

Margaret Hale as a Walker

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要 旨

本論はエリザベス・ギヤスケルの『北と南』(1854)におけるヒロイン、マーガレット・ヘイルの歩く行為が、彼女の肉体と精神に影響を与え、最終的に彼女が移りゆく時代を生き残る女性に変貌するのを後押ししていることを指摘する。親戚の家で青年期を過ごしたマーガレットは、その後両親とともに引越しや帰郷、慰安旅行など様々な理由でイギリス国内を旅する。歩くことが好きなマーガレットは悩みや不安を抱えたとき自然と外の世界に足を向ける。彼女の歩みは当初、楽しかった過去の時代を追い求めるノスタルジックなものであるが、歩くことをきっかけに出会った人々は彼女を勇気づけ、やがてマーガレットはそれまで知らなかった労働者階級・新興中産階級の世界に新たに関わりを持つようになっていく。本論では作者ギヤスケルが歩く行為を女性の精神的、肉体的自立を促す要素として捉えていたことを考察し、旅における女性の主体性を探る。自発的、あるいはやむを得ない彼女の歩きは、結果的に周囲の他の女性よりも彼女に広い活動領域を与え、時代の変化を目撃することを可能にしている。

キーワード：女性，移動性，歩き，慈善活動，コミュニケーション

Margaret Hale in *North and South* is a walker. Asked by Henry Lennox what she does in her hometown, Helstone, she states: 'walk, decidedly. We have no horse, not even for papa. He walks to the very extremity of his parish. The walks are so beautiful, it would

be a shame to drive—almost a shame to ride’ (14). According to Mathieson, ‘walking experienced a resurgence in popularity, and a positive cultural shift in the perception of walking took effect throughout early nineteenth century’ (20). However, the fact that Margaret’s father does not own a horse connotes their modest livelihood. On returning to her home, Helstone, which is ‘like a village in one of Tennyson’s poems’ (14) from Aunt Shaw’s house in London, Margaret appreciates her fascination regarding walking and prefers walking through the New Forest to staying in the parsonage. Tramping alongside her father, she enjoys the fragrance of the fern crushed by her foot, herbs, and flowers. She is proud of her forest, mingling with the inhabitants of the village:

She made hearty friends with them; learned and delighted in using their peculiar words; took up her freedom amongst them; nursed their babies; talked or read with slow distinctness to their old people; carried dainty messes to their sick; resolved before long to teach at the school where her father went regularly every day as to an appointed task, but she was continually tempted off to go and see some individual friend—man, woman, or child—in some cottage in the green shade of the forest. (19)

Margaret’s walking links to her philanthropic activity, but hers is individual one; she does not belong to any philanthropic group but performs philanthropic acts by herself. She helps anybody who needs aid and her movement is beyond the role of the daughter of the clergyman. Gordon and Nair claim that religious and philanthropic activity was central to the creation of middle-class identity, as was demonstrating one’s good character through good works (115). However, Margaret does not care about middle-class identity, willingly using the peculiar words of the villagers, and assimilating into the community of the forest people. As Lesa Scholl suggests, ‘language is tied to identity, and by speaking like the other inhabitants, Margaret adapts and begins to belong’ (101). Indeed, walking about the forest and talking in the same way as the inhabitants allow Margaret to enter the public sphere in Helstone. Margaret’s walking in spite of the weather is also ascribed to the circumstances that she is tired of hearing her mother’s discontent with her father’s small income. When Mrs Hale calls the Gormans respectable coach-builders, Margaret responds to her mother: ‘how tired I used to be of the drives every day in Aunt Shaw’s carriage, and how I longed to walk!’ (20). Margaret ‘is so happy out of doors, at her

father's side, that she almost danced' and 'with the soft violence of the west wind behind her, as she crossed some heath, she seemed to be borne onwards, as lightly and easily as the fallen leaf that was wafted along by the autumnal breeze' (20–21). Scholl points out that while the image presented by this scene is predominantly pastoral, 'the violence of the wind reflects the changing world, and the comparison of Margaret to an easily moved leaf acts as a reminder that she is designed for mobility, even though she seeks to ignore that impulse' (99). Indeed, her walk reveals her restless moving in the changing world. Furthermore, I suggest that 'to be born onwards' reflects her courage and vigour, and 'wafted along by the autumnal breeze' (21) represents her flexibility.

Her walks in the garden of the parsonage are linked to her hard experiences. When Henry Lennox, brother-in-law of Edith, visits Helstone, Margaret and Henry Lennox stroll along the little terrace walk under the south wall in the garden. His sudden proposal in the garden embarrasses her and she wishes to escape the situation. Despising herself for the fluttering at her heart, she rejects his proposal, even though she considers him as her best sympathiser in Aunt Shaw's family. He responds to her refusal by self-deprecation. Annoyed by his tone, she feels a little contempt mingled with pain arising from refusing him. However, her rejection is forecasted in the beginning of the novel, where Margaret tells Lennox, who regards gardening as 'a proper employment for young ladies in the country', that 'I don't know. I am afraid I shan't like such hard work' (14). About this scene, Athmanathan states that while Margaret deliberately offers a misleading insight about her character to Lennox, 'her attitude to physical labor in this instance, her words are more significant in their critique of the ideology of the garden space, especially its association with traditional gender expectations' (39).

In informing her mother, Mrs Hale, of their removal to Milton-Northern, Margaret tempts her mother out into the garden. In contrast with Mr Hale, her father, who is too much of a coward to inform his wife of the bad news of the move, Margaret fulfils the hard task. Consoling her mother who cries on the garden bench, Margaret is sorry for her mother. She feels that her mother ought to have been told about their removal and Mr Hale's religious dissent much before as Margaret detects Mrs Hale's jealousy of her learning of the removal before her. Margaret's last walk in the garden on the evening prior to their removal makes her melancholy, though all the packing cases are carried to the nearest station under her direction. Feeling over-fatigued, she goes along the walk under the pear-tree wall and remembers her rejection of Lennox's proposal: 'Only a

fortnight ago! And all so changed!’ (54). Her nerves are sensitive by the over-work; even a faint sound over the garden-fence frightens her, and she runs back to the house. It is not until she enters ‘the drawing-room, with the windows fastened and bolted’ (55) that she feels safe. Thus, in *North and South*, the gardens are not linked to the romantic and pastoral image that was popular among the nineteenth century middle-class people.

Margaret frequently walks in Milton to help her household, taking the place of her mother, as her mother’s weak health has worsened since their move. To secure a maid for assisting Dixon, Mrs Hale’s maid, Margaret walks about by herself in the Northern industrial town. In contrast to her walk in the country like Helstone, the walk in the busy and bustling place is a difficult experience for her. In London, Margaret used to rebel against her aunt, Mrs Shaw’s rule that ‘a footman should accompany Edith and Margaret, if they went beyond Harley Street or the immediate neighbourhood’ (71). In Helstone, Margaret would often enjoy ‘the free walks and rambles of her forest life’ (71). In Milton, however, she is not accustomed to walking in the streets with the unfamiliar factory workers:

Until Margaret had learnt the times of their ingress and egress, she was very unfortunate in constantly falling in with them. They came rushing along with bald, fearless faces, and loud laughs and jests, particularly aimed at all those who appeared to be above them in rank or station. The tones of their unrestrained voices, and their carelessness of all common rules of street politeness, frightened Margaret a little first. (72)

Annoyed with the workmen’s outspokenness, she gets relieved to hear a middle-aged workman’s humorous remark: ‘your bonny face, my lass, makes the day look brighter’ (72). Margaret’s meeting with the man named Higgins and his daughter, Bessy, in the street changes her negative image of the Northern industrial town, Milton, into a positive one. Higgins refers to their meeting as follows: ‘North and South has both met and made kind o’ friends in this big smoky place’ (73). Slackening her pace to walk alongside of Higgins and Bessy, Margaret learns that Bessy is sick and offers to visit them. In Helstone, it was an understood convention that when she asked people about the location of their house, it was to offer her aid to them as a clergyman’s daughter. However, seeing Higgin’s suspicious response, Margaret is aware of the difference between the culture of

the North and South. As Scholl states, from this moment, Margaret is able to act as ‘a mediatory force between the two cultures’ and that ‘it is first necessary, though, for her not only to learn the language and cultural forms of the North, but to incorporate them to some degree in her cultural repertoire’ (100).

Margaret’s first visit to the Higginses is accidentally followed by her visiting register offices. On arriving at Bessy’s house, Margaret’s act of helping Bessy to drink a cup of water and lifting Bessy’s hair from off her temples and bathing them with water is that of a nurse, ingrained in her by her philanthropic movement at the forest in Helstone. Margaret sympathises with Bessy, who is suffering from consumption caused by her work in the spinning mill and who is consequently disappointed with her present and future life. Margaret consoles her, encouraging her to think about God. However, Higgins, doubting religion, criticises Margaret for affecting her daughter with religion. However, he realises that Margaret’s visit is not caused by her motive of performing a philanthropic act but due to her love for Bessy. His criticism does not prevent Margaret from visiting them; however, she does not visit them as a daughter of an ex-clergyman but as Bessy’s closest friend. As Dorice Williams Elliott argues, it is significant that Margaret meets and visits a house in a working-class neighbourhood ‘on her own accord’ (33). She continues that when she visits the Higginses, ‘she does not come as an envoy of the landed gentry or of the church, as a Lady Bountiful would; neither does she visit as an emissary for a philanthropic association’ (33). Margaret is amused to tell Bessy about the landscape of Helstone, her beloved home, and learns from her that the factory people work in a harsh environment. Knowing that Bessy is 19 years old, the same age as hers, Margaret is distressed to recognise the contrast between them due to their birthplace. According to Carolyn Lambert, Bessy works as the role of a double for Margaret: ‘her journey towards death mirrors Margaret’s journey towards maturity, and it is the link with Bessy and her family that acts as the catalyst for changing Margaret’s perceptions, values, and assessment of the world around her’ (56). Margaret’s friendly intercourse with Bessy and Higgins helps her learn about the lives of the working class and the people in the North beyond the boundaries between their classes.

Another important visit of Margaret in Milton is to call on Mrs Thornton, the mother of the mill owner, Mr Thornton, in return for her call to the Hales. Margaret and her father walk approximately two miles from their house in Crampton Crescent to Marlborough Street. The Thorntons live in the same site as Mr Thornton’s factory.

Coming to the end of the long dead wall, they see a factory lodge door. Admitted by the lodge-keeper, they enter the great yard and walk about seeing the offices for business and ‘an immense many-windowed mill’. They feel annoyed with the resonance of ‘the continual clank of machinery and the long groaning roar of the steam-engine’ (111). They arrive at ‘a handsome stone-coped house blackened by the smoke, which had been built some fifty or sixty years’ (111). Margaret, who loves the country life, wonders why people who can afford to live in such a good house, and keep it in such perfect order, do not prefer a dwelling in a quiet country or even a suburb. Ushered to the drawing room, she feels as if it had never been entered by anybody for a thousand years. The centre of the carpet is covered by linen and each chair and sofa is covered by netting or knitting to protect them from dirt. In the middle of the room, a large circular table is placed under the chandelier, with books arranged on the table at regular intervals. Such an atmosphere of the drawing room is maintained by Mrs Thornton’s ‘care and labour, but not care and labour to procure ease, to help on habits of tranquil home employment’ (112). It reveals Mrs Thornton’s rigidity, coolness, and a careful sense of economy, as Mr Thornton suggests to the Hales that she is ‘a woman of strong power and firm resolve’ (85). Margaret feels unpleasant and uncomfortable in the drawing room. According to Davidoff and Hall, this cold drawing room is far from the middle-class ideal, for ‘warm colours and textures gave a domestic cosiness and rich feeling, physical warmth was provided by—heavy curtains, carpets and upholstered furniture’ (380). Mrs Thornton’s drawing room contrasts itself with that of the Hales, which is comfortable enough to fascinate Mr Thornton. Mrs Thornton does not sympathise with Mrs Hale’s not visiting her on account of her illness. She complains about Mr Thornton studying classics under the guidance of Mr Hale, stating the following: ‘Classics may do very well for men who loiter away their lives in the country or in colleges; but Milton men ought to have their thoughts and powers absorbed in the work of today’ (113). Insisting that the manufacturers will lose flexibility if do not engage in spheres other than business, Margaret does not agree with Mrs Thornton’s opinion. Thus, Margaret takes part in the community of the manufacturer’s family in place of her mother.

When she wants to change her distressed state of mind after hearing Mrs Hale’s serious health condition from the doctor, Margaret plans to walk to the field:

The length of a street—yes, the air of a Milton Street—cheered her young blood

before she reached her first turning. Her step grew lighter, her lip redder. She began to take notice, instead of having her thoughts turned so exclusively inward. (131)

This reveals that Margaret is used to walking in Milton, the industrial town; however, she dislikes the prospect of the long walk through the street where men loiter slovenly, girls laugh or speak loudly, and decides to visit Bessy instead, thinking that ‘it would not be so refreshing as a quiet country walk, but still it would perhaps be doing the kinder thing’ (131). Regarding a country walk as impossible in Milton, the practical Margaret thinks that visiting her sick friend is good for her as well as for herself. Margaret first learns of the occurrence of a strike from Bessy, who explains the circumstances reluctantly, with Higgins expressing his anger at the masters such as Mr Thornton for reducing the workers’ wages. She perceives that both masters and workers have a hard time during the strike. Margaret, who is ignorant of the circumstances regarding a strike, learns the relationship between people’s lives and a strike. Her walk is linked to the problems faced while modernising England in the Victorian era.

Margaret’s errand to borrow a water-bed for her mother from Mrs Thornton falls on the day when the rioters proceed to Marlborough Street. Earlier, she hears Higgins’s reference of 700 workmen marching into Marlborough Mills as they are angry at Mr Thornton’s employment of Irish workers. As she is too absorbed in her thought that she might become motherless before long, she fails to notice that ‘there is a restless, oppressive sense of irritation abroad among the people; a thunderous atmosphere, morally as well as physically, around her’ (170). Indeed, her faculty of observation is weakened due to her distress, but she approaches Marlborough Street hearing the workers’ low distant roar and a myriad of fierce indignant voices. Entering the house, Margaret finds that the women are gathered round the windows of the drawing room, fascinated to look on the scene that terrifies them due to the workers’ angry voices and the sounds of the maddened crowd’s dashing themselves against the great gates of the mill as if they were ‘battering-rams’ (172). Mrs Thornton shows her terror and her fingers tremble in shutting the windows; perceiving this, Margaret assists her in her task. While Mrs Thornton retreats to the back room with Fanny, her daughter who shows signs of fainting, Margaret stands at the window nearest to the factory and rejects Mr Thornton’s suggestion that she should go upstairs. As she ‘had always dreaded lest her courage should fail her in any emergency, and she should be proved to be, what she dreaded lest she was—a

coward' (173), Margaret seems to challenge Mrs Thornton through this action as the latter insisted on one occasion that 'if you live in Milton, you must learn to have a brave heart' (116). In contrast to Mrs Thornton, who is unable to go out of the back room due to Fanny, Margaret shows her courage. Margaret persuades Mr Thornton to speak with the workers and to go out of the drawing room. Accompanying Mr Thornton downstairs quickly to fasten the door, Margaret goes back to 'her place by the farthest window' (175). Opening the window to look on him in the step, 'Margaret tore her bonnet off' (176) to hear him, however, she can hear nothing because of noise but finds the crowd raging worse than ever. According to Simon Morgan, "'tearing off her bonnet" reveals that Margaret abandons the passive, decorative femininity' (185). On seeing some young men preparing to throw their wooden clogs as missiles towards Mr Thornton, Margaret leaves the window; she rushes out of the room, down the stairs, and throws the door open wide. She 'was there—in face of that angry sea of men, her eyes smiting them flaming arrows of reproach—she stood between them and their enemy' (176). Her quick recognition of danger for Mr Thornton's life prompts her to go out to help him with instinctive courage. Morgan argues that 'Margaret's abandonment of her position at the window, with its connotations of sexual purity, links to a symbolical "fallen woman"' (186). Indeed, Margaret goes out of Mrs Thornton's drawing room, a secure place, into the perilous place outside of the house to protect Mr Thornton from the raging rioters. However, I would like to highlight her philanthropic nature to help people in trouble and her innate courage awakened in the emergency, regardless of her own danger. Margaret's action of protecting Mr Thornton by throwing her arms around him on seeing a pebble fly towards him is brought about by a 'humanitarian motive' (84), as argued by Stoneman. Rejecting Mr Thornton's proposal after the riot, Margaret insists that she owes her action to women's nature: 'any women, worthy of the name of women, would come forward to shield, with her revered helplessness, a man in danger from the violence of numbers' (193). It is true that, as Morgan suggests, 'Mr Thornton's masculinity is questioned' (185), but more significantly, I think, Margaret's courage is challenged in the riot scene. According to Stoneman, 'Margaret's intervention in the riot is as unacceptable as a caring act as it is an act of sexual provocation; both are inappropriate to a scene defined in terms of warfare' (90). However, Margaret's intervention in the industrial riot leads to her 'involvement in the public sphere' (42), as Athmanathan argues. I agree with Athmanathan, for Margaret acts as a negotiator with the rioters by telling them that they shall have 'relief' from their

‘complaints’ if they ‘go peaceably’ (177). After being asked by one of rioters whether the Irish workers will go back, Mr Thornton’s denial to this demand enrages the workmen. Moreover, Margaret’s fainting by the attack with a pebble thrown by a worker and her blood on her forehead make the rioters regain their reason and retrograde towards the gate before the arrival of the soldiers. Although Morgan argues that ‘Gaskell is clearly criticising the chivalric model of female influence in making Margaret feel guilty about the violence she has unwittingly encouraged’ (185), Margaret’s reckless intervention helps save not only the life of Mr Thornton, but also the lives of the rioters. While Margaret was supposed to have a brisk walk on an errand to Marlborough Street, she is involved in serious problems caused due to industrialisation between the manufacturers and the workmen in the North.

Margaret’s walking is related to death, especially the death of her beloved people. The news of Bessy’s death is conveyed to her by Mary, Bessy’s sister. As Margaret has never seen a dead person up to that point, she hesitates to go to see the lifeless Bessy; however, finally, she plucks up her courage to go to see Bessy. Walking swiftly to the house of the Higginses, Margaret goes into ‘the quiet presence of the dead’ (215). The soft smile of eternal rest upon Bessy’s face gives Margaret a sense of deep calm. Higgins is deeply shocked by Bessy’s death and intends to go out to drink. When Mary prevents his going out, he begins to strike at Mary. Margaret, in an attempt to stop him, ‘stood in the doorway, silent yet commanding’ (217). Her ‘innate sense of oppression’ (195) results in him giving up his wish to go drink, and she suggests that he should say goodbye to Bessy and come with her to her home to tea. Her unexpected invitation probably eases his inconsolable feeling, for he confesses that he ‘often wished to say to a parson’ many things (218). At first, Mr Hale is dismayed by the drunken infidel weaver; however, Mr Hale as a ‘decorous, kind-hearted, simple, old-fashioned gentleman’ treats Higgins as he treats ‘his all fellow-creatures alike’ (222), listening to him with interest. Higgins, too, straightening his appearance before seeing Mr Hale, with ‘a good, earnest composure on his face’ (222), speaks about religion, the masters, and the worker’s union. While Higgins cannot believe in God in his depressed state, Margaret, touching his arm very softly, consoles him: ‘We do not want to reason—we believe; and so do you. It is the one sole comfort in such times’ (224). Mr Hale suggests to Higgins that he should join them in family prayer. In Mr Hale’s study, ‘Margaret the Churchwoman, her father the Dissenter, Higgins the Infidel, knelt down together. It did them no harm’ (230). It is one of

the themes of the novel that human beings are equal before God in spite of the difference of classes, religions, and opinions. Margaret plays the role of mediating between the middle class and the working class. Patsy Stoneman argues that ‘Elizabeth Gaskell does not suggest that verbal communication will eliminate class struggles’ (80); however, Margaret’s straightforward way of speaking and body language appeal to Higgins’s rigid thinking and emotion, and comfort his unbearable sorrow calmly and strongly; Higgins, too, accepts Margaret’s cordial kindness. Her walk both ways to the Higginses after Bessy’s death is helpful strengthens her friendship with Higgins.

The most thrilling walk throughout the narrative is in the scene where Margaret sees off Frederick, her fugitive brother, at the station. It is Margaret that asks Frederick to visit England from Spain to fulfil her mother’s wish of seeing her son before her death; Frederick is under an arrest warrant by English navy as a ringleader of a mutiny, and is in grave danger in England. After Mrs Hale’s death, Mr Hale, due to his overwhelming despair, cannot play the role of the patriarch, and Frederick is also stricken and far from supporting Margaret. Rising from ‘her trembling and despondency’, Margaret has to become ‘a strong angel’ (246) to console and take care of her father and brother. Instead of her father, Margaret accompanies her brother to the Outwood station in the evening to see him off. When she walks with her hand laid in Frederick’s arm outside the station, they are seen by Mr Thornton on horseback. Later, her walking with a young gentleman in the evening stimulates Mr Thornton’s jealousy as well as Mrs Thornton’s criticism of Margaret’s conduct. Here, from the standpoint of middle-class politics in the mid-nineteenth century, Margaret is indifferent about how she appears to passers-by in her walk with Frederick. Female walking has various gendered problems. On the platform, Frederick is nearly caught by Leonards, a sailor who plots to win a cash award by turning Frederick in to the authorities, and wrestles with him. As soon as they see Leonards fall from the platform, Margaret and Frederick run to the train, and he jumps in a carriage. Margaret, left alone, feels terribly sick and faint. She walks into the ladies’ waiting room to rest for a while. She ventures out to walk to the end of the platform, making sure that the platform is empty. However, she is ‘so trembling and affrighted that she felt she could not walk home along the road’ (259), and she goes home by train. Thus, she experiences for the first time that she is unable to walk owing to her depression and feeling of apprehension by the terrible accident; moreover, her walk with her brother places her in a very serious situation in the latter half of the narration.

Her walk at her mother's funeral transgresses the middle-class ideal in the Victorian era. Margaret's insistence on accompanying Mr Hale at the funeral is opposed by him: 'women do not generally go' (261). She insists that although 'women of our class don't go' (261) because they cannot control themselves, she 'will be no trouble' (261). 'Over the records suggest that', Davidoff and Hall mention, 'women began to stay away from the burial service and the grave side ritual although they might be present at the meal afterwards. In the 1770s all the family attended the funeral, but by the 1840s this was much less common' (408). They add that daughters and widows did not attend funerals, because women were beginning to be considered 'too delicate to bear the public rituals of death', and if they did go, 'they were advised to follow the practices of nobility and gentry and remain in the church while the actual burial was taking place outside' (408). Indeed, Mrs Shaw and Edith do not attend the funeral although their being abroad at the time is the reason for their absence for the service. As Mr Bell, one of Mr Hale's friends who lives in Oxford, cannot come because he is suffering from gout, Margaret accompanies her father to the funeral. 'Margaret sat by him in the coach, almost supporting him in her arms, and repeating all the noble verses of holy comfort' (263) instead of her father. Margaret finds Higgins and his daughter standing a little aloof, but deeply attentive to the ceremony. However, she does not notice that Mr Thornton is present for the funeral. When the funeral service is over, Margaret lays Mr Hale's hand on her arm, and leads him away in response to his mute entreaty 'as if he were a blind, and she his faithful guide' (263). She supports her weakened father during the funeral ceremony as 'a strong angel' far from a trouble. Her attendance at her mother's funeral signifies that she has enough strength and courage to transgress the custom of the middle-class ideal of femininity and that she has an individual responsibility for supporting her father as well as controlling herself.

Margaret's philanthropic activity is not abandoned by her depression. Visiting the Higginses in return for their attending the funeral, Margaret and Mr Hale notice that Higgins is out of work because of the strike. Soon after Higgins disparages his neighbour Boucher for asking for work to a mill owner in exchange of information regarding the workers' union, calling him the good-for-nothing Judas, they see Boucher's body carried by policemen, who has committed suicide by drowning himself in the brook due to his feeling of despair. Finding that no man has the courage to inform Mrs Boucher of her husband's death, Margaret walks into Boucher's house quietly by herself. Thus, her sense

of mission gives her courage, prompting her to convey the sad news compassionately to Mrs Boucher, who has six little children. Margaret nurses her, as she faints after hearing the terrible news, and takes care of the little children. In this case, too, Mr Hale, an ex-clergyman, is not reliable and cannot console the crying widow. Margaret and Mr Hale call on Mrs Boucher the next day; however, Margaret is distressed to hear Mrs Boucher abusing the masters such as Mr Thornton, the union, and the noisy children; however, she recognises that it is ‘a hard world to live in’ (295):

It is the town life. Their nerves are quickened by the haste and bustle and speed of everything around them, to say nothing of the confinement in these pent-up houses, which of itself is enough to induce depression and worry of spirits. Now in the country, people live so much more out of doors, even children, and even in the winter” (295).

Mr Hale insists: ‘But people must live in towns. And, in the country, some get such stagnant habits of mind that they are almost fatalists’ (295). Although both Margaret and Mr Hale realise that they can do little for the widowed Mrs Boucher, Margaret does not abandon the duty of taking care of the widow; she visits and supports Mrs Boucher and her children. As Elliott argues, ‘Margaret modifies her attitudes and adapts her charitable practices to fit the new social circumstances she encounters in the industrial North’ (33), tailoring them to fit the individual person.

Margaret, after her father’s death, visits Helstone with Mr Bell, who is her godfather. Taking a walk with him, she notices that the landscape has changed since she left with her father and mother three years ago. Finding old trees felled here and there, and a familiar cottage pulled down, she misses the past landscape. However, Mr Bell regards this change as a matter of course:

It is the first changes among familiar things that make such a mystery of time to the young, afterwards we lose the sense of the mysterious. I take changes in all I see as a matter of course. The instability of all human things is familiar to me, to you it is new and oppressive. (378–379)

According to Parkins, Mr Bell ‘sees in every change only the eternal verities of age and

experience'. Parkins continues, 'the fact that such transformations have taken place even in a place as close to nature as Helstone confirms for him that change is an inevitable, organic—rather than historical—process' (511). While she walks slower than her normal pace for the sake of fat and scant o' breath Mr Bell, Margaret, in her heart, wishes to have her dear-loved walks alone in silence. Hearing the cruel episode of a cat being roasted alive according to a savage country superstition by the mother of Susan, a girl whom Margaret used to instruct, Margaret as well as Mr Bell are shocked that some of villagers believe in such superstitions; Margaret endeavours in vain to enlighten Susan's mother of the folly of her action. They walk mutely through many a bosky dell to the parochial school, seeing by chance the present Vicar's wife, Mrs Hale's successor. After Mr Hale's resignation, the church is taken over by an evangelical Vicar who is a teetotaller and a magistrate. According to Parkins, 'the arrival of the new evangelical clergyman', is 'a sign of modernity and transition in the established church, instigates changes in housing and education and the (attempted) introduction of temperance in the village' (511). Mrs Hepworth, the Vicar's wife, invites Margaret and Mr Bell to see the parsonage which is currently under renovation, which she starts to call 'improvements', changing to 'alterations' to spare Margaret's feelings (383). Margaret finds that the parsonage is so 'altered, both inside and out, that the real pain was less than she had anticipated'; 'the garden, the grass-plot, formerly so daintily trim' is messy with children's things and 'a straw-hat forced down upon a rose-tree as on a peg' (383). According to Davidoff and Hall, 'Gardens were used as teaching devices. Children were given small plots to inculcate patience, care, tenderness, and reverence along with practical science lessons' (373). While she apologises for the messy state of the garden, Mrs Hepworth claims that 'when the nursery is finished, I shall insist upon a little order' (383) and wonders how Margaret did without a nursery. As Athmanathan has argued, 'though the Hales' poorer economic circumstances could be cited as the reason behind the absence of a proper nursery in the parsonage, the lack of a nursery does strike as an oddity in the middle-class household of the Hales' (40). According to Andrea Kaston Tange, 'the nursery suite was tucked away at the top of the house, and the children themselves typically stayed in those rooms except when appearing at prescribed times, carefully groomed, on best behaviour downstairs', and 'the middle-class were for the first time separating children from adults within the home as common practice' (222), regarding this practice as the cultural desirability to protect their children from the dangers of the outside world. As

the child Margaret did not experience such a spatial segregation in the parsonage, she felt so lonely that she sobbed in the nursery on arriving at Mrs Shaw's house. Therefore, Athmanathan argues the following:

[T]he fact that a nursery is being constructed out of formerly Margaret's room in the parsonage is itself telling in the context of spatial demarcation, fluidity of movement and emotional connectivity between family members. Spatial segregation within domesticity in the name of discipline and order reflects a desire to demarcate homogeneity of behavior and function, one that can be emotionally confining for the occupants (40).

Walking in Helstone is not what Margaret has expected and the experience disappoints her:

There was change everywhere; slight, yet pervading all. Households were changed by absence, or death, or marriage, or the natural mutations brought by days and months and years, which carry us on imperceptibly from childhood to youth, and thence through manhood to age, whence we drop like fruit, fully ripe, into the quiet mother earth. places were changed—a tree gone here, a bough there, bringing in a long ray of light where no light was before—a road was trimmed and narrowed, and the green straggling pathway by its side enclosed and cultivated. A great improvement it was called; but Margaret sighed over the old picturesqueness, the old gloom, and the grassy wayside of former days. (384)

Thus, Margaret meditates on the changes of nature and the world with the times. In the latter half of the passage, as Parkins argues, 'it is not an unmediated nature which Margaret mourns but an idea cultivated in a slightly earlier period of modernity', and it is 'the passing of "old picturesqueness" in favour of the new discourse of "improvement" which is lamented' (511). However, the next morning Margaret wakes up with 'a brighter view of things' (390). She begins to think about the change positively:

If the world stood still, it would retrograde and become corrupt, if that is not Irish. Looking out of myself, and my own painful sense of change, the progress all around

me is right and necessary. I must not think so much of how circumstances affect me myself, but how they affect others, if I wish to have a right judgement, or a hopeful trustful heart. (390–391)

She comes to accept change and progress around her positively and recognise that it is important to see the changes of others by the effect of circumstances. That is, she has a role of mediation between people and the changes of their environments. This flexibility links to her innate ‘hybridity’, as Athmanathan suggests (39). Margaret, before they leave Helstone, enjoys a walk alone to the parsonage garden to gather a piece of honeysuckle. Returning to the common field, she feels the place ‘reinvested with the old enchanting atmosphere’, ‘more musical than anywhere else in the world’, and ‘the light more golden’ (391). She, feeling herself different from yesterday, suggests that ‘I too change perpetually’ (391). She acknowledges that she herself is situated within change.

Margaret’s walks usually have destinations and have aims such as errands for her family, visits to her acquaintances, or delivering help to her neighbours. Loving walks, she walks vigorously not only in the country but also in the town, and walks alone as well in somebody’s company. Indeed, she is an innate pedestrian. Her walking pace is faster than usual. Walking signifies her mental as well as her physical state. Her walks connect a place with another place and herself with people. While her walking often reveals her family’s modest economic status, she is proud of walking for the pleasure it affords her. While her first walk in London is regulated due to her gender and class norms as a middle-class young lady, Margaret gradually increases her opportunities to walk alone outside, and the meaning of her walking changes from having a charitable purpose for her own pleasure and responsibility through her back-and-forth travel to rural and urban areas, country and town, wealthy and poor regions. In *North and South*, the heroine’s walk functions significantly for her to make personal contact with people from completely different backgrounds and connect these people.

Text

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