, “I can help her, for **now I shall never marry**; and my master here is just and liberal, and pays me sixty florins a year, which is high wages.” (Sixty florins are about five pounds sterling.) “And now, good-night, sir. This cup to the left holds the tisane, that to the right the acorn-tea.” She shaded the candle, and was leaving the room. I raised myself on my elbow, and called her back. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 376-377)

“My shame and my reproach is this: I have loved a man who has not loved me”— she grasped her hands together till the fingers made deep white dents in the rosy flesh—“and I can't make out whether he ever did, or whether he did once and is changed now; if only he did once love me, I could forgive myself.” (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 374)

The letter was signed “Franz Weber,” and dated from some small town in Switzerland—I forget what—about a month previous to the time when I read it. It began with acknowledging the receipt of some money which had evidently been requested by the writer, and for which the thanks were almost fulsome; and then, by the quietest transition in the world, he went on

to consult her as to the desirability of his marrying some girl in the place from which he wrote, saying that this Anna Somebody was only eighteen, and very pretty, and her father a well-to-do shopkeeper, and adding, with coarse coxcombry, his belief that he was not indifferent to the maiden herself. He wound up by saying that, if this marriage did take place, he should certainly repay the various sums of money which Thekla had lent him at different times. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 375)

But, when Franz comes back, it seems that he wants to marry Thekla, because he hopes that she will come home with him. Moreover, the narrator thinks that Thekla is still in love with the young man.

“He is here. Yes, I am sure it is he; but four years makes such a difference in a man; his whole look and manner seemed so strange to me; but he knew me at once, and called me all the old names which we used to call each other when we were children; and he must needs tell me how it had come to pass that he had not married that Swiss Anna. He said he had never loved her; and that now he was going home to settle, and he hoped that I would come too, and” — There she stopped short. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 382)

I had been reflecting a good deal on Thekla’s story; I could not quite interpret her manner to-day to my full satisfaction; but yet, the love which had grown with her growth must assuredly have been called forth by her lover’s sudden reappearance; and I was inclined to give him some credit for having broken off an engagement to Swiss Anna, which had promised so many worldly advantages; and, again, I had considered that, if he was a little weak and sentimental, it was Thekla, who would marry him by her own free will, and perhaps she had sense and quiet resolution enough for both. So I gave the heads of the little history I have told you to my good friend and host, adding that I should like to have a man’s opinion of this man; but that, if he were not an absolute good-for-nothing, and, if Thekla still loved him, as I believed, I would try and advance them the requisite money towards establishing themselves in the hereditary inn at Altenahr.

Such was the romantic ending to Thekla’s sorrows I had been planning and brooding over for the last hour. As I narrated my tale, and hinted at the possible happy conclusion that might be in store, my host’s face changed. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 383)

However, Fritz Müller discovers that Franz is not a good person, and he thinks that the young man is not worthy of the inn servant. Therefore, the narrator believes that Thekla will not marry Franz, when she discovers how he behaves. Instead, the innkeeper thinks that she will continue to love him. Besides, he confesses that he is in love with Thekla.

“He is not worthy of her,” he said. “He drinks brandy right hard; he boasts of his success at play, and”—here he set his teeth hard—“he boasts of the women who have loved him. In a village like this, sir, there are always those who spend their evenings in the gardens of the inns; and this man, after he had drunk his fill, made no secrets. It needed no spying to find out what he was; else I should not have been the one to do it.”

“Thekla must be told of this,” said I. “She is not the woman to love any one whom she cannot respect.”

Herr Müller laughed a low, bitter laugh, quite unlike himself. Then he replied—

“As for that matter, sir, you are young; you have had no great experience of women. From what my sister tells me, there can be little doubt of Thekla’s feeling towards him. She found them standing together by the window—his arm round Thekla’s waist, and whispering in her ear; and, to do the maiden justice, she is not the one to suffer such familiarities from every one. No,” continued he, still in the same contemptuous tone, “you’ll find she will make excuses for his faults and vices; or else, which is perhaps more likely, she will not believe your story, though I who tell it you can vouch for the truth of every word I say.” (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, pp. 384-385)

“I ask your pardon, sir,” he began, “for troubling you afresh. I believe I was possessed by the devil this morning. I have been thinking it over. One has, perhaps, no right to rule for another person’s happiness. To have such a”—here the honest fellow choked a little—“such a woman as Thekla to love him ought to raise any man. Besides, I am no judge for him or for her. I have found out this morning that I love her myself; and so the end of it is, that if you, sir, who are so kind as to interest yourself in the matter, and if you think it is really her heart’s desire to marry this man—which ought to be his salvation both for earth and heaven—I shall be very glad to go halves with you in any plan for setting them up in the inn at Altenahr; only allow me to see that whatever money we advance is well and legally tied up, so that it is secured to her. And be so kind as to take no notice of what I have said about my having found out that I have loved her. I named it as a kind of apology for my hard words this morning, and as a reason why I was not a fit judge of what was best.” (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, pp. 385-386)

As the narrator had observed, the inn servant does not love Franz anymore, because he is not the same person she used to know. After a moment of hesitation, in which the inn servant thought that it was her moral duty to marry Franz, Thekla decides not to marry him, thanks in part to the Englishman’s advice. Therefore, she does not remain passive, because she does not submissively follow social conventions. Indeed, according to Foster (1985: 157), “here Gaskell punctures the false ideal of self-sacrifice which may motivate a woman”.

“But,” I said, “since you were here Thekla has come to me, and we have had a long talk. She speaks now as openly to me as she would if I were her brother; with sensible frankness, where frankness is wise—with modest reticence, where confidence would be unbecoming. She came to ask me if I thought it her duty to marry this fellow, whose very appearance, changed for the worse, as she says it is, since she last saw him four years ago, seems to have repelled her.”

“She could let him put his arm round her waist yesterday,” said Herr Müller, with a return of his morning’s surliness.

“And she would marry him now, if she could believe it to be her duty. For some reason of his own, this Franz Weber has tried to work upon this feeling of hers. He said it would be the saving of him.”

“As if a man had not strength enough in him—a man who is good for aught—to save himself, but needed a woman to pull him through life!”

“Nay,” I replied, hardly able to keep from smiling, “you yourself said, not five minutes ago, that her marrying him might be his salvation both for earth and heaven.”

“That was when I thought she loved the fellow,” he answered quick. “Now—— but what did you say to her, sir?”

“I told her, what I believe to be as true as gospel, that, as she owned she did not love him any longer, now his real self had come to displace his remembrance, she would be sinning in marrying him—doing evil that possible good might come. I was clear myself on this point; though I should have been perplexed how to advise, if her love had still continued.”

“And what answer did she make?”

“She went over the history of their lives. She was pleading against her wishes, to satisfy her conscience. She said that all along through their childhood she had been his strength; that, while under her personal influence, he had been negatively good; away from her, he had fallen into mischief”——

“Not to say vice,” put in Herr Müller.

“And now he came to her penitent, in sorrow, desirous of amendment, asking her for the love she seems to have considered as tacitly plighted to him in years gone by”——

“And which he has slighted and insulted. I hope you told her of his words and conduct last night in the ‘Adler’ gardens?”

“No; I kept myself to the general principle, which, I am sure, is a true one. I repeated it in different forms; for the idea of the duty of self-sacrifice had taken strong possession of her fancy. Perhaps, if I had failed in setting her notion of her duty in the right aspect, I might have had recourse to the statement of facts, which would have pained her severely, but would have proved to her how little his words of penitence and promises of amendment were to be trusted to.”

“And it ended?”

“Ended by her being quite convinced that she would be doing wrong instead of right, if she married a man whom she had entirely ceased to love, and that no real good could come from a course of action based on wrong-doing.”
(*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, pp. 386-387)

Consequently, Fritz Müller asks the inn servant to marry him, but she determinedly refuses his marriage proposal. By doing so, as Spina (1988: 87) underlines, Thekla affirms her dignity as a woman, and she claims the autonomy of her choices.

He had gone to her straight on leaving me; and, like a foolish, impetuous lover, had spoken out his mind and his wishes to her in the presence of his sister, who, it must be remembered, had heard no explanation of the conduct which had given her propriety so great a shock the day before. Herr Müller thought to reinstate Thekla in his sister's good opinion by giving her in the Fräulein's very presence the highest possible mark of his own love and esteem. And there in the kitchen, where the Fräulein was deeply engaged in the hot work of making some delicate preserve on the stove, and ordering Thekla about with short, sharp displeasure in her tones, the master had come in, and, possessing himself of the maiden's hand, had, to her infinite surprise—to his sister's infinite indignation—made her the offer of his heart, his wealth, his life; had begged of her to marry him. I could gather from his account that she had been in a state of trembling discomfiture at first; she had not spoken, but had twisted her hand out of his, and had covered her face with her apron. And then the Fräulein had burst forth—"accursed words," he called her speech. Thekla had uncovered her face, to listen—to listen to the end—to the passionate recrimination between the brother and the sister. And then she had gone up close to the angry Fräulein, and had said, quite quietly, but with a manner of final determination which had evidently sunk deep into her suitor's heart, and depressed him into hopelessness, that the Fräulein had no need to disturb herself; that on this very day she had been thinking of marrying another man, and that her heart was not like a room to let, into which as one tenant went out another might enter. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, pp. 388-389)

"Thekla! I owe you a great debt—let me speak to you openly! I know that your master wanted to marry you, and that you refused him. Do not deceive yourself! You are sorry for that refusal now?"

She kept her serious look fixed upon me; but her face and throat reddened all over.

"No," she said, at length; "I am not sorry. What can you think I am made of; having loved one man ever since I was a little child until a fortnight ago, and now just as ready to love another? I know you do not rightly consider what you say, or I should take it as an insult." (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 394)

However, at the end of the story, she decides to marry him. Even though from a sentimental point of view Thekla changes her opinion many times, she always shows that she chooses what she wants. Moreover, when her future husband asks her to tell the Englishman about their wedding, and he tenderly calls her "wilful" and "foolish", Thekla wrenches her hand out of Fritz's, and she adds decisively that the innkeeper is

even more foolish than her. So, it seems that Thekla wants to conclude the discourse by having the last word.

“Has she told you, sir?” said he, possessing himself of her hand, and looking all a-glow with happiness. “Hast thou told our good friend?” addressing her. “No. I was going to tell him, but I did not know how to begin.” “Then I will prompt thee. **Say after me—‘I have been a wilful, foolish woman’**” ——

She wrenched her hand out of his, half-laughing—“I am a foolish woman, for I have promised to marry him. But he is a still more foolish man, for he wishes to marry me. That is what I say.”

“And I have sent Babette to Frankfort with the pastor. He is going there, and will explain all to Frau von Schmidt; and Babette will serve her for a time. When Max is well enough to have the change of air the doctor prescribes for him, thou shalt take him to Altenahr; and thither will I also go, and become known to thy people and thy father. And before Christmas the gentleman here shall dance at **our wedding.**” (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 403)

As Rubenius (1950: 77-78) underlines, after *Mary Barton* and before *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, Gaskellian heroines' feelings were permanent. Indeed, in her first novel, Mary is not constant in her feelings, because the author did not want to create an unreal and idealised female protagonist (Rubenius, 1950: 78). Since for that reason Elizabeth Gaskell received many negative criticisms, she chose not to present again this kind of female protagonist (Rubenius, 1950: 77-78). However, after one of her daughters broke off her engagement, the author started to think that a woman was justified to act in that way in particular cases, and so she decided to propose again the inconstancy on the heroine's part in *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* (Rubenius, 1950: 78, 82). Moreover, after Thekla's discontinuous feelings Elizabeth Gaskell “never reverted to the conventional literary pattern which she had followed before the problem had assumed such a personal significance to her” (Rubenius, 1950: 80). In *Half a Lifetime Ago*, which was written before *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, Susan breaks off her engagement, but her story ends differently from Thekla's. Indeed, Rubenius (1950: 79) observes that “in the earlier stories where broken engagements had occurred, no change in the heroine's affections had been considered possible, and they were left to grow ‘wan and bitter’, only to find some happiness in their old age in the unselfish service of others”. Indeed, according to the traditional literary pattern of that time, a virtuous heroine never changed her affections, and therefore, after an unhappy love affair, she could not love other men (Rubenius, 1950: 79). But that was not the model Elizabeth Gaskell wanted her

daughter Meta to follow (Rubenius, 1950: 79-80). Indeed, after giving up her first lover, Thekla “is not faced with a long life of hopeless grief, but marries her faithful second admirer in the end” (Rubenius, 1950: 82).

2.2.3 MOTHERLESS FEMALE PROTAGONISTS

Rubenius (1950: 97) notes that in Elizabeth Gaskell’s works the “girls who assert independence do so only after their parents’ death”, and she uses as an example the female protagonist of *Right at Last*. Indeed, Margaret lives with her uncle and aunt, before she gets married. In the following example, the girl has not got her mother’s help for the household management, and she has not got her aunt’s help neither, because Professor Frazer and his wife were opposed their niece’s engagement. But Margaret assumes control of the situation without problems.

So it was rather with a heavy heart that she arranged their future ménage with Doctor Brown, unable to profit by her aunt’s experience and wisdom. But Margaret herself was a prudent and sensible girl. (*Right at Last*, pp. 281-282)

In *Half a Lifetime Ago*, Susan has both her parents at the beginning of the story, but shortly after she becomes an orphan. On the contrary, the female protagonist of *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* is just motherless. As a consequence, I argue that in these three Gaskellian short stories it is not important whether the female protagonists are fatherless or not. Indeed, it is the untimely death of their mothers that enables the reader to foresee that, without maternal support, they must fend for themselves. In particular, Susan assumes the responsibilities that her mother had in the family, and she becomes as a mother for her brother. Moreover, Susan even behaves harshly towards people other than William, because she has no maternal protection.

“Susan, lass, thou must not fret. It is God’s will, and thou wilt have a deal to do. Keep father straight if thou canst; and, if he goes out Ulverstone ways, see that thou meet him before he gets to the Old Quarry. It’s a dree bit for a man who has had a drop. As for lile Will”—here the poor woman’s face began to work and her fingers to move nervously as they lay on the bed-quilt—“lile Will will miss me most of all. Father’s often vexed with him because he’s not a quick, strong lad: he is not, my poor lile chap. And father thinks he’s saucy, because he cannot always stomach oat-cake and porridge.

There's better than three pound in th' old black tea-pot on the top shelf of the cupboard. Just keep a piece of loaf-bread by you, Susan dear, for Will to come to when he's not taken his breakfast. I have, may be, spoilt him; but there'll be no one to spoil him now." (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 282-283)

"Mother, I'll take tent of Will. Mother, do you hear? He shall not want ought I can give or get for him, least of all the kind words which you had ever ready for us both. Bless you! bless you! my own mother."

"Thou'lt promise me that, Susan, wilt thou? I can die easy if thou'lt take charge of him. But he's hardly like other folk; he tries father at times, though I think father'll be tender of him when I'm gone, for my sake. And, Susan, there's one thing more. I never spoke on it for fear of the bairn being called a tell-tale, but I just comforted him up. He vexes Michael at times, and Michael has struck him before now. I did not want to make a stir; but he's not strong, and a word from thee, Susan, will go a long way with Michael." (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 283)

She never spoke again coherently; but when her children and her husband stood by her bedside, she took lile Will's hand and put it into Susan's, and looked at her with imploring eyes. Susan clasped her arms round Will, and leaned her head upon his little curly one, and vowed within herself to be as a mother to him. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 284)

She was tender to lile Will when she was prompt and sharp with everybody else—with Michael most of all; for somehow the girl felt that, unprotected by her mother, she must keep up her own dignity, and not allow her lover to see how strong a hold he had upon her heart. He called her hard and cruel, and felt her so; and she smiled softly to herself, when his back was turned, to think how little he guessed how deeply he was loved. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 284)

In *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, the female protagonist explains to the Englishman that, since her mother had died, she decided to work in order to earn enough money to buy the necessary items required for a wedding. Therefore, Thekla assumed her mother's task.

"Oh, yes; and among inn-keepers, too," she said. "Most of the waiters at the great hotels in Frankfort, and Heidelberg, and Mayence, and, I dare say at all the other places, are the sons of inn-keepers in small towns, who go out into the world to learn new ways, and perhaps to pick up a little English and French; otherwise, they say, they should never get on. Franz went off from Altenahr on his journeyings four years ago next May-day, and before he went, he brought me back a ring from Bonn, where he bought his new clothes. I don't wear it now; but I have got it upstairs, and it comforts me to see something that shows me it was not all my silly fancy. I suppose he fell among bad people, for he soon began to play for money—and then he lost

more than he could always pay; and sometimes I could help him a little, for we wrote to each other from time to time, as we knew each other's addresses; for the little ones grew around my father's hearth, and I thought that I, too, would go forth into the world and earn my own living, so that—well, I will tell the truth—I thought that by going into service, I could lay by enough for buying a handsome stock of household-linen, and plenty of pans and kettles against—against what will never come to pass now.” (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 376)

“Oh, yes; the bride furnishes all that is wanted in the kitchen, and all the store of house-linen. If my mother had lived, it would have been laid by for me, as she could have afforded to buy it; but my stepmother will have hard enough work to provide for her own four little girls. However,” she continued, brightening up, “I can help her, for now I shall never marry; and my master here is just and liberal, and pays me sixty florins a year, which is high wages.” (Sixty florins are about five pounds sterling.) “And now, good-night, sir. This cup to the left holds the tisane, that to the right the acorn-tea.” She shaded the candle, and was leaving the room. I raised myself on my elbow, and called her back. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, pp. 376-377)

2.2.4 MARGARET AND SUSAN: BRAVE WOMEN

The female protagonists of *Right at Last* and *Half a Lifetime Ago* are heroines, because they do not surrender to life's hardships, but they bravely face them with vigour and determination (Spina, 1988: 87-88). They decide to react, even though they are aware of the fact that their choices will create suffer. Therefore, these two women courageously accept the consequences of their acts, which are not just firm decisions, they are real self-sacrifice. Susan and Margaret are women capable of dealing with problems, since they take responsibility not only for themselves but also for the lives of others. These two female protagonists act in this obstinate way, since it is their nature to follow what they think it is right.

In *Right at Last* Margaret deals with problems with great fortitude. She immediately faces the issue of stolen notes by asking Crawford to send for police.

“And after all,” she said with spirit, “it can't be gone far. Only last night, it was here. The chimney-sweeps—we must send Crawford for the police directly. You did not take the numbers of the notes?” ringing the bell as she spoke.

“No; they were only to be in our possession one night,” he said.

“No, to be sure not.”

The charwoman now appeared at the door with her pail of hot water. Margaret looked into her face, as if to read guilt or innocence. (*Right at Last*, p. 288)

Margaret's suspicions settled down yet more distinctly upon the chimney-sweeper; but he could not have gone far; the notes could hardly have got into circulation. Such a sum could not have been spent by such a man in so short a time; and the restoration of the money was her first, her only object. She had scarcely a thought for subsequent duties, such as prosecution of the offender, and the like consequences of crime. While her whole energies were bent on the speedy recovery of the money, and she was rapidly going over the necessary steps to be taken, her husband "sat all poured out into his chair," as the Germans say; no force in him to keep his limbs in any attitude requiring the slightest exertion; his face sunk, miserable, and with that foreshadowing of the lines of age which sudden distress is apt to call out on the youngest and smoothest faces.

"What can Crawford be about?" said Margaret, pulling the bell again with vehemence. "Oh, Crawford!" as the man at that instant appeared at the door. "Is anything the matter?" he said, interrupting her, as if alarmed into an unusual discomposure by her violent ringing. (*Right at Last*, p. 289)

"Oh, Crawford! I am afraid the sweep has got into your master's bureau, and taken all the money he put there last night. It is gone, at any rate. Did you ever leave him in the room alone?" (*Right at Last*, p. 289)

"How was it that he got into the bureau?" said Margaret, turning to her husband. "Was the lock broken?" (*Right at Last*, p. 290)

"At any rate, it is no use losing time in wondering now. Go, Crawford, as fast as you can, for a policeman. You know the name of the chimney-sweeper, of course," she added, as Crawford was preparing to leave the room. (*Right at Last*, p. 290)

Then, when she discovers that Crawford is the thief and that he is blackmailing her husband, she persuades Doctor Brown to prosecute the manservant. Margaret does not want the truth to be hidden, because she thinks that justice must be done. She is even ready to face a life full of struggles in order to bring the blackmailer to justice. The female protagonist shows moral and social courage, because "she persuades her husband to admit publicly his secret and brave the ensuing disgrace" (Foster, 1985: 156). So, she becomes the creator of her and her husband destiny.

Susan's feeble-minded brother needs her care, and she faces this problem with great courage, because she breaks off her engagement to Michael, who she loves very much. She is determined to take care of her brother, and therefore to keep the promise

that she made to her mother. So, Susan decides to sacrifice her romantic love, even if she knows that her life will be miserable, because she knows that it is the right thing to do (William is her family, and he is the most helpless). She chooses to follow the most arduous road with determination (she does not send her brother to a madhouse, and she does not marry Michael). Many scholars and critics believe that the female protagonist of *Half a Lifetime Ago* is a real heroine. Duthie affirms that *Half a Lifetime Ago* is “an unforgettable study of the quiet heroism of a Cumbrian ‘Stateswoman’” (1980: 194), and Sharps observes that “the essence of the tale is Susan’s quiet heroism in following her conscience, finely illustrated by the clap-bread episode” (1970: 248). Duthie also adds that “the incident was prophetic of the vigour and efficiency with which she was to run the farm for the sake of the brother” (1980: 134). Indeed, when Susan breaks off her engagement to Michael, she turns to making clap-bread.

And she turned into the house, with the intention of making ready some refreshment for Susan, after her hard day at the market, and her harder evening. But in the kitchen, to which she passed through the empty house-place, making a face of contemptuous dislike at the used tea-cups and fragments of a meal yet standing there, she found Susan, with her sleeves tucked up and her working apron on, busied in preparing to make clap-bread, one of the hardest and hottest domestic tasks of a Daleswoman. She looked up, and first met and then avoided, Peggy’s eye; it was too full of sympathy. Her own cheeks were flushed, and her own eyes were dry and burning.

“Where’s the board, Peggy? We need clap-bread; and, I reckon, I’ve time to get through with it to-night.” Her voice had a sharp, dry tone in it, and her motions a jerking angularity about them.

Peggy said nothing, but fetched her all that she needed. Susan beat her cakes thin with vehement force. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 311)

“This vital force and strength of will take, in the face of trouble and disaster, the form of a taciturn stoicism” and “such stoicism [...] often implies a remarkable courage” (Duthie, 1980: 133). But Susan is a brave woman even in other circumstances. As Wright (1995: 194-195) and Foster (1985: 165) underline, she shows strength of heart when she informs Michael’s widow and children of his death, and when she takes Michael’s family to live with her.

“He is at my house,” continued Susan, determined not to stop or quaver in the operation—the pain which must be inflicted.

“At your house? Yew Nook?” questioned Eleanor, surprised. “How came he there?”—half jealously. “Did he take shelter from the coming storm? Tell me,—there is something—tell me, woman!”

“He took no shelter. Would to God he had!”

“Oh! would to God! would to God!” shrieked out Eleanor, learning all from the woeful import of those dreary eyes. Her cries thrilled through the house; the children’s piping wailings and passionate cries on “Daddy! Daddy!” pierced into Susan’s very marrow. But she remained as still and tearless as the great round face upon the clock. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 325-326)

When she returned to Yew Nook, she took Michael Hurst’s widow and children with her to live there, and fill up the haunted hearth with living forms, that should banish the ghosts. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 327)

2.2.5 SUSAN AND THEKLA: WOMEN WORKERS

As Stoneman (1987: 46) observes, Elizabeth Gaskell’s work as a whole highlights working women like farmers, domestic servants, and so forth, and their “work is not seen primarily as a hardship [...] but as a means to self-sufficiency”. Two examples are the female protagonists of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*. The former is manager and later capable and successful owner of a farm, while the latter works as an inn servant. Stoneman (1987: 46) even asserts that Susan’s self-sufficiency is probably the most impressive example of all Gaskell’s writing, and Foster observes that *Half a Lifetime Ago* “explores female independence operating beyond the hegemony of patriarchal structures” (Foster, 1985: 114). Indeed, Susan inserts herself into the male sphere of work. “In portraying Susan as a successful farmer and respected local businesswoman, Gaskell suggests that successful and independent female activity should not be viewed only in terms of compensation for emotional impoverishment” (Foster, 1985: 115).

Half a lifetime ago, there lived in one of the Westmoreland dales a single woman, of the name of Susan Dixon. She was owner of the small farmhouse where she resided, and of some thirty or forty acres of land by which it was surrounded. She had also an hereditary right to a sheep-walk, extending to the wild fells that overhang Blea Tarn. In the language of the country she was a Stateswoman. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 278)

Yet those with whom she had dealings, in the way of selling her cattle or her farm produce, spoke of her as keen after a bargain—a hard one to have to do with; and she never spared herself exertion or fatigue, at market or in the field, to make the most of her produce. She led the hay-makers with her swift, steady rake, and her noiseless evenness of motion. She was about

among the earliest in the market, examining samples of oats, pricing them, and then turning with grim satisfaction to her own cleaner corn. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 279)

“Oh, yes; and among inn-keepers, too,” she said. “Most of the waiters at the great hotels in Frankfort, and Heidelberg, and Mayence, and, I dare say at all the other places, are the sons of inn-keepers in small towns, who go out into the world to learn new ways, and perhaps to pick up a little English and French; otherwise, they say, they should never get on. Franz went off from Altenahr on his journeyings four years ago next May-day, and before he went, he brought me back a ring from Bonn, where he bought his new clothes. I don't wear it now; but I have got it upstairs, and it comforts me to see something that shows me it was not all my silly fancy. I suppose he fell among bad people, for he soon began to play for money—and then he lost more than he could always pay; and sometimes I could help him a little, for we wrote to each other from time to time, as we knew each other's addresses; for the little ones grew around my father's hearth, and I thought that I, too, would go forth into the world and earn my own living, so that—well, I will tell the truth—I thought that by going into service, I could lay by enough for buying a handsome stock of household-linen, and plenty of pans and kettles against—against what will never come to pass now.” (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 376)

Moreover, Elizabeth Gaskell's working heroines contrast strongly with the doctrine that women's role is to please men, because she does not see beauty as an asset (Stoneman, 1987: 54). Indeed, a face or a body that is marked reveals a person who works hard. Therefore, the two female protagonists are described through their inelegant facial and corporal features. It almost seems that the author wanted to implicitly express their strength of character through their rude appearance. It is as though Elizabeth Gaskell had wanted to give the reader a glimpse of the female protagonists' inner appearance through their exterior.

Yes; the time had been when that tall, gaunt, hard-featured, angular woman—who never smiled, and hardly ever spoke an unnecessary word—had been a fine-looking girl, bright-spirited and rosy; and when the hearth at the Yew Nook had been as bright as she, with family love and youthful hope and mirth. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 280)

Susan was not yet thirty when this happened; but she looked a middle-aged, not to say an elderly woman. People affirmed that she had never recovered her complexion since that fever, a dozen years ago, which killed her father, and left Will Dixon an idiot. But besides her grey sallowness, the lines in her face were strong, and deep, and hard. The movements of her eyeballs were slow and heavy; the wrinkles at the corners of her mouth and eyes

were planted firm and sure; not an ounce of unnecessary flesh was there on her bones—every muscle started strong and ready for use. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 315)

She knew that her own skin was weather-beaten, furrowed, brown—that her teeth were gone, and her hair grey and ragged. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 324)

She was a tall young woman, with a fine strong figure, a pleasant face, expressive of goodness and sense, and with a good deal of comeliness about it too, although the fair complexion was bronzed and reddened by weather, so as to have lost much of its delicacy, and the features, as I had afterwards opportunity enough of observing, were anything but regular. She had white teeth, however, and well-opened blue eyes—grave-looking eyes which had shed tears for past sorrow—plenty of light-brown hair, rather elaborately plaited, and fastened up by two great silver pins. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 364)

The author described not only Susan and Thekla's aesthetic imperfection, but she also underlined their unusual physical strength.

She had always been strong and notable, and had been too busy to attend to the early symptoms of illness. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 282)

And she turned into the house, with the intention of making ready some refreshment for Susan, after her hard day at the market, and her harder evening. But in the kitchen, to which she passed through the empty house-place, making a face of contemptuous dislike at the used tea-cups and fragments of a meal yet standing there, she found Susan, with her sleeves tucked up and her working apron on, busied in preparing to make clap-bread, one of the hardest and hottest domestic tasks of a Daleswoman. She looked up, and first met and then avoided, Peggy's eye; it was too full of sympathy. Her own cheeks were flushed, and her own eyes were dry and burning.

"Where's the board, Peggy? We need clap-bread; and, I reckon, I've time to get through with it to-night." Her voice had a sharp, dry tone in it, and her motions a jerking angularity about them.

Peggy said nothing, but fetched her all that she needed. Susan beat her cakes thin with vehement force. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 311)

The movements of her eyeballs were slow and heavy; the wrinkles at the corners of her mouth and eyes were planted firm and sure; not an ounce of unnecessary flesh was there on her bones—every muscle started strong and ready for use. She needed all this bodily strength, to a degree that no human creature, now Peggy was dead, knew of; for Willie had grown up large and strong in body, and, though in general, docile enough in mind, but, every now and then, he became first moody, and then violent. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 315)

She believed that she fought her brother's battle in holding down those tearing hands, in binding, whenever she could, those uplifted restless arms, prompt and prone to do mischief. All the time she subdued him with her cunning or her strength, she spoke to him in pitying murmurs, or abused the third person, the fiendish enemy, in no unmeasured tones. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 316)

To his surprise, the reply she made was in a series of smart strokes across his shoulders, administered through the medium of a supple hazel-switch. "Take that!" said she, almost breathless, "to teach thee how thou darrest make a fool of an honest woman old enough to be thy mother. If thou com'st a step nearer the house, there's a good horse-pool, and there's two stout fellows who'll like no better fun than ducking thee. Be off wi' thee!" (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 318-319)

Into the brake—all snow in appearance—almost a plain of snow, looked on from the little eminence where she stood—she plunged, breaking down the bush, stumbling, bruising herself, fighting her way, her lantern held between her teeth, and she herself using head as well as hands to butt away a passage, at whatever cost of bodily injury. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 321)

Susan lifted him up with her wiry strength; he gave no help—no sign of life; but for all that he might be alive: he was still warm; she tied her maud round him; she fastened the lantern to her apron-string; she held him tight, half-carrying, half-dragging—what did a few bruises signify to him, compared to dear life, to precious life! She got him through the brake, and down the path. There, for an instant, she stopped to take breath; but, as if stung by the Furies, she pushed on again with almost superhuman strength. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 321-322)

How Michael Hurst got to Yew Nook no one but Susan ever knew. They thought he had dragged himself there, with some sore internal bruise sapping away his minuted life. They could not have believed the superhuman exertion which had first sought him out, and then dragged him hither. Only Susan knew of that. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 323)

She was a tall young woman, with a fine strong figure, a pleasant face, expressive of goodness and sense, and with a good deal of comeliness about it too, although the fair complexion was bronzed and reddened by weather, so as to have lost much of its delicacy, and the features, as I had afterwards opportunity enough of observing, were anything but regular. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 364)

"He is in the higher vineyard," said Thekla, quietly, but not looking round in that direction. "He will be some time there, I should think. He went with the pastor and his wife; he will have to speak to his labourers and his friends. My arm is strong, and I can leave Max in Lina's care for five minutes. If you are tired, and want to go back, let me help you down the steps; they are steep and slippery." (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 397)

Sometimes their strength is even compared to a man's. Indeed, in *Half a Lifetime Ago*, according to Bonaparte (1992: 215), the author transformed Susan into a male, and Stoneman (1987: 52) affirms that in *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* Elizabeth Gaskell compared the servant Thekla to a man.

Susan had been a **strong**, independent, healthy **girl**; a clever help to her mother, and a spirited companion to her father; **more of a man in her** (as he often said) than her delicate little brother ever would have. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 282)

She passed her arm under the pillow on which my head rested, and raised me a very little; **her support was as firm as a man's could have been**. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 367)

In *Half a Lifetime Ago*, the author did not stop the male comparison at physical strength, but, as Bonaparte (1992: 215) observes, at the market the female protagonist “prefers the male activities to the female”, and, it seems, she judges certain farm animals better than any man in her area.

She was regularly present in Coniston market with the best butter and the earliest chickens of the season. Those were the common farm produce that every farmer's wife about had to sell; but Susan, **after she had disposed of the more feminine articles, turned to on the man's side. A better judge of a horse or cow there was not in all the country round**. Yorkshire itself might have attempted to jockey her, and would have failed. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 318)

3. A STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE ITALIAN EDITIONS OF ELIZABETH GASKELL'S *HALF A LIFETIME AGO* AND *SIX WEEKS AT HEPPENHEIM*

Before translating *Right at Last* into Italian, I analysed *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* in order to identify the peculiar characteristics of Elizabeth Gaskell's narrative style that can be found in both short stories. Therefore, besides the strong female protagonist theme, which unites all three short stories, I identified three essential points: detailed description, frequent use of metaphors and similes, and use of literary dialect. I worked in that way in order to analyse which translation strategies the translators of the two short stories used to report the peculiarity of the Gaskellian style.

Before proceeding to the various stages of the analysis, I will provide a brief presentation of the two translators and their works. In 1988 *Half a Lifetime Ago* was translated into Italian for the first time by Marisa Sestito and it appeared with the title *Susan Dixon*. The translator is full professor of English Literature at the University of Udine. In 1995 she also translated Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* into Italian. Instead, Francesco Marroni is the translator of *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*. He translated the short story in 1989, with the title *Sei Settimane a Heppenheim*, and that was the first Italian version. The translator is full professor of English Literature at the Gabriele d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara. Besides, he is the Vice President of *The Gaskell Society* (UK) and his publications include books about Elizabeth Gaskell.

For my analysis of the English short stories, I took account of the widest collection of Elizabeth Gaskell's works, namely *The Works of Mrs. Gaskell in Eight Volumes*. This clarification is necessary, because the several editions may have been published with slight differences. Hence, it is possible that the Italian translators used an edition different from mine. Regarding the Italian versions, there are no problems, because so far there is only a single translation of both texts.

3.1 STRONG WOMAN

As already stated in the previous chapter, in *Half a Lifetime Ago* and in *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* Elizabeth Gaskell inserts two female protagonists who are simple (of humble origins), but strong. The translators almost always reported the female protagonists' strength with the same intensity found in the original texts. However, sometimes the Italian translations increased or reduced this characteristic. This is highlighted in the examples listed below.

“No,” I replied; “but you are well rid of such a fellow.”
She shook her head a little. “It shows his bad side, sir. We have all our bad sides. **You must not judge him harshly**; at least, I cannot. But then we were brought up together.” (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 375)

— No, — risposi, — però lei si è liberata di un tale soggetto.
Scosse un po' la testa. — La lettera rivela il suo aspetto negativo, signore. Noi tutti abbiamo dei lati negativi. **Non dobbiamo giudicarlo severamene** [*sic*]; almeno, io non ci riesco. E poi noi siamo cresciuti assieme. (*Sei settimane a Heppenheim*, p. 128)

Thekla, the inn servant, does not agree with the English traveller's idea about her childhood friend Franz and she has no qualms about disputing it by asserting the strength of her convictions. In the original text the subject is *you*, namely the English traveller; therefore Susan is prohibiting the man from judging Franz harshly. By contrast, in the Italian version there is a first person plural subject, and so it also includes Susan. However, in this way, Susan's expression does not fully express the strength of her character.

I had been reflecting a good deal on Thekla's story; I could not quite interpret her manner to-day to my full satisfaction; but yet, the love which had grown with her growth must assuredly have been called forth by her lover's sudden reappearance; and I was inclined to give him some credit for having broken off an engagement to Swiss Anna, which had promised so many worldly advantages; and, again, I had considered that, if he was a little weak and sentimental, **it was Thekla, who would marry him by her own free will**, and perhaps she had sense and quiet resolution enough for both. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, pp. 383-384)

Avevo riflettuto un bel po' sulla storia di Thekla. Non riuscivo a interpretare adeguatamente e con mia piena soddisfazione il senso del suo comportamento, eppure l'amore che era cresciuto con lei doveva sicuramente essere stato risvegliato dall'improvviso riapparire del suo

innamorato, ed io ero incline a dare a lui un qualche credito per avere rotto il fidanzamento con la ragazza svizzera, che pure prometteva così tanti vantaggi materiali. E ancora, avevo considerato che se lui era veramente un tipo un po' debole e sentimentale, **sarebbe stata Thekla a prendere l'iniziativa di sposarlo**, e forse lei aveva il buon senso e la ferma determinazione sufficienti per tutt'e due. (*Sei Settimane a Heppenheim*, p. 136)

The English traveller thinks that Thekla is a strong woman, especially compared to Franz. In the original text there is *free will*, while in the Italian version there is *prendere l'iniziativa*, 'take the initiative'. Both versions underline that it is more likely that it is Thekla who decides to marry Franz; however, the English text emphasises more that Thekla would do that as an autonomous choice.

Few strangers penetrated further than this room. Once or twice, wandering tourists, attracted by the lonely picturesqueness of the situation, and the exquisite cleanliness of the house itself, made their way into this house-place, and offered money enough (as they thought) to tempt the hostess to receive them as lodgers. They would give no trouble, they said; they would be out rambling or sketching all day long; would be perfectly content with a share of the food which she provided for herself; or would procure what they required from the Waterhead Inn at Coniston. But no liberal sum—no fair words—moved her from her stony manner, or her monotonous tone of indifferent refusal. No persuasion could induce her to show any more of the house than that first room; no appearance of fatigue procured for the weary an invitation to sit down and rest; and, if one more bold and less delicate did so without being asked, Susan stood by, cold and apparently deaf, or only replying by the briefest monosyllables, till the unwelcome visitor had departed. Yet those with whom she had dealings, in the way of selling her cattle or her farm produce, spoke of her as keen after a bargain—**a hard one to have to do with**; and she never spared herself exertion or fatigue, at market or in the field, to make the most of her produce. She led the hay-makers with her swift, steady rake, and her noiseless evenness of motion. She was about among the earliest in the market, examining samples of oats, pricing them, and then turning with grim satisfaction to her own cleaner corn. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 279)

Pochi forestieri riuscivano a oltrepassare quella stanza. Capitò una o due volte che dei turisti, attratti nei loro vagabondaggi dalla pittoresca solitudine e dall'estrema pulizia della casa, vi entrarono e offrirono denaro abbastanza (secondo loro) da tentare la proprietaria ad accoglierli come pensionanti. Non avrebbero recato alcun disturbo, dicevano; se ne sarebbero stati in giro tutto il giorno a passeggiare o a disegnare; sarebbero stati pienamente appagati di mangiare quello che mangiava lei; o si sarebbero procurati il necessario alla locanda di Waterhead a Coniston. Ma non vi erano somme generose o belle parole, che la potessero smuovere dal suo

atteggiamento gelido, o dal tono monotono e indifferente dei suoi rifiuti. Non vi era modo di persuaderla a mostrare altre parti della casa oltre quella prima stanza; non vi era segno di stanchezza che procurasse agli esausti un invito a sedersi e riposare; e se qualcuno, più audace e meno sensibile degli altri lo faceva spontaneamente, Susan restava lì in piedi, fredda e apparentemente sorda, o rispondendo a monosillabi sinché l'ospite sgradito se ne andava. Ma coloro che avevano delle relazioni commerciali con lei, che compravano il suo bestiame o i prodotti della fattoria, dicevano che aveva il senso degli affari, che **era un osso duro**; e non si risparmiava sforzi o fatiche, al mercato o nei campi, per ottenere il massimo dai suoi prodotti. Guidava i falciatori con i colpi rapidi e decisi del rastrello, con la regolarità silenziosa dei suoi movimenti. Era al mercato tra i primi, saggiando campioni d'avena, chiedendone il prezzo, e tornando poi con soddisfazione compiaciuta al suo cereale più mondo. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 200)

In this long description of Susan's strong and determined personality the translator decided to further emphasise such characteristics when she translated the English expression *a hard one to have to do with* as the metaphor *un osso duro*, which is often used in Italian and means a person who is almost impossible to convince.

"Don't be feared on me. You want your supper, and you shall have it; and don't you be feared on Michael. He shall give reason for every hair of your head that he touches—**he shall**." (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 288)

"Non aver paura di me. Non hai ancora cenato; adesso preparo; e non aver paura di Michael, perché dovrà render ragione di ogni capello che ti tocca... **proprio così**." (*Susan Dixon*, p. 208)

Both in the English and Italian version Susan reaffirms what she has just said. However, in the translation the reinforcing value created by the repetition of the auxiliary verb *shall* is softened. Indeed, in the original text Susan's discourse is more incisive.

Michael complained that she never had a word for him, or a minute of time to spend with him now; but she only said she must try, while there was yet a chance, to bring back her brother's lost wits. As for marriage in this state of uncertainty, she had no heart to think of it. Then Michael stormed, and absented himself for two or three days; but it was of no use. When he came back, he saw that she had been crying till her eyes were all swollen up, and he gathered from Peggy's scoldings (which she did not spare him) that Susan had eaten nothing since he went away. **But she was as inflexible as ever**.

"Not just yet. Only not just yet. And don't say again that I do not love you," said she, suddenly hiding herself in his arms. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 300)

Michael si lamentava di non aver più per sé né un attimo del suo tempo, né una sua sola parola; ma lei rispondeva soltanto che doveva tentare di recuperare il senno perduto del fratello, finché ve n'era ancora la possibilità. Al matrimonio, in quello stato di incertezza, non si sentiva di pensare. Allora Michael si infuriò e si assentò per due o tre giorni; ma non servì a niente. Quando tornò, vide che aveva gli occhi gonfi dal gran piangere; e dai rimproveri che Peggy non gli risparmiò, comprese che non aveva mangiato da quando se n'era andato via. **Ma l'inflessibilità di Susan non cambiò.** "Non ancora... solo non ancora. E non dire più che non ti amo!" disse, nascondendosi all'improvviso tra le sue braccia. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 219)

The translator kept the meaning of the English sentence, but she presented it in the negative form, turned the adjective into a noun and used a dynamic rather than a stative verb. In this way, in the Italian version the narrator seems a little surprised by Susan's inflexibility. Therefore, the translator emphasised how uncommon a determined behaviour like the girl's one is. Indeed, she does not change her mind, despite the pain.

"Thou wilt not bide in the same house with him, say'st thou? There's no need for thy bidding, as far as I can tell. There's solemn reason why I should bide with my own flesh and blood, and keep to the word I pledged my mother on her death-bed; but, as for thee, there's no tie that I know on to keep thee fro' going to America or Botany Bay this very night, if that were thy inclination. **I will have no more of your threats** to make me send my bairn away. If thou marry me, thou'lt help me to take charge of Willie. If thou doesn't choose to marry me on those terms—why, I can snap my fingers at thee, never fear. I'm not so far gone in love as that. But I will not have thee, if thou say'st in such a hectoring way that Willie must go out of the house—and the house his own too—before thou'lt set foot in it. Willie bides here, and I bide with him." (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 304)

"Non vuoi stare nella stessa casa con lui, dici? Non ce n'è bisogno, per quanto mi riguarda. Io ho gravi motivi per stare con la mia carne e col mio sangue, e mantenere la parola data a mia madre sul letto di morte; ma per quello che so, tu non hai una sola ragione per non andartene in America o a Botany Bay anche stanotte, se ti va. **Sono stufa delle tue minacce** per farmi mandar via il mio bambino. Se mi sposi, mi devi aiutare a badare a Willie. Se non ti va di sposarmi a queste condizioni... pazienza! Me ne infischio di te, sta' tranquillo. Non ti spasimo dietro fino a questo punto. Bada che non ti sposo se vieni a fare il gradasso e a dirmi che Willie deve andarsene da casa prima che ci entri tu — casa sua, poi. Willie sta qui, e io sto con lui." (*Susan Dixon*, p. 222)

The Italian expression *sono stufa delle tue minacce* indicates more Susan's impatience, while the original text stresses more the girl's determined stance towards Michael, whose behaviour she will not tolerate anymore.

The one **idea** of taking charge of him had deepened and deepened with years. It was graven into her mind as the object for which she lived. The sacrifice she had made for this object only made it more precious to her. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 316)

Quell'unica **determinazione** di prendersi cura di lui, si era andata rafforzando sempre più col passare degli anni. Le si era impressa nella mente come scopo della vita. Il sacrificio compiuto lo rendeva uno scopo ancor più prezioso. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 233)

The translator decided to translate the noun *idea* as *determinazione* in order to underline more how resolute Susan is.

She believed that she fought her brother's battle in holding down those tearing hands, in binding, whenever she could, those uplifted restless arms, prompt and prone to do mischief. All the time she subdued him with her cunning or her strength, she spoke to him in pitying murmurs, or abused the third person, the fiendish enemy, **in no unmeasured tones**. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 316)

Era convinta di combattere la battaglia del fratello, serrando tra le sue quelle mani devastanti, legando ogni volta che poteva quelle braccia alzate e senza pace, pronte e proclivi a far del male. Per tutto il tempo lo soggiogava con l'astuzia o con la forza, gli parlava in sussurri pietosi, oppure insultava **violentemente** quel terzo essere, l'avversario diabolico. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 233)

The English text demonstrates that Susan is a strong woman, since she is not discouraged and remains rational even in the hardest moments. In the English expression *in no unmeasured tones* there is a double negative, because there is a negative word (*no*) followed by an adjective with a negative prefix (*unmeasured*). Double negatives used to express negation were a normal part of English usage until some time after the 16th century and have then been widely used in English dialects (Oxford, 2017).

According to standard English grammar, a double negative used to express a single negative [...] is incorrect. The rules dictate that the two negative elements cancel each other out to give an affirmative statement [...].

Modern (correct) uses of the double negative give an added subtlety to statements: [...] [double negative] suggests reservations in the speaker's mind that are not present in its 'logical' equivalent (Oxford, 2017).

Instead, the translator decided to assign negative value to the English double negative. So, in this way, Susan addresses her brother more aggressively when he is victim of the fiendish enemy.

To his surprise, the reply she made was in a series of smart strokes across his shoulders, administered through the medium of a supple hazel-switch. "Take that!" said she, almost breathless, "**to teach thee how thou darest** make a fool of an honest woman old enough to be thy mother. If thou com'st a step nearer the house, there's a good horse-pool, and there's two stout fellows who'll like no better fun than ducking thee. Be off wi' thee!" And she strode into her own premises, never looking round to see whether he obeyed her injunction or not. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 318-319)

Con gran meraviglia si sentì rispondere con una scarica di frustate sulla schiena, assestate con l'aiuto di un flessibile ramo di nocciuolo. "Prendi questo!" disse quasi senza fiato, "**così impari** a farti beffe di una donna onesta, abbastanza vecchia da esser tua madre. Se fai ancora un passo avanti, bada che c'è l'abbeveratoio dei cavalli, e due bei tipi robusti che se la spasserebbero a buttartici dentro. Sparisci." E si allontanò sulla sua proprietà a passi decisi, senza voltarsi a guardare se ubbidiva o no alla sua ingiunzione. (*Susan Dixon*, pp. 235-236)

In the English text Susan emphasises her role of "teacher" towards a young man who is courting her, namely she teaches him a strict lesson in behaviour. Moreover, she highlights his insolence by using the verb *to dare*. Instead, the translator preferred to underline the young man's role of "pupil" and she eliminated the verb *to dare*. But, in this way, Susan's strong character slightly loses value.

But Susan was not one to be affrighted by the stony aspect of death.
(*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 322)

Ma non era la faccia rigida della morte che spaventava una come lei.
(*Susan Dixon*, p. 239)

The translator preferred to focus the attention on the person who performs the act. Therefore, the subject of the English text, who is affected by the act, became the object in the Italian version. However, in the translation Susan's centrality is lost, since the

girl's strength to be able to resist even the worst adversities is not highlighted as it should.

3.2 NARRATIVE STYLE

Elizabeth Gaskell's short stories are deeply realistic, because they are not characterised by the representation of an unrealistic perfection (Duthie, 1980: 18). Indeed, the realism of her works mainly derives from her acute power of observation of the world around her (in particular, her numerous trips were very helpful), but also from the extensive research she did before writing, because she derived information from history, from customs and traditions, and so forth (Spina, 1988: 8). Consequently, the author's style is essentially based on the precise representation of reality. The descriptions are not vague, but they are rich and accurate, because the writer wants to provide as much details and information as possible to the reader. The metaphors and the similes call to reader's mind clear and incisive images, which enrich the descriptions even more. Literary dialect intensifies the authenticity of the story, because it provides a plausible background (Spina, 1988: 7).

3.2.1 DESCRIPTION

Through the analysis of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* I noticed that Elizabeth Gaskell's writing is characterised by very detailed descriptions that make the stories more realistic. In particular, the descriptions often present very long sentences in which there are few strong pauses. The structure of these sentences is original, because the author frequently uses punctuation marks (except for the full stop, which on the contrary, is little used) and the conjunction *and*.

The translators tried to remain as faithful as possible to the original texts, and therefore they tried to keep this stylistic peculiarity. At times, though, they had to intervene in order to avoid a heavy prose and to make the texts flowing and clear for the Italian readers. In any case, they did not alter the texts radically. The following examples show the most significant changes.

It was a large building with a green court before it. A cross-looking but scrupulously clean hostess received me, and showed me into a large room

with a dinner-table in it, which, though it might have accommodated thirty or forty guests, only stretched down half the length of the eating-room. There were windows at each end of the room; two looked to the front of the house, on which the evening shadows had already fallen; the opposite two were partly doors, opening into a large garden full of trained fruit-trees and beds of vegetables, amongst which rose-bushes and other flowers seemed to grow by permission, not by original intention. There was a stove at each end of the room, which, I suspect, had originally been divided into two. The door by which I had entered was exactly in the middle; and opposite to it was another, leading to a great bed-chamber, **which my hostess showed me as my sleeping quarters for the night.** (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 363)

Si trattava di un grande edificio con un cortile tutto verde davanti. Mi ricevette una locandiera dall'aspetto severo, ma scrupolosamente pulita che mi fece accomodare in una grande sala; c'era un enorme tavolo da pranzo che, sebbene potesse accogliere trenta o quaranta ospiti, occupava solo la metà della lunghezza del salone. Ad ogni capo della stanza si aprivano delle finestre, due, sulle quali erano già scese le ombre della sera, che guardavano sul davanti della casa; le altre due, sul lato opposto, erano delle porte-finestre che si affacciavano su un vasto giardino pieno di alberi carichi di frutta e file di ortaggi, tra i quali i cespugli di rose e di altri fiori sembravano crescere più per un atto di magnanimità che per una scelta deliberata. C'era una stufa in ciascun capo della stanza che, credo, in origine doveva essere divisa in due. La porta attraverso cui ero entrato si trovava esattamente al centro, di fronte a un'altra che portava a una grande stanza da letto, **destinatami dalla padrona per la notte.** (*Sei Settimane a Heppenheim*, p. 116)

Her house is yet to be seen on the Oxenfell road, between Skelwith and Coniston. You go along a moorland track, made by the carts that occasionally come for turf from Oxenfell. A brook babbles and brattles by the wayside, giving you a sense of companionship, which relieves the deep solitude in which this way is usually traversed. Some miles on this side of Coniston there is a farmstead—a grey stone house, and a square of farm-buildings surrounding a green space of rough turf, in the midst of which stands a mighty, funereal umbrageous yew, making a solemn shadow, as of death, in the very heart and centre of the light and heat of the brightest summer day. On the side away from the house, this yard slopes down to a dark-brown pool, which is supplied with fresh water from the overflowings of a stone cistern, into which some rivulet of the brook before-mentioned continually and melodiously falls bubbling. The cattle drink out of this cistern. **The household bring their pitchers and fill them with drinking-water** by a dilatory, yet pretty, process. The water-carrier brings with her a leaf of the hound's-tongue fern, and, inserting it in the crevice of the grey rock, makes a cool, green spout for the sparkling stream.

The house is no specimen, at the present day, of what it was in the lifetime of Susan Dixon. Then, every small diamond pane in the windows glittered with cleanliness. You might have eaten off the floor; you could see yourself

in the pewter plates and the polished oaken awmry, or dresser, of the state kitchen into which you entered. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 278-279)

Si può ancora vedere la sua casa sulla strada che porta a Oxenfell, tra Skelwith e Coniston. Si passa nella brughiera, lungo un sentiero tracciato dai carri, che di tanto in tanto si rifornivano di torba a Oxenfell. Il bisbiglio gorgogliante di un ruscello fa compagnia e allevia il senso di profonda solitudine che di solito accompagna chi percorre quella strada. A poche miglia di distanza da Coniston vi è un casale — una grigia casa di pietra e un complesso di edifici che formano un quadrato intorno a uno spazio verde non coltivato, al cui centro si erge un imponente tasso frondoso e funereo che getta un'ombra solenne, come di morte, sul cuore ardente della più luminosa giornata estiva. Sul lato lontano dalla casa, il cortile declina verso uno stagno color bruno in cui affluisce l'acqua che trabocca da una cisterna di pietra, rifornita dai rivoli del ruscello di cui parlavo, che senza sosta vi si riversano gorgogliando melodiosamente. Le bestie si abbeverano alla cisterna, **la gente riempie le brocche di acqua potabile** con un sistema lento ma pieno di grazia. La donna che va a prendere l'acqua porta con sé una foglia di felce e, inserendola nella crepa della roccia grigia, ne fa una grondaia verde e fresca per lo zampillo scintillante.

La casa non riflette oggi giorno ciò che era al tempo di Susan Dixon. Allora, le finestre a piccoli rombi brillavano da quant'eran linde. Nella sala si poteva mangiare dal pavimento e ci si poteva specchiare nei piatti di peltro e nella madia, o credenza, di lucido legno di quercia. (*Susan Dixon*, pp. 199-200)

Elizabeth Gaskell's description is so thorough that sometimes it appears redundant in some places when translated into Italian. Therefore, in these two examples, the translators decided to avoid unnecessary repetitions, and consequently they made the Italian sentences more flowing. In the first case, *sleeping quarters* is removed, since *great bed-chamber* appears before it, and, in the second case, the translator omitted the verb *to bring* and only translated the verb *to fill*, because she thought that the information was superfluous. According to literary translation theory, though, these changes have a major impact on the style in the target text as readers are deprived of ways to fully realise how Gaskell wrote.

During the morning-hours the window through which the sun streamed—**the window looking on to the front court**—was opened a little; and through it I heard the sounds of active life, which gave me pleasure and interest enough. The hen's cackle, the cock's exultant call, when he had found the treasure of a grain of corn, the movements of a tethered donkey, and the cooing and whirring of the pigeons which lighted on the window-sill, gave me just subjects enough for interest. Now and then a cart or carriage drove up—**I could hear them ascending the rough village street**

long before they stopped at the “Halbmond,” the village inn. Then there came a sound of running and haste in the house; and Thekla was always called for in sharp, imperative tones. I heard little children's footsteps, too, from time to time; and once there must have been some childish accident or hurt, for a shrill, plaintive little voice kept calling out, “*Thekla, Thekla, liebe Thekla!*” (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 370)

Durante le ore del giorno, **la finestra che dava sul cortile** e da cui entrava il sole rimaneva leggermente aperta, e, attraverso di essa, sentivo i suoni della vita attiva, che mi davano piacere, risvegliando alquanto il mio interesse. Gli schiamazzi delle galline, il richiamo esultante del gallo che ha trovato il tesoro di un chicco di grano, i movimenti di un asino alla cavezza, il tubare e il frullare dei piccioni che si posano sul davanzale, erano per me soggetti abbastanza interessanti.

Di tanto in tanto si avvicinavano un barroccio o una carrozza. **Potevo udirli mentre salivano per la via sconnessa prima di fermarsi alla «Mezzaluna», la locanda del villaggio.** Poi tutta la casa risuonava dei passi frettolosi di chi accorreva, e Thekla veniva spesso chiamata con toni severi e di comando. Di tanto in tanto mi giungeva anche il rumore di passi di bambini; e una volta dovette essere accaduto un qualche incidente a un bambino, visto che una vocina acuta e lamentosa continuava a chiedere aiuto, — Thekla, Thekla, liebe Thekla —. (*Sei Settimane a Heppenheim*, p. 123)

The day had been keen, and piercingly cold. The whole lift of heaven seemed a dome of iron. Black and frost-bound was the earth under the cruel east wind. Now the wind had dropped; and, as the darkness had gathered in, the weather-wise old labourers prophesied snow. The sounds in the air arose again, as Susan sat still and silent. They were of a different character to what they had been during the prevalence of the east wind. Then they had been shrill and piping; now they were like low distant growling; not unmusical, but strangely threatening. Susan went to the window, and drew aside the little curtain. The whole world was white—**the air was blinded with the swift and heavy fall of snow.** At present it came down straight; but Susan knew those distant sounds in the hollows and gulleys of the hills portended a driving wind and a more cruel storm. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 320)

Durante il giorno il freddo era stato aspro e pungente. L'intera volta del cielo sembrava una cupola di ferro. Nera e serrata nel gelo era la terra spazzata dal furioso vento dell'est. Poi il vento si era calmato e quand'era calato il buio, i vecchi lavoranti che sul tempo la sapevano lunga, profetizzarono neve. Mentre Susan sedeva quieta e silenziosa, nell'aria di nuovo vi furono suoni. Ma erano diversi da quelli che s'eran sentiti mentre soffiava il vento dell'est. Allora erano stati acuti e penetranti, poi divennero una specie di cupo brontolio nella lontananza; non privo di una sua musicalità, ma stranamente minaccioso. Susan andò alla finestra e scostò la tendina. Tutto il mondo era bianco, **l'aria era accecata dalla neve che cadeva fitta e rapida.** In quel momento cadeva diritta, ma Susan sapeva

che i suoni lontani nei dirupi e nei burroni delle colline presagivano raffiche impetuose e un' ancor più violenta tempesta. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 237)

In the two examples, the three English portions in boldface are parenthetical phrases, namely interruptions placed within the sentences that provide additional information. Elizabeth Gaskell chose to use the dashes to introduce them in order to emphasise the fact that they are additional information. However, since these punctuation marks violently disrupt the flow of the sentences (Trask, 1997: 69), the translators decided to remove them in order not to fragment the text further. In the first case, the translator placed the additional information within the sentence, while, in the second case, he decided to insert a full stop and create a new sentence. In the third case, the translator replaced the dash with a bracketing comma, and so she transformed the strong interruption into a weak one (Trask, 1997: 21). Therefore, the translators managed to make the texts more flowing, even if they partially modified Gaskell's style.

There was the bare half of the room, it is true, looking as it had done on that first afternoon, sunless and cheerless, with the long, unoccupied table, and the necessary chairs for the possible visitors; but round the windows that opened on the garden a part of the room was enclosed by the household clothes'-horses, hung with great pieces of the blue homespun cloth of which the dress of the Black Forest peasant is made. **This shut-in space was warmed by the lighted stove, as well as by the lowering rays of the October sun. There was a little round walnut table with some flowers upon it, and a great cushioned arm-chair, placed so as to look out upon the garden and the hills beyond.** (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, pp. 378-379)

È vero, la stanza appariva per metà vuota, come già mi era sembrava in quel primo pomeriggio, senza sole e squallido, con il lungo tavolo sgombro e le sedie necessarie per gli eventuali avventori. Ma attorno alle finestre che si aprivano sul giardino, una parte della stanza era occupata dagli stenditoi per la biancheria di casa, pavesati con grandi pezze di panno blu tessuto a mano, con il quale vengono cuciti i vestiti degli abitanti della Foresta Nera.

Questo spazio circoscritto era scaldato dalla stufa come pure dai raggi declinanti del sole di ottobre. C'era un tavolinetto rotondo in noce con dei fiori e una grande poltrona imbottita disposta in modo da consentire la vista del giardino fino alle colline più in là. (*Sei Settimane a Heppenheim*, p. 131)

William and Margaret Dixon were rather superior people, of a character belonging—as far as I have seen—exclusively to the class of Westmoreland and Cumberland statesmen—just, independent, upright; not given to much speaking; kind-hearted, but not demonstrative; disliking change, and new ways, and new people; sensible and shrewd; each house-hold self-contained,

and its members having little curiosity as to their neighbours, with whom they rarely met for any social intercourse, save at the stated times of sheep-shearing and Christmas; having a certain kind of sober pleasure in amassing money, which occasionally made them miserable (as they call miserly people up in the north) in their old age; reading no light or ephemeral literature, but the grave, solid books brought round by the pedlars (such as the “Paradise Lost” and “Regained,” “The Death of Abel,” “The Spiritual Quixote,” and “The Pilgrim’s Progress”), which were to be found in nearly every house: the men occasionally going off laking, *i.e.* playing, *i.e.* drinking, for days together, and having to be hunted up by anxious wives, who dared not leave their husbands to the chances of the wild precipitous roads, but walked miles and miles, lantern in hand, in the dead of night, to discover and guide the solemnly-drunken husband home; who had a dreadful head-ache the next day, and the day after that came forth as grave, and sober, and virtuous-looking as if there were no such thing as malt and spirituous liquors in the world; and who were seldom reminded of their misdoings by their wives, to whom such occasional outbreaks were as things of course, when once the immediate anxiety produced by them was over. Such were—such are—the characteristics of a class now passing away from the face of the land, as their compeers, the yeomen, have done before them. **Of such was William Dixon. He was a shrewd clever farmer, in his day and generation, when shrewdness was rather shown in the breeding and rearing of sheep and cattle than in the cultivation of land.** (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 280-281)

William e Margaret Dixon erano gente di natura superiore, caratteristica — per quanto ne so — esclusivamente della classe dei proprietari terrieri del Westmoreland e del Cumberland: giusti, indipendenti, onesti; di poche parole; di buon cuore, senz’essere espansivi; ostili ai cambiamenti, alle nuove abitudini, alla gente nuova; intelligenti e sagaci; eran gruppi familiari riservati, privi di curiosità nei confronti dei vicini con cui avevano rare occasioni di incontri, oltre le ricorrenze stabilite della tosatura e del Natale; che manifestavano un certo gusto sobrio nell’ammassar denaro, che occasionalmente da vecchi li rendeva pittime (come chiamano gli avari su al nord); che non leggevano alcun tipo di letteratura leggera o effimera, anche se di libri seri e gravi, portati in giro dai venditori ambulanti (come *Paradiso Perduto* e *Riconquistato*, *La morte di Abele*, *Il Chisciotte spirituale*, e *Il viaggio del pellegrino*), se ne potevan trovare quasi in ogni casa; gli uomini che a volte se ne andavano in cimbali, ovvero a suonare, ovvero a bere per giorni di fila, cercati da mogli ansiose, riluttanti ad esporli ai rischi delle ripide strade selvagge, disposte a camminare per miglia e miglia nel cuore della notte con le lanterne in mano, per scovare e guidare verso casa i mariti solennemente ubriachi; che il giorno dopo accusavano un tremendo mal di testa, e il giorno dopo ancora comparivano con un’aria grave, sobria e virtuosa, quasi che non vi fossero al mondo cose come alcolici e liquori al malto; e a cui le mogli raramente ricordavano le loro malefatte, considerando questi sporadici sfoghi — dopo che la preoccupazione immediata che provocavano era scomparsa — come un

fatto normale. Tali erano — tali sono — le caratteristiche di una classe che sta scomparendo dalle campagne, com'è accaduto ai piccoli proprietari che li hanno preceduti.

William Dixon era uno di loro; un fattore esperto e sagace, per quel tempo e quella generazione, quando la sagacia si misurava sull'allevamento di pecore e mucche, piuttosto che sulla coltivazione della terra. (*Susan Dixon*, pp. 201-202)

In these two examples, the translators divided the text into two separate paragraphs. In the first case, the translator decided to do such division, because the first part of the text is about a general description of the room, while the second one is about a more specific description of a part of the same room. In the second case, the translator decided to isolate the part of the text that only describes William Dixon after the description of the class to which he belongs.

I rounded a corner in the pathway; **and** there I found Thekla, watching by little sleeping Max. He lay on her shawl; **and** over his head she had made an arching canopy of broken vine-branches, so that the great leaves threw their cool, flickering shadows on his face. He was smeared all over with grape-juice; his sturdy fingers grasped a half-eaten bunch even in his sleep. Thekla was keeping Lina quiet, by teaching her how to weave a garland for her head out of field-flowers and autumn-tinted leaves. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 397)

Oltrepassai la curva del sentiero e lì incontrai Thekla che badava al piccolo Max, che dormiva steso sul suo scialle. Sopra la testa del bambino lei aveva fatto una specie di baldacchino di tralci spezzati, cosicché le grandi foglie gettavano sul suo viso fresche e tremolanti ombre. Lui era tutto imbrattato di succo d'uva, le sue forti dita stringevano, ancora durante il sonno, un grappolo per metà mangiato. Thekla teneva buona Lina insegnandole a intrecciare una ghirlanda per la sua testa con i fiori di campo e le foglie dai colori autunnali. (*Sei Settimane a Heppenheim*, pp. 148-149)

When Susan, his daughter, was about seventeen, one Michael Hurst was farm-servant at Yew Nook. He worked with the master, and lived with the family, and was in all respects treated as an equal, except in the field. His father was a wealthy statesman at Wythburne, up beyond Grasmere; **and** through Michael's servitude the families had become acquainted, and the Dixons went over to the High Beck sheep-shearing, and the Hursts came down by Red Bank and Loughrig Tarn and across the Oxenfell when there was the Christmas-tide feasting at Yew Nook. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 281)

Quando Susan aveva circa diciassette anni, un certo Michael Hurst era un lavorante del Nido del Tasso. Lavorava col padrone e viveva con la famiglia; in tutto, tranne che nei campi, era trattato come un pari. Suo padre

era un ricco proprietario di Wythburne, più su di Grasmere; grazie all'apprendistato di Michael, le famiglie avevano fatto conoscenza, e i Dixon andavano a Rio del Monte per la tosatura, e gli Hurst scendevano per Red Bank e Loughrig Tarn, oltre Oxenfell, fino al Nido del Tasso, per le festività natalizie. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 202)

In these examples, there are three copulative conjunctions *and* preceded by a semicolon. Elizabeth Gaskell used this construction several times, but it is very uncommon in the Italian language. Therefore, the translators had to intervene many times in the texts in order to transform it. As regards the first case, the translator removed the punctuation mark and only used the copulative conjunction, while, in the second case, she rendered the English construction into a full stop. Instead, in the third case, the translator eliminated the copulative conjunction and only used the semicolon.

Right outside of the windows was, as I have so often said, the garden. **Trained plum-trees with golden leaves, great bushes of purple Michaelmas daisies, late-flowering roses, apple-trees, partly stripped of their rosy fruit, but still with enough left on their boughs to require the props set to support the luxuriant burden; to the left an arbour covered over with honeysuckle and other sweet-smelling creepers—all bounded by a low grey stone wall which opened out upon the steep vineyard that stretched up the hill beyond, one hill of a series rising higher and higher into the purple distance.** (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 380)

Proprio fuori dalle finestre c'era, come ho spesso accennato, il giardino. **Susini dalle foglie dorate tenuti con cura, grandi cespugli di margherite purpuree della festa di San Michele, rose tardive, meli in parte spogli dei loro frutti rosei, purtuttavia ancora con rami abbastanza ricchi di mele da richiedere bastoni capaci di reggere il loro lussureggiante carico. A sinistra una pergola ricoperta di caprifoglio e di altri rampicanti odorosi, il tutto delimitato da un muricciolo di pietra grigia che si apriva verso il ripido vigneto inerpicantesi su per la collina, la prima di una serie che si stagliavano sempre più alte sullo sfondo purpureo.** (*Sei Settimane a Heppenheim*, p. 133)

Susan was not yet thirty when this happened; but she looked a middle-aged, not to say an elderly woman. People affirmed that she had never recovered her complexion since that fever, a dozen years ago, which killed her father, and left Will Dixon an idiot. But besides her grey sallowness, the lines in her face were strong, and deep, and hard. The movements of her eyeballs were slow and heavy; the wrinkles at the corners of her mouth and eyes were planted firm and sure; not an ounce of unnecessary flesh was there on her bones—every muscle started strong and ready for use. **She needed all this bodily strength, to a degree that no human creature, now Peggy was dead, knew of; for Willie had grown up large and strong in body,**

and, though in general, docile enough in mind, but, every now and then, he became first moody, and then violent. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 315)

All'epoca non aveva ancora trent'anni, ma sembrava una donna di mezz'età, per non dire anziana. La gente diceva che la sua carnagione non era più stata la stessa, dopo quella febbre di dodici anni prima, che ne aveva ucciso il padre e reso idiota Will Dixon. Ma nel grigiore terreo del viso, anche i suoi lineamenti si eran fatti marcati, incavati e duri, lo sguardo lento e pesante, gli angoli della bocca e degli occhi, segnati da rughe indelebili; sulle ossa non v'era un'oncia di carne superflua, ogni suo muscolo scattava resistente e pronto per essere usato. **Tutta quella forza fisica le era indispensabile, e nessun essere umano, morta Peggy, poteva sapere sino a che punto: Willie infatti era cresciuto, aveva un corpo robusto e massiccio e una mente di solito abbastanza mansueta. Ma vi erano volte in cui prima diventava cupo e poi violento.** (*Susan Dixon*, pp. 232-233)

In each of these two examples, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote a long sentence that the translators decided to divide. In the first case, the translator interrupted the flow of the discourse with a full stop, because he thought that the sentence was too long. In the second case, the translator chose to create a new sentence in order to emphasise its content that is in opposition to the content of the previous sentence.

3.2.2. METAPHORS AND SIMILES

Figures of speech are deviations from the linguistic norm, expressive uses of language in which words are not used for their literal meanings but rather for some specific stylistic effect so as to produce mental images in the reader's mind (Dodds, 1985: 60).

Metaphors and similes often recur in Elizabeth Gaskell's writing. Metaphor is "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable" (Oxford, 2017). Therefore, metaphor establishes some kind of semantic equivalence through association of ideas (Dodds, 1985: 244-245). Simile is "a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind" (Oxford, 2017). So, simile, unlike metaphor, establishes some kind of semantic equivalence through actual comparison (Dodds, 1985: 244-245). These two figures of speech enabled the author to improve reader's understanding of what she was expressing, since they refer to simple and known realities. They enrich the already rich

Gaskellian description, because they evoke images, colours, sensations, and so forth that enable the reader to perceive the story more completely.

Fortunately, English and Italian are closely related languages, both linguistically and culturally, and therefore English metaphors and similes can nearly always be rendered in Italian without great problems (Dodds, 1985: 248). However, in some cases, the translators intervened in the text for different reasons. Some examples are given below.

After he left me, he took off coat and waistcoat, displaying his **snowy** shirt and gaily-worked braces; and presently he was as busy as anyone. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, pp. 395-396)

Dopo avermi lasciato, si tolse la giacca e il panciotto mostrando la camicia **bianca come la neve** e le bretelle allegramente ricamate, ed eccolo affaccendato non meno degli altri. (*Sei settimane a Heppenheim*, pp. 147-148)

In English, *snowy* is a metaphor used to indicate white colour. Indeed, it means *white like snow*. In Italian, the metaphor was not preserved with the adjective *nevoso*, but it was rendered into the related simile, and therefore into another figure of speech.

But no liberal sum—no fair words—moved her from her **stony** manner, or her monotonous tone of indifferent refusal. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 279)

Ma non vi erano somme generose o belle parole, che la potessero smuovere dal suo atteggiamento **gelido**, o dal tono monotono e indifferente dei suoi rifiuti. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 200)

In English, *stony* is a metaphor meaning *impassive*. Indeed, it means *hard like stone*. In Italian, the metaphor was not preserved with the adjective *pietoso*, and was not even rendered into the related simile *duro come la pietra*, but another metaphor was used, which is more common in Italian. The Italian metaphor means *cold like frost* and relates to the quality of being *impassive*, too.

For Susan was merely comely and fine-looking; Michael was strikingly handsome, admired by all the girls for miles round, and quite enough of a country coxcomb to know it and **plume himself** accordingly. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 284)

Difatti Susan era semplicemente graziosa e gradevole, mentre Michael era particolarmente attraente, ammirato da ogni ragazza per miglia intorno; e,

da quel bellimbusto di paese che era, lo sapeva e **se ne pavoneggiava** di conseguenza. (*Susan Dixon*, pp. 204-205)

In English, *to plume oneself* is a verb that means *to preen itself*, when it refers to a bird (Oxford, 2017). However, in this case, the meaning is not literal, but metaphorical, because the subject is human. Indeed, *to plume oneself* is used with the meaning of *to pride oneself*. The translator had to face this ambivalence, and she tried to render it in the Italian version through the verb *pavoneggiare*, which means *to strut like a peacock*. Indeed, in Italian, the image of the peacock spreading its plumed tail evokes the plumes, but especially vanity.

There's a mighty pretty girl comes to the dancing-class; but she is all **milk and water**. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 285)

Alle lezioni di ballo c'è una ragazza proprio graziosa; ma è tutta **lattemiele**. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 206)

Milk and water is a metaphorical phrase that means that *someone's suggestions or ideas are weak or sentimental* (Collins, 2017). The translator tried to keep the term *milk*, and translated the English expression as *lattemiele*. However, the Italian adjective indicates an *oversweet, sugary* person (Hazon, 2009: 2099). Therefore, in this case, she changed the figurative meaning of the original text.

He had the same **chord** of delicacy running through his mind that made his body feeble and weak. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 292)

Nella mente gli vibrava la stessa **corda** della sensibilità, che rendeva il suo corpo debole e fiacco. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 212)

The metaphor *chord* literally means *a string on a harp or other instrument* (Oxford, 2017). The translator decided to translate the English noun as *corda*, but, since the Italian noun is more generic, she decided to keep the musical analogy by introducing the verb *vibrare*.

Her voice had a sharp, dry tone in it, and her motions a jerking **angularity** about them. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 311)

Il timbro della voce era aspro e asciutto, i movimenti avevano un che di **angoloso** e contratto. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 229)

In this metaphor, the translator kept both the literal and the figurative meaning of *angularity*, but she preferred to replace the English noun with the equivalent Italian adjective.

There was one gratification which Susan felt was needed for the restoration of her mind to its more healthy state, after she had passed through **the whirling fever**, when duty was as nothing, and anarchy reigned; a gratification that, somehow, was to be her last burst of unreasonableness; of which she knew and recognised pain as the sure consequence. She must see him once more—herself unseen. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 313-314)

Dopo esser passata attraverso **il turbine della febbre**, quando il dovere non contava e regnava l'anarchia, rimaneva un unico piacere che Susan sentiva indispensabile al ripristino definitivo della sua salute mentale; un piacere che in certo modo doveva rappresentare l'ultimo scoppio di irrazionalità e da cui, lei lo sapeva bene, non poteva derivare che sofferenza. Doveva vederlo ancora una volta, senz'esser vista. . (*Susan Dixon*, p. 231)

In the English metaphor, *fever* is a noun, while *whirling* is a present participle used as an adjective. But, the translator decided to translate *whirling* as the equivalent Italian noun (*turbine*) and *fever* as a prepositional phrase.

And then she had gone up close to the angry Fräulein, and had said, quite quietly, but with a manner of final determination which had evidently sunk deep into her suitor's heart, and depressed him into hopelessness, that the Fräulein had no need to disturb herself; that on this very day she had been thinking of marrying another man, and that her heart was not **like a room to let**, into which as one tenant went out another might enter. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 389)

Poi lei salì al primo piano dall'adirata Fräulein, e disse con assoluta calma, ma con l'atteggiamento di chi ha già preso una decisione finale — il che evidentemente aveva ferito profondamente il cuore del suo innamorato privandolo dell'ultimo residuo di speranza — che la Fräulein non doveva disturbarci, che proprio quello stesso giorno lei aveva pensato di sposare un altro uomo, che il suo cuore non era **una stanza da affittare** nella quale, quando un occupante se ne va, può entrarne un altro. (*Sei Settimane a Heppenheim*, p. 141)

Susan clasped her arms round Will, and leaned her head upon his little curly one, and vowed within herself to be **as a mother** to him. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 284)

Susan lo strinse tra le braccia e appoggiò la testa sulla testolina ricciuta, e giurò a se stessa di essere **una madre** per lui. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 204)

In both the examples, there is an English simile that the translators decided to render into the equivalent metaphor, and therefore into another figure of speech.

I suppose I ate my supper, or tried to do so, at any rate; and I must have gone to bed, for days after I became conscious of lying there, **weak as a new-born babe**, and with a sense of past pain in all my weary limbs. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 365)

Credo di aver mangiato la mia minestra, o di aver tentato di farlo, ad ogni buon conto; e dovetti essere andato a letto, perché giorni dopo mi resi conto di giacere lì, **debole come un neonato** e con un forte indolenzimento diffuso per le membra esauste. (*Sei Settimane a Heppenheim*, p. 118)

The translator translated the English simile, but he considered that the expression *new-born babe* was repetitive. Consequently, the translator removed the English noun, and he translated the English adjective as *neonato*, namely as the equivalent Italian noun.

Her eyes never flash like yours when you're put out; why, I can see them flame across the kitchen **like a cat's in the dark**. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 285)

I suoi occhi non mandano lampi come i tuoi quando ti arrabbi; pensa che riesco a vederli sfolgorare attraverso la cucina, **come gli occhi di un gatto nel buio**. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 206)

In this example, the translator kept the simile, but she had to add the object that belongs to the cat, since only in English it can be unexpressed thanks to the presence of the Saxon genitive. Anyway, the translator preferred to repeat the noun *occhi*, instead of using the substitute pronoun (*quelli*).

But she remained **as still and tearless as the great round face upon the clock**. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 326)

Ma non pianse; rimase **immobile come il quadrante del grande orologio tondo**. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 242)

In the English text, there is a simile that compares two adjectives (*still, tearless*), which are referred to Susan, to *the great round face upon the clock*. In this case, the translator decided to change the original text in many places. First of all, she replaced the second adjective from the simile with a separate sentence (*Ma non pianse*), since *tearless* is not

a characteristic of the compared object. Then, the translator preferred to move the reference of the adjectives *great* and *round* from *face* to *clock*.

“He was fast at the ‘Adler’; he could not pay his score; so he kept on staying here, saying that he should receive a letter from a friend with money in a day or two; lying in wait, too, for Thekla, who is well-known and respected all through Heppenheim: so his being an old friend of hers made him have a kind of standing. I went in this morning and paid his score, on condition that he left the place this day; and he left the village **as merrily as a cricket**, caring no more for Thekla than for the Kaiser who built our church; for he never looked back at the ‘Halbmond’, but went whistling down the road.” (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, pp. 391-392)

— Era fermo all’«Aquila», e non poteva saldare il conto, così continuava a rimanere dicendo che avrebbe ricevuto una lettera da un amico con il denaro, entro un giorno o due. Rimaneva anche per incontrare Thekla che è conosciuta e rispettata in tutta Heppenheim, per cui, il semplice fatto di essere un suo vecchio amico ha procurato a Franz Weber una specie di buona reputazione. Sono andato questa mattina a pagare il suo conto in sospeso, a condizione che se ne andasse oggi stesso. E lui ha lasciato il villaggio **felice come un grillo**, mostrando un interesse per Thekla non più grande che per il Kaiser che fece innalzare la nostra chiesa: infatti non si è mai voltato a guardare la «Mezzaluna», ma se ne è andato fischiettando lungo la strada. (*Sei settimane a Heppenheim*, pp. 143-144)

In the English text, there is a simile that the translator tried to keep in Italian, but he preferred to translate the English adverb *merrily* as the equivalent Italian adjective *felice*.

Where the wind had drifted the snow on one side, and the road was clear and bare, she rode, and rode fast; where the soft, deceitful heaps were massed up, she dismounted and led her steed, plunging in deep, with fierce energy, the pain at her heart urging her onwards with **a sharp, digging spur**. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 323-324)

Dove il vento aveva spazzato la neve di lato, lasciando la strada libera e sgombra, cavalcava — e cavalcava in fretta; dove erano ammassati i soffici cumuli insidiosi, smontava e conduceva il cavallo, sprofondando nella neve, avanzando con energia feroce, mentre la pena che aveva in cuore la incalzava **affondando il suo sperone acuminato**. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 240)

In this English metaphor, the translator preferred to turn *digging*, which is an –ing form used as an adjective, into a gerund. Moreover, she decided to insert the possessive adjective (*suo*), which was not present in the original text.

3.2.3 LITERARY DIALECT

In order to increase the realism of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, Elizabeth Gaskell made use of dialect in her dialogues, even if in a restricted way (Görlach, 1999: 33). Dialect is a variety of language shared by a defined subset of the speech community that linguistically differs from others and that corresponds to geographical, class or other divisions of society (Leech and Short, 2007: 134). She used literary dialect, “in which the majority of the text is in Standard English, but the speech of some characters is represented as dialectal” (Beal, 2006: 82). She “tended to use Standard English for the authorial voice, but used dialect as a marked variety to represent the speech of certain rural and/or lower-class characters” (Beal, 2014: 191). Indeed, the characters who use dialect are identified from the geographical point of view¹, but, above all, from the social one (low status: uneducated and/or working class people). In this way, the author gave “the reader a flavour of the dialect without making it inaccessible” (Beal, 2006: 88), because the dialect is recognisable as such and the texts are not difficult to read (Beal, 2006: 82). 19th-century writers used some devices to convey dialect: semi-phonetic spelling, eye-dialect, allegro speech respellings and regionalisms (Beal, 2006: 88-89). Semi-phonetic spelling is “the use of non-standard spellings to indicate regional or non-standard pronunciations” (Beal, 2006: 116). Eye-dialect is

a device used in [...] literary dialect when the author wishes to give an impression of non-standard and/or uneducated speech. The form represents a pronunciation that would be common in most accents, including RP [Received Pronunciation], but that gives an impression of uneducated usage because of deviant spelling (Beal, 2006: 113).

Allegro speech respelling is “a type of spelling used in [...] literary dialect to represent the way words tend to be shortened when we speak quickly” (Beal, 2006: 111).

¹ It is important to underline the fact that *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* is narrated by an Englishman. He tells the story that happened to him in Germany and he himself explains that most dialogues occurred in German thanks to his fair knowledge of that language. Nevertheless, in order to allow the English reader to understand the speeches between characters, the narrator did not reproduce them in German, but he wrote them in English. It is precisely in some of these dialogues that it can be noted the presence of English dialect features. Their presence makes it possible to perceive that there were German dialect features in the original dialogues.

Regionalism is “the use in [...] literary dialect of a word or grammatical construction that is associated with a regional dialect” (Beal, 2006: 115). Elizabeth Gaskell used dialect when the speaker wants to give more expressiveness to his/her discourse in order to establish a more direct relation with the interlocutor. Indeed, dialect features often increase the immediacy of the discourse. In particular, the writer used *thou*, *thee* and *thy*, which are the second person singular pronouns and possessive determiner, only in informal situations and when the speaker is equal or superior to the interlocutor (from family, work, and so forth point of view).

Thee and *thou* were used in earlier English [...] to address someone either inferior to, or very well known to, the speaker. This went out of use in Standard English around 1700, but it is still found in some dialects (Beal, 2006: 23).

Before analysing some examples, I summarized the dialect features that I identified in the dialogues of both texts in the table below. For my analysis I used *Oxford*, *Collins* and *Chambers* online dictionaries and *The English Dialect Dictionary*.

Dialect features	Word classes	Meanings
'a	Pronoun	<i>Ya</i> (non-standard spelling of <i>you</i> , used to represent informal pronunciation)
'em	Pronoun	<i>Them</i>
'lt	Verb	<i>Shalt/wilt</i> (archaic second person singular of <i>shall/will</i>)
'st	Verb	<i>Hast</i> (archaic second person singular present of <i>have</i>)
<i>Afear'd</i>	Adjective	<i>Afraid</i>
<i>Bairn</i>	Noun	<i>Child</i>

<i>Bide</i>	Verb	<i>Remain</i>
<i>Bonny</i>	Adjective	(Of a baby) <i>plump and healthy-looking</i>
<i>Com'st</i>	Verb	<i>Comest</i> (archaic second person singular of <i>come</i>)
<i>Dree</i>	Adjective	<i>Dreary</i>
<i>Easy</i>	Adverb	<i>Easily</i>
<i>Fro'</i>	Preposition	<i>From</i>
<i>Ha'</i>	Verb	<i>Have</i>
<i>Lass</i>	Noun	<i>Girl</i>
<i>Lile</i>	Adjective	<i>Little</i>
<i>Na'</i>	Adverb	<i>Not</i>
<i>Ne'er</i>	Adverb	<i>Never</i>
<i>Nor</i>	Preposition	<i>Than</i>
<i>O'</i>	Preposition	<i>Of</i>
<i>Say'st</i>	Verb	<i>Sayest</i> (archaic second person singular of <i>say</i>)
<i>Should'st</i>	Verb	<i>Shouldest</i> (archaic second person singular of <i>should</i>)
<i>Sin'</i>	Preposition	<i>Since</i>
<i>Th'</i>	Determiner	<i>The</i>
<i>Thee</i>	Pronoun	<i>You</i> (as the singular object of a verb or preposition)

<i>Thou</i>	Pronoun	<i>You</i> (as the singular subject of a verb)
<i>Thy</i>	Possessive determiner	<i>Your</i>
<i>Wi'</i>	Preposition	<i>With</i>
<i>Ye</i>	Pronoun	<i>You</i>
<i>Yon</i>	Determiner	<i>That</i>

The translator does not have to try to render the dialect as such into the target language, but he/she has to try to render the function that dialect performs in the source text (Morini, 2007: 207) in order to give the reader an impression as similar as possible to that given to the reader of the original text. As regards the Italian translations of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, the loss of the geographical factor is inevitable. Indeed, the insertion of an Italian dialect would have caused geographical confusion, because “rendering [source language] dialect by [target language] dialect runs the risk of creating unintended effects” (Hatim and Mason, 2013: 41). As for the social function, the translators tried to render it by other means whenever possible. They intervened in morphosyntax, in spelling and in lexicon by using incorrect verb moods, wrong agreements, syntactically incorrect sentences, elisions and apocopes, lexical errors, expressions of the colloquial language, and so forth, because those who use dialect are usually assumed to have received a lower education than those who only speaks Standard English. This can be verified by the examples given below.

“Susan, **lass**, **thou** must not fret. It is God’s will, and **thou** wilt have a deal to do. Keep father straight if **thou** canst; and, if he goes out Ulverstone ways, see that **thou** meet him before he gets to the Old Quarry. It’s a **dree** bit for a man who has had a drop. As for **lile** Will”—here the poor woman’s face began to work and her fingers to move nervously as they lay on the bed-quilt—“**lile** Will will miss me most of all. Father’s often vexed with him because he’s not a quick, strong lad: he is not, my poor **lile** chap. And father thinks he’s saucy, because he cannot always stomach oat-cake and porridge. There’s better than three pound in **th’** old black tea-pot on the top shelf of the cupboard. Just keep a piece of loaf-bread by you, Susan dear, for Will to come to when he’s not taken his breakfast. I have, may be, spoilt

him; but there'll be no one to spoil him now." (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 282-283)

"Susan, **ragazza mia**, non ti crucciare. È la volontà di Dio, e avrai tanto da fare. Se puoi, fai rigar diritto tuo padre, e se se ne va dalle parti di Ulverstone, **fa'** in modo di raggiungerlo prima che arrivi alla Cava Vecchia. È un brutto pezzo di strada per un uomo che ha bevuto un goccio. Riguardo al piccolo Will" — il viso della povera donna cominciò a contrarsi, le sue dita abbandonate sulla trapunta, a muoversi nervosamente — "il piccolo Will sentirà la mia mancanza più di tutti. Tuo padre si arrabbia spesso con lui perché non è un ragazzo sveglio e robusto; no, non lo è, povero il mio **bambinello**. E tuo padre crede che sia insolente perché non sempre riesce a mandar giù la focaccia e la minestra. Nella vecchia teiera nera sull'ultimo ripiano della credenza ci sono più di tre sterline. Susan mia, cerca di aver sempre un pezzo di pane, a portata di mano, così Will può mangiarlo se non ha fatto colazione. Forse l'ho viziato; ma adesso non ci sarà più nessuno a vizziarlo." (*Susan Dixon*, p. 203)

Susan's mother is heartbrokenly speaking to her daughter, to whom she delegates the great responsibility of the future of their family. In the Italian text, *lass* was translated as *ragazza mia*. The translator decided to add the possessive determiner, which is absent in the original version, because the expression *ragazza mia* is typical of the colloquial language and, in that way, she also underlined the close relation between the mother and her daughter. Besides, the translator decided to use an apocope of the imperative *fai* in order to make the discourse more immediate. Finally, she replaced *lile Will* with *bambinello*, which is a colloquial term of endearment that underlines the close relation between the mother and her son.

"**Thou'lt** promise me that, Susan, wilt **thou**? I can die **easy** if **thou'lt** take charge of him. But he's hardly like other folk; he tries father at times, though I think father'll be tender of him when I'm gone, for my sake. And, Susan, there's one thing more. I never spoke on it for fear of the **bairn** being called a tell-tale, but I just comforted him up. He vexes Michael at times, and Michael has struck him before now. I did not want to make a stir; but he's not strong, and a word from **thee**, Susan, will go a long way with Michael." (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 283)

"Me lo prometti, Susan? Posso morire **tranquilla**, se **a lui ci** pensi tu. Non è come gli altri ragazzi; certe volte fa perder la pazienza a tuo padre, ma credo che gli vorrà bene per amor mio, quando non ci sarò più. Susan, c'è un'altra cosa. Il **piccolo** aveva paura che dicessero che faceva la spia, e così non ne ho mai parlato, l'ho consolato e basta. Certe volte fa arrabbiare Michael e lui lo picchia. Non volevo far venir fuori una baruffa; ma non è un bambino

robusto e una tua parola, Susan, può far molto con Michael." (*Susan Dixon*, p. 204)

Susan's mother is addressing her daughter again, highlighting her concern about her son Willie who is the weakest member of the family. The translator chose not to render *easy* into the adverb *tranquillamente*, but to use the colloquial *tranquilla*. Then, she decided to use two consecutive pronouns with the same grammatical function (*a lui* and *ci*). Even though this repetition is not correct according to Italian grammar, it is often used at the colloquial level to underline more the indirect object. Finally, she translated *bairn* as the noun *piccolo*, which is normally used in the colloquial language and also helps the Italian reader to better understand that Willie needs protection.

"His father's his father, and there is nought more to be said. But if he did burn **thee**, it was by accident, and not **o'** purpose, as **thou** kicked him; it's a mercy if his ribs are not broken." (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 286)

"Suo padre è suo padre, e non c'è altro da dire. Ma se **t'**ha bruciato è stato per caso, non apposta come te che l'hai preso a calci; è una fortuna che non gli hai spezzato le costole." (*Susan Dixon*, pp. 206-207)

Susan is speaking to Michael Hurst, her close friend. The girl is angry with him, because she does not excuse his bad behaviour towards her brother, while she defends Willie for what he did. The translator chose to write the pronoun *ti* in the elided form underlining the immediacy of the message.

"He howls loud enough, I'm sure. I might **ha'** kicked many a lad twice as hard, and they'd **ne'er ha'** said ought but 'damn **ye**;' but **yon** lad must needs cry out like a stuck pig if one touches him;" replied Michael, sullenly. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 286)

"Con gli urli non scherza di sicuro! Ce n'è di ragazzi che si sarebbero presi calci anche due volte più forti, senza dire altro che '**va'** al diavolo'; ma **quello là** deve gridare come un maiale scannato se uno lo tocca," rispose Michael di malumore. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 207)

Michael is angry with Willie and he is addressing Susan in order to emphasise the fact that the boy misbehaved. In the Italian translation, the agreement between *ragazzi* (third person plural subject) and *è* (third person singular predicate) is wrong. In the second highlighted case, the translator decided to use an apocope of the imperative *vai* in order to make the discourse more immediate. Finally, she translated *yon lad* as the colloquial

expression *quello là*. In that way, the translator underlined the pejorative way with which Michael refers to Willie.

“Come, lad! come lad!” said she anxiously. “Be a man. It was not much that I saw. Why, when first the red cow came she kicked me far harder for offering to milk her before her legs were tied. See **thee**! here’s a peppermint-drop, and I’ll make thee a pasty to-night; only don’t give way so, for it hurts me sore to think that Michael has done thee any harm, my pretty.” (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 287)

"Su, su," disse lei ansiosamente. "Sii uomo. Da quello che ho visto, non è proprio stato granché. Senti, i primi tempi che c'era la vacca rossa, mi ha scalciato molto più forte di così perché volevo mungerla senza legarle le zampe. Eccoti qua una caramella di menta, e stasera ti cucino un pasticcio; solo non lasciarti andare così, mi fa un gran male pensare che Michael ti ha fatto qualcosa, piccolo mio." (*Susan Dixon*, p. 207)

Susan is speaking to her brother, because she wants to encourage him to overcome his difficult time. From a logical point of view, the subject of the predicate *ha scalciato* is *la vacca rossa*, but from a syntactic point of view the subject is missing. Therefore, this example shows a syntactically incorrect structure.

“I never will let **thee** go, lad. Never! There’s no knowing where they would take thee to, or what they would do with thee. As it says in the Bible, ‘Nought but death shall part **thee** and me!’” (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 303)

"Non ti lascerò mai andare, **bambino mio**. Mai! Chissà dove ti porterebbero, cosa ti farebbero. Come dice la Bibbia, ‘Nulla potrà separarci, tranne la morte!’" (*Susan Dixon*, p. 222)

Susan is addressing Willie, because she wants to reassure him. The translator added the possessive determiner *mio* to the noun *bambino*. This Italian expression is used in the colloquial language.

“Thou wilt not **bide** in the same house with him, **say’st** thou? There’s no need for **thy biding**, as far as I can tell. There’s solemn reason why I should **bide** with my own flesh and blood, and keep to the word I pledged my mother on her death-bed; but, as for **thee**, there’s no tie that I know on to keep **thee fro’** going to America or Botany Bay this very night, if that were **thy** inclination. I will have no more of your threats to make me send my **bairn** away. If thou marry me, thou’**lt** help me to take charge of Willie. If **thou** doesn’t choose to marry me on those terms—why, I can snap my fingers at thee, never fear. I’m not so far gone in love as that. But I will not have thee, if thou **say’st** in such a hectoring way that Willie must go out of

the house—and the house his own too—before thou'**It** set foot in it. Willie **bides** here, and I **bide** with him.'" (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 304)

"Non vuoi stare nella stessa casa con lui, dici? Non ce n'è bisogno, per quanto mi riguarda. Io ho gravi motivi per stare con la mia carne e col mio sangue, e mantenere la parola data a mia madre sul letto di morte; ma per quello che so, tu non hai una sola ragione per non andartene in America o a Botany Bay anche stanotte, se ti va. Sono stufa delle tue minacce per farmi mandar via il mio bambino. Se mi sposi, mi devi aiutare a badare a Willie. Se non ti va di sposarmi a queste condizioni... pazienza! Me ne infischio di te, **sta'** tranquillo. Non ti spasio dietro fino a questo punto. Bada che non ti sposo se vieni a fare il gradasso e a dirmi che Willie deve andarsene da casa prima che ci entri tu — casa sua, poi. Willie sta qui, e io sto con lui." (*Susan Dixon*, p. 222)

Susan is angrily speaking to Michael, who is her future husband at the moment. The girl is angry with him, because he does not understand the indissoluble bond that there is between her and her brother. Even in this example, the translator made the discourse more immediate by using an apocope of an imperative mood verb (*sta'*).

"At Thomas Applethwaite's, in Langdale. They had a kind of harvest-home; and he were there among the young folk, and very thick **wi'** Nelly Hebthwaite, old Thomas's niece. **Thou'It** have to look after him a bit, Susan!" (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 307)

"Da Thomas Applethwaite, a Langdale. C'era una specie di festa della mietitura, e c'era anche lui tra i giovani, tutto preso da Nelly Hebthwaite, la nipote del vecchio Thomas. Devi **stargli** un po' **dietro**, Susan!" (*Susan Dixon*, p. 225)

A neighbour is giving Susan a warning and she advises her to take care of Michael. The expression *stargli dietro* is typical of the colloquial language.

"**Lass!**" said Peggy solemnly, "thou hast done well. It is not long to **bide**, and then the end will come." (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 311)

"**Ragazza mia!**" disse Peggy solennemente, "hai fatto bene. C'è solo un po' da aspettare, e poi viene la fine." (*Susan Dixon*, p. 229)

Peggy, the Dixon family's old servant, is addressing Susan in order to comfort her after the intense argument she had with Michael. Even in this case, the translator decided to add the possessive determiner, which is absent in the original version, to the noun *lass*,

because the expression *ragazza mia* is typical of the colloquial language. In that way, she also underlined the affectionate relation that exists between the two women.

“It is but a day **sin’** I were young,” replied Peggy; but she stopped the conversation by again pushing the cup with gentle force to Susan’s dry and thirsty lips. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 312)

"È passato solo un giorno da **quand’**ero giovane," rispose Peggy; ma interruppe il dialogo spingendo di nuovo la tazza verso le labbra riarse e assetate di Susan con gentile fermezza. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 229)

Peggy is speaking to Susan again. The translator decided to elide the conjunction *quando* in order to make the discourse more immediate.

“Take that!” said she, almost breathless, “to teach **thee** how **thou** darest make a fool of an honest woman old enough to be **thy** mother. If thou **com’st** a step nearer the house, there’s a good horse-pool, and there’s two stout fellows who’ll like no better fun than ducking thee. Be off **wi’ thee!**” (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 318-319)

"Prendi questo!" disse quasi senza fiato, "così impari a farti beffe di una donna onesta, abbastanza vecchia da esser tua madre. Se fai ancora un passo avanti, bada che c’è l’abbeveratoio dei cavalli, e due bei tipi robusti che se la spasserebbero a buttartici dentro. Sparisci." (*Susan Dixon*, p. 236)

Susan is addressing a young man who wants to court her despite the age difference between them. Because of this, she strongly reproaches him, since she believes that his behaviour is disrespectful. The translator decided to omit the second *there’s* (which the author used with a plural subject in order to underline the informality of the situation)², but, in this way, the Italian sentence is not correct from a syntactic point of view, because the predicate of the plural subject (*due bei tipi robusti*) is missing.

“No! he’ll be stopping somewhere out Ulverstone ways. I’m sure we’ve need of him at home, for I’ve no one but **lile** Tommy to help me tend the beasts. Things have not gone well with us, and we don’t keep a servant now. But you’re trembling all over, ma’am. You’d better come in, and take something warm, while your horse rests. That’s the stable-door, to your left.” (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, pp. 324-325)

"No! si sarà fermato dalle parti di Ulverstone. E noi abbiamo un gran bisogno di lui a casa perché con le bestie non mi aiuta nessuno, tranne il

² “In speaking and in some informal writing, we [the British] use *there’s* even when it refers to more than one. This use could be considered incorrect in formal writing” (Cambridge, 2017).

piccolo Tommy. Le cose non ci sono andate bene, e non ci possiamo permettere un lavorante. Ma signora, tremate tutta. È meglio che **entrate** e **prendete** qualcosa di caldo, intanto che il cavallo si riposa. Quella a sinistra è la porta della stalla." (*Susan Dixon*, p. 241)

Michael's wife is speaking to Susan. With regard to the verbs *entrate* and *prendete*, the translator chose to use the indicative mood instead of the subjunctive mood required by Italian syntax.

He was the father of three **bonny bairns** that lie dead in Grasmere churchyard. (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 326)

Era il padre dei tre **bambinelli** paffuti che son sepolti nel cimitero di Grasmere. (*Susan Dixon*, p. 242)

Michael's wife is addressing Susan again, but now she is desperate, because she has just realized that her husband is dead. In this case, the translator chose to translate *bairns* as *bambinelli*, which is a colloquial term of endearment that underlines the close relation between Michael's wife and her children who died at young ages.

"Then I will prompt **thee**. Say after me—"I have been a wilful, foolish woman"" (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 403)

— Ti aiuterò. Ripeti **dietro** di me, «Sono stata sciocca e ostinata...». (*Sei settimane a Heppenheim*, p. 155)

The innkeeper is speaking to the inn servant Thekla, his future wife. The man wants to lovingly convince the girl to inform the English traveller about the marriage. The translator created a lexical error by using the word *dietro* instead of *dopo*. Indeed, the expression *ripeti dopo di me* is normally used in Italian.

On other occasions, the translators preferred not to intervene in the ways previously mentioned in order not to run the risk of causing ambiguities (they could have caused unintended effects like confusing the Italian reader, creating erroneous impressions, making a character into someone he/she is not, distorting the meaning, and so forth). Consequently, in such cases, they decided to render source text dialect by target language standard, although also this choice has a disadvantage, because it removes the special effect intended in the source text (Hatim and Mason, 2013: 41). In

order to corroborate this statement, an example from *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* and an example from *Half a Lifetime Ago* are shown.

“Has she told you, sir?” said he, possessing himself of her hand, and looking all a-glow with happiness. “Hast **thou** told our good friend?” addressing her. (*Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, p. 403)

— Thekla glielo ha detto, signore? — fece lui, prendendo la mano di lei, raggianti di felicità, e rivolgendosi alla ragazza: — Hai informato il nostro buon amico? (*Sei settimane a Heppenheim*, p. 155)

The innkeeper is addressing the inn servant Thekla; therefore the speaker is superior to the interlocutor from a work point of view. He is happy, because the girl has promised to marry him, and he wants to share his happiness with the English traveller.

“And so I do. And so I ever will do. Lover nor husband shall come betwixt **thee** and me, lad—**ne’er** a one of them. That I promise **thee** (as I promised mother before), in the sight of God and with her hearkening now, if ever she can hearken to earthly word again. Only I cannot abide to have **thee** fretting, just because my heart is large enough for two.” (*Half a Lifetime Ago*, p. 293-294)

"E io lo faccio. E lo farò sempre. Non ci sarà innamorato o marito che si possa mettere tra te e me... mai. Te lo prometto (come già l’ho promesso alla mamma) davanti a Dio e davanti a lei che ci ascolta, se può ancora sentire le parole che diciamo su questa terra. Solo non riesco a sopportare che ti crucci, proprio perché nel mio cuore c’è abbastanza spazio per due." (*Susan Dixon*, p. 213)

Susan is speaking to Willie and she reassures him by telling him that she will love him all her life.

4. AN ITALIAN TRANSLATION OF *RIGHT AT LAST*

Giusto alla fine

Il Dottor Brown era povero e doveva farsi strada nel mondo. Era andato a studiare medicina a Edimburgo e, grazie alla sua energia, al suo talento e alla sua buona condotta, aveva ricevuto una certa attenzione da parte dei professori. Una volta presentato alle donne delle loro famiglie, il suo aspetto attraente e i suoi modi galanti lo resero il preferito in assoluto; forse nessun altro studente ricevette così tanti inviti a feste da ballo e ricevimenti serali o fu scelto così spesso per occupare un posto a tavola liberatosi all'ultimo. Nessuno sapeva esattamente chi fosse o da dove venisse; dopotutto non aveva parenti stretti, come aveva fatto notare una o due volte, perciò evidentemente non era ostacolato da familiari di umili origini o di scarsa signorilità. Prima di iniziare il college, era stato in lutto per sua madre.

Tutto ciò fu richiamato alla memoria del Professor Frazer da sua nipote Margaret, mentre una mattina stava di fronte a lui nel suo studio, raccontandogli con voce pacata, ma risoluta, che, la sera precedente, il Dottor James Brown le aveva fatto la proposta di matrimonio — da lei accettata — e che lui aveva intenzione di far visita al Professor Frazer (suo zio e parente di riferimento) quella stessa mattina, per ottenere il suo consenso al loro fidanzamento. Il Professor Frazer era perfettamente consapevole, dal comportamento di Margaret, che lei considerava la sua approvazione come una mera formalità, perché aveva già preso la sua decisione e lui aveva avuto più di una volta l'occasione di scoprire quanto inflessibile lei potesse essere. Ma anche in lui scorreva lo stesso sangue e persisteva nelle proprie convinzioni con la medesima caparbia. Di conseguenza zio e nipote si erano spesso dissuasi dal provare rancore reciproco, senza cambiare le rispettive opinioni di una virgola. Ma in quella occasione, più che in qualunque altra, il Professor Frazer non poteva non intervenire.

“Quindi, Margaret, ti preparerai tranquillamente a essere una mendicante, perché quel giovane Brown ha davvero poco denaro per pensare di sposarsi. Tu che potresti essere l'illustre Lady Kennedy, se volessi!”

“Non potrei, zio.”

“Che assurdit , figliola! Sir Alexander   un uomo affabile e di bell’aspetto... di mezza et , per cos  dire... beh, una donna volitiva deve fare ci  che vuole, ma, se avessi avuto idea che questo ragazzo si stava intrufolando in casa mia per indurti ad amarlo, avrei desiderato che si fosse tolto di torno prima ancora di aver permesso a tua zia di invitarlo a cena. S ! Puoi anche borbottare, ma dico che nessun gentiluomo sarebbe mai venuto in casa mia a corteggiare mia nipote, senza prima informarmi delle sue intenzioni e chiedermi il permesso.”

“Il Dottor Brown   un gentiluomo, zio Frazer, nonostante quello che tu possa pensare di lui.”

“Cos  credi tu... cos  credi tu. Ma a chi interessa l’opinione di una ragazza accecata dall’amore? Lui   un affascinante e convincente giovanotto dalle buone maniere. E non intendo negare le sue capacit . Ma c’  qualcosa in lui che non mi   mai piaciuto e ora   spiegato. E Sir Alexander... Bene, bene! Tua zia rimarr  delusa da te, Margaret. Ma sei sempre stata una ragazza testarda. Questo Jamie Brown ti ha mai detto chi o che persone fossero i suoi genitori, oppure da dove proviene lui? Non faccio domande sui suoi antenati, perch  sembra un ragazzo che non li abbia mai avuti. E tu, una Frazer di Lovat¹! Ah, che vergogna, Margaret! Chi   questo Jamie Brown?”

“Lui   James Brown, dottore in medicina all’Universit  di Edimburgo: un giovane bravo e intelligente, che amo con tutto il mio cuore” replic  Margaret, arrossendo.

“Ohib !   questo il modo in cui parla una ragazza? Lui da dove viene? Chi sono i suoi parenti? A meno che non riesca a fornire un soddisfacente resoconto della sua famiglia e delle sue prospettive, mi limiter  ad intimargli di andarsene, Margaret; te lo dico in modo ragionevole.”

“Zio,” (gli occhi le si stavano riempiendo di calde lacrime di indignazione) “sono adulta. Tu sai che lui   bravo e intelligente. Altrimenti perch  lo hai ricevuto cos  spesso nella tua casa? Io sposo lui e non la sua parentela.   un orfano. Dubito che abbia dei parenti con cui si tenga in contatto. Non ha n  fratelli n  sorelle. Non mi interessa da dove proviene.”

“Cosa faceva suo padre?” domand  con freddezza il Professor Frazer.

“Non lo so. Perché dovrei andare a indagare su ogni particolare della sua famiglia e domandare chi era suo padre, qual era il cognome da nubile di sua madre e quando si era sposata sua nonna?”

“Eppure penso di aver sentito la signorina Margaret Frazer esprimersi a gran voce e con molta forza a favore di una lunga e onorata stirpe.”

“Suppongo di essermi dimenticata della nostra, quando parlavo così. Simon, Lord Lovat², è un prozio stimabile per i Frazer! Se tutte le dicerie sono veritiere, avrebbe dovuto essere impiccato da criminale, anziché decapitato come un leale gentiluomo.”

“Oh! Se sei determinata ad infangare le tue stesse origini, ho finito. Fai entrare James Brown; gli farò il mio inchino e lo ringrazierò per abbassarsi a sposare una Frazer.”

“Zio,” disse Margaret, ora piangendo abbondantemente “non lasciamoci con rancore! Nel profondo dei nostri cuori ci vogliamo bene. Sei stato buono con me e così anche la zia. Ma ho dato la mia parola al Dottor Brown e devo mantenerla. Lo amerei anche se fosse il figlio di un contadino. Non ci aspettiamo di diventare ricchi, ma lui ha qualche centinaia di sterline con cui iniziare e io ho le mie cento sterline all’anno...”

“Bene, bene, figliola, non piangere! Hai sistemato tutto da sola, a quanto pare; quindi me ne lavo le mani. Mi scrollo di dosso ogni responsabilità. Riferirai a tua zia quali accordi prendi con il Dottor Brown per il vostro matrimonio e io al riguardo farò ciò che desideri. Ma non mandare il giovane a chiedermi il consenso! Né lo darò, né lo negherò. Sarebbe stato diverso, se si fosse trattato di Sir Alexander.”

“Oh! Zio Frazer, non parlare così. Ricevi il Dottor Brown e, in ogni caso... per il mio bene... digli che acconsenti! Fammi sentire veramente parte della tua vita! Sembra così triste dover allontanarmi in un momento simile, come se non fossi appartenuta ad alcuna famiglia o nessuno si fosse preso cura di me.”

La porta venne spalancata e il Dottor James Brown venne annunciato. Margaret se ne andò in fretta e, prima che lui se ne rendesse conto, il Professore aveva dato una specie di consenso, senza fare una domanda al felice ragazzo, il quale scappò via per cercare la sua fidanzata, lasciando lo zio di lei a borbottare tra sé e sé.

Sia il Dottore che la signora Frazer erano così fortemente contrari al fidanzamento di Margaret, in realtà, che non potevano evitare di mostrarlo attraverso atteggiamenti e sottintesi, benché avessero la delicatezza di rimanere in silenzio. Ma Margaret sentiva

con ancora più perspicacia del suo innamorato che lui non era il benvenuto nella casa. La gioia nel vederlo veniva distrutta dalla sua percezione della freddezza con cui veniva ricevuto e lei acconsentì volentieri al suo desiderio di un fidanzamento breve, che era contrario al loro piano originale di aspettare finché lui non si fosse sistemato professionalmente a Londra e avesse ritenuto possibile guadagnare abbastanza da rendere il loro matrimonio un passo prudente. Il Dottore e la signora Frazer né obiettavano, né approvavano. Margaret avrebbe preferito il contrasto più intenso che quella freddezza glaciale. Ma questo la fece volgere con affetto raddoppiato verso il suo comprensivo innamorato dal cuore d'oro. Con lui non aveva mai discusso del comportamento dei suoi zii. Finché ne era apparentemente ignaro, lei non glielo avrebbe svelato. Inoltre, loro erano stati per lei come dei genitori per così tanto tempo, che sentiva di non avere il diritto di introdurre un estraneo che svolgesse il ruolo di giudice nei loro confronti.

Perciò fu piuttosto con la morte nel cuore che lei programmò con il Dottor Brown la futura gestione della loro casa, impossibilitata a beneficiare dell'esperienza e della saggezza di sua zia. Ma Margaret stessa era una ragazza prudente e giudiziosa. Anche se abituata nella casa di suo zio a un livello di benessere che quasi diventava lusso, poteva decisamente farne a meno, se la situazione lo richiedeva. Quando il Dottor Brown partì per Londra, per cercare e preparare la loro nuova casa, gli ordinò di non fare nulla tranne i preparativi più necessari per la sua accoglienza. Al suo arrivo lei stessa avrebbe controllato tutto ciò che mancava. Lui aveva alcuni mobili vecchi, conservati in un magazzino, che erano stati di sua madre. Propose di venderli e al loro posto comprarne di nuovi. Margaret lo convinse a non farlo, ma ad usarli il più a lungo possibile. Il nucleo familiare della coppia di novelli sposi avrebbe incluso una donna scozzese da lungo tempo in rapporto con la famiglia Frazer, la quale sarebbe stata l'unica domestica, e un uomo che il Dottor Brown assunse a Londra, subito dopo aver scelto una casa. L'uomo, che si chiamava Crawford, aveva vissuto per molti anni con un gentiluomo, il quale in quel momento si trovava all'estero, e, in risposta alle domande del Dottor Brown, mostrò il carattere più eccellente. Questo gentiluomo aveva impiegato Crawford in diversi modi, perciò in effetti era una specie di tuttodfare; il Dottor Brown, in ogni lettera per Margaret, aveva qualche nuovo talento del suo domestico da raccontare. Lo faceva in modo dettagliato e con fervore, perché Margaret aveva leggermente messo in

discussione l'opportunità di iniziare la loro nuova vita con un domestico, ma aveva ceduto alle motivazioni del Dottor Brown sulla necessità di mantenere un aspetto rispettabile, di fare una buona impressione, etc., a chiunque potesse essere propenso a consultarlo, ma potesse essere intimorito dall'aspetto della vecchia Christie fuori della cucina e riluttante a lasciare un messaggio a una che parlava un inglese così incomprensibile. Crawford era un carpentiere così bravo che poteva montare mensole, aggiustare cardini difettosi e riparare serrature. Arrivò perfino a costruire una scatola con alcune vecchie assi che una volta avevano formato una cassa. Crawford, un giorno, quando il padrone di casa era troppo occupato per uscire a cenare, improvvisò una omelette più buona di quelle che il Dottor Brown aveva assaggiato a Parigi, quando stava studiando lì. In breve, Crawford era a modo suo una specie di Ammirabile Critonio³ e Margaret era abbastanza convinta che la decisione del Dottor Brown di dover avere un domestico fosse giusta; ancor prima che lei venisse rispettosamente accolta da Crawford, mentre lui apriva la porta alla coppia di novelli sposi, quando arrivarono alla loro nuova casa dopo il loro breve viaggio di nozze.

Il Dottor Brown aveva molta paura che Margaret potesse ritenere la casa spoglia e triste essendo semiarredata, perché lui aveva rispettato i suoi ordini e aveva comprato il minimo possibile di arredo, oltre alle poche cose che lui aveva ereditato da sua madre. Il suo studio medico (come suonava grandioso!) era completamente sistemato, pronto per eventuali pazienti, ed era ben studiato per far loro una buona impressione. Sul pavimento c'era un tappeto turco, che era stato di sua madre, ed era appena sufficientemente consumato per conferirgli l'aria di rispettabilità che i notevoli pezzi di arredo hanno quando sembrano non essere stati appena comprati per l'occasione, ma sono in parte ereditati. Lo stesso aspetto pervadeva la stanza: il tavolo (comprato usato, bisogna ammetterlo), lo scrittoio (che era stato di sua madre), le poltrone in pelle (trasmesse di generazione in generazione come il tavolo), le mensole che Crawford aveva appeso per i libri di medicina del Dottor Brown e una bella incisione sulle pareti davano complessivamente un aspetto così piacevole all'abitazione che sia il Dottore che la signora Brown pensavano, almeno per quella sera, che la povertà fosse una cosa altrettanto confortevole quanto la ricchezza. Crawford, come suo umile modo di accogliere la padrona di casa, si era coraggiosamente preso la libertà di posizionare per la stanza alcuni fiori di tardo autunno, unendo l'idea dell'estate con quella dell'inverno,

suggerita dal luminoso fuocherello nel camino. Christie portò su delle deliziose focaccine per il tè e la signora Frazer aveva compensato la sua mancanza di cordialità, come meglio poteva, con una scorta di marmellata e prosciutti di montone.

Il Dottor Brown non riusciva a sentirsi tranquillo in quel benessere, finchè non avesse mostrato a Margaret, quasi gemendo, quante stanze non erano ancora arredate... quanto rimaneva da fare. Ma lei minimizzò la sua preoccupazione dovuta al timore che dovesse essere delusa dalla sua nuova casa; dichiarò che non avrebbe desiderato altro che organizzare e architettare, e che, tra il suo talento personale per la tappezzeria e quello di Crawford per la falegnameria, le stanze sarebbero state arredate come per magia e nessuna fattura—consueta conseguenza del benessere—sarebbe stata imminente. Ma, con il mattino e la luce del giorno, l'agitazione del Dottor Brown tornò. Vedeva e percepiva ogni crepa sul soffitto, ogni macchia sulla carta da parati, non per se stesso, ma per Margaret. Sembrava comparare perennemente nella sua testa la casa in cui l'aveva portata con quella che lei aveva lasciato. Sembrava perennemente spaventato dal timore che lei si fosse pentita o si sarebbe pentita di averlo sposato. Quella morbosa agitazione era l'unico ostacolo alla loro grande felicità e, per eliminarlo, Margaret fu portata a spendere ben oltre la sua intenzione originale. Lei comprava un articolo anzichè un altro, perché suo marito, se andava a fare compere con lei, sembrava così triste se sospettava che si privasse del minimo desiderio a causa del risparmio. Imparò ad evitare di portarlo fuori con sè, quando andava a fare i suoi acquisti, dato che per lei era una cosa molto semplice scegliere l'articolo meno costoso, anche se era il più brutto, quando era da sola, ma non una cosa facile e indolore indurire il suo cuore allo sguardo di mortificazione del marito, quando lei diceva sommessamente al venditore che non poteva permettersi un articolo o un altro. All'uscita da un negozio dopo una di queste occasioni, lui aveva detto:

“Oh, Margaret, non avrei dovuto sposarti. Devi perdonarmi... ti ho amata tanto.”

“Perdonarti, James?” disse lei. “Per rendermi così felice? Cosa dovrebbe farti pensare che mi importi così tanto di un tessuto rispetto ad un altro? Non parlare più così, per favore!”

“Oh, Margaret! Ma non dimenticare che ti ho chiesto di perdonarmi.”

Crawford era tutto ciò che aveva promesso di essere e più di quello che si potesse desiderare. Era il braccio destro di Margaret in tutti i suoi piccoli progetti domestici, in

un modo che irritava Christie non poco. Questa ostilità fra Christie e Crawford era infatti il più grande disagio nel nucleo familiare. Crawford era silenziosamente trionfante nella sua conoscenza superiore di Londra, nell'essere il prediletto al piano superiore, nella sua forza di assistere la padrona di casa e nel conseguente privilegio di essere frequentemente consultato. Christie rimpiangeva continuamente la Scozia e faceva allusioni al disinteresse di Margaret nei confronti di una che aveva seguito le sue sorti in un paese sconosciuto, per rendere prediletto un estraneo, e alludeva a uno che, come lei a volte avrebbe affermato, non era affatto così buono come avrebbe dovuto essere. Però, siccome lei non portò mai alcuna prova delle sue vaghe accuse, Margaret non scelse di interrogarla, ma attribuì quelle a una gelosia nei confronti del suo collega, che la padrona fece tutto il possibile per far sì che finisse. Nel complesso, tuttavia, le quattro persone che formavano quella famiglia vivevano insieme in tollerabile armonia. Il Dottor Brown era più che soddisfatto della sua casa, dei suoi domestici, delle sue prospettive professionali e soprattutto della sua energica mogliettina. Margaret, di tanto in tanto, veniva sorpresa da certi stati d'animo di suo marito, ma questi tendevano non a indebolirle l'affetto, anzi a suscitare un sentimento di compassione per quelli che le sembravano timori e tormenti morbosi—una compassione pronta ad essere trasformata in comprensione, non appena avesse potuto scoprire qualsiasi motivo preciso dell'occasionale depressione d'animo del marito. Christie non faceva finta che le piacesse Crawford, ma, siccome Margaret si rifiutava con discrezione di ascoltare le sue lamentele e il suo malcontento sulla questione, e siccome Crawford stesso era quasi fin troppo sollecito a guadagnare la buona opinione della vecchia donna scozzese, non c'era nessuna frattura tra loro. Nel complesso, il popolare e affermato Dottor Brown era apparentemente la persona più ansiosa all'interno della sua famiglia. Ciò non poteva essere causato da un grave motivo in merito ai suoi affari economici. A seguito di uno di quei casi fortunati che qualche volta conducono un uomo fuori dalle sue difficoltà, e lo trasportano verso un terreno liscio e sgombro, lui fece un grande passo nella sua crescita professionale; era probabile che il loro guadagno da quella fonte fosse decisamente più di quanto lui e Margaret avessero previsto nei loro momenti più speranzosi, con la probabilità, pure, di aumento costante, col passare degli anni.

Devo spiegarmi in modo più completo sulla questione.

Margaret stessa aveva un po' più di cento sterline all'anno, infatti, qualche volta i suoi dividendi avevano ammontato a centotrenta o centoquaranta sterline, ma su quello lei non osava basarsi. Il Dottor Brown aveva millesettecento sterline rimanenti delle tremila lasciategli da sua madre e al di fuori di questo doveva pagare una parte dell'arredo; malgrado Margaret avesse più volte richiesto che le relative fatture fossero inviate, a quel tempo non erano ancora arrivate. Giunsero circa una settimana prima del tempo in cui gli eventi che sto per narrare ebbero luogo. Di certo ammontavano a più di quello che perfino la prudente Margaret aveva previsto e lei era un po' demoralizzata nello scoprire quanti soldi sarebbero serviti per liquidarle. Ma, cosa abbastanza curiosa e contraddittoria—come lei aveva spesso notato in precedenza—qualsiasi motivo concreto di agitazione o di delusione non sembrava intaccare l'allegria di suo marito. Lui minimizzò lo sconcerto di lei a proposito dei suoi conti, fece tintinnare nelle tasche il ricavato di quella giornata di lavoro, lo diede a lei contandolo e calcolò il probabile reddito dell'anno dai guadagni di quel giorno. Margaret prese le ghinee e in silenzio le portò al piano superiore al suo mobiletto personale, avendo imparato la difficile arte di cercare di sopportare le preoccupazioni domestiche in presenza di suo marito. Quando tornò, era allegra, seppur seria. Lui aveva preso le fatture in sua assenza e le stava sommando.

“Duecentotrentasei sterline” disse, mettendo i conti da parte, per sgomberare il tavolo per il tè, mentre Crawford portava dentro l'occorrente. “Beh, non le definirei tante. Credo di aver contato sul fatto che ammontassero a molto di più. Andrò nella City domani, venderò alcune azioni e toglierò un peso dal tuo cuoricino. Dunque stasera non andare a mettere una cucchiata in meno di tè per aiutare a pagare queste fatture. Guadagnare è meglio che risparmiare e io sto guadagnando ad una velocità eccellente. Dammi del buon tè, Maggie, perché ho avuto una buona giornata di lavoro.”

Stavano seduti nello studio medico del dottore per risparmiare maggiormente il fuoco. Da aggiungere al disagio di Margaret, il camino fumava quella sera. Lei si era trattenuta dall'esprimere la sua insoddisfazione perché ricordava il vecchio proverbio riguardo un camino fumoso e una moglie brontolona⁴, ma era più irritata dagli sbuffi di fumo che passavano sopra il suo grazioso ricamo bianco su bianco di quello che voleva mostrare. Fu in un tono più duro del solito che parlò, nell'ordinare a Crawford di fare attenzione e di far spazzare il camino. La mattina seguente tutto si era brillantemente

sistemato. Suo marito l'aveva convinta che le loro questioni economiche stavano procedendo positivamente, il fuoco bruciava vivacemente al momento della colazione e l'inconsueto sole splendeva attraverso le finestre. Margaret fu sorpresa quando Crawford le disse che quella mattina non era stato capace di imbattersi in uno spazzacamino, ma che aveva cercato di sistemare il carbone nel focolare, in modo che, per quell'unica mattina almeno, la padrona di casa non dovesse essere infastidita, e, dalla seguente, lui avrebbe provveduto a far sì che il camino venisse spazzato. Margaret lo ringraziò e assecondò con maggior facilità tutti i progetti di dare una pulizia generale alla stanza, perché sentiva che aveva parlato duramente la sera prima. Decise di andare a pagare tutte le fatture e fare alcune visite lontano da casa il mattino seguente; suo marito promise di andare nella City a procurarle il denaro.

Questo fece. Le mostrò le banconote quella sera, le rinchiuse per la notte nel suo scrittoio; e, ecco, alla mattina erano sparite! Fecero colazione nel soggiorno, o sala da pranzo semiarredata. Una donna delle pulizie era nel salotto a togliere lo sporco lasciato dagli spazzacamini. Il Dottor Brown andò al suo scrittoio, cantando un vecchio motivo scozzese mentre lasciava la sala da pranzo. Tardava tanto nel tornare, che Margaret andò a cercarlo. Stava seduto sulla poltrona più vicina allo scrittoio, appoggiandovi la testa, in un atteggiamento della più profonda disperazione. Non sembrava sentire la camminata di Margaret, mentre lei si faceva strada tra tappeti arrotolati e poltrone accatastate l'una sull'altra. Lei dovette toccarlo sulla spalla prima che potesse destarlo.

“James, James!” disse allarmata.

Alzò lo sguardo verso di lei quasi come se non la conoscesse.

“Oh, Margaret!” disse; le afferrò le mani e nascose la sua faccia nel collo di lei.

“Amore mio, cosa c'è?” chiese, pensando che lui si fosse improvvisamente sentito male.

“Qualcuno è stato al mio scrittoio, a partire da ieri sera” si lamentò, senza alzare lo sguardo né muoversi.

“E ha preso il denaro” disse Margaret, comprendendo immediatamente come stavano le cose. Fu un grave colpo, una grave perdita, molto più grave delle poche sterline extra a causa delle quali le fatture avevano superato i suoi calcoli, eppure sembrava che potesse sopportarlo meglio. “Ohimè!” esclamò lei. “Questo è un male, ma dopotutto... Sai,” disse, cercando di fargli alzare il viso, in modo che potesse

esaminarlo e dargli l'incoraggiamento dei suoi onesti e amorevoli occhi "all'inizio pensavo che tu stessi terribilmente male e ogni sorta di spaventosa possibilità mi è passata per la testa... è un tale sollievo scoprire che è soltanto denaro..."

"Soltanto denaro!" ripeté lui tristemente, evitando il suo sguardo, come se non potesse sopportare di mostrarle quanto ne risentisse.

"E dopotutto" disse lei con vigore "non può essere finito lontano. Solo ieri sera, era qui. Gli spazzacamini... dobbiamo mandare Crawford a chiamare subito la polizia. Tu non hai preso i numeri di serie delle banconote?" suonando il campanello mentre parlava.

"No, dovevano rimanere in nostro possesso soltanto una notte" disse.

"In effetti."

La donna delle pulizie apparve in quel momento alla porta con il suo secchio di acqua calda. Margaret esaminò il suo viso, come per leggere la colpevolezza o l'innocenza. Lei era una protetta di Christie, la quale non era incline a concedere la sua predilezione facilmente o senza buoni motivi; era una vedova onesta e rispettabile, con una famiglia numerosa da mantenere con il suo lavoro—quella era la reputazione con la quale Margaret l'aveva assunta e quella vide. Sporca nel suo vestito—perché non poteva risparmiare il denaro o il tempo per la sua pulizia—la sua pelle sembrava sana e curata, si mostrava semplice ed efficiente e non sembrava in alcun modo scoraggiata né sorpresa nel vedere il Dottore e la signora Brown stare nel mezzo della stanza, in uno stato di sofferenza e contrariata perplessità. Svolse le sue faccende senza prestare loro alcuna particolare attenzione. I sospetti di Margaret si concentrarono ancora più nettamente sullo spazzacamino, ma lui non poteva essere andato lontano; difficilmente le banconote potevano essere entrate in circolazione. Una tale somma non poteva essere stata spesa da un uomo del genere in così poco tempo; la restituzione dei soldi era il suo primo e unico obiettivo. Lei a malapena pensava ai successivi doveri, come l'accusa contro il colpevole e simili conseguenze del crimine. Mentre tutte le sue energie erano rivolte al veloce ritrovamento dei soldi e stava rapidamente esaminando i passi necessari da compiere, suo marito "sedeva tutto riversato sulla sua poltrona", come dicono i tedeschi; nessuna forza in lui per tenere gli arti in una qualsiasi posa che richiedesse il minimo sforzo. Il suo viso era abbattuto e triste, con quell'anticipazione delle rughe del tempo che una sofferenza improvvisa è portata a segnare i visi più giovani e più lisci.

“Che cosa può star facendo Crawford?” disse Margaret, tirando nuovamente il campanello⁵ con veemenza. “Oh, Crawford!” poiché l’uomo in quell’istante apparve alla porta.

“C’è qualcosa che non va?” disse lui, interrompendola, come se il suo violento scampanellio lo avesse allarmato portandolo a un’insolita agitazione. “Ero solo andato dietro l’angolo con la lettera che il padrone mi diede ieri sera per la posta e, quando sono tornato, Christie mi ha detto che lei, signora, mi aveva chiamato suonando il campanello. Le chiedo scusa, ma ho fatto molto in fretta” infatti, il suo respiro si fece davvero veloce e il suo viso era pieno di ansia di pentimento.

“Oh, Crawford! Temo che lo spazzacamino si sia introdotto nello scrittoio del tuo padrone e abbia preso tutto il denaro che aveva messo lì ieri sera. È sparito, ad ogni modo. Hai mai lasciato lui da solo nella stanza?”

“Non posso dirlo, signora; forse l’ho fatto. Sì, penso di averlo fatto. Ora ricordo... avevo il mio lavoro da svolgere; pensavo che la donna delle pulizie fosse arrivata e sono andato al mio ripostiglio. Dopo un po’ di tempo Christie è venuta da me, lamentandosi che la signora Roberts fosse così in ritardo, quindi ho saputo che lui doveva essere stato da solo nella stanza. Ma, ohimè, signora, chi avrebbe pensato che ci fosse stata tanta malvagità in lui?”

“Come è accaduto che lui si sia introdotto nello scrittoio?” disse Margaret, rivolgendosi a suo marito. “La serratura era rotta?”

Lui si sollevò, come uno che si sveglia dal sonno.

“Sì! No! Presumo di aver girato la chiave a vuoto ieri sera. Lo scrittoio era chiuso, ma non a chiave, quando ci sono andato questa mattina, e il chiavistello era stato fatto scorrere.”

Ricadde in un silenzio inerte e pensieroso.

“Ad ogni modo, è inutile perdere tempo a porsi domande ora. Vai, Crawford, più veloce che puoi, a chiamare un poliziotto. Tu conosci il nome dello spazzacamino, ovviamente” aggiunse lei, mentre Crawford si stava accingendo a lasciare la stanza.

“In verità, signora, mi dispiace molto, ma ero semplicemente d’accordo con il primo che stava passando lungo la strada. Se avessi potuto sapere...”

Ma Margaret si era girata dall’altra parte con un impaziente gesto di sconforto. Crawford andò, senza dire altro, a cercare un poliziotto.

Invano la moglie cercò in tutti i modi di persuadere il marito ad assaggiare la colazione; una tazza di tè fu tutto ciò che avrebbe cercato di ingerire e quella fu bevuta a sorsi frettolosi, per schiarirsi la gola secca, mentre sentiva la voce di Crawford parlare al poliziotto che stava facendo entrare.

Il poliziotto ascoltò tutto e disse poco. Poi arrivò l'ispettore. Il Dottor Brown sembrò lasciare tutto il discorso a Crawford, che apparentemente non desiderava altro. Margaret era infinitamente addolorata e turbata dall'effetto che il furto sembrava aver avuto sulle energie di suo marito. La probabile perdita di una simile somma era alquanto grave, ma c'erano una tale debolezza e una tale mancanza di carattere nel permettere che ciò lo influenzasse così fortemente da affievolire tutta l'energia e da distruggere tutto il fervore della speranza, che, anche se Margaret non si arrischiò a definire la sua sensazione, né la causa di essa, a se stessa, aveva costantemente davanti a sé il fatto che, se doveva giudicare suo marito da quell'unica mattina, doveva imparare a contare solo su se stessa in tutti i casi di emergenza. L'ispettore passò ripetutamente da Crawford al Dottore e alla signora Brown per delle risposte alle sue domande. Fu Margaret che replicò, con frasi concise e brevi, molto diverse dalle spiegazioni lunghe e complesse di Crawford.

Alla fine l'ispettore chiese di parlare a lei da sola. Lei lo seguì in un'altra stanza, oltre l'offeso Crawford e il suo avvilito marito. L'ispettore diede un duro sguardo alla donna delle pulizie, che stava continuando con il suo lavoro con una indifferenza impassibile, la mandò via e poi chiese a Margaret da dove provenisse Crawford, da quanto tempo visse con loro e diverse altre domande; tutte mostravano la direzione che i suoi sospetti avevano preso. Questo sconvolse moltissimo Margaret, ma rispose rapidamente ad ogni domanda e, alla fine, guardò il viso dell'ispettore attentamente e aspettò che dichiarasse il suo sospetto.

Tuttavia, lui la ricondusse alla stanza precedente senza dire nulla. Crawford se ne era andato e il Dottor Brown stava cercando di leggere le lettere della mattina (che erano appena state recapitate), ma le sue mani tremavano talmente tanto che non riusciva a vedere nemmeno una riga.

“Dottor Brown” disse l'ispettore “sono quasi certo che il suo domestico abbia commesso questo furto. Giudico così dal suo intero comportamento, dalla sua ansia di raccontare la storia e dal suo modo di cercare di gettare il sospetto sullo spazzacamino,

il cui nome e il cui domicilio lui non può fornire; almeno sostiene di no. Sua moglie ci dice che lui è già stato fuori casa questa mattina, ancora prima che andasse a chiamare un poliziotto, quindi è altamente probabile che abbia trovato il sistema per nascondere le banconote o disfarsene; e lei, signore, afferma di non conoscere i numeri di serie. Tuttavia, questo può probabilmente essere accertato.”

In quel momento Christie bussò alla porta e, in uno stato di profonda agitazione, chiese di parlare a Margaret. Menzionò molte altre circostanze sospette, nessuna delle quali di per sé gran cosa, ma tutte tendevano a incriminare il suo collega. Lei si era aspettata di vedersi accusata per aver fatto sorgere l'idea della colpevolezza di Crawford ed era piuttosto sorpresa di vedersi ascoltata con attenzione dall'ispettore. Questo la condusse a raccontare molte altre piccole cose, tutte dirette contro Crawford, le quali, per timore di essere considerata gelosa e litigiosa, aveva nascosto in precedenza ai padroni di casa. Alla fine della sua storia l'ispettore disse:

“Non ci può essere alcun dubbio sulla strada da intraprendere. Lei, signore, deve consegnare il suo domestico alla polizia. Lui sarà direttamente portato dinanzi al magistrato in carica e ci sono già prove sufficienti affinché venga detenuto in attesa di giudizio per una settimana, durante la quale noi potremmo rintracciare le banconote e chiudere il cerchio.”

“Devo accusarlo?” disse il Dottor Brown, quasi di un pallore grigiastro. “Questa è, riconosco, una grave perdita di denaro per me, ma ci saranno ulteriori spese dell'accusa ... la perdita di tempo... il...”

Si fermò. Vide gli occhi indignati di sua moglie fissi su di lui e rifuggì dal loro sguardo di inconsapevole disapprovazione.

“Sì, ispettore” disse. “Lo consegno alla polizia. Faccia ciò che vuole. Faccia ciò che è giusto. Naturalmente mi prendo le conseguenze. Noi ci prendiamo le conseguenze. Non è vero, Margaret?” parlò con una specie di voce esaltata e bassa, a cui Margaret pensò fosse meglio non prestare attenzione.

“Ci racconti esattamente cosa fare” disse lei in modo molto freddo e pacato, rivolgendosi al poliziotto.

Lui le diede le indicazioni necessarie riguardo il loro presenziare al posto di polizia e portare Christie come testimone, poi andò via per prendere provvedimenti per arrestare Crawford.

Margaret era sorpresa di scoprire quanta poca fretta o forza dovesse essere usata nell'arresto di Crawford. Si era aspettata di sentire rumori di trambusto nella casa, se davvero Crawford stesso non si era spaventato e non era scappato. Ma, quando lei aveva lasciato intendere quest'ultima apprensione all'ispettore, lui sorrise e le disse che, quando era inizialmente venuto a sapere dell'accusa dal poliziotto di ronda, aveva messo un agente investigativo di guardia alla casa a sorvegliare ogni entrata o uscita, di modo che, se Crawford avesse tentato di scappare, si sarebbe rapidamente scoperta la sua posizione.

L'attenzione di Margaret era ora rivolta a suo marito. Lui stava facendo frettolosi preparativi per intraprendere il suo giro di visite ed evidentemente non desiderava avere alcuna conversazione con lei riguardo all'evento della mattina. Promise di essere di ritorno per le undici in punto; l'ispettore garantì loro che, prima di quell'orario, la loro presenza non sarebbe stata necessaria. Una o due volte, il Dottor Brown disse, come se a se stesso: "È un affare avvilente." In effetti, Margaret era convinta che fosse così; ora che era passata la necessità di parlare e agire immediatamente, iniziò a credere di dover essere davvero dura di cuore... davvero carente di ciò che in genere si dovrebbe provare, dato che lei non aveva sofferto come suo marito alla scoperta che il domestico—che loro avevano imparato a considerare come un amico e a ritenere che avesse i loro interessi tanto vivamente a cuore—era, con tutta probabilità, un infido ladro. Si ricordava tutti i gradevoli gesti di attenzione verso di lei, dal giorno in cui lui aveva accolto il suo arrivo alla nuova casa con il suo umile dono floreale, fino solo al giorno prima, quando, vedendola affaticata, senza chiedere, le aveva preparato una tazza di caffè, come nessuno, tranne lui, sapeva preparare. Quante volte lui aveva pensato a vestiti caldi e asciutti per suo marito, quanto vigile era stato di notte, quanto diligente al mattino! Non c'era da sorprendersi che suo marito sentisse intensamente quella scoperta di tradimento domestico. Era lei che era dura ed egoista, pensando di più al ritrovamento del denaro che alla terribile delusione nei confronti del domestico, se l'accusa contro Crawford era vera.

Alle undici in punto suo marito ritornò con una carrozza. Christie aveva pensato che l'occasione di comparire in un posto di polizia fosse degna degli abiti della domenica ed era tanto elegante quanto i suoi averi potevano renderla tale. Ma Margaret

e suo marito apparivano così pallidi e affranti dal dolore come se loro fossero stati gli accusati e non gli accusatori.

Il Dottor Brown rifuggì dall'incrociare lo sguardo di Crawford, mentre l'uno prendeva posto nel banco dei testimoni e l'altro in quello degli imputati. Eppure Crawford stava cercando—Margaret ne era sicura—di attirare l'attenzione del suo padrone. Fallendovi, osservò Margaret con un'espressione che lei non poteva comprendere. Infatti, tutti i tratti del suo viso erano cambiati. Invece dell'aspetto calmo e tranquillo di premurosa ubbidienza, aveva assunto un'insolente e minacciosa espressione di sfida, sorridendo di tanto in tanto nel modo più sgradevole, mentre il Dottor Brown parlava dello scrittoio e del suo contenuto. Venne detenuto in attesa di giudizio per una settimana, ma, siccome le prove erano ancora lontane dall'essere inoppugnabili, venne accettato il rilascio su cauzione con successivo obbligo di comparizione. Questo rilascio su cauzione fu offerto da suo fratello, un rispettabile negoziante, ben conosciuto nel suo vicinato e al quale Crawford aveva inviato la notizia del suo arresto.

Perciò Crawford fu di nuovo in libertà, con grande sgomento di Christie, la quale, al suo rientro a casa, si tolse gli abiti della domenica con la morte nel cuore, sperando, più che credere, che loro non dovessero essere tutti uccisi nei loro letti prima che la settimana finisse. Bisogna ammetterlo, Margaret stessa non era totalmente libera dai timori di una vendetta da parte di Crawford; i suoi occhi avevano osservato lei e suo marito in modo davvero maligno e vendicativo mentre fornivano la loro testimonianza.

Ma l'assenza del domestico nel nucleo familiare diede a Margaret da fare a sufficienza per impedirle di soffermarsi su sciocchi timori. La sua lontananza creò un terribile vuoto nel loro benessere quotidiano, il quale né Margaret né Christie—per quanto si sforzassero—potevano colmare ed era più che mai necessario che tutto dovesse filare liscio, poiché i nervi del Dottor Brown avevano ricevuto un tale trauma alla scoperta della colpevolezza del suo domestico prediletto e fidato, che Margaret fu condotta a volte a temere una grave malattia. Di notte, quando pensava che lei stesse dormendo, camminava per la stanza, lamentandosi—e alla mattina aveva bisogno del massimo convincimento per indurlo ad uscire a vedere i suoi pazienti. Dopo aver consultato l'avvocato che aveva assunto per condurre l'accusa, stava peggio che mai. C'era, come Margaret fu portata a malincuore a notare, un certo mistero nel caso perché

lui prendeva con ansia le sue lettere dalla posta—andava alla porta appena sentiva bussare e nascondeva a lei il loro mittente. Mentre la settimana passava, la sua tristezza nervosa continuava ad aumentare.

Una sera—le candele non erano accese e lui stava seduto vicino al fuoco in un atteggiamento spento, appoggiando la testa su una mano con il sostegno del ginocchio—Margaret decise di provare un esperimento per vedere se non potesse indagare il tormento, e scoprirne la natura, che lui nascondeva con un’attenzione così costante. Lei prese uno sgabello e si sedette ai suoi piedi, prendendogli l’altra mano tra le sue.

“Ascolta, carissimo James, una vecchia storia che una volta ho sentito. Ti potrebbe interessare. C’erano due orfani, un ragazzo e una ragazza nei loro cuori, sebbene fossero un giovane uomo e una giovane donna da anni. Non erano fratello e sorella e a poco a poco si innamorarono; ti ricordi, proprio nello stesso modo tenero e sciocco in cui tu e io ci innamorammo. Dunque, la ragazza viveva con i suoi familiari, ma il ragazzo era lontano dai propri—se effettivamente ne aveva vivo qualcuno. Ma la ragazza lo amava così ardentemente per quello che era, che qualche volta pensava di essere felice che il suo innamorato non avesse nessuno che si prendesse cura di lui tranne lei sola. Ai suoi amici lui non piaceva tanto quanto a lei, perché, forse, erano persone assennate, serie e fredde e lei, oserei dire, era molto sciocca. E a loro non piaceva che lei sposasse il ragazzo; il che era solo stupidità da parte loro, perché non avevano nulla da dire contro di lui. Ma, circa una settimana prima che il giorno del matrimonio fosse fissato, loro pensarono di aver scoperto qualcosa... mio caro amore, non togliere la tua mano... non tremare così, ascolta solamente! Sua zia andò da lei e disse: ‘Figliola, devi lasciare il tuo amato. Suo padre fu tentato e commise peccato; se ora è vivo, è un detenuto deportato. Il matrimonio non può aver luogo.’ Ma la ragazza si alzò e disse: ‘Se lui ha conosciuto questa grande pena e vergogna, ha bisogno del mio amore ancora di più. Non lo lascerò, né lo abbandonerò, ma lo amerò ancora di più. E io ti impongo, zia, siccome tu spero di ricevere una benedizione per fare agli altri quello che vorresti fosse fatto a te, di non dirlo a nessuno!’ Credo davvero che quella ragazza, in qualche strano modo, con il timore influenzò sua zia a mantenere il segreto. Ma, quando la ragazza rimase da sola, pianse a lungo e mestamente nel pensare a quale ombra giaceva sul cuore che lei amava così ardentemente; intendeva lottare per

rischiare la vita del ragazzo e per nascondere per sempre che lei era venuta a sapere del suo fardello. Ma ora lei pensa... Oh, marito mio! Come devi aver sofferto...” poichè lui chinò la testa sulla spalla della moglie e versò intense lacrime virili.

“Che Dio sia ringraziato!” lui disse alla fine. “Tu sai tutto e non rifuggi da me. Oh, che miserabile e ingannevole codardo sono stato! Sofferto? Sì... sofferto a sufficienza da farmi impazzire; se fossi stato solamente coraggioso, avrei potuto risparmiarmi tutti questi dodici lunghi mesi di agonia. Ma è giusto che dovessi essere punito. E tu lo sapevi perfino prima che ci fossimo sposati, quando avresti potuto esserti tirata indietro!”

“Non avrei potuto. Tu non avresti rotto il fidanzamento con me, non è vero, considerate tali circostanze, se le nostre situazioni fossero state invertite?”

“Non lo so. Forse avrei potuto perché io non sono così coraggioso, così bravo, così forte come te, Margaret mia. Come potrei esserlo? Lascia che ti dica di più. Vagavamo qua e là, io e mia madre, grati che il nostro cognome fosse uno così comune, ma rifuggendo da ogni allusione... in un modo che nessuno che non è stato consapevole di un tormento interiore può capire. Vivere in una città sede di un tribunale fu una tortura, in una città commerciale fu quasi peggio. Mio padre era il figlio di un dignitoso ministro di culto, ben noto ai suoi confratelli, quindi una città vescovile doveva essere evitata, perché lì era certo che fosse conosciuta la circostanza della deportazione del figlio del Decano di San Botulfo. Dovevo essere istruito, perciò dovevamo vivere in una città; poichè mia madre non poteva sopportare di separarsi da me, fui mandato in una scuola diurna⁶. Noi eravamo molto poveri per il nostro rango... no! Non avevamo alcun rango, eravamo il figlio e la moglie di un detenuto... poveri per le precedenti abitudini di mia madre, avrei dovuto dire. Ma, quando avevo circa quattordici anni, mio padre morì durante il suo esilio, lasciando, come i detenuti a quei tempi a volte facevano, una grande fortuna. La ereditammo tutta. Mia madre si ammutolì, pianse e pregò per un giorno intero. Poi chiese il mio aiuto e mi espresse il suo parere. Noi ci promettemmo solennemente di dare il denaro a qualche organizzazione di beneficenza, non appena fossi diventato maggiorenne. Fino ad allora ogni centesimo dell'interesse venne messo da parte, sebbene qualche volta fossimo in grave difficoltà economica, dato che la mia istruzione era davvero costosa. Ma come potevamo raccontare in che modo i soldi erano stati accumulati?” Qui lui abbassò la voce. “Poco dopo aver compiuto ventun anni, i

giornali erano pieni di ammirazione per lo sconosciuto e generoso donatore di certe somme di denaro. Detestai i loro elogi. Rifuggii da ogni ricordo di mio padre. Me lo ricordavo vagamente, ma sempre arrabbiato e violento con mia madre. La mia povera e dolce madre! Margaret, lei lo amava e, per il suo bene, ho cercato, dalla sua morte, di essere ben disposto verso il ricordo di mio padre. Poco dopo la morte di mia madre, feci la tua conoscenza, gioiello mio, tesoro mio!”

Dopo un po’, ricominciò. “Ma, oh, Margaret! Perfino adesso non conosci il peggio. Dopo la morte di mia madre, trovai una raccolta di giornali giuridici... di resoconti giornalistici sul processo di mio padre. Povera anima! Perché li avesse tenuti, non so dirlo. Erano ricoperti da appunti nella sua calligrafia e, per quel motivo, li tenni. Fu così commovente leggere le sue annotazioni dei giorni che trascorse nella sua innocenza solitaria, mentre lui si stava invischiando sempre più in profondità nel crimine. Ho conservato quella raccolta (siccome la credevo davvero al sicuro!) in un cassetto segreto del mio scrittoio, ma quel miserabile di Crawford se ne è impadronito. Ho perso i giornali proprio quella mattina. La loro perdita è stata infinitamente peggio della perdita del denaro e ora Crawford minaccia di rivelare in pubblica udienza, se può, l’unica terribile verità; il suo avvocato potrebbe farlo, ne sono convinto. In ogni caso, saperla dichiarata pubblicamente al mondo... io che ho trascorso la mia vita a temere questo momento! Ma soprattutto per te, Margaret! Eppure... se solo potesse essere evitato! Chi darà lavoro al figlio di Brown, il noto falsario? Perderò tutti i miei pazienti. Gli uomini mi guarderanno con sospetto mentre entro dalle loro porte. Mi condurranno al crimine. Qualche volta temo che il crimine sia ereditario! Oh, Margaret! Cosa devo fare?”

“Cosa puoi fare?” chiese lei.

“Posso rifiutare di accusarlo.”

“Lasciare che Crawford rimanga impunito, mentre sai che è colpevole?”

“So che è colpevole.”

“Allora, semplicemente, non puoi farlo. Metti un criminale in libertà tra la gente.”

“Ma, se non lo faccio, arriveremo alla vergogna e alla povertà. È per te che me ne preoccupo, non per me stesso. Non avrei mai dovuto sposarmi.”

“Ascoltami. Non mi importa la povertà e, per quanto riguarda la vergogna, dovrei sentirla venti volte più penosamente, se io e te acconsentissimo a proteggere il colpevole

da qualsiasi pericolo e per tutti i nostri motivi egoistici. Non fingo che non la sentirò, quando inizialmente la verità sarà conosciuta. Ma la mia vergogna diventerà orgoglio, mentre ti guarderò vincerla. L'aver per tutta la tua vita qualcosa da nascondere ti ha reso morboso, marito caro. Lascia che il mondo sappia la verità e che dica le cose peggiori. Tu sarai un uomo libero, onesto e d'onore, capace di fare il tuo lavoro futuro senza paura.”

“Quel farabutto di Crawford ha richiesto una risposta al suo sfrontato biglietto” disse Christie, affacciandosi alla porta.

“Rimani! Posso scriverla *io?*” disse Margaret.

Lei scrisse:

“Qualsiasi cosa tu possa fare o dire, noi abbiamo solo una strada da seguire. Nessuna minaccia può impedire al tuo padrone di fare il suo dovere.

MARGARET BROWN”

“Ecco!” disse, passandola a suo marito. “Vedrò che so tutto; io sospetto che lui abbia fatto affidamento sull'affetto che provi per me.”

Il biglietto di Margaret fece solo infuriare Crawford, non lo intimorì. Prima che finisse una settimana, tutti quelli a cui importava sapevano che il Dottor Brown, il giovane medico in carriera, era figlio del famigerato Brown, il falsario. Tutte le conseguenze si verificarono, cosa che lui aveva anticipato. Crawford dovette subire una dura condanna; il Dottor Brown e sua moglie dovettero lasciare la loro casa e andare in una più piccola, dovettero far economia ed essere parsimoniosi, assistiti in tutto con massimo zelo dalla fedele Christie. Ma, da quando il Dottor Brown aveva memoria, non era mai stato così spensierato. Il suo piede era ora fermamente piantato nel terreno e ogni passo che faceva era una sicura conquista. La gente diceva davvero che Margaret era stata vista, nei momenti peggiori, pulire a carponi la soglia di casa sua. Ma non ci credo, perché Christie non glielo avrebbe mai lasciato fare. E, per quanto riguarda la mia testimonianza personale, posso solo dire che, l'ultima volta che sono stata a Londra, ho visto una targhetta in ottone, con inciso “Dottor James Brown”, sulla porta di una bella casa in una bella piazza. E, mentre guardavo, ho visto una carrozza accostarsi alla porta, una signora uscirne e andare dentro quella casa; era sicuramente la Margaret Frazer dei giorni passati—stavo per dire più seria, più robusta, più austera. Ma, mentre

guardavo e riflettevo, l'ho vista raggiungere la finestra della sala da pranzo con un bambino tra le braccia e tutto il suo viso era disteso in un sorriso di infinita dolcezza.

NOTE

- 1 Lo zio di Margaret vuole evidenziare la loro parentela con Lord Lovat, il capo del clan Fraser (Shelston, 2007: 453).
- 2 Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat (c. 1667-1747), fu un giacobita scozzese e capo del clan Fraser di Lovat. Tramò con entrambe le fazioni nelle cospirazioni giacobite e fu giustiziato per alto tradimento (Shelston, 2007: 453).
- 3 James Crichton (1560-1582) fu un erudito scozzese che venne denominato con l'appellativo di *Admirable Crichton* (Spina, 1988: 71), diventato in Italia *Ammirabile Critonio*, per il suo fulgore d'ingegno e per la sua vastità di sapere, come riporta la lapide bilingue (inglese e italiano) all'interno della Chiesa di San Simone a Mantova, città in cui morì (<http://www.turismo.mantova.it/index.php/approfondimenti/scheda/id/134/rictab/eventi/font/small>).
- 4 *Three things drive a man out of his house—smoke, rain, and a scolding wife* è il proverbio inglese a cui l'autrice fa riferimento (Shelston, 2007: 453) e che in lingua italiana viene comunemente riportato con il proverbio *Tre cose cacciano l'uomo di casa: fumo, goccia, e femmina arrabbiata* (Varano, 2004: 78).
- 5 Nelle abitazioni vittoriane, per chiamare i domestici, i padroni di casa suonavano il campanello tirando una corda, o una catenella, o una maniglia, o una striscia di stoffa.
- 6 *Scuola diurna* traduce l'inglese *day-school* che si riferisce a una scuola privata i cui studenti vivono a casa invece che a scuola (Cambridge, 2017).

5. *RIGHT AT LAST*: APPLICATION OF THE TRANSLATION STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE ITALIAN EDITIONS OF *HALF A LIFETIME AGO* AND *SIX WEEKS AT HEPPENHEIM*

As already stated in the preceding chapters, *Right at Last*, *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* are united by the strong female protagonist theme. Moreover, the Gaskellian short story that I translated presents all the three essential points of the author's narrative style that I had identified in her two other short stories. Therefore, during my translation process of *Right at Last* I always took into account the translation strategies that the translators of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* had used to report the peculiarity of Elizabeth Gaskell's style. When in the short story I identified the strong female protagonist theme, detailed descriptions, metaphors and similes, and literary dialect, I considered, on a case-by-case basis, whether those strategies were useful to the rendering of the text into Italian and, when I regarded them as such, I applied them. Consequently, this chapter shows the passages of the short story in which I chose to apply the strategies that the two translators had used and it explains the reason of my choice. Even in this case, it is important to underline the fact that the edition of *Right at Last* of which I took account comes from *The Works of Mrs. Gaskell in Eight Volume*, too.

5.1 STRONG WOMAN

In some parts of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* the translators had decided to intervene, increasing or reducing the female protagonists' strength. Instead, I chose to never reduce the strength of character of Margaret, the protagonist of *Right at Last*. That decision derived from the fact that Margaret has a stronger character than Susan and Thekla, the protagonists of the other short stories. Indeed, in *Right at Last* the author underlined several times the marked difference between Margaret and her weak husband. Consequently, my occasional interventions aimed to increase the protagonist's strength.

Professor Frazer was perfectly aware, from Margaret's manner, that **his consent was regarded by her as a mere form**, for that her mind was made up: and he had more than once had occasion to find out how inflexible she could be. (*Right at Last*, p. 278)

Il Professor Frazer era perfettamente consapevole, dal comportamento di Margaret, che **lei considerava la sua approvazione come una mera formalità**, perché aveva già preso la sua decisione e lui aveva avuto più di una volta l'occasione di scoprire quanto inflessibile lei potesse essere.

Although Margaret has asked her uncle, Professor Frazer, to give his consent for her to marry Doctor Brown, he is perfectly aware of his niece's character, and therefore he knows that she has already made a decision that she will not change. I decided to switch *his consent was regarded by her as a mere form* from the passive voice to the active voice. In this way, it and the following subordinate clause have the same subject, but, above all, the attention is more focused on Margaret rather than Professor Frazer, and therefore the girl's strength of character is emphasised.

"Uncle" (her eyes were filling with hot indignant tears), "**I am of age**; you know he is good and clever; else why have you had him so often to your house? I marry him, and not his kinsfolk. He is an orphan. I doubt if he has any relations that he keeps up with. He has no brothers nor sisters. I don't care where he comes from." (*Right at Last*, p. 280)

"Zio," (gli occhi le si stavano riempiendo di calde lacrime di indignazione) "**sono adulta**. Tu sai che lui è bravo e intelligente; altrimenti perché lo hai ricevuto così spesso nella tua casa? Io sposo lui e non la sua parentela. È un orfano. Dubito che abbia dei parenti con cui si tenga in contatto. Non ha né fratelli né sorelle. Non mi interessa da dove proviene."

Professor Frazer has warned his niece that he will send away Doctor Brown, her future husband. Margaret responds to him by affirming that she is able to make her own decisions in a rational way. Consequently, instead of translating *I am of age* as *sono maggiorenne*, I preferred *sono adulta*, because in this way it is more highlighted the fact that the girl wants to be considered and treated as his equal by her uncle.

"Yet I think I have heard Miss Margaret Frazer **speak up pretty strongly in favour** of a long line of unspotted ancestry." (*Right at Last*, p. 280)

"Eppure penso di aver sentito la signorina Margaret Frazer **esprimersi a gran voce e con molta forza a favore** di una lunga e onorata stirpe."

Professor Frazer brings to Margaret's attention that, in order to assert her current opinions, she denies what she had asserted with the same determination in the past. *Pretty* is an intensifier that weakens the adverb that it modifies, so the quality described by *strongly* is present only to a limited extent. However, I decided to render *pretty* as *molto*, which is a stronger intensifier, since it makes the meaning of the adverb more powerful. Therefore, I emphasised Margaret's strength, because, even if the situation has changed over time, she remains a woman who always defends her beliefs decisively.

“Oh! if **you're determined to foul your own nest**, I have done. Let James Brown come in; I will make him my bow, and thank him for condescending to marry a Frazer.” (*Right at Last*, p. 280)

“Oh! Se **sei determinata ad infangare le tue stesse origini**, ho finito. Fai entrare James Brown; gli farò il mio inchino e lo ringrazierò per abbassarsi a sposare una Frazer.”

The uncle blames his niece of dishonouring her family in order to support her engagement with Doctor Brown. I decided to translate *nest* as *origini* in order to also include her ancestors (indeed, she has just denigrated Lord Lovat, who is a creditable great-uncle to the Frazers). In this way, I stressed how determined she appears to the eyes of her uncle.

“Uncle,” said Margaret, now fairly crying, “don't let us part in anger! We love each other in our hearts. You have been good to me, and so has my aunt. But I have given my word to Doctor Brown, and I must keep it. **I should love him, if he was the son of a ploughman.** We don't expect to be rich; but he has a few hundreds to start with, and I have my own hundred a year”—— (*Right at Last*, p. 280)

“Zio,” disse Margaret, ora piangendo abbondantemente “non lasciamoci con rancore! Nel profondo dei nostri cuori ci vogliamo bene. Sei stato buono con me e così anche la zia. Ma ho dato la mia parola al Dottor Brown e devo mantenerla. **Lo amerei anche se fosse il figlio di un contadino.** Non ci aspettiamo di diventare ricchi, ma lui ha qualche centinaia di sterline con cui iniziare e io ho le mie cento sterline all'anno...”

The protagonist wants her uncle to understand that she is really determined to marry Doctor Brown. I chose to transform the condition clause (introduced by *if*) into a concessive clause (introduced by *anche se*), because in this way in the Italian text it is

more clear that Margaret would love Doctor Brown anyway, independently of his social class.

Doctor and Mrs. Frazer neither objected nor approved. **Margaret would rather have had the most vehement opposition than this icy coldness.** (*Right at Last*, p. 281)

Il Dottore e la signora Frazer né obiettavano, né approvavano. **Margaret avrebbe preferito il contrasto più intenso che quella freddezza glaciale.**

Since I wanted to emphasise how fighting Margaret wants to be in defending her decisions, I decided to omit *have had* in order to focus the attention immediately on the object of her preference.

“At any rate, it is no use losing time in wondering now. Go, Crawford, as fast as you can, for a policeman. You know the name of the chimney-sweeper, of course,” she added, as Crawford was preparing to leave the room. (*Right at Last*, p. 290)

“Ad ogni modo, è inutile perdere tempo a porsi domande ora. Vai, Crawford, più veloce che puoi, a chiamare un poliziotto. Tu conosci il nome dello spazzacamino, ovviamente” aggiunse lei, mentre Crawford si stava accingendo a lasciare la stanza.

Margaret is determined and curt, because she has no intention of wasting time. In the Italian version I preferred to condense *no use* into a single word (*inutile*). In this way, the discourse is more direct and Margaret’s resolution is underlined.

But the girl stood up and said: ‘If he has known this great sorrow and shame, he needs my love all the more. **I will not leave him, nor forsake him, but love him all the better.** And I charge you, aunt, as you hope to receive a blessing for doing as you would be done by, that you tell no one!’ I really think that girl awed her aunt, in some strange way, into secrecy. (*Right at Last*, p. 295)

Ma la ragazza si alzò e disse: ‘Se lui ha conosciuto questa grande pena e vergogna, ha bisogno del mio amore ancora di più. **Non lo lascerò, né lo abbandonerò, ma lo amerò ancora di più.** E io ti impongo, zia, siccome tu speri di ricevere una benedizione per fare agli altri quello che vorresti fosse fatto a te, di non dirlo a nessuno!’ Credo davvero che quella ragazza, in qualche strano modo, con il timore influenzò sua zia a mantenere il segreto.

The girl does not let herself be persuaded by her aunt, but rather she uses the same reasonings in order to strengthen her already firm opinions. I translated *all the better* as

ancora di più, which, beyond repeating the previous expression, and therefore intensifying it, increases the original meaning from the quantitative point of view and not from the qualitative point of view. In this way the subject, namely Margaret, shows how steady her determination is.

“I can refuse to prosecute.”

“**Let Crawford go free, you knowing him to be guilty?**”

“I know him to be guilty.”

“Then, simply, **you cannot do this thing**. You let loose a criminal upon the public.” (*Right at Last*, p. 298)

“Posso rifiutare di accusarlo.”

“**Lasciare che Crawford rimanga impunito, mentre sai che è colpevole?**”

“So che è colpevole.”

“Allora, semplicemente, **non puoi farlo**. Metti un criminale in libertà tra la gente.”

Margaret is determined to prosecute the manservant Crawford, but her husband is afraid. Consequently, at the beginning she tries to convince him to change his mind by attempting to make him feel guilty, and then she directly forbids him not to take action. I decided to translate *go free* as *rimanga impunito*, because in this way the rhetorical question stressed the fact that Margaret wants her husband not to evade his responsibility, and consequently she wants to encourage him to take action, so that justice will be done. Besides, I transformed *this thing* as a direct object pronoun attached to the end of the verb. In this way, Margaret’s expression is more concise, and therefore her resolution is highlighted.

“Stay! May I write it?” said Margaret.

She wrote:—

“**Whatever you may do or say, there is but one course open to us**. No threats can deter your master from doing his duty.”

“MARGARET BROWN.”

(*Right at Last*, p. 298)

“Rimani! Posso scriverla *io?*” disse Margaret.

Lei scrisse:

“**Qualsiasi cosa tu possa fare o dire, noi abbiamo solo una strada da seguire**. Nessuna minaccia può impedire al tuo padrone di fare il suo dovere.

MARGARET BROWN”

Considering her husband's fear and his constant indecisions, Margaret faces the situation and firmly replies to Crawford's note addressed to Doctor Brown. In a concise way, in order to make it clearer, she informs the manservant that nothing can stop her and her husband from doing what is right. The expression *there is but one course open to us* indicates the possible path to follow, but I preferred to translate it as *noi abbiamo solo una strada da seguire*, which emphasises the fact that such path will be certainly followed. Consequently, it is underlined that Margaret is strong and does not submit to the blackmail.

5.2 NARRATIVE STYLE

The detailed description, the frequent use of metaphors and similes, and the use of literary dialect are the three essential points of Gaskellian narrative style that I had identified in her two other short stories and that are also present in *Right at Last*. Once again, they are used by the author in order to create a realistic short story.

5.2.1 DESCRIPTION

Even though *Right at Last* is briefer than *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, likewise it presents accurate descriptions, which increase the realistic effect of the short story. Indeed, even in this case, the descriptions present long sentences in which there are many punctuation marks (except the full stop, which is less used) and many conjunctions *and*. In the same way as the translators of the other Gaskellian short stories, I kept this stylistic peculiarity as much as possible in order to remain faithful to the original text. But, similarly, in some cases I decided to intervene, without altering radically the work, in order to make the text more flowing.

Doctor Brown was rather afraid lest Margaret should think the house bare and cheerless in its half-furnished state; for he had obeyed her injunctions and bought as little furniture as might be, in addition to the few things he had inherited from his mother. His consulting-room (how grand it sounded!) was completely arranged, ready for stray patients; and it was well calculated to make a good impression on them. There was a Turkey-carpet on the floor, that had been his mother's, and was just sufficiently worn to give it the air of respectability which handsome pieces of furniture have when they look as if they had not just been purchased for the occasion, but are in some degree hereditary. The same appearance pervaded the room: the library-table

(bought second-hand, it must be confessed), the bureau—that had been his mother’s—the leather chairs (as hereditary as the library-table), the shelves Crawford had put up for Doctor Brown’s medical books, a good engraving on the walls, gave altogether so pleasant an aspect to the apartment that both Doctor and Mrs. Brown thought, for that evening at any rate, that poverty was just as comfortable a thing as riches. Crawford had ventured to take the liberty of placing a few **flowers** about the room, as his humble way of welcoming his mistress—late autumn-**flowers**, blending the idea of summer with that of winter, suggested by the bright little fire in the grate. Christie sent up delicious scones for tea; and Mrs. Frazer had made up for her want of geniality, as well as she could, by a store of marmalade and mutton hams. (*Right at Last*, p. 283)

Il Dottor Brown aveva molta paura che Margaret potesse ritenere la casa spoglia e triste essendo semiarredata, perché lui aveva rispettato i suoi ordini e aveva comprato il minimo possibile di arredo, oltre alle poche cose che lui aveva ereditato da sua madre. Il suo studio medico (come suonava grandioso!) era completamente sistemato, pronto per eventuali pazienti, ed era ben studiato per far loro una buona impressione. Sul pavimento c’era un tappeto turco, che era stato di sua madre, ed era appena sufficientemente consumato per conferirgli l’aria di rispettabilità che i notevoli pezzi di arredo hanno quando sembrano non essere stati appena comprati per l’occasione, ma sono in una certa misura ereditati. Lo stesso aspetto pervadeva la stanza: il tavolo (comprato di seconda mano, bisogna ammetterlo), lo scrittoio (che era stato di sua madre), le poltrone in pelle (ereditate come il tavolo), le mensole che Crawford aveva appeso per i libri di medicina del Dottor Brown e una bella incisione sulle pareti davano complessivamente un aspetto così piacevole all’abitazione che sia il Dottore che la signora Brown pensavano, almeno per quella sera, che la povertà fosse una cosa altrettanto confortevole quanto la ricchezza. Crawford, come suo umile modo di accogliere la padrona di casa, si era coraggiosamente preso la libertà di posizionare per la stanza alcuni **fiori** di tardo autunno, unendo l’idea dell’estate con quella dell’inverno, suggerita dal luminoso fuocherello nel camino. Christie portò su delle deliziose focaccine per il tè e la signora Frazer aveva compensato la sua mancanza di cordialità, come meglio poteva, con una scorta di marmellata e prosciutti di montone.

She remembered all his pretty marks of attention to her, from the day when he had welcomed her arrival at her new home by his humble present of flowers, until only the day before, when, seeing her fatigued, he had, unasked, made her a cup of **coffee**—**coffee** such as none but he could make. How often had he thought of warm dry clothes for her husband; how wakeful had he been at nights; how diligent in the mornings! (*Right at Last*, p. 293)

Si ricordava tutti i gradevoli gesti di attenzione verso di lei, dal giorno in cui lui aveva accolto il suo arrivo alla nuova casa con il suo umile dono floreale, fino solo al giorno prima, quando, vedendola affaticata, senza chiedere, le aveva preparato una tazza di **caffè**, come nessuno, tranne lui, sapeva

preparare. Quante volte lui aveva pensato a vestiti caldi e asciutti per suo marito, quanto vigile era stato di notte, quanto diligente al mattino!

As stated previously in Chapter 3, in order to make her descriptions more incisive, the author occasionally used some repetitions. Nevertheless, when I found them to be superfluous in Italian, I preferred to omit them. In both examples, there are unnecessary repetitions of the same words (*flowers, coffee*), and therefore I decided to remove them in order to make the Italian sentences more flowing.

Doctor Brown was rather afraid lest Margaret should think the house bare and cheerless in its half-furnished state; for he had obeyed her injunctions and bought as little furniture as might be, in addition to the few things he had inherited from his mother. His consulting-room (how grand it sounded!) was completely arranged, ready for stray patients; and it was well calculated to make a good impression on them. There was a Turkey-carpet on the floor, that had been his mother's, and was just sufficiently worn to give it the air of respectability which handsome pieces of furniture have when they look as if they had not just been purchased for the occasion, but are in some degree hereditary. The same appearance pervaded the room: the library-table (bought second-hand, it must be confessed), the bureau—that had been his mother's—the leather chairs (as hereditary as the library-table), the shelves Crawford had put up for Doctor Brown's medical books, a good engraving on the walls, gave altogether so pleasant an aspect to the apartment that both Doctor and Mrs. Brown thought, for that evening at any rate, that poverty was just as comfortable a thing as riches. Crawford had ventured to take the liberty of placing a few flowers about the room, as his humble way of welcoming his mistress—**late autumn-flowers, blending the idea of summer with that of winter, suggested by the bright little fire in the grate.** Christie sent up delicious scones for tea; and Mrs. Frazer had made up for her want of geniality, as well as she could, by a store of marmalade and mutton hams. (*Right at Last*, p. 283)

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complessivamente un aspetto così piacevole all'abitazione che sia il Dottore che la signora Brown pensavano, almeno per quella sera, che la povertà fosse una cosa altrettanto confortevole quanto la ricchezza. Crawford, come suo umile modo di accogliere la padrona di casa, si era coraggiosamente preso la libertà di posizionare per la stanza alcuni fiori **di tardo autunno, unendo l'idea dell'estate con quella dell'inverno, suggerita dal luminoso fuocherello nel camino**. Christie portò su delle deliziose focaccine per il tè e la signora Frazer aveva compensato la sua mancanza di cordialità, come meglio poteva, con una scorta di marmellata e prosciutti di montone.

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The household of the newly-married couple was to consist of a Scotchwoman long connected with the Frazer family, who was to be the sole female servant, and of a man whom Doctor Brown picked up in London, soon after he had fixed on a house—**a man named Crawford, who had lived for many years with a gentleman now gone abroad, who gave him the most excellent character, in reply to Doctor Brown's inquiries**. (*Right at Last*, p. 282)

Il nucleo familiare della coppia di novelli sposi avrebbe incluso una donna scozzese da lungo tempo in rapporto con la famiglia Frazer, la quale sarebbe stata l'unica domestica, e un uomo che il Dottor Brown assunse a Londra, subito dopo aver scelto una casa. **L'uomo, che si chiamava Crawford, aveva vissuto per molti anni con un gentiluomo, il quale in quel momento si trovava all'estero, e che, in risposta alle domande del Dottor Brown, mostrò il carattere più eccellente**.

In the descriptions, sometimes, in order to emphasise some additional information, Elizabeth Gaskell introduced them by using the dashes, because these punctuation marks violently disrupt the flow of the sentences (Trask, 1997: 69). Since in the Italian version these parenthetical phrases occasionally interrupt too much the discourse fluency, I decided to intervene in the text structure by adopting the strategies employed

in the Italian editions of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*. In the first example, I chose to remove the dash and place the additional information within the sentence. In the second example, I replaced the punctuation mark of the English text with a bracketing comma, in order to transform the strong interruption into a weak one (Trask, 1997: 21). In the last example, I decided to remove the dash, in order to avoid a very long interruption that would have fragmented the text too much, and add a full stop, so that I could place the additional information in a new sentence.

Doctor Brown was rather afraid lest Margaret should think the house bare and cheerless in its half-furnished state; for he had obeyed her injunctions and bought as little furniture as might be, in addition to the few things he had inherited from his mother. His consulting-room (how grand it sounded!) was completely arranged, ready for stray patients; and it was well calculated to make a good impression on them. There was a Turkey-carpet on the floor, that had been his mother's, and was just sufficiently worn to give it the air of respectability which handsome pieces of furniture have when they look as if they had not just been purchased for the occasion, but are in some degree hereditary. The same appearance pervaded the room: the library-table (bought second-hand, it must be confessed), the bureau—that had been his mother's—the leather chairs (as hereditary as the library-table), the shelves Crawford had put up for Doctor Brown's medical books, a good engraving on the walls, gave altogether so pleasant an aspect to the apartment that both Doctor and Mrs. Brown thought, for that evening at any rate, that poverty was just as comfortable a thing as riches. Crawford had ventured to take the liberty of placing a few flowers about the room, as his humble way of welcoming his mistress—late autumn-flowers, blending the idea of summer with that of winter, suggested by the bright little fire in the grate. Christie sent up delicious scones for tea; and Mrs. Frazer had made up for her want of geniality, as well as she could, by a store of marmalade and mutton hams. **Doctor Brown could not be easy in his comfort, until he had shown Margaret, almost with a groan, how many rooms were as yet unfurnished—how much remained to be done.** (*Right at Last*, p. 283)

Il Dottor Brown aveva molta paura che Margaret potesse ritenere la casa spoglia e triste essendo semiarredata, perché lui aveva rispettato i suoi ordini e aveva comprato il minimo possibile di arredo, oltre alle poche cose che lui aveva ereditato da sua madre. Il suo studio medico (come suonava grandioso!) era completamente sistemato, pronto per eventuali pazienti, ed era ben studiato per far loro una buona impressione. Sul pavimento c'era un tappeto turco, che era stato di sua madre, ed era appena sufficientemente consumato per conferirgli l'aria di rispettabilità che i notevoli pezzi di arredo hanno quando sembrano non essere stati appena comprati per l'occasione, ma sono in una certa misura ereditati. Lo stesso aspetto pervadeva la stanza: il tavolo (comprato di seconda mano, bisogna ammetterlo), lo scrittoio (che era stato di sua madre), le poltrone in pelle

(ereditate come il tavolo), le mensole che Crawford aveva appeso per i libri di medicina del Dottor Brown e una bella incisione sulle pareti davano complessivamente un aspetto così piacevole all'abitazione che sia il Dottore che la signora Brown pensavano, almeno per quella sera, che la povertà fosse una cosa altrettanto confortevole quanto la ricchezza. Crawford, come suo umile modo di accogliere la padrona di casa, si era coraggiosamente preso la libertà di posizionare per la stanza alcuni fiori di tardo autunno, unendo l'idea dell'estate con quella dell'inverno, suggerita dal luminoso fuocherello nel camino. Christie portò su delle deliziose focaccine per il tè e la signora Frazer aveva compensato la sua mancanza di cordialità, come meglio poteva, con una scorta di marmellata e prosciutti di montone.

Il Dottor Brown non riusciva a sentirsi tranquillo in quel benessere, finchè non avesse mostrato a Margaret, quasi gemendo, quante stanze non erano ancora arredate... quanto rimaneva da fare.

In this instance, I chose to divide the text into two separate paragraphs, since in the first one there is a specific description of James Brown's consulting room, while in the second one the description stops and the text progresses to analyse Doctor Brown's sad reflections about the situation of the other rooms.

She was a protégée of Christie's, who was not apt to accord her favour easily, or without good grounds; an honest, decent widow, with a large family to maintain by her labour—that was the character in which Margaret had engaged her; **and** she looked it. Grimy in her dress—because she could not spare the money or time to be clean—her skin looked healthy and cared for; she had a straightforward, business-like appearance about her, and seemed in no ways daunted nor surprised to see Doctor and Mrs. Brown standing in the middle of the room, in displeased perplexity and distress. (*Right at Last*, pp. 288-289)

Lei era una protetta di Christie, la quale non era incline a concedere la sua predilezione facilmente o senza buoni motivi; era una vedova onesta e rispettabile, con una famiglia numerosa da mantenere con il suo lavoro—quella era la reputazione con la quale Margaret l'aveva assunta e quella vide. Sporca nel suo vestito—perché non poteva risparmiare il denaro o il tempo per la sua pulizia—la sua pelle sembrava sana e curata, si mostrava semplice ed efficiente e non sembrava in alcun modo scoraggiata né sorpresa nel vedere il Dottore e la signora Brown stare nel mezzo della stanza, in uno stato di sofferenza e contrariata perplessità.

Doctor Brown was poor, and had to make his way in the world. He had gone to study his profession in Edinburgh, and his energy, ability, and good conduct had entitled him to some notice on the part of the professors. Once introduced to the ladies of their families, his prepossessing appearance and pleasing manners made him a universal favourite; **and** perhaps no other student received so many invitations to dancing- and evening-parties, or was

so often singled out to fill up an odd vacancy at the last moment at the dinner-table. No one knew particularly who he was, or where he sprang from; but then he had no near relations, as he had once or twice observed; so he was evidently not hampered with low-born or low-bred connections. He had been in mourning for his mother, when he first came to college. (*Right at Last*, p. 278)

Il Dottor Brown era povero e doveva farsi strada nel mondo. Era andato a studiare medicina a Edimburgo e, grazie alla sua energia, alla sua capacità e alla sua buona condotta, aveva ricevuto una certa attenzione da parte dei professori. Una volta presentato alle donne delle loro famiglie, il suo aspetto attraente e i suoi modi galanti lo resero il preferito in assoluto; forse nessun altro studente ricevette così tanti inviti a feste da ballo e ricevimenti serali o fu scelto così spesso per occupare un posto a tavola liberatosi all'ultimo. Nessuno sapeva esattamente chi fosse o da dove venisse; dopotutto non aveva parenti stretti, come aveva fatto notare una o due volte, perciò evidentemente non era ostacolato da familiari di umili origini o di scarsa signorilità. Prima di iniziare il college, era stato in lutto per sua madre.

She had held her tongue from any repining words; for she remembered the old proverb about a smoky chimney and a scolding wife; but she was more irritated by the puffs of smoke coming over her pretty white work than she cared to show; **and** it was in a sharper tone than usual that she spoke, in bidding Crawford take care and have the chimney swept. The next morning all had cleared brightly off. Her husband had convinced her that their money matters were going on well; the fire burned briskly at breakfast time; and the unwonted sun shone in at the windows. (*Right at Last*, p. 287)

Lei si era trattenuta dall'esprimere la sua insoddisfazione perché ricordava il vecchio proverbio riguardo un camino fumoso e una moglie brontolona, ma era più irritata dagli sbuffi di fumo che passavano sopra il suo grazioso ricamo bianco su bianco di quello che voleva mostrare. Fu in un tono più severo del solito che parlò, nell'ordinare a Crawford di fare attenzione e di far spazzare il camino. La mattina seguente tutto si era brillantemente sistemato. Suo marito l'aveva convinta che le loro questioni economiche stavano procedendo positivamente, il fuoco bruciava vivacemente al momento della colazione e l'inconsueto sole splendeva attraverso le finestre.

The author often used a semicolon followed by a copulative conjunctions *and*. However, I sometimes tried to modify this construction, since it is very uncommon in Italian. In the first example, I decided to remove the semicolon and use only the copulative conjunction, in order not to separate too much the discourse from its short final part. In the second example, I decided to remove the copulative conjunction *and* and use only the punctuation mark, because I preferred to keep the pause between the

two parts of the discourse. In the third example, I chose to transform the English construction into a full stop, in order to create two separate sentences. In this way, I more emphasised their difference. In the first part, Elizabeth Gaskell referred to the reflections and the emotions of Margaret, while in the second one the author presented the protagonist's concrete action.

Crawford was so good a carpenter that he could put up shelves, adjust faulty hinges, mend locks, and even went the length of constructing a box of some old boards that had once formed a packing-case. (*Right at Last*, p. 282)

Crawford era un carpentiere così bravo che poteva montare mensole, aggiustare cardini difettosi e riparare serrature. Arrivò perfino a costruire una scatola con alcune vecchie assi che una volta avevano formato una cassa.

While her whole energies were bent on the speedy recovery of the money, and she was rapidly going over the necessary steps to be taken, her husband "sat all poured out into his chair," as the Germans say; no force in him to keep his limbs in any attitude requiring the slightest exertion; his face sunk, miserable, and with that foreshadowing of the lines of age which sudden distress is apt to call out on the youngest and smoothest faces. (*Right at Last*, p. 289)

Mentre tutte le sue energie erano rivolte al veloce ritrovamento dei soldi e stava rapidamente esaminando i passi necessari da compiere, suo marito "sedeva tutto riversato sulla sua poltrona", come dicono i tedeschi; nessuna forza in lui per tenere gli arti in una qualsiasi posa che richiedesse il minimo sforzo. Il suo viso era abbattuto e triste, con quell'anticipazione delle rughe del tempo che una sofferenza improvvisa è portata a segnare i visi più giovani e più lisci.

In these examples, there are two sentences that I chose to divide with a full stop. In the first case, I decided to create a new sentence, in order to distinguish in a more decisive way the list of things that the manservant can normally do from a particular thing that Crawford did once. Therefore, I wanted to highlight the difference. In the second case, the sentence is long, and so I preferred to separate the general description about Doctor Brown's body from the more specific one about his face. In this way, the interruption of the discourse emphasises the second part, namely how much the distress has marked James Brown.

5.2.2 METAPHORS AND SIMILES

Also in *Right at Last* Elizabeth Gaskell used metaphors and similes to clarify what she wanted to express. By evoking simple and known realities, the author enriched the description, too. As I already stated, in most cases English metaphors and similes can be rendered in Italian without great problems (Dodds, 1985: 248). But, in the same way as

the translators of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, I had to intervene occasionally in the short story.

Doctor Brown was poor, and had to **make his way** in the world. (*Right at Last*, p. 278)

Il Dottor Brown era povero e doveva **farsi strada** nel mondo.

In English, *make one's way* figuratively means *to make progress* (Hornby, 2000: 1464). It is a metaphor that I tried to preserve, even if I had to change a grammatical category. Indeed, the English verb and the English possessive determiner have become a single apparent reflexive verb, which is used in Italian when “the action done by the subject does not reflect on the subject and the pronoun is an indirect object” (Pellegrini and Albertini, 1994: 135). Indeed, *farsi strada* figuratively means *to achieve success* or *to have a successful career* (Quartu, 2017).

Yet he, too, was of the same **blood**, and held to his own opinions in the same obdurate manner. (*Right at Last*, p. 278)

Ma anche in lui scorreva lo stesso **sangue** e persisteva nelle proprie convinzioni con la medesima caparbia.

In this example, the metaphor *blood* means *family origins* (Hornby, 2000: 120) and I reproduced it with the equivalent Italian noun *sangue*, which figuratively means *family* or *lineage* (Sabatini and Coletti, 2017). Besides, I added the verb *scorrere*, in order to keep the analogy of blood.

But who cares for the opinion of a **love-sick** girl? (*Right at Last*, p. 279)

Ma a chi interessa l'opinione di una ragazza **accecata dall'amore**?

Lovesick is a metaphor that shows love as disease and it is used to indicate *someone who is unable to think clearly or behave in a sensible way because he/she is in love with somebody* (Hornby, 2000: 764). In order to preserve this metaphorical meaning in Italian, I replaced the disease with the blindness. Indeed, in Italian *accecata dall'amore* literally means *blinded by love*.

“What was his father?” asked Professor Frazer **coldly**. (*Right at Last*, p. 280)

“Cosa faceva suo padre?” domandò **con freddezza** il Professor Frazer.

“Tell us exactly what to do,” she said very **coldly** and quietly, addressing herself to the policeman. (*Right at Last*, p. 292)

“Ci racconti esattamente cosa fare” disse lei **in modo** molto **freddo** e pacato, rivolgendosi al poliziotto.

In these two instances, *coldly* metaphorically means *without any emotion* (Hornby, 2000: 231). In the translation I reproduced both the literal meaning and the figurative meaning of the metaphors, but I changed their grammatical category (from adverbs to adverbial phrases). In the second case, I did not use *con freddezza*, because there is *very*, which is an intensifier that modifies the adverb, and because *coldly* is followed by another adverb (*quietly*).

We love each other **in our hearts**. (*Right at Last*, p. 280)

Nel profondo dei nostri cuori ci vogliamo bene.

In English, *in one's heart* metaphorically means *fundamentally* (Collins, 2017). I tried to keep the figure of speech, but I also added *profondo*, in order to better express the depth of the feeling in Italian.

You have settled it all for yourself, it seems; so **I wash my hands of it**. (*Right at Last*, p.280)

Hai sistemato tutto da sola, a quanto pare; quindi **me ne lavo le mani**.

Wash one's hands of something figuratively means *to refuse to be responsible for or involved with something* (Hornby, 2000: 1458). I preserved the metaphor, but I changed the grammatical category of some parts of the expression, because *lavarsene le mani* is the version that is used in Italian language, in order to express the same meaning. Indeed, this figure of speech means *to disclaim all responsibility for something* (Quartu, 2017).

But it made her turn with redoubled affection to her **warm-hearted** and sympathising lover. (*Right at Last*, p. 281)

Ma questo la fece volgere con affetto raddoppiato verso il suo comprensivo innamorato dal **cuore d'oro**.

In English, *warm-hearted* figuratively means *kind, friendly and sympathetic* (Hornby, 2000: 1457). In order to reproduce the metaphorical meaning, I kept the analogy of heart, but I transformed the other part of the figure of speech. Indeed, the metaphor *cuore d'oro* indicate a *very good, generous and understanding person* (Quartu, 2017).

Besides, they had stood to her so long in the relation of parents, that she felt she had no right to bring in a stranger **to sit in judgment upon them**. (*Right at Last*, p. 281)

Inoltre, loro erano stati per lei come dei genitori per così tanto tempo, che sentiva di non avere il diritto di introdurre un estraneo **che svolgesse il ruolo di giudice nei loro confronti**.

In the British courtrooms the judge sits behind a raised desk, and therefore he/she looks down on the accused. So, this metaphor means *to judge like a judge*. I explicated more distinctly the figure of speech, in order to make its meaning clearer.

So it was rather with a **heavy heart** that she arranged their future *ménage* with Doctor Brown, unable to profit by her aunt's experience and wisdom. (*Right at Last*, p. 281)

Perciò fu piuttosto con la **morte nel cuore** che lei programmò con il Dottor Brown la futura gestione della loro casa, impossibilitata a beneficiare dell'esperienza e della saggezza di sua zia.

So Crawford was at large again, much to Christie's dismay; who took off her Sunday clothes, on her return home, with a **heavy heart**, hoping, rather than trusting, that they should not all be murdered in their beds before the week was out. (*Right at Last*, p. 294)

Perciò Crawford fu di nuovo in libertà, con grande sgomento di Christie, la quale, al suo rientro a casa, si tolse gli abiti della domenica con la **morte nel cuore**, sperando, più che credere, che loro non dovessero essere tutti uccisi nei loro letti prima che la settimana finisse.

In both these examples, there is the metaphor *heavy heart*, which means a *feeling of great sadness* (Hornby, 2000: 603). Even in these two cases, in order to preserve the metaphorical meaning, I kept the analogy of heart, but I transformed the other part of the figure of speech. Indeed, *con la morte nel cuore* figuratively means *with deep sorrow* (De Mauro, 2017).

This gentleman had employed Crawford in a number of ways; so that in fact he was a kind of **Jack-of-all-trades**; and Doctor Brown, in every letter to Margaret, had some new accomplishment of his servant's to relate. (*Right at Last*, p. 282)

Questo gentiluomo aveva impiegato Crawford in diversi modi, perciò in effetti era una specie di **tuttofare**; il Dottor Brown, in ogni lettera per Margaret, aveva qualche nuovo talento del suo domestico da raccontare.

Jack-of-all-trades indicates a person who can do many different types of work (Hornby, 2000: 692). I reproduced the meaning of the English metaphor with the Italian metaphor *tuttofare*. Indeed, it indicates *someone who does a bit of everything* (Treccani, 2017).

He was Margaret's **right hand** in all her little household plans, in a way which irritated Christie not a little. (*Right at Last*, p. 284)

Era il **braccio destro** di Margaret in tutti i suoi piccoli progetti domestici, in un modo che irritava Christie non poco.

Right hand is a metaphor that means *an efficient or indispensable assistant* (Oxford, 2017). In the translation, I replaced *hand* with the Italian word for *arm* (which is a part of the body belonging to upper limbs, too), since *braccio destro* is the metaphor that is used in the Italian language to express the same meaning. Indeed, the Italian figure of speech indicates *a reliable and highly capable helper* (Quartu, 2017).

Margaret took the guineas, and carried them upstairs to her own secrétaire in silence; having learnt the difficult art of trying to **swallow down** her household cares in the presence of her husband. (*Right at Last*, p. 286)

Margaret prese le ghinee e in silenzio le portò al piano superiore al suo mobiletto personale, avendo imparato la difficile arte di cercare di **sopportare** le preoccupazioni domestiche in presenza di suo marito.

In English, *to swallow (something) down* literally means *to ingurgitate* (Sansoni, 2017), but it metaphorically means *to accept something without expressing disagreement*. I tried to preserve the figurative meaning with another Italian metaphor. Indeed, I used *sopportare*, which is a verb that literally means *to hold or support a load*, but it metaphorically means *to tolerate, to bear without resistance* (Sabatini and Coletti, 2017).

I'll go into the City to-morrow, and sell out some shares, and **set your little heart at ease**. (*Right at Last*, p. 286)

Andrò nella City domani, venderò alcune azioni e **toglierò un peso dal tuo cuoricino**.

In this case, the metaphor *set one's little heart at ease* means *to alleviate one's worries*. In Italian, I tried to reproduce the figurative meaning with another metaphor that keeps the analogy of heart. Indeed, *togliere un peso (di dosso)* figuratively means *to unburden someone of his/her worries* (Treccani, 2017).

She had held her tongue from any repining words; for she remembered the old proverb about a smoky chimney and a scolding wife; but she was more irritated by the puffs of smoke coming over her pretty white work than she cared to show; and it was in a **sharper** tone than usual that she spoke, in bidding Crawford take care and have the chimney swept. The next morning all had cleared brightly off. Her husband had convinced her that their money matters were going on well; the fire burned briskly at breakfast time; and the unwonted sun shone in at the windows. Margaret was surprised, when Crawford told her that he had not been able to meet with a chimney-sweeper that morning; but that he had tried to arrange the coals in the grate, so that, for this one morning at least, his mistress should not be annoyed, and, by the next, he would take care to secure a sweep. Margaret thanked him, and acquiesced in all plans about giving a general cleaning to the room; the more readily, because she felt that she had spoken **sharply** the night before. (*Right at Last*, p. 287)

Lei si era trattenuta dall'esprimere la sua insoddisfazione perché ricordava il vecchio proverbio riguardo un camino fumoso e una moglie brontolona, ma era più irritata dagli sbuffi di fumo che passavano sopra il suo grazioso ricamo bianco su bianco di quello che voleva mostrare. Fu in un tono **più duro** del solito che parlò, nell'ordinare a Crawford di fare attenzione e di far spazzare il camino. La mattina seguente tutto si era brillantemente sistemato. Suo marito l'aveva convinta che le loro questioni economiche stavano procedendo positivamente, il fuoco bruciava vivacemente al momento della colazione e l'inconsueto sole splendeva attraverso le finestre. Margaret fu sorpresa quando Crawford le disse che quella mattina non era stato capace di imbattersi in uno spazzacamino, ma che aveva cercato di sistemare il carbone nel focolare, in modo che, per quell'unica mattina almeno, la padrona di casa non dovesse essere infastidita, e, dalla seguente, lui avrebbe provveduto a far sì che il camino venisse spazzato. Margaret lo ringraziò e assecondò con maggior facilità tutti i progetti di dare una pulizia generale alla stanza, perché sentiva che aveva parlato **duramente** la sera prima. Decise di andare a pagare tutte le fatture e fare alcune visite lontano da casa il mattino seguente; suo marito promise di andare nella City a procurarle il denaro.

The inspector gave one **sharp** look at the charwoman, who was going on with her scouring with stolid indifference, turned her out, and then asked Margaret where Crawford came from—how long he had lived with them, and various other questions, all showing the direction his suspicions had taken. (*Right at Last*, p. 291)

L'ispettore diede un **duro** sguardo alla donna delle pulizie, che stava continuando con il suo lavoro con una indifferenza impassibile, la mandò via e poi chiese a Margaret da dove provenisse Crawford, da quanto tempo viveva con loro e diverse altre domande; tutte mostravano la direzione che i suoi sospetti avevano preso.

In these two instances, there are three metaphors that have the same root: *sharper* (comparative adjective), *sharply* (adverb) e *sharp* (adjective). *Sharp* literally means *having a fine edge or point, especially of something that can cut or make a hole in something*, but it figuratively means *critical or harsh* (Hornby, 2000: 1177). I tried to reproduce the metaphorical meaning of the three figures of speech by translating them into other Italian metaphors (*più duro*, *duramente* and *duro*). Indeed, *duro* literally means *resistant to intrusive external forces*, but it figuratively means *harsh, violent* (Sabatini and Coletti, 2017).

“There can be no doubt of the course to be taken. You, sir, must give your man-servant in charge. He will be taken before the sitting magistrate directly; and there is already evidence enough to make him be remanded for a week, during which time we may trace the notes, and **complete the chain.**” (*Right at Last*, p. 292)

“Non ci può essere alcun dubbio sulla strada da intraprendere. Lei, signore, deve consegnare il suo domestico alla polizia. Lui sarà direttamente portato dinanzi al magistrato in carica e ci sono già prove sufficienti affinché venga detenuto in attesa di giudizio per una settimana, durante la quale noi potremmo rintracciare le banconote e **chiudere il cerchio.**”

Complete the chain is a metaphor that means *to conclude, to terminate*. In order to reproduce the figurative meaning, I translated it as *chiudere il cerchio*, which is another metaphor.

Indeed, Margaret felt it to be so; and, now that the necessity for immediate speech and action was over, she began to fancy that she must be very hard-hearted—very deficient in common feeling; inasmuch as she had not suffered like her husband, at the discovery that the servant—whom they had been learning to consider as a friend, and to look upon as having their

interests so **warmly** at heart—was, in all probability, a treacherous thief. (*Right at Last*, p. 293)

In effetti, Margaret era convinta che fosse così; ora che era passata la necessità di parlare e agire immediatamente, iniziò a credere di dover essere davvero dura di cuore... davvero carente di ciò che in genere si dovrebbe provare, dato che lei non aveva sofferto come suo marito alla scoperta che il domestico—che loro avevano imparato a considerare come un amico e a ritenere che avesse i loro interessi tanto **vivamente** a cuore—era, con tutta probabilità, un infido ladro.

Warmly literally means *in a way that gives out warmth* (Oxford, 2017). However, in this case it is used as metaphor, because it means *in a way that shows that you like something very much* (Longman, 2017). In the Italian version, I tried to preserve the figurative meaning by using another metaphor. Indeed, *vivamente*, which literally means *in a lively manner, strongly, resolutely*, figuratively means *fervently, deeply* (Gabrielli, 2017).

But, as I watched and thought, I saw her come to the dining-room window with a baby in her arms, and her whole face **melted** into a smile of infinite sweetness. (*Right at Last*, p. 299)

Ma, mentre guardavo e riflettevo, l'ho vista raggiungere la finestra della sala da pranzo con un bambino tra le braccia e tutto il suo viso era **disteso** in un sorriso di infinita dolcezza.

In English, *melted* literally means *having turned soft or into a liquid* (Cambridge, 2017), but in this case it is a metaphor, because it means *not tense*. In order to reproduce the figurative meaning in Italian, I used another metaphor. Indeed, *disteso* means *calm, relaxed* (Sabatini and Coletti, 2017).

5.2.3 LITERARY DIALECT

Unlike *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, in *Right at Last* literary dialect was not used to represent the speech of certain rural and/or lower-class characters (in the other two short stories literary dialect identifies the characters mainly from the social point of view: uneducated and/or working class people), but it was exclusively employed to identify the characters from the geographical point of view. Indeed, in *Right at Last* literary dialect is present in the dialogues of Professor Frazer,

who is a member of the upper middle class and comes from Scotland. In any case, even in this short story Elizabeth Gaskell used dialect when the speaker wants to give more expressiveness to his/her discourse in order to establish a more direct relation with the interlocutor (indeed, dialect features often increase the immediacy of the discourse).

Before showing the examples, I summarized the dialect features that I identified in the dialogues of *Right at Last* in the table below. For my analysis I used *Oxford, Collins* and *Chambers* online dictionaries and the *Dictionary of the Scots language*.

Dialect features	Word classes	Meanings
<i>Ay</i>	Exclamation	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Hoot</i>	Exclamation	<i>An exclamation of impatience or dissatisfaction</i>
<i>Maun</i>	Modal verb	<i>Must</i>
<i>See (someone) far enough (first)</i>	Phrase	<i>To wish that someone were out of the way, had not appeared or interfered in some way (used as an emphatic expression of exasperation, repugnance or defiance)</i>

In the translations of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, the translators tried to preserve the social function of the source language dialect (which was the main one), but they inevitably removed the geographical factor. Since even in *Right at Last* the function of the dialect is geographical (but in this short story is the only one), likewise I decided not to render the source language dialect by a target language dialect, because I would not have rendered the function that dialect performs in the source text and I would have created a geographical confusion. Therefore, I rendered source text dialect by target language standard, although unfortunately the special effect intended in the source text was removed (Hatim and Mason, 2013: 41).

“Nonsense, child! Sir Alexander is a personable and agreeable man—middle-aged, if you will—well, a wilful woman **maun** have her way; but, if I had had a notion that this youngster was sneaking into my house to cajole you into fancying him, **I would have seen him far enough** before I had ever let your aunt invite him to dinner. **Ay!** you may mutter; but I say, no gentleman would ever have come into my house to seduce my niece’s affections, without first informing me of his intentions, and asking my leave.” (*Right at Last*, p. 279)

“Che assurdit , figliola! Sir Alexander   un uomo affabile e di bell’aspetto ... di mezza et , per cos  dire... beh, una donna volitiva **deve** fare ci  che vuole; ma, se avessi avuto idea che questo ragazzo si stava intrufolando in casa mia per indurti ad amarlo, **avrei desiderato che si fosse tolto di torno** prima ancora di aver permesso a tua zia di invitarlo a cena. **S !** Puoi anche borbottare; ma dico che, nessun gentiluomo sarebbe mai venuto in casa mia a corteggiare mia nipote, senza prima informarmi delle sue intenzioni, e chiedermi il permesso.”

“**Hoot!** is that the way for a maiden to speak? Where does he come from? Who are his kinsfolk? Unless he can give a pretty good account of his family and prospects, I shall just bid him begone, Margaret; and that I tell you fairly.”(*Right at Last*, pp. 279-280)

“**Ohib !**   questo il modo in cui parla una ragazza? Lui da dove viene? Chi sono i suoi parenti? A meno che non riesca a fornire un resoconto abbastanza esaustivo/pi  che sufficiente della sua famiglia e delle sue prospettive, mi limiter  ad intimargli di andarsene, Margaret; e te lo dico ragionevolmente.”

Professor Frazer is strongly addressing his niece Margaret, because she does not want to accept his advice. He wants to increase the expressiveness of his discourse, in order to address the girl more directly. This is the reason why the author introduced some dialect features in this part of his speech. In particular, in the first instance Professor Frazer uses the emphatic expression *to see (someone) far enough (first)*, which I decided to translate as *avrei desiderato che si fosse tolto di torno*, in order to reproduce the same emphasis. *Togliersi di torno* means *to leave, to depart from a place where one’s presence represents an obstacle or is cause of annoyance* (De Mauro, 2017). In the second instance, Professor Frazer, disappointed with the manner in which Margaret replies, utters an instinctive exclamation of dissatisfaction, which I chose to reproduce as the Italian exclamation *ohib *, which expresses disapproval (Sabatini and Coletti, 2017).

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APPENDIX

Right at Last

Doctor Brown was poor, and had to make his way in the world. He had gone to study his profession in Edinburgh, and his energy, ability, and good conduct had entitled him to some notice on the part of the professors. Once introduced to the ladies of their families, his prepossessing appearance and pleasing manners made him a universal favourite; and perhaps no other student received so many invitations to dancing- and evening-parties, or was so often singled out to fill up an odd vacancy at the last moment at the dinner-table. No one knew particularly who he was, or where he sprang from; but then he had no near relations, as he had once or twice observed; so he was evidently not hampered with low-born or low-bred connections. He had been in mourning for his mother, when he first came to college.

All this much was recalled to the recollection of Professor Frazer by his niece Margaret, as she stood before him one morning in his study; telling him, in a low, but resolute voice that, the night before, Doctor James Brown had offered her marriage—that she had accepted him—and that he was intending to call on Professor Frazer (her uncle and natural guardian) that very morning, to obtain his consent to their engagement. Professor Frazer was perfectly aware, from Margaret's manner, that his consent was regarded by her as a mere form, for that her mind was made up: and he had more than once had occasion to find out how inflexible she could be. Yet he, too, was of the same blood, and held to his own opinions in the same obdurate manner. The consequence of which frequently was, that uncle and niece had argued themselves into mutual bitterness of feeling, without altering each other's opinions one jot. But Professor Frazer could not restrain himself on this occasion, of all others.

“Then, Margaret, you will just quietly settle down to be a beggar, for that lad Brown has little or no money to think of marrying upon: you that might be my Lady Kennedy, if you would!”

“I could not, uncle.”

“Nonsense, child! Sir Alexander is a personable and agreeable man—middle-aged, if you will—well, a wilful woman maun have her way; but, if I had had a notion that this youngster was sneaking into my house to cajole you into fancying him, I would have seen him far enough before I had ever let your aunt invite him to dinner. Ay! you may mutter; but I say, no gentleman would ever have come into my house to seduce my niece’s affections, without first informing me of his intentions, and asking my leave.”

“Doctor Brown is a gentleman, Uncle Frazer, whatever you may think of him.”

“So you think—so you think. But who cares for the opinion of a love-sick girl? He is a handsome, plausible young fellow, of good address. And I don’t mean to deny his ability. But there is something about him I never did like, and now it’s accounted for. And Sir Alexander—Well, well! your aunt will be disappointed in you, Margaret. But you were always a headstrong girl. Has this Jamie Brown ever told you who or what his parents were, or where he comes from? I don’t ask about his forbears, for he does not look like a lad who has ever had ancestors; and you a Frazer of Lovat! Fie, for shame, Margaret! Who is this Jamie Brown?”

“He is James Brown, Doctor of Medicine of the University of Edinburgh: a good, clever young man, whom I love with my whole heart,” replied Margaret, reddening.

“Hoot! is that the way for a maiden to speak? Where does he come from? Who are his kinsfolk? Unless he can give a pretty good account of his family and prospects, I shall just bid him begone, Margaret; and that I tell you fairly.”

“Uncle” (her eyes were filling with hot indignant tears), “I am of age; you know he is good and clever; else why have you had him so often to your house? I marry him, and not his kinsfolk. He is an orphan. I doubt if he has any relations that he keeps up with. He has no brothers nor sisters. I don’t care where he comes from.”

“What was his father?” asked Professor Frazer coldly.

“I don’t know. Why should I go prying into every particular of his family, and asking who his father was, and what was the maiden name of his mother, and when his grandmother was married?”

“Yet I think I have heard Miss Margaret Frazer speak up pretty strongly in favour of a long line of unspotted ancestry.”

“I had forgotten our own, I suppose, when I spoke so. Simon, Lord Lovat, is a creditable great-uncle to the Frazers! If all tales be true, he ought to have been hanged for a felon, instead of beheaded like a loyal gentleman.”

“Oh! if you’re determined to foul your own nest, I have done. Let James Brown come in; I will make him my bow, and thank him for condescending to marry a Frazer.”

“Uncle,” said Margaret, now fairly crying, “don’t let us part in anger! We love each other in our hearts. You have been good to me, and so has my aunt. But I have given my word to Doctor Brown, and I must keep it. I should love him, if he was the son of a ploughman. We don’t expect to be rich; but he has a few hundreds to start with, and I have my own hundred a year”——

“Well, well, child, don’t cry! You have settled it all for yourself, it seems; so I wash my hands of it. I shake off all responsibility. You will tell your aunt what arrangements you make with Doctor Brown about your marriage; and I will do what you wish in the matter. But don’t send the young man in to me to ask my consent! I neither give it nor withhold it. It would have been different, if it had been Sir Alexander.”

“Oh! Uncle Frazer, don’t speak so. See Doctor Brown, and at any rate—for my sake—tell him you consent! Let me belong to you that much! It seems so desolate at such a time to have to dispose of myself, as if nobody owned or cared for me.”

The door was thrown open, and Doctor James Brown was announced. Margaret hastened away; and, before he was aware, the Professor had given a sort of consent, without asking a question of the happy young man; who hurried away to seek his betrothed, leaving her uncle muttering to himself.

Both Doctor and Mrs. Frazer were so strongly opposed to Margaret’s engagement, in reality, that they could not help showing it by manner and implication; although they had the grace to keep silent. But Margaret felt even more keenly than her lover that he was not welcome in the house. Her pleasure in seeing him was destroyed by her sense of the coldness with which he was received, and she willingly yielded to his desire of a short engagement; which was contrary to their original plan of waiting until he should be settled in practice in London, and should see his way clear to such an income as would render their marriage a prudent step. Doctor and Mrs. Frazer neither objected nor approved. Margaret would rather have had the most vehement opposition than this icy

coldness. But it made her turn with redoubled affection to her warm-hearted and sympathising lover. Not that she had ever discussed her uncle and aunt's behaviour with him. As long as he was apparently unaware of it, she would not awaken him to a sense of it. Besides, they had stood to her so long in the relation of parents, that she felt she had no right to bring in a stranger to sit in judgment upon them.

So it was rather with a heavy heart that she arranged their future *ménage* with Doctor Brown, unable to profit by her aunt's experience and wisdom. But Margaret herself was a prudent and sensible girl. Although accustomed to a degree of comfort in her uncle's house that almost amounted to luxury, she could resolutely dispense with it, when occasion required. When Doctor Brown started for London, to seek and prepare their new home, she enjoined him not to make any but the most necessary preparations for her reception. She would herself superintend all that was wanting when she came. He had some old furniture, stored up in a warehouse, which had been his mother's. He proposed selling it, and buying new in its place. Margaret persuaded him not to do this, but to make it go as far as it could. The household of the newly-married couple was to consist of a Scotchwoman long connected with the Frazer family, who was to be the sole female servant, and of a man whom Doctor Brown picked up in London, soon after he had fixed on a house—a man named Crawford, who had lived for many years with a gentleman now gone abroad, who gave him the most excellent character, in reply to Doctor Brown's inquiries. This gentleman had employed Crawford in a number of ways; so that in fact he was a kind of Jack-of-all-trades; and Doctor Brown, in every letter to Margaret, had some new accomplishment of his servant's to relate. This he did with the more fulness and zest, because Margaret had slightly questioned the wisdom of starting in life with a man-servant, but had yielded to Doctor Brown's arguments on the necessity of keeping up a respectable appearance, making a decent show, &c., to any one who might be inclined to consult him, but be daunted by the appearance of old Christie out of the kitchen, and unwilling to leave a message with one who spoke such unintelligible English. Crawford was so good a carpenter that he could put up shelves, adjust faulty hinges, mend locks, and even went the length of constructing a box of some old boards that had once formed a packing-case. Crawford, one day, when his master was too busy to go out for his dinner, improvised an omelette as good as any Doctor Brown had ever tasted in Paris, when he was studying there. In short, Crawford

was a kind of Admirable Crichton in his way, and Margaret was quite convinced that Doctor Brown was right in his decision that they must have a man-servant; even before she was respectfully greeted by Crawford, as he opened the door to the newly-married couple, when they came to their new home after their short wedding tour.

Doctor Brown was rather afraid lest Margaret should think the house bare and cheerless in its half-furnished state; for he had obeyed her injunctions and bought as little furniture as might be, in addition to the few things he had inherited from his mother. His consulting-room (how grand it sounded!) was completely arranged, ready for stray patients; and it was well calculated to make a good impression on them. There was a Turkey-carpet on the floor, that had been his mother's, and was just sufficiently worn to give it the air of respectability which handsome pieces of furniture have when they look as if they had not just been purchased for the occasion, but are in some degree hereditary. The same appearance pervaded the room: the library-table (bought second-hand, it must be confessed), the bureau—that had been his mother's—the leather chairs (as hereditary as the library-table), the shelves Crawford had put up for Doctor Brown's medical books, a good engraving on the walls, gave altogether so pleasant an aspect to the apartment that both Doctor and Mrs. Brown thought, for that evening at any rate, that poverty was just as comfortable a thing as riches. Crawford had ventured to take the liberty of placing a few flowers about the room, as his humble way of welcoming his mistress—late autumn-flowers, blending the idea of summer with that of winter, suggested by the bright little fire in the grate. Christie sent up delicious scones for tea; and Mrs. Frazer had made up for her want of geniality, as well as she could, by a store of marmalade and mutton hams. Doctor Brown could not be easy in his comfort, until he had shown Margaret, almost with a groan, how many rooms were as yet unfurnished—how much remained to be done. But she laughed at his alarm lest she should be disappointed in her new home; declared that she should like nothing better than planning and contriving; that, what with her own talent for upholstery and Crawford's for joinery, the rooms would be furnished as if by magic, and no bills—the usual consequences of comfort—be forthcoming. But, with the morning and daylight, Doctor Brown's anxiety returned. He saw and felt every crack in the ceiling, every spot on the paper, not for himself, but for Margaret. He was constantly in his own mind, as it seemed, comparing the home he had brought her to with the one she had left. He

seemed constantly afraid lest she had repented, or would repent having married him. This morbid restlessness was the only drawback to their great happiness; and, to do away with it, Margaret was led into expenses much beyond her original intention. She bought this article in preference to that, because her husband, if he went shopping with her, seemed so miserable if he suspected that she denied herself the slightest wish on the score of economy. She learnt to avoid taking him out with her, when she went to make her purchases; as it was a very simple thing to her to choose the least expensive thing, even though it were the ugliest, when she was by herself, but not a simple painless thing to harden her heart to his look of mortification, when she quietly said to the shopman that she could not afford this or that. On coming out of a shop after one of these occasions, he had said—

“Oh, Margaret, I ought not to have married you. You must forgive me—I have so loved you.”

“Forgive you, James?” said she. “For making me so happy? What should make you think I care so much for rep in preference to moreen? Don’t speak so again, please!”

“Oh, Margaret! but don’t forget how I ask you to forgive me.”

Crawford was everything that he had promised to be, and more than could be desired. He was Margaret’s right hand in all her little household plans, in a way which irritated Christie not a little. This feud between Christie and Crawford was indeed the greatest discomfort in the household. Crawford was silently triumphant in his superior knowledge of London, in his favour upstairs, in his power of assisting his mistress, and in the consequent privilege of being frequently consulted. Christie was for ever regretting Scotland, and hinting at Margaret’s neglect of one who had followed her fortunes into a strange country, to make a favourite of a stranger, and one who was none so good as he ought to be, as she would sometimes affirm. But, as she never brought any proof of her vague accusations, Margaret did not choose to question her, but set them down to a jealousy of her fellow-servant, which the mistress did all in her power to heal. On the whole, however, the four people forming this family lived together in tolerable harmony. Doctor Brown was more than satisfied with his house, his servants, his professional prospects, and most of all with his little energetic wife. Margaret, from time to time, was taken aback by certain moods of her husband’s; but the tendency of

these moods was not to weaken her affection, rather to call out a feeling of pity for what appeared to her morbid sufferings and suspicions—a pity ready to be turned into sympathy, as soon as she could discover any definite cause for his occasional depression of spirits. Christie did not pretend to like Crawford; but, as Margaret quietly declined to listen to her grumblings and discontent on this head, and as Crawford himself was almost painfully solicitous to gain the good opinion of the old Scotch woman, there was no rupture between them. On the whole, the popular, successful Doctor Brown was apparently the most anxious person in his family. There could be no great cause for this as regarded his money affairs. By one of those lucky accidents which sometimes lift a man up out of his struggles, and carry him on to smooth, unencumbered ground, he made a great step in his professional progress; and their income from this source was likely to be fully as much as Margaret and he had ever anticipated in their most sanguine moments, with the likelihood, too, of steady increase, as the years went on.

I must explain myself more fully on this head.

Margaret herself had rather more than a hundred a year; sometimes, indeed, her dividends had amounted to a hundred and thirty or forty pounds; but on that she dared not rely. Doctor Brown had seventeen hundred remaining of the three thousand left him by his mother; and out of this he had to pay for some of the furniture, the bills for which had not been sent in at the time, in spite of all Margaret's entreaties that such might be the case. They came in about a week before the time when the events I am going to narrate took place. Of course they amounted to more than even the prudent Margaret had expected; and she was a little dispirited to find how much money it would take to liquidate them. But, curiously and contradictorily enough—as she had often noticed before—any real cause for anxiety or disappointment did not seem to affect her husband's cheerfulness. He laughed at her dismay over her accounts, jingled the proceeds of that day's work in his pockets, counted it out to her, and calculated the year's probable income from that day's gains. Margaret took the guineas, and carried them upstairs to her own *secrétaire* in silence; having learnt the difficult art of trying to swallow down her household cares in the presence of her husband. When she came back, she was cheerful, if grave. He had taken up the bills in her absence, and had been adding them together.

“Two hundred and thirty-six pounds,” he said, putting the accounts away, to clear the table for tea, as Crawford brought in the things. “Why, I don’t call that much. I believe I reckoned on their coming to a great deal more. I’ll go into the City to-morrow, and sell out some shares, and set your little heart at ease. Now don’t go and put a spoonful less tea in to-night to help to pay these bills. Earning is better than saving, and I am earning at a famous rate. Give me good tea, Maggie, for I have done a good day’s work.”

They were sitting in the doctor’s consulting-room, for the better economy of fire. To add to Margaret’s discomfort, the chimney smoked this evening. She had held her tongue from any repining words; for she remembered the old proverb about a smoky chimney and a scolding wife; but she was more irritated by the puffs of smoke coming over her pretty white work than she cared to show; and it was in a sharper tone than usual that she spoke, in bidding Crawford take care and have the chimney swept. The next morning all had cleared brightly off. Her husband had convinced her that their money matters were going on well; the fire burned briskly at breakfast time; and the unwonted sun shone in at the windows. Margaret was surprised, when Crawford told her that he had not been able to meet with a chimney-sweeper that morning; but that he had tried to arrange the coals in the grate, so that, for this one morning at least, his mistress should not be annoyed, and, by the next, he would take care to secure a sweep. Margaret thanked him, and acquiesced in all plans about giving a general cleaning to the room; the more readily, because she felt that she had spoken sharply the night before. She decided to go and pay all her bills, and make some distant calls on the next morning; and her husband promised to go into the City and provide her with the money.

This he did. He showed her the notes that evening, locked them up for the night in his bureau; and, lo, in the morning they were gone! They had breakfasted in the back parlour, or half-furnished dining-room. A charwoman was in the front room, cleaning after the sweeps. Doctor Brown went to his bureau, singing an old Scotch tune as he left the dining-room. It was so long before he came back, that Margaret went to look for him. He was sitting in the chair nearest to the bureau, leaning his head upon it, in an attitude of the deepest despondency. He did not seem to hear Margaret’s step, as she made her way among rolled-up carpets and chairs piled on each other. She had to touch him on the shoulder before she could rouse him.

“James, James!” she said in alarm.

He looked up at her almost as if he did not know her.

“Oh, Margaret!” he said, and took hold of her hands, and hid his face in her neck.

“Dearest love, what is it?” she asked, thinking he was suddenly taken ill.

“Some one has been to my bureau since last night,” he groaned, without either looking up or moving.

“And taken the money,” said Margaret, in an instant understanding how it stood. It was a great blow; a great loss, far greater than the few extra pounds by which the bills had exceeded her calculations: yet it seemed as if she could bear it better. “Oh dear!” she said, “that is bad; but after all—Do you know,” she said, trying to raise his face, so that she might look into it, and give him the encouragement of her honest loving eyes, “at first I thought you were deadly ill, and all sorts of dreadful possibilities rushed through my mind—it is such a relief to find that it is only money”——

“Only money!” he echoed sadly, avoiding her look, as if he could not bear to show her how much he felt it.

“And after all,” she said with spirit, “it can’t be gone far. Only last night, it was here. The chimney-sweeps—we must send Crawford for the police directly. You did not take the numbers of the notes?” ringing the bell as she spoke.

“No; they were only to be in our possession one night,” he said.

“No, to be sure not.”

The charwoman now appeared at the door with her pail of hot water. Margaret looked into her face, as if to read guilt or innocence. She was a *protégée* of Christie’s, who was not apt to accord her favour easily, or without good grounds; an honest, decent widow, with a large family to maintain by her labour—that was the character in which Margaret had engaged her; and she looked it. Grimy in her dress—because she could not spare the money or time to be clean—her skin looked healthy and cared for; she had a straightforward, business-like appearance about her, and seemed in no ways daunted nor surprised to see Doctor and Mrs. Brown standing in the middle of the room, in displeased perplexity and distress. She went about her business without taking any particular notice of them. Margaret’s suspicions settled down yet more distinctly upon the chimney-sweeper; but he could not have gone far; the notes could hardly have got into circulation. Such a sum could not have been spent by such a man in so short a time;

and the restoration of the money was her first, her only object. She had scarcely a thought for subsequent duties, such as prosecution of the offender, and the like consequences of crime. While her whole energies were bent on the speedy recovery of the money, and she was rapidly going over the necessary steps to be taken, her husband “sat all poured out into his chair,” as the Germans say; no force in him to keep his limbs in any attitude requiring the slightest exertion; his face sunk, miserable, and with that foreshadowing of the lines of age which sudden distress is apt to call out on the youngest and smoothest faces.

“What can Crawford be about?” said Margaret, pulling the bell again with vehemence. “Oh, Crawford!” as the man at that instant appeared at the door.

“Is anything the matter?” he said, interrupting her, as if alarmed into an unusual discomposure by her violent ringing. “I had just gone round the corner with the letter master gave me last night for the post; and, when I came back Christie told me you had rung for me, ma’am. I beg your pardon, but I have hurried so,” and, indeed, his breath did come quickly, and his face was full of penitent anxiety.

“Oh, Crawford! I am afraid the sweep has got into your master’s bureau, and taken all the money he put there last night. It is gone, at any rate. Did you ever leave him in the room alone?”

“I can’t say, ma’am; perhaps I did. Yes; I believe I did. I remember now—I had my work to do; and I thought the charwoman was come, and I went to my pantry; and some time after Christie came to me, complaining that Mrs. Roberts was so late; and then I knew that he must have been alone in the room. But, dear me, ma’am, who would have thought there had been so much wickedness in him?”

“How was it that he got into the bureau?” said Margaret, turning to her husband. “Was the lock broken?”

He roused himself up, like one who wakens from sleep.

“Yes! No! I suppose I had turned the key without locking it last night. The bureau was closed, not locked, when I went to it this morning, and the bolt was shot.” He relapsed into inactive, thoughtful silence.

“At any rate, it is no use losing time in wondering now. Go, Crawford, as fast as you can, for a policeman. You know the name of the chimney-sweeper, of course,” she added, as Crawford was preparing to leave the room.

“Indeed, ma’am, I’m very sorry, but I just agreed with the first who was passing along the street. If I could have known”——

But Margaret had turned away with an impatient gesture of despair. Crawford went, without another word, to seek a policeman.

In vain did his wife try and persuade Doctor Brown to taste any breakfast; a cup of tea was all he would try to swallow; and that was taken in hasty gulps, to clear his dry throat, as he heard Crawford’s voice talking to the policeman whom he was ushering in.

The policeman heard all and said little. Then the inspector came. Doctor Brown seemed to leave all the talking to Crawford, who apparently liked nothing better. Margaret was infinitely distressed and dismayed by the effect the robbery seemed to have had on her husband’s energies. The probable loss of such a sum was bad enough; but there was something so weak and poor in character in letting it affect him so strongly as to deaden all energy and destroy all hopeful spring, that, although Margaret did not dare to define her feeling, nor the cause of it, to herself, she had the fact before her perpetually, that, if she were to judge of her husband from this morning only, she must learn to rely on herself alone in all cases of emergency. The inspector repeatedly turned from Crawford to Doctor and Mrs. Brown for answers to his inquiries. It was Margaret who replied, with terse, short sentences, very different from Crawford’s long, involved explanations.

At length the inspector asked to speak to her alone. She followed him into the room, past the affronted Crawford and her despondent husband. The inspector gave one sharp look at the charwoman, who was going on with her scouring with stolid indifference, turned her out, and then asked Margaret where Crawford came from—how long he had lived with them, and various other questions, all showing the direction his suspicions had taken. This shocked Margaret extremely; but she quickly answered every inquiry, and, at the end, watched the inspector’s face closely, and waited for the avowal of the suspicion.

He led the way back to the other room without a word, however. Crawford had left, and Doctor Brown was trying to read the morning’s letters (which had just been delivered); but his hands shook so much that he could not see a line.

“Doctor Brown,” said the inspector, “I have little doubt that your man-servant has committed this robbery. I judge so from his whole manner; and from his anxiety to tell the story, and his way of trying to throw suspicion on the chimney-sweeper, neither whose name nor whose dwelling he can give; at least he says not. Your wife tells us he has already been out of the house this morning, even before he went to summon a policeman; so there is little doubt that he has found means for concealing or disposing of the notes; and you say you do not know the numbers. However, that can probably be ascertained.”

At this moment Christie knocked at the door, and, in a state of great agitation, demanded to speak to Margaret. She brought up an additional store of suspicious circumstances, none of them much in themselves, but all tending to criminate her fellow-servant. She had expected to find herself blamed for starting the idea of Crawford’s guilt, and was rather surprised to find herself listened to with attention by the inspector. This led her to tell many other little things, all bearing against Crawford, which a dread of being thought jealous and quarrelsome had led her to conceal before from her master and mistress. At the end of her story the inspector said—

“There can be no doubt of the course to be taken. You, sir, must give your man-servant in charge. He will be taken before the sitting magistrate directly; and there is already evidence enough to make him be remanded for a week, during which time we may trace the notes, and complete the chain.”

“Must I prosecute?” said Doctor Brown, almost lividly pale. “It is, I own, a serious loss of money to me; but there will be the further expenses of the prosecution—the loss of time—the”——

He stopped. He saw his wife’s indignant eyes fixed upon him, and shrank from their look of unconscious reproach.

“Yes, inspector,” he said; “I give him in charge. Do what you will. Do what is right. Of course I take the consequences. We take the consequences. Don’t we, Margaret?” He spoke in a kind of wild, low voice, of which Margaret thought it best to take no notice.

“Tell us exactly what to do,” she said very coldly and quietly, addressing herself to the policeman.

He gave her the necessary directions as to their attending at the police-office, and bringing Christie as a witness, and then went away to take measures for securing Crawford.

Margaret was surprised to find how little hurry or violence needed to be used in Crawford's arrest. She had expected to hear sounds of commotion in the house, if indeed Crawford himself had not taken the alarm and escaped. But, when she had suggested the latter apprehension to the inspector, he smiled, and told her that, when he had first heard of the charge from the policeman on the beat, he had stationed a detective officer within sight of the house, to watch all ingress or egress; so that Crawford's whereabouts would soon have been discovered, if he had attempted to escape.

Margaret's attention was now directed to her husband. He was making hurried preparations for setting off on his round of visits, and evidently did not wish to have any conversation with her on the subject of the morning's event. He promised to be back by eleven o'clock; before which time, the inspector assured them, their presence would not be needed. Once or twice, Doctor Brown said, as if to himself, "It is a miserable business." Indeed, Margaret felt it to be so; and, now that the necessity for immediate speech and action was over, she began to fancy that she must be very hard-hearted—very deficient in common feeling; inasmuch as she had not suffered like her husband, at the discovery that the servant—whom they had been learning to consider as a friend, and to look upon as having their interests so warmly at heart—was, in all probability, a treacherous thief. She remembered all his pretty marks of attention to her, from the day when he had welcomed her arrival at her new home by his humble present of flowers, until only the day before, when, seeing her fatigued, he had, unasked, made her a cup of coffee—coffee such as none but he could make. How often had he thought of warm dry clothes for her husband; how wakeful had he been at nights; how diligent in the mornings! It was no wonder that her husband felt this discovery of domestic treason acutely. It was she who was hard and selfish, thinking more of the recovery of the money than of the terrible disappointment in character, if the charge against Crawford were true.

At eleven o'clock her husband returned with a cab. Christie had thought the occasion of appearing at a police-office worthy of her Sunday clothes, and was as smart

as her possessions could make her. But Margaret and her husband looked as pale and sorrow-stricken as if they had been the accused, and not the accusers.

Doctor Brown shrank from meeting Crawford's eye, as the one took his place in the witness-box, the other in the dock. Yet Crawford was trying—Margaret was sure of this—to catch his master's attention. Failing that, he looked at Margaret with an expression she could not fathom. Indeed, the whole character of his face was changed. Instead of the calm, smooth look of attentive obedience, he had assumed an insolent, threatening expression of defiance; smiling occasionally in a most unpleasant manner, as Doctor Brown spoke of the bureau and its contents. He was remanded for a week; but, the evidence as yet being far from conclusive, bail for his appearance was taken. This bail was offered by his brother, a respectable tradesman, well known in his neighbourhood, and to whom Crawford had sent on his arrest.

So Crawford was at large again, much to Christie's dismay; who took off her Sunday clothes, on her return home, with a heavy heart, hoping, rather than trusting, that they should not all be murdered in their beds before the week was out. It must be confessed, Margaret herself was not entirely free from fears of Crawford's vengeance; his eyes had looked so maliciously and vindictively at her and at her husband as they gave their evidence.

But his absence in the household gave Margaret enough to do to prevent her dwelling on foolish fears. His being away made a terrible blank in their daily comfort, which neither Margaret nor Christie—exert themselves as they would—could fill up; and it was the more necessary that all should go on smoothly, as Doctor Brown's nerves had received such a shock at the discovery of the guilt of his favourite, trusted servant, that Margaret was led at times to apprehend a serious illness. He would pace about the room at night, when he thought she was asleep, moaning to himself—and in the morning he would require the utmost persuasion to induce him to go out and see his patients. He was worse than ever, after consulting the lawyer whom he had employed to conduct the prosecution. There was, as Margaret was brought unwillingly to perceive, some mystery in the case; for he eagerly took his letters from the post, going to the door as soon as he heard the knock, and concealing their directions from her. As the week passed away, his nervous misery still increased.

One evening—the candles were not lighted—he was sitting over the fire in a listless attitude, resting his head on his hand, and that supported on his knee—Margaret determined to try an experiment; to see if she could not probe, and find out the nature of, the sore that he hid with such constant care. She took a stool and sat down at his feet, taking his hand in hers.

“Listen, dearest James, to an old story I once heard. It may interest you. There were two orphans, boy and girl in their hearts, though they were a young man and young woman in years. They were not brother and sister, and by-and-by they fell in love; just in the same fond silly way you and I did, you remember. Well, the girl was amongst her own people; but the boy was far away from his—if indeed he had any alive. But the girl loved him so dearly for himself, that sometimes she thought she was glad that he had no one to care for him but just her alone. Her friends did not like him as much as she did; for, perhaps, they were wise, grave, cold people, and she, I dare say, was very foolish. And they did not like her marrying the boy; which was just stupidity in them, for they had not a word to say against him. But, about a week before the marriage-day was fixed, they thought they had found out something—my darling love, don’t take away your hand—don’t tremble so, only just listen! Her aunt came to her and said: ‘Child, you must give up your lover: his father was tempted, and sinned; and, if he is now alive, he is a transported convict. The marriage cannot take place.’ But the girl stood up and said: ‘If he has known this great sorrow and shame, he needs my love all the more. I will not leave him, nor forsake him, but love him all the better. And I charge you, aunt, as you hope to receive a blessing for doing as you would be done by, that you tell no one!’ I really think that girl awed her aunt, in some strange way, into secrecy. But, when she was left alone, she cried long and sadly to think what a shadow rested on the heart she loved so dearly; and she meant to strive to lighten his life, and to conceal for ever that she had heard of its burden; but now she thinks—Oh, my husband! how you must have suffered”—as he bent down his head on her shoulder and cried terrible man’s tears.

“God be thanked!” he said at length. “You know all, and you do not shrink from me. Oh, what a miserable, deceitful coward I have been! Suffered! Yes—suffered enough to drive me mad; and, if I had but been brave, I might have been spared all this

long twelve months of agony. But it is right I should have been punished. And you knew it even before we were married, when you might have been drawn back!”

“I could not; you would not have broken off your engagement with me, would you, under the like circumstances, if our cases had been reversed?”

“I do not know. Perhaps I might; for I am not so brave, so good, so strong as you, my Margaret. How could I be? Let me tell you more. We wandered about, my mother and I, thankful that our name was such a common one, but shrinking from every allusion—in a way which no one can understand, who has not been conscious of an inward sore. Living in an assize town was torture; a commercial one was nearly as bad. My father was the son of a dignified clergyman, well known to his brethren: a cathedral town was to be avoided, because there the circumstance of the Dean of Saint Botolph’s son having been transported was sure to be known. I had to be educated; therefore we had to live in a town; for my mother could not bear to part from me, and I was sent to a day-school. We were very poor for our station—no! we had no station; we were the wife and child of a convict—poor for my mother’s early habits, I should have said. But, when I was about fourteen, my father died in his exile, leaving, as convicts in those days sometimes did, a large fortune. It all came to us. My mother shut herself up, and cried and prayed for a whole day. Then she called me in, and took me into her counsel. We solemnly pledged ourselves to give the money to some charity, as soon as I was legally of age. Till then the interest was laid by, every penny of it; though sometimes we were in sore distress for money, my education cost so much. But how could we tell in what way the money had been accumulated?” Here he dropped his voice. “Soon after I was one-and-twenty, the papers rang with admiration of the unknown munificent donor of certain sums. I loathed their praises. I shrank from all recollection of my father. I remembered him dimly, but always as angry and violent with my mother. My poor, gentle mother! Margaret, she loved my father; and, for her sake, I have tried, since her death, to feel kindly towards his memory. Soon after my mother’s death, I came to know you, my jewel, my treasure!”

After a while, he began again. “But, oh, Margaret! even now you do not know the worst. After my mother’s death, I found a bundle of law papers—of newspaper reports about my father’s trial. Poor soul! why she had kept them, I cannot say. They were covered over with notes in her handwriting; and, for that reason, I kept them. It was so

touching to read her record of the days spent by her in her solitary innocence, while he was embroiling himself deeper and deeper in crime. I kept this bundle (as I thought so safely!) in a secret drawer of my bureau; but that wretch Crawford has got hold of it. I missed the papers that very morning. The loss of them was infinitely worse than the loss of the money; and now Crawford threatens to bring out the one terrible fact, in open court, if he can; and his lawyer may do it, I believe. At any rate, to have it blazoned out to the world—I who have spent my life in fearing this hour! But most of all for you, Margaret! Still—if only it could be avoided! Who will employ the son of Brown, the noted forger? I shall lose all my practice. Men will look askance at me as I enter their doors. They will drive me into crime. I sometimes fear that crime is hereditary! Oh, Margaret! what am I to do?”

“What can you do?” she asked.

“I can refuse to prosecute.”

“Let Crawford go free, you knowing him to be guilty?”

“I know him to be guilty.”

“Then, simply, you cannot do this thing. You let loose a criminal upon the public.”

“But, if I do not, we shall come to shame and poverty. It is for you I mind it, not for myself. I ought never to have married.”

“Listen to me. I don’t care for poverty; and, as to shame, I should feel it twenty times more grievously, if you and I consented to screen the guilty, from any fear or for any selfish motives of our own. I don’t pretend that I shall not feel it, when first the truth is known. But my shame will turn into pride, as I watch you live it down. You have been rendered morbid, dear husband, by having something all your life to conceal. Let the world know the truth, and say the worst. You will go forth a free, honest, honourable man, able to do your future work without fear.”

“That scoundrel Crawford has sent for an answer to his impudent note,” said Christie, putting in her head at the door.

“Stay! May *I* write it?” said Margaret.

She wrote:—

“Whatever you may do or say, there is but one course open to us. No threats can deter your master from doing his duty.

“MARGARET BROWN.”

“There!” she said, passing it to her husband; “he will see that I know all; and I suspect he has reckoned something on your tenderness for me.”

Margaret’s note only enraged, it did not daunt, Crawford. Before a week was out, every one who cared knew that Doctor Brown, the rising young physician, was son of the notorious Brown, the forger. All the consequences took place which he had anticipated. Crawford had to suffer a severe sentence; and Doctor Brown and his wife had to leave their house and go to a smaller one; they had to pinch and to screw, aided in all most zealously by the faithful Christie. But Doctor Brown was lighter-hearted than he had ever been before in his conscious lifetime. His foot was now firmly planted on the ground, and every step he rose was a sure gain. People did say that Margaret had been seen, in those worst times, on her hands and knees cleaning her own door-step. But I don’t believe it, for Christie would never have let her do that. And, as far as my own evidence goes, I can only say that, the last time I was in London, I saw a brass-plate, with “Doctor James Brown” upon it, on the door of a handsome house in a handsome square. And as I looked, I saw a brougham drive up to the door, and a lady get out, and go into that house, who was certainly the Margaret Frazer of old days—graver; more portly; more stern, I had almost said. But, as I watched and thought, I saw her come to the dining-room window with a baby in her arms, and her whole face melted into a smile of infinite sweetness.

SUMMARY

Sulla base del fatto che la mia tesi segna la fine del mio corso di studi, ho ritenuto opportuno focalizzare la mia ricerca sulle aree di studio che mi interessano maggiormente. Poiché mi piacciono sia la letteratura inglese che tradurre, la traduzione letteraria era l'opzione giusta per me. Considerato il mio interesse per la letteratura inglese dell'Ottocento, all'interno di tale periodo ho selezionato un'autrice che mi ha colpito per la sua capacità di mostrare il suo talento anche nelle opere più brevi. Ecco perché la mia tesi, suddivisa in cinque capitoli, propone una traduzione in lingua italiana del racconto *Right at Last* di Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865), non ancora tradotto nella nostra lingua.

Nel primo capitolo, dal titolo "Early and Mid-Victorian Women Novelists: Elizabeth Gaskell, the Brontë Sisters and George Eliot", il mio sguardo si è rivolto al Regno Unito del XIX secolo, che ha ricevuto l'impronta del governo della regina Vittoria (1837-1901), un'epoca in cui il continuo progresso economico, dovuto alla rivoluzione industriale, ha cambiato sia i rapporti economici che i rapporti sociali. Nell'ambito letterario di questo contesto storico, mi sono interessata alla scrittura femminile nel campo della narrativa, soffermandomi su alcune scrittrici in particolare (Elizabeth Gaskell, le sorelle Brontë e George Eliot).

In "Elizabeth Gaskell: the Strong Female Protagonists in *Right at Last*, *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*", secondo capitolo della mia tesi, ho analizzato la tematica delle protagoniste forti, una tematica che accomuna i tre racconti di Elizabeth Gaskell, di cui due già tradotti in lingua italiana e uno oggetto della mia traduzione. L'ideale tradizionale del tempo era quello di una donna passiva, che, inserita all'interno di una famiglia di tipo patriarcale, si affidava al giudizio del marito, o del padre, o di un'altra figura maschile. Quindi la sottomissione della donna portava via la responsabilità del suo destino dalle sue mani. Invece, la gran parte delle eroine degli scritti gaskelliani è più forte della controparte maschile. Ad esempio, Margaret, Susan e Thekla, che sono le protagoniste dei tre racconti, fanno scelte significative su chi sposare o meno e decidono senza prendere in considerazione le aspettative altrui. Sebbene siano donne con un vissuto diverso, tutte e tre, di fronte ad ostacoli o problemi

o situazioni particolari, prendono decisioni sulla loro vita e agiscono in relazione alla loro volontà. In *Right and Last*, il racconto oggetto della mia traduzione, Margaret, moglie del dottor Brown, si trova ad un certo punto ad affrontare dei problemi: il furto subito di alcune banconote e il ricatto da parte del loro domestico. Lei gestisce subito la situazione e tutto si risolve, assicurando il colpevole alla giustizia. Quello che colpisce è che Margaret non si fa abbattere dalle difficoltà, ma subito reagisce con raziocinio, decidendo le azioni concrete da mettere in atto. Contrapposto a lei si pone il marito, che, affranto, non sa cosa fare; si lascia sommergere dagli eventi e lascia tutte le responsabilità alla moglie. Dal testo emerge che Margaret non è mai dubbiosa, anzi stimola il marito ad accusare Crawford, il loro domestico, affinché giustizia sia fatta (come il titolo anticipa). Inoltre, nonostante la protagonista sia pienamente consapevole del fatto che le sue decisioni porteranno conseguenze negative alla sua famiglia, lei è pronta ad affrontarle. Tuttavia, la fine del racconto rassicura il lettore con una scena che esprime grande serenità, infatti l'autrice presenta Margaret nel momento in cui si avvicina, sorridendo, ad una finestra della sua bella casa tenendo in braccio un bambino. Nel racconto *Half a Lifetime Ago* viene presentata un'altra figura di donna forte. Susan vive in un ambiente rurale, in una fattoria. Le sue vicissitudini familiari (la morte dei genitori, la malattia del fratello) la portano a cambiare radicalmente la sua vita tanto da arrivare a rompere il fidanzamento con Michael. Questo è il fatto che evidenzia maggiormente la forza di carattere della protagonista. Lei, per mantenere fede ad una promessa fatta alla madre sul letto di morte, ovvero prendersi cura di suo fratello William, sacrifica la sua vita futura. Decide di non sposarsi con Michael perché lui non accetta le condizioni che lei ha posto. Dopo la morte del fratello, vive da sola e il suo carattere diventa sempre più duro perché deve gestire la vita di tutta la fattoria, di cui è diventata proprietaria. Susan è un'eccellente donna d'affari; questo lo si nota, ad esempio, quando al mercato svolge anche attività tipicamente maschili. Solo in vecchiaia, trova una certa serenità accogliendo nella sua casa la vedova e i figli di Michael. In *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* Thekla lavora come domestica in una locanda in Germania. Il racconto ruota attorno alla sua storia. Apparentemente sembra meno forte delle altre due protagoniste, ma in realtà anche lei si dimostra una ragazza determinata. A livello sentimentale cambia più volte opinione, ma questa sua incostanza dimostra che ogni volta è lei, e non l'uomo, a decidere che svolta dare alla sua vita.

Un'osservazione particolare accomuna i tre racconti. Le tre protagoniste sono orfane di madre, per cui passano sulle loro spalle tutte quelle responsabilità che appartenevano a tale genitore e anche questo le fortifica, portandole a reagire in modo autonomo e deciso di fronte ai problemi.

Nel terzo capitolo, intitolato “A Study of the Translation Strategies Employed in the Italian Editions of *Half a Lifetime Ago* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*”, ho analizzato i due racconti di Elizabeth Gaskell al fine di identificare le caratteristiche peculiari del suo stile narrativo. Perciò, oltre alla tematica della protagonista forte, ho individuato tre punti essenziali: descrizione dettagliata, frequenti metafore e similitudini, dialetto letterario. In questo modo in seguito ho potuto analizzare che strategie di traduzione avevano impiegato i due traduttori al fine di riportare la peculiarità dello stile di Elizabeth Gaskell. Preciso che *Half a Lifetime Ago* è stato tradotto da Marisa Sestito e *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* da Francesco Marroni. Riguardo alla tematica che unisce i tre racconti, i traduttori hanno quasi sempre riportato la forza delle protagoniste con la stessa intensità dei testi originali. Tuttavia, alcune volte le traduzioni italiane hanno aumentato o diminuito tale caratteristica. Passando allo stile narrativo, l'autrice grazie alla sua particolare capacità d'osservazione del mondo e alle sue estensive ricerche, ha offerto dei racconti che sono profondamente realistici. Elizabeth Gaskell, per inserire la storia narrata in un contesto preciso, ha offerto delle descrizioni particolareggiate di personaggi ed ambienti. In tal modo il lettore viene direttamente portato più vicino ai personaggi e dentro il luogo descritto, così la storia diventa più viva e realistica. Le descrizioni spesso presentano periodi lunghi in cui Elizabeth Gaskell ha fatto largo uso della congiunzione copulativa *and* e dei segni di punteggiatura, ad esclusione del punto fermo. Generalmente i traduttori hanno cercato di rimanere fedeli il più possibile al testo di partenza, ma in alcuni casi sono intervenuti per rendere la prosa meno appesantita e più scorrevole (ad esempio, hanno eliminato ridondanze testuali o hanno suddiviso una parte descrittiva da un'altra per evitare periodi troppo lunghi). Altra caratteristica della scrittrice è quella di usare frequentemente metafore e similitudini. Queste figure retoriche creano subito immagini precise nella mente del lettore e chiariscono meglio il concetto che l'autrice voleva trasmettere. L'uso di metafore e similitudini si nota spesso nelle parti descrittive che così risultano più arricchite. Anche in questo caso i traduttori sono intervenuti con metodologie differenti (ad esempio, a volte hanno sostituito una

metafora con una similitudine, oppure altre volte si sono rifatti a figure retoriche in uso nella lingua italiana). In *Half a Lifetime Ago* e in *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* Elizabeth Gaskell utilizza anche il dialetto letterario e ciò significa che il parlato di alcuni personaggi presenta tratti dialettali, ma la maggioranza del testo dei due racconti è in inglese standard. Il dialetto letterario intensifica l'autenticità della storia, in quanto fornisce un background plausibile. In *Half a Lifetime Ago* e in *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*, i personaggi che usano i tratti dialettali sono identificati dal punto di vista geografico, ma soprattutto da quello sociale (appartengono al ceto basso). Loro usano il dialetto quando vogliono aumentare l'immediatezza del discorso e desiderano stabilire una relazione più diretta con l'interlocutore. Perciò i traduttori hanno cercato di rendere la funzione che il dialetto svolge nei testi di partenza. Inevitabilmente il fattore geografico è andato perduto, ma, per quanto riguarda la funzione sociale, hanno cercato di riproporla con altri mezzi (ad esempio, attraverso espressioni della lingua colloquiale o modi verbali errati).

In "An Italian Translation of *Right at Last*", quarto capitolo della mia tesi, ho presentato la mia traduzione di *Right at Last* (*Giusto alla Fine*). In seguito ho aggiunto delle note esplicative al fine di fornire al lettore italiano delle informazioni aggiuntive o di chiarimento. Inoltre, in appendice ho riportato il testo originale inglese.

Infine, nel quinto e ultimo capitolo, dal titolo "*Right at Last: Application of the Translation Strategies Employed in the Italian Editions of Half a Lifetime Ago and Six Weeks at Heppenheim*", ho presentato i passaggi del racconto in cui ho deciso di applicare le strategie che i traduttori degli altri due racconti gaskelliani avevano utilizzato per riportare lo stile dell'autrice.

In conclusione, devo affermare che la traduzione letteraria è stata davvero la scelta giusta per terminare il mio corso di studi, in quanto sono soddisfatta di aver avuto l'opportunità di realizzare la prima traduzione italiana di *Right at Last*. Tuttavia, non ho solo proposto una traduzione italiana del racconto, ma ho anche voluto mostrare l'utilità della ricerca prima del processo traduttivo. Da una parte l'analisi sull'autrice mi ha permesso di comprendere il modo in cui lei scriveva e il periodo storico e letterario in cui viveva. Dall'altra parte lo studio delle strategie di traduzione, impiegate dai traduttori dei due racconti gaskelliani, mi ha permesso di scoprire dei metodi che sono

stati utili alla mia traduzione. Infatti ho potuto affrontare il testo con maggiore consapevolezza.