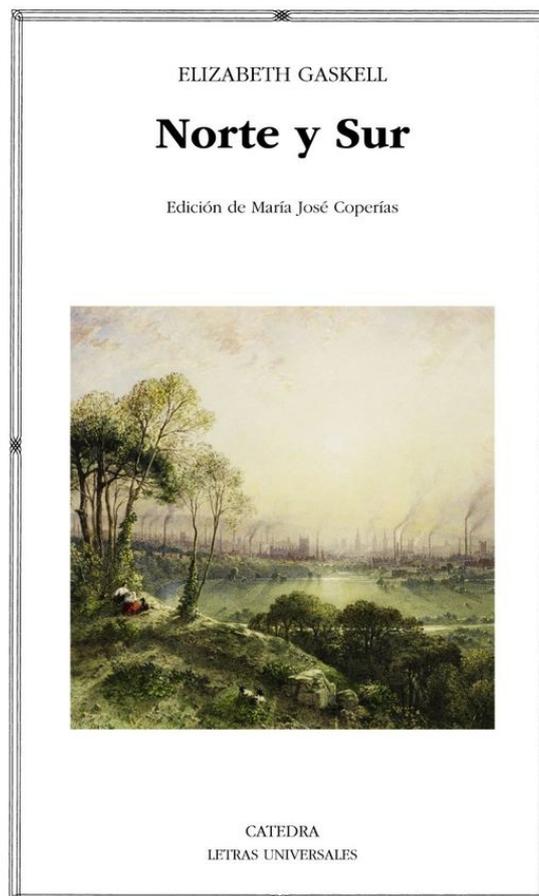


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Elizabeth Gaskell. Norte y sur. Edición de María José Coperías, traducción de Elizabeth Power. Madrid: Cátedra (Letras Universales), 2015, pp. 711.
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It is always good news to see a new edition in Spanish of a nineteenth-century English novel, and especially so in that this text offers Spanish and Latin American readers the first critical edition of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855). This publication includes not only a thoroughly researched introduction by María José Coperías, but also a new version by the proficient translator Elizabeth Power. New editions of this kind serve to fill gaps in the market of the Spanish-speaking community, providing a hitherto unavailable work for a specific target audience, and Cátedra is a highly respected academic publishing house based in Madrid that maintains in print a series specializing in the publication of foreign fiction in Spanish translation, expanded each year in order to keep abreast of the interests of its readership. An edition such as this pays a significant debt in that it makes partial amends for lacunae in the Hispanic market regarding eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English fiction in general and indeed for the previous absence of this novel in particular. In reception and translation studies it is widely accepted that English novels rarely reached the Spanish market at the same time as they did in other European languages, such as French (Hale, 2001: 64). This was definitely the case with Elizabeth Gaskell, whose texts were read in French almost immediately after their publication in England (Hopkins 1938, 545-74) but not in Spain, where most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts arrived only in the twentieth century, even those by George Eliot (Lorenzo-Modia, 2016: 220), for example. Specifically, Gaskell's *Cousin Phillis* (1864), *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (1848) and *Cranford* (1851-53) were first translated into Spanish in the years 1920 (*Mi prima Filis*), 1922 (*María Barton: Historia de la vida de Manchester*) and 1931 (*Cranford*).

Both in her introduction and annotations Coperías relates the author's times to the present, using an economy of means that makes the text both contemporary while at the same time offering an interpretation that "elevates the role of the editor to that of a critic" (Badaracco, 1984: 42). According to modern theories of textual editions, such as those of the followers of both Fredson Bowers (59) and M. H. Abrams (568), the editor of *Norte y sur* conveys the text in its specific historical setting as well as giving contextual information about the period so that the modern reader becomes "as 'competent'

as the original intended readership" (Small and Walsh, 2007: 8). All these informative introductory elements are paramount in the transmission of texts to other linguistic communities and contribute decisively to the transnational diffusion of a given text. Indeed, Coperías' example is an excellent illustration of Adrian Armstrong's claim in "Scholarly Editing": "Scrutiny and Visibility: therein lies the profound twofold value of scholarly editing to the larger research community" (2013: 239).

The current edition includes a number of sections, the first being a biographical treatment of Gaskell in which details of her works and literary career are interspersed with personal information, thus introducing the text by means of its textual genesis and transmission. Subsections devoted to her personal and family background shed light on her education and Unitarian religious upbringing. Her wide-ranging education and tolerant, progressive vision of life is very well documented in this chapter by Coperías, who also illuminates the themes dealt with in both *North and South* and the rest of the author's literary production. As the editor observes, Gaskell's career was that of a professional writer who did not consider herself to be completely so, in that her income did not depend on it (44). She defined herself as a story-teller, an activity that was indeed part of her way of life. This introduction provides a very full account of Gaskell's career and her literary circle, which included Harriet Martineau, the Brontë sisters, Elizabeth Barret Browning and George Eliot. Because of her close relationship with these writers, on the death of Charlotte Brontë, her father asked Gaskell to write a biography of his recently deceased daughter; *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) would be written immediately after *North and South*. The editor of this volume analyses this novel as a means of providing a Spanish readership with an up-to-date explanation of the text, including all aspects of the English Industrial Revolution and its narrative representation. Following Thomas Carlyle's "Condition of England Question" raised in "Chartism" (1839), the publication of this condition-of-England novel in Spanish is a landmark in that it shows that social novels of the industrial revolution, which for Spanish readers are most commonly associated with Charles Dickens, were also produced by many women, Elizabeth Gaskell among them, given that both this novel and her *Mary Barton* are examples of such works. The fictional city of Milton

depicted in *North and South* represents those British industrial towns in which the exploitation of workers in cotton factories and the incipient role of trade unionism are juxtaposed. Another virtue of the publication of the present text is that even if contemporary readers may approach the novel from a historic perspective, many similarities can be drawn with twenty-first century workers' conditions, particularly in times of economic crisis. The analysis of the reception of Gaskell's texts shows that with *North and South* the novelist tried to address the unbalanced perspective she was said to have used in her previous industrial narrative, *Mary Barton*. Thus, *Norte y sur* presents the figure of the entrepreneur John Thornton in a positive light, in that he learns to feel compassion for his workers and tries to treat them fairly. The description of the genesis of the text here is particularly interesting since it shows that the novel—originally published in instalments in the journal *Household Words* and edited by Charles Dickens—was corrected for the first edition in English in book form. Gaskell's difficult relationship with Dickens as an editor is also highlighted, since this may have influenced the textual history of *North and South*, notably in the abrupt ending of the first version of the novel. Throughout their editorial work on the project she occasionally ignored his guidelines and failed to meet the firm deadlines that he imposed. Once the whole novel had appeared in the journal, Gaskell reworked its last section in order to better delineate the internal growth of the heroine, so that the final edition would offer a living, flesh and blood character. The editor of this novel goes on to explain exactly why she uses Gaskell's book edition as the basis for the Spanish version, and provides Spanish readers with a detailed description of the changes introduced by Gaskell in the second edition, such as the inclusion of literary quotations before every chapter, which were not present in the prior English version.

The Spanish introduction to the novel also provides extensive information on the social, religious and political debates that existed in mid nineteenth-century England, in which economic liberalism contrasted with its harsh effects on the lives of workers, often unable to feed their children and condemned to death due to inhuman labour conditions in factories. The role of trade unions is also analysed in this prefatory essay, showing Gaskell's sympathetic view of their function in the new society as catalysts for the dignity

for workers and as providing an arena of understanding between factory owners and labourers. Lastly, this introductory section concludes by discussing the critical reception of the novel in English, then offers a bibliography divided into sections including Studies on Victorian literature and culture, Gaskell and her work, and particularly on *North and South*; this is followed by a short list of modern English editions. All this information is yet another significant benefit of the informative introductory essay to this edition. Abundant explanatory footnotes are inserted both in the introduction and in the text of the novel itself, in order to provide full data for the references and quotations in various languages used by Gaskell. Additionally, the notes allow a hypertextual dialogue with other English editions of the novel (250, n. 56) as well as with many other English and world writers mentioned by Gaskell, which here are often identified (162, n. 30; 642, ns. 167 and 168) and assessed for Hispanic readers. Hence, we have before us a learned edition by a deeply knowledgeable scholar who has thoroughly researched the literary sources used by the novelist, and even indicates the ones which prove to be unknown (490, n. 126), in such cases often proposing plausible hypotheses as to authorship (272, n. 71, or 277, n. 74).

The final issue to be mentioned in analysis of the Cátedra edition of this novel is the cover illustration, entitled "Manchester from Kersal Moor" (1852) by William Wyld (1806-89). It is a watercolour commissioned by Queen Victoria after her visit to the city, having already seen other paintings by the artist in Belgium. Its date almost coincides with the composition of *North and South*, and both works represent the smoking chimneys of Manchester, which made the city very unhealthy as a place to live and work, and the painting thus seems to reflect the negative impression that the main characters in the novel have when arriving in the city from the South. If one had to find a weak point in this edition, it would perhaps be the lack of information about prior editions in Spanish of Gaskell's texts and a brief discussion of the reception of her work in the Iberian Peninsula. Nevertheless, the textual-critical apparatus of this volume provides a broad depiction of the reception of both English and classical literature in the nineteenth-century as well as in the present day, particularly considering the polysystem theory, which would take into account a four-part BBC version which led

to a worldwide revisiting of the text as a key element in the dissemination of the novel (Even Zohar, 1990).

The publication of *Norte y sur* in a scholarly edition in Spanish is absolutely pertinent, for the following reasons. Firstly, this nineteenth-century novel is of huge significance in the twenty-first century Age of Austerity. Secondly, to the best of our knowledge there have been only two prior editions in Spanish, one in 1930 and the other in 2005, neither of these being critical editions. Thirdly, the publication of a condition-of-England novel by a woman novelist is a landmark in the revision of the literary canon, and (re)installs Elizabeth Gaskell, for the Spanish-speaking community, among the great British writers of the nineteenth century.

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