i intend to focus my topic on the “stillness” and “depth” of the world of Cranford in this essay. Firstly, I would like to demonstrate the impression that the so-called Amazon has exerted on my mind.
I. AMAZON OR ARCADIA?
“In the first place, Cranford is in possession of the Amazon.” (Cranford: 39)So many critics argue whether the readers should take this sentence seriously as the generalization of the life of Cranford. In my opinion, it is a mild legerdemain played by Mrs. Gaskell. It is “mild” because Cranford and Amazon have something in common superficially. It is “legerdemain” because this analogy tends to become disputable as the plot proceeds.
The paradox of Amazon is the centre of all that Cranford and Amazon have in common. It is brave women warriors that Amazon first reminds every reader of when it is mentioned. What principles do they uphold and what do they fight for? On the other hand, what or who do they fight against. If they fight for their femininity or sexuality, is it insensible to remove the right breast as the important symbol of woman in order to draw a bow more easily. If they fight to avoid the invasion of men, why is it just Amazon’s queen, Hippolyte who possesses the very girdle of magic power of love and desire？ In the opening chapters of Cranford, Miss Jenkyns defends Dr. Johnson against Captain Brown’s preference of Charles Dickens. It is true that Miss Jenkyns is arguing with a MAN. However, what she strives to uphold is merely a value or authority belonging to the past established by MAN, such as her father or Dr Johnson. So Cranfordians’ “fight” is the same blind, aimless and paradoxical as the Amazonians’ in the legend. Miss Jenkyns’s opinion of Mr. Brown also undergoes a series of changes except that about Dr. Johnson. On hearing his death, she is quite shocked and sad and takes over the responsibilities of providing for his two daughters. She is by no means a feminist in this case.