

# *The Martineau Society*

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### *Editor's Note*

In this newsletter, our first article from Will Frank dives headlong into the deep oceans of the religious thoughts of James Martineau in England and William Ellery Channery in New England. Theirs were thoughts which influenced each other and together influenced, indeed, revolutionised religious thinking throughout the nineteenth century and far more widely than the Unitarianism to which both men subscribed. Theirs were thoughts which continue to echo against religious walls well beyond a century later.

Speakers at the Society's very successful 2010 conference at Ambleside contribute our further articles. We look at Harriet Martineau's contribution to what became known as the 'Women's Movement'. Dorothy Wordsworth makes interesting appearances. We shall have more papers and reports from Ambleside in our next issue.

Our thanks to all our contributors. As usual, the errors are solely those of your editor. Do enjoy this issue of the newsletter.

Meanwhile, I would draw your attention to the announcement by our secretary, Professor Gaby Weiner, of the arrangements for the Society's 2011 Conference and AGM at the Park Hotel, Grand Parade, Tynemouth UK on 7 – 10 July 2011. You will find links to the registration information and details of the connections the Martineaus had to Tynemouth on the Society's website - [www.martineausociety.co.uk](http://www.martineausociety.co.uk) . Do enjoy your reading.

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## ***Trans-Atlantic Influences: James Martineau and American Religious Thought***

***Willard C. Frank, Jr.***

Liberal religious thought integral to the Unitarian and Universalist tradition has since the sixteenth century flowed freely and widely. At first within continental Europe and then between Europe and Britain, and then between Britain and America, and finally world wide, ideas in print and in letter swirled back and forth, inspiring here, reinforcing there, challenging everywhere. Open freedom of such expression was necessary, and their proponents ensured thereby that such sharing and probing would sustain a free faith.

In the late eighteenth century the flow was largely from England to America, such as the inspiration John Taylor of Norwich imparted to Charles Chauncey of Boston. In the nineteenth century the flow tended to reverse itself, from America to England, such as the inspiration William Ellery Channing bestowed on James Martineau. Yet the influences were always interactive, guiding intellects within each continent and on both sides of the Great Pond to examine, reflect, suggest, criticize, and spiritually grow.

This paper concentrates on one aspect of this movement, the trans-Atlantic flow of liberal religious ideas in the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly between the minds of William Ellery Channing in America and James Martineau in England.

Unfettered rational science sprouting forth in 17th century England along with the political and religious conflicts revolving around the British civil wars all tended to spur independent thought. Sir Isaac Newton applied an empirical and critical mind to the traditions of the Christian faith, as did John Locke with the addition of Socinian ideas swirling around Holland when he was in exile there, thus by the mid 18th century laying the foundations of a broad-minded and rational approach to religious thought among what were known as English Presbyterians. John Taylor of Norwich preached on “dilating the Heart to universal Goodness and Benevolence, ... and giving Freedom of Mind to admit the Truth wherever we find it,” a most radical message. His Octagon Chapel, symmetrical, rational, light-filled, and congregational-centered, is a perfect architectural expression of the rational mind and giving heart. The rise of Dissenting Academies, such as Warrington Academy, and of young rationalist ministers, such as Joseph Priestley, who propagated the “Unitarian” label, led to ever increasing flow of books, tracts and sermons, and burgeoning liberal Christian chapels in England and Lowland Scotland.

In America the seats of liberal religious thought were all transplants from these British sources, developing almost simultaneously in the mid 18th century within the faculty of the College of William and Mary in Virginia, which led to the American Bill of Rights, among the Scots factors who settled in Philadelphia and founded the

Unitarian Church there, and spectacularly in Boston, which became the center of the Unitarian movement in America.

In 18th century Boston and surrounding counties, the hopes of the Puritan “city on a hill” had become hopelessly nostalgic, as unexplained deep socio-economic decline set in. Agricultural towns had become overcrowded, younger children moving into Boston to seek employment, and competing with other immigrants and British soldiers in what was becoming an increasingly rowdy commercial port town. Decline seemed clearly a signal of human sin and God’s wrath, leaving the faithful to fear that God would condemn them like a loathsome spider held for eternity over the unquenchable fiery pit of Hell. One could find no sign of hope. By the 1740s, this Dread had triggered the Great Awakening, an emotional outburst to seek personal salvation by giving one’s unworthy self wholly to Jesus. And yet the emotional release was often temporary and the perceived decline continued. This led to an alternate way out, to project one’s fears onto Parliament and Crown as the cause of one’s woes, a deep-seated but unrecognized spur to the American revolutionary war for independence.<sup>1</sup>

The emotional outbursts of camp meetings sat uneasily with members of the learned clergy of Boston, such as Charles Chauncey of First Church, Boston, the church of the Puritan fathers and the leading families of the day, and Jonathan Mayhew of West Church. Among these Chauncey, known as “Old Brick,” was most influential in thinking afresh on religion by drawing on English thought, such as that of Locke and Taylor, prominently displayed in books arriving in the town’s bookstores from Britain. Over a period of sixty years, these ministers rejected the Puritanism that had ceased to meet human needs and the Methodist emotionalism that seemed to have abandoned any test of truth, to form a new liberal Christianity that drew out human abilities to connect with the divine with reason and hope. Rejected was inherent original sin, replaced by a human capacity to do right or wrong (Arminianism). Calvinist determinism gave way to free will, human beings being free moral agents, allowing us to progressively develop one’s character, leaving salvation within human reach. God-given reason, reflection, and intuition gave us the ability to know the right and the true, and thus to make moral choices. Gone was God’s wrathful judgment with its threat of condemnation, replaced by God’s loving nurture for all of his children that would inspire us to love each other, safe in the knowledge that God is on our side and that any divine punishment is corrective in God’s intent to lead us all to holiness and salvation. The semi-divine Jesus of Arianism gave way to the Socinian notion of Jesus as a human being inspired by God. Throughout these years of developing liberal thought, from the 1740s and through the next fifty years, where much derived from Locke and Taylor, an increasing emphasis centered on the right of private judgment, in which a diversity of opinion in religion promoted inquiry, and

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<sup>1</sup> For an exploration into this argument, see Willard C. Frank, Jr., “Colonial Disequilibrium and the American Revolution: A Review of Some Recent Writing of History,” in *Virginia in the American Revolution: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Richard A. Rutyna and Peter C. Stewart (Norfolk: Old Dominion University, 1977), pp. 1-37.

inquiry promoted discussion, and discussion promoted knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

This was the religious inheritance of William Ellery Channing, American Unitarianism's most prominent figure in the first half of the 19th century. These elements of emerging Unitarianism in Boston were all in place when James Martineau was born in Norwich, England, in 1805.

Nurtured in the Octagon Chapel just a few minutes walk from his birthplace and home, James from early on and throughout his life showed an original and independent mind, unfettered by custom or popularity. So did his older sister Harriet, who became his first mentor. Brother and sister were more alike than we often give them credit. They were very close as children and youth and so had a tremendous influence on each other in those young years when one's basic character is being formed. They took long walks together in Scotland. The ideas of both evolved, with contradictions and uncertainties, over their lifetimes. As young people, Harriet was attracted by the rationality and humanitarianism of political economy, while James felt a call to the rational liberal Christian ministry. Reason and benevolence were alive in both. It was their likeness as independent minds with a passion for discovering the truth that, as they took divergent paths, finally drove them apart.<sup>3</sup>

At age 15 James attended Lant Carpenter's school in Bristol. There he first encountered the ideas of William Ellery Channing, which continually inspired Carpenter. Channing's seminal sermon, "Unitarian Christianity" (1819), had been a sensation when delivered in Baltimore the year before and had already been printed and reprinted in Liverpool. In the Baltimore sermon a somewhat reluctant Channing defended liberal Christianity in response to orthodox attacks that labeled the unacceptable rising heresy as "Unitarianism." Channing preferred a non-confrontational sharing of views within one unbroken Christian family and avoiding polemics and absolute certainties that would only obscure rather than illuminate veiled or emerging truths. In time Martineau adopted this same position, putting him at odds with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, as Channing was

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<sup>2</sup> This evolution of liberal religious thought in Boston is well developed in the classic study by Conrad Wright, *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America* (Boston: Starr King Press, 1955). Key books, which among others made their way to England, include Charles Chauncey, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England* (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743); Charles Chauncey, *Salvation for All Men: Illustrated and Vindicated as a Scripture Doctrine in Numerous Extracts from a Variety of Pious and Learned Men, Who Have Purposely Writ upon the Subject* (Boston; T. and J. Fleet, 1782); and Jonathan Mayhew, *Seven Sermons upon the Following Subjects; viz. The Difference betwixt Truth and Falsehood, Right and Wrong; The Natural Abilities of Men for Discerning These Differences; The Right and Duty of Private Judgment; Objections Considered; The Love of God; The Love of Our Neighbour; The First and Great Commandment, Etc.* (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1749).

<sup>3</sup> For an interpretation of the estrangement out of nineteenth-century cultural assumptions, see Valerie Sanders, "James and Harriet Martineau: Brother and Sister," *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2002), pp. 322-338.

ambivalent about the American Unitarian Association. The 1819 sermon had not yet made a major impression on young James, but in 1822, when James was already at Manchester College, York, with Carpenter present, a copy from Boston of Channing's *Evidences of Revealed Religion* came to Carpenter's attention, and Carpenter was so enthusiastically engrossed in Channing's words, that he forgot breakfast, extolled the work to his students, and preached on it the following Sunday, with James present. Carpenter had the sermon reprinted in Bristol. Carpenter was Channing's most important early advocate in Britain, and from then on James was alert to any new morsel of Channing's thought crossing the Atlantic.<sup>4</sup>

Channing, however, on his one voyage of England in 1822, did not reciprocate the interest. He assumed that English Unitarians were all followers of the philosophical necessitarianism of Joseph Priestley, and made no effort to contact anyone wearing a Unitarian label. Priestley was at the pinnacle of fame, as tutor at Warrington Academy, as survivor of the Birmingham riots, as chemist and minister, as advocate of necessitarianism. This concept, derived from the scientific view of outside forces of nature stimulating a response, whereby all action had antecedent causes, seemed rationally irrefutable. Harriet had accepted a necessitarian basis for her study of political economy, and James had also assumed its validity. And yet it was a deterministic denial of human free will, which Channing characterized as "the chilling doctrine of the Materialism of the Soul, of the mechanical Necessity of human actions, and of the suspension of consciousness for ages after death." It was a "heart-withering philosophy," Channing concluded, that he had to totally reject, even as his strong stand made Channing appear theologically intolerant.<sup>5</sup>

In the place of Calvinist depravity or a mechanistic response to stimuli, Channing came to see that the path for the soul to unite with God lay in complete human freedom. Chauncey and others had assembled the elements, but it was Channing who put them together in a poetic form that moved multitudes. A free mind must withstand base influences on mind and heart, so it might rise, not to respond to stimuli from without, but to heed the moral sense of God beckoning from within.

In his 1830 sermon "Spiritual Freedom" Channing wrote:

"I call that mind free, which masters the senses, which protects itself against animal appetites, which contemns pleasure and pain in comparison with its own

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew M. Hill, "Channing and British Unitarianism: Sowing the Seeds," *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. 19, no. 2 (April 1988), pp. 71-77. See also William Ellery Channing, "Unitarian Christianity: Discourse at the Ordination of the Rev. Jared Sparks, Baltimore, 1819," and "The Evidences of Revealed Religion: Discourse before the University in Cambridge, at the Dudleian Lecture, 14th March 1821," in *The Works of William E. Channing, D.D.*, 7th ed. (Boston: Munroe, 1847), vol. 3, pp. 59-136. For Martineau's love/hate relationship with organized Unitarianism with its then doctrinal proclivities, see Alan Rushton, "James Martineau and the Unitarian Association," *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2002), pp. 371-384.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Hill, "Channing and British Unitarianism," p. 73.

energy, which penetrates beneath the body and recognises its own reality and greatness, which passes life, not is asking what it shall eat or drink, but in hungering, thirsting, and seeking after righteousness.

I call that mind free, which escapes the bondage of matter, which, instead of stopping at the material universe and making it a prison wall, passes beyond it to its Author, and finds in the radiant signatures which it everywhere bears of the Infinite Spirit, helps to its own spiritual enlargement.

I call that mind free, which jealously guards its intellectual rights and powers, which calls no man master, which does not content itself with a passive or hereditary faith, which opens itself to light whencesoever it may come, which receives new truth as an angel from heaven, which, whilst consulting others, inquires still more of the oracle within itself, and uses instructions from abroad, not to supersede but to quicken and exalt its own energies.

I call that mind free, which sets no bounds to its love, which is not imprisoned in itself or in a sect, which recognises in all human beings the image of God and the rights of his children, which delights in virtue and sympathizes with suffering wherever they are seen, which conquers pride, anger, and sloth, and offers itself up a willing victim to the cause of mankind.

I call that mind free, which protects itself against the usurpations of society, which does not cower to human opinion, which feels itself accountable to a higher tribunal than man's, which respects a higher law than fashion, which respects itself too much to be the slave or tool of the any or the few.

I call that mind free, which resists the bondage of habit, which does not mechanically repeat itself and copy the past, which does not live on its old virtues, which does not enslave itself to precise rules, but which forgets what is behind, listens for new and higher monitions of conscience, and rejoices to pour itself forth in fresh and higher exertions.

I call that mind free, which is jealous of its own freedom, which guards itself from being merged in others, which guards its empire over itself a nobler than the empire of the world.”<sup>6</sup>

Such was the spiritual freedom that through the enlargement of thought and affection becomes a powerful moral force in the world, the essence, to Channing, of Christianity. Reason was a tool in such spiritual freedom, as to read the Bible critically, but was not its core. The center toward which Channing's thought was bending was the moral perfection of God, and human likeness to God. Jesus came to point out this truth and the way. This was not a negative religion of salvation from sin, but an uplifting religion of self-actualization, of the soul rising in free will toward an intimate union of man and God.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> William Ellery Channing, “Spiritual Freedom: Discourse Preached at the Annual Election, May 26, 1830,” *Works*, vol. 4, pp. 71-73. Among the fine studies of Channing are Jack Mendelsohn, *Channing: The Reluctant Radical: A Biography* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971); and Andrew Delcanto, *William Ellery Channing: An Essay on the Liberal Spirit in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> The precepts of Channing that were most influential to British Unitarians are explored in Duncan S.

James Martineau, as a student at Manchester College, York, was in a perfect environment to consider and perhaps absorb Channing's ideas. Charles Wellbeloved, the senior tutor, always encouraged his students to think for themselves, and refrained from any sectarian orthodoxy. Despite the growing tendency of Manchester College to be seen as a Unitarian college for the preparation of Unitarian ministers, Wellbeloved avoided any labels and ensured that there were no boundaries around acceptable thought.<sup>8</sup> Here Wellbeloved was echoing Channing. James well learned the imperative of the free mind and carried it to his pulpits in Dublin and Liverpool. Installed in the Paradise Street Chapel in Liverpool in 1832, he had a close circle of friends with whom he could interchange ideas, particularly his Unitarian colleagues John James Tayler and John Hamilton Thom, both closely associated with Channing through correspondence, and in 1835 the free-spirited Anglican Joseph Blanco White, who joined the circle.

James had already come firmly to the side of free inquiry. Now in Liverpool in the early 1830s, he drew from Channing the assertion that while the Christian faith is more than reason, it could not be contrary to reason. Therefore one must treat the Bible as any other human document, with a discerning and critical eye. On the basis of rationality, he, as Channing, rejected the Trinity, the Atonement, and everlasting Hell. Next, he progressively broke with Priestley's necessitarianism. Where Priestley judged one's actions in terms of results, as science assumed, James Martineau reversed it to judge one's actions by one's motives, as ethics required. Finally, James shifted the focus of worship from the search for truth, the focus of Priestley, to an emotional devotion to the moral law through conscience and Christ as exemplar. The critical mind could lead one to hear the voice of God within.<sup>9</sup> Here again, he was walking in the footsteps of Channing.

By 1840, the transformation of James Martineau was complete, with Channing's mind apparent at every step, each reinforcing the other. Both Channing and Martineau wrestled with the role of Christ in a Unitarian theology. Some Unitarians were ready to drop him from a central role in the faith. Perhaps a Liberal Christianity did not need a Christ. Yet both Channing and Martineau concluded that Christ

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McGuffie, "William Ellery Channing's Religion and its Influence," *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. 17, no. 2 (July 1980), pp. 45-53.

<sup>8</sup> David L. Wykes, "Dissenting Academy or Unitarian Seminary? Manchester College at York (1803-1840)," *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. 19, no. 2 (April 1988), pp. 102-112.

<sup>9</sup> For James Martineau's shifts of the 1830s, see Ralph Waller, "James Martineau: The Critical Mind and the Will to Believe," *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2002), pp. 339-354; and "James Martineau: The Development of His Religious Thought," in *Truth, Liberty, Religion: Essays Celebrating Two Hundred Years of Manchester College*, ed. Barbara Smith (Oxford: Manchester College, 1986), pp. 233-245. The most systematic study of Martineau's ideas is Frank Schulman, *James Martineau: "This Conscience-Intoxicated Unitarian"* (Chicago: Meadville Lombard Theological School Press, 2002). For Martineau's evaluation of the ideas of Priestley and Channing, see James Martineau, "The Life and Works of Dr. Priestley" and "Memoir and Papers of Dr. Channing," in *James Martineau, Essays, Reviews, and Addresses*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans Green, 1890), pp. 1-42, 81-148.

expressed the highest level of the moral law of God, and that devotion to the teachings of Christ most fully brought one into communion with God. Neither was sectarian, and saw Unitarianism as a doctrinal label that impeded the free mind. Neither wished to be associated with a denomination that distinguished itself doctrinally from other Christians. Both saw conscience as the seat of authority in religion, the voice of God within, intuitively known and inwardly discerned. Here Martineau was clearer and more consistent than Channing, whose unsystematic poetic style, although accessible to the hearts of his hearers, clouded any precise theology. Finally, with the Liverpool Controversy of 1839, Martineau was forced to take the strongest stand yet against philosophical necessity, much as Channing was propelled to do in 1819, and won Channing's warm praise.<sup>10</sup>

It is striking to see the great extent that Martineau absorbed Universalism, God's intention to nurture all souls and bring them to restoration with the divine. Hell, therefore, is a fiction, and never part of God's plan. Where Channing hinted at the restoration of all souls, Martineau explicitly endorsed it. Martineau likely gained his Universalism originally from America, from the writings of Chauncey and Elhanan Winchester, and perhaps from the visit to England of Winchester and the ministry of William Vidler in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and associated Universalist publications. Even the Monthly Repository had started out as a Universalist journal. By 1825, Universalist concepts had largely been absorbed into British Unitarianism, but not given prominence. However, they were alive in the thought of James Martineau, even though not given much expression in the British Unitarian pulpit then or now.<sup>11</sup>

These shifts were in actuality symptomatic of the great shift in Western thought that had already been underway for decades. The Enlightenment, with its mechanistic rationalism, had been giving way to the Romantic movement in Western culture. "I think; therefore I am" of Descartes had shifted to "I feel; therefore I am" of the Romantics. Architecture expressed the shift. Eighteenth-century light and symmetry of the Palladian and Georgian style had given way to nineteenth-century neo-Gothic moods, colors and shadows. Thus Channing's Federal Street Church was constructed in the Gothic style and outfitted with heavy draperies, while Martineau abandoned his symmetrical octagonal Paradise Street Chapel in Liverpool for the new towering Gothic edifice on Hope Street, which would aid worship by arousing soaring emotions.

With Channing's death in 1842, their correspondence ended, but not the influence.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 242-245. Martineau's lectures in the Liverpool Controversy are gathered in *Unitarianism Defended: A Series of Lectures by Three Protestant Dissenting Ministers of Liverpool, in Reply to a Course of Lectures, Entitled "Unitarianism Confuted,"* by Thirteen Clergymen of the Church of England (Liverpool: Willmer and Smith, 1839).

<sup>11</sup> Charles A. Howe, "British Universalism, 1787-1825: Elhanan Winchester, William Vidler and the Gospel of Universal Restoration," *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. 17, no. 1 (September 1979), pp. 1-14. Universalism as a religious movement could not bridge the gap between doctrinal essentials and the free mind. Nor did it prioritize institutional strength. These weaknesses plagued Universalism on both sides of the Atlantic.

Channing's works continued to inspire his British colleague. Channing was prominent among a handful of liberal thinkers of whom Martineau wrote: "Take the volumes from its shelves, blot out the dear and venerable names that are the symbols of its wisdom and piety; and what Church could live? They are the silent preachers that reach the furthest onward, and find the deepest in all time"<sup>12</sup>

Over the coming years, Martineau drew from Immanuel Kant and Samuel Taylor Coleridge to reinforce the idea that although God is unknowable, a life of meaning that follows conscience connecting one with God. Martineau also established warm friendships with Francis Newman and Bishop John Colenso of Natal, who drew from Martineau for their evolving thought. Martineau drew less from American Transcendentalists, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker. Emerson, despite their commonality on the inner voice, only evoked a smile from Martineau. James warmly offered his pulpit to Parker when he visited Liverpool, while Parker's "Transient and Permanent" sermon left no permanent place for the figure of Christ, and his "Great and Thursday Sermon" went too far in suggesting that God had greater figures yet to inspire religious seekers.<sup>13</sup>

Yet, Martineau did honor the recently deceased Parker with his address on the opening of Manchester New College, London, in 1862, titled "The Transient and Permanent in Theology." Not only did Martineau borrow his title from Parker, but made an analogy between religious minds in Parker's Massachusetts charting new ground in theology and English Non-Conformists exiled from the Established Church doing the same. However, where Scripture was a "purely human literature" and not a "narrow and rigorous conception of the Word of God," the permanent in theology, or where the divine touched the human, included "the inner experience" of "the immediate relation between ourselves and God (where Parker would agree) and also the "outer experience" of nature and historical religion which "mediate sources of religion," especially Jesus as a "transcendent personality, ... in whom the power of the Spirit took up humanity entirely and showed it to be immortal." Here Jesus appears "not an absolute reality but its impression on differing and wondering minds." Martineau could not give the image of Jesus in its historical context authority, nor could he throw it away, because ultimately it derives, imperfect as it was, from the "greater genius" of God.<sup>14</sup> While Transcendentalist thought in America was transcending Christianity itself, and Martineau stopped short, but accepted in his theology a range of ambiguity surrounding the figure of Jesus.

Channing and Martineau both resonated with the imperative to reach the poor, such

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<sup>12</sup> Martineau, Charge to minister (A. Gordon) and congregation of Hope Street Church, Liverpool (1863), in Martineau, *Essays, Reviews, and Addresses*, vol. 4 (1891), p. 548.

<sup>13</sup> For Theodore Parker's far-reaching sermons, see "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" and "The Relation of Jesus to His Age," in his collected works, vol. 4, *The Transient and Permanent in Christianity* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1908), pp. 1-57.

as Boston's Joseph Tuckerman or London's Edward Tagart were doing. Yet both Channing and Martineau restricted their social action to works of the pen, Channing especially in his stinging attack on slavery, but Martineau only in a round-about way through the pulpit encouraging one to listen to one's conscience. Nurture the spirit, and to Martineau conscience would do the rest.

Both Martineau and Channing were influenced by individuals on the cutting edge of liberal religious thought, not by established schools of thought. Both saw in human beings the likeness of God; one finds God within. Conscience is God's voice calling. Martineau was the more systematic and the clearer writer of the two, and although Channing's prose could soar, for clarity one would have to return to Martineau. Perhaps, therefore, Martineau provides a window not only into the mature Unitarian thought of nineteenth-century Britain, but perhaps into the thought of America's Channing as well.

14 Martineau, "The Transient and the Permanent in Theology" (1862), in Martineau, *Essays, Reviews, and Addresses*, vol. 4, pp. 93-108. The quotes are on pp. 97, 101, 107.

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### ***"The spirited pen": The Ladies' Treasury and Harriet Martineau***

#### ***Ruth Watts***

In 1859 a fashionable magazine *The Ladies' Treasury*, urging the charms of music – 'the greatest source of public attraction and of private enjoyment' - as having peculiar claims' as a particularly important accomplishment for women, used the example of a story about a young girl who sang all day for the sheer enjoyment of it from 'the spirited pen of Miss Martineau' as authority for what it was stating.<sup>1</sup> It seems rather incongruous at first that a '*Ladies' Treasury*' would cite a radical, independent woman thinker to back their arguments, but examining the journal and how Harriet might, or might not, relate to it, can give us some insight into the actuality of the complex world of interweaving, as well as opposing, ideas on women's role in mid nineteenth century England.

*The Ladies' Treasury* was a monthly magazine, put into book form at the end of the year. Beginning in 1857 it exemplified the new general illustrated magazines for middle-class women and ran successfully until 1895. Its subtitle, *An Illustrated Magazine of ENTERTAINING LITERATURE, EDUCATION, FINE ART*, (sic)

*Domestic Economy, Needlework and Fashion*, showed it intended to be educational while catering for 'feminine' arts<sup>ii</sup> while the preface boasted of 'influential' reviews which hailed it as the best of women's magazines for combining 'everything in literature and art that could refine the taste, elevate the mind, cultivate the understanding, and ennoble the hearts of the wives and daughters of England.'<sup>iii</sup> It included much fiction – mostly sentimental stories and poems of love and death - , fashions (although the tyranny of fashion was deplored)<sup>iv</sup>, crochet and 'kitchen economy', but it also had a history of England, lessons in French, Italian and German, miscellaneous articles on places, people, natural history and other themes, reflections on current affairs and correspondence. 'Aunt Deborah's Receipt Book', gave detailed advice on household tasks and cooking so that those in charge of households could understand servants' tasks and write out the advice plainly for their servant use, evidently assuming that the servants were fairly literate.<sup>v</sup>

Direct religion was not preached, but *The Ladies Treasury* promoted what might loosely be termed 'Victorian values', morality pervading most of the articles and fiction<sup>vi</sup> including the literature studied in the language teaching. The heroines and heroes are those who are faithful, honest and true and work hard whether rich or poor while the 'baddies' include superficial snobs and dilettantes and those who are greedy, careless or unreliable, although such can be redeemed especially by wise and good female relatives or friends. There is much compassion for the poor and outcast and hatred of 'political economy', particularly when it would rather separate loving families and cast them into heartless institutions, rather than help them by charity. The need for the rich to be compassionate and charitable and the poor industrious, frugal and honest despite hardship and temptations is often shown to be more likely realised by the latter than the former. <sup>vii</sup> Amongst other moral concerns the need for mothers to nurse their own children is urged and the cultural equality of slaves is illustrated. <sup>viii</sup>

In some of these concerns Harriet Martineau would concur. She too disliked the 'tyranny of fashion', although she probably would have laughed at the many pages devoted to this in *the Ladies Treasury* since in the very same year, 1859, she wrote about the 'preventible mortality' of many women in Britain if they changed to wearing dress that was fitting, comfortable, and protective from the 'heat, damp, or glare.' She wrote of the increase in rheumatism since the advent of the crinoline; a similar increase in neuralgia because of flimsy, inappropriate bonnets; a spread of throat and chest diseases because of the fashion of wearing boas around the neck; and illness and accidents because of flimsy shoes and ill-shaped boots. Fulminating against the evils of stays which perverted the shape, leading to deformity and not even looking nice, Harriet waxed even more strongly against the absurd crinolines, the 'hoops of some unconscious walking balloon' that knocked people out of the way and made a woman on a sofa look 'like a child popping up from under a haycock.' Harriet, preferring the common sense of those wearing the new bloomers being worn in America, deplored the bigotry of those who ridiculed these out of fashion.<sup>ix</sup> She liked sewing and certainly could sew well enough to earn her living by fancy work when she and her mother and sisters lost all their money in 1829, but she disliked the endless sewing recommended for girls and believed that many women ruined their

health by exhausting and nerve-racking prolonged sewing. She welcomed the advent of sewing machines that would provide more and cheaper clothing and free women for 'occupations now kept from them by men.'<sup>x</sup> She believed '[N]o true woman, married or single, *can* be happy without some sort of domestic life ...' and also thought that mistresses needed to know household arts if servants were to work well. She herself had very good relations with her servants at Ambleside. One maid, Martha, to the interested joy of a number of Harriet's Unitarian women friends, including Elizabeth Gaskell, married the master of Mary Carpenter's Ragged School, having the reception at Harriet's home with Mary Carpenter as bridesmaid, Philip Carpenter as minister and Martha's brother, Harriet's gardener as best man. But Harriet was sad to lose both Martha and her servant Jane who emigrated that year (1852).<sup>xi</sup>

In these instances, therefore, Harriet did not disagree with the sentiments of *The Ladies Treasury*, although she took their principles somewhat further. This was even more so on slavery and she was in complete opposition on political economy. Harriet hated slavery, wrote two fictional books – *Demerara* and her historical novel *The Hour and the Man* exposing the rottenness of the system and toured the States as an abolitionist.<sup>xii</sup> Although she wrote on theology, it was not doctrinal matters, but a rational, humane morality which imbued all her writings, even before she eschewed the Unitarianism in which she had been raised. Her own novel *Deerbrook* enjoyed some success but, perhaps more importantly, Harriet used fiction to convey deeply serious messages of morality, social, political messages and even political economy. On the latter, indeed, she differed profoundly from *The Ladies Treasury*, first achieving fame through her monthly fictionalised instalments of *Illustrations of Political Economy* and promoting these Utilitarian doctrines long after.<sup>xiii</sup>

Through the absorbing monthly sections 'On Dits' and 'Answers to correspondents', *The Ladies Treasury* both gave news of royalty at home and abroad, society life and culture and some political news – especially the need for beautiful Italy to be free – and helped correspondents on the many daily problems of life from loss of hair to confusion in love. Both news and advice were generally in gendered terms: for example, explanation of bills concerning marriage to a deceased wife's sister replaced the Reform Bill while wives are urged to learn to improve the cooking of good dinners to compete with those at gentlemen's clubs.<sup>xiv</sup> At the same time, it was wished that ladies should be allowed to decide the question on the marriage bill.<sup>xv</sup>

A good part of the *Ladies Treasury* sought to extend the education of its readers. Language teaching at different levels used dialogue and extracts from well-known authors to teach in the most simple and popular ways French, Italian and German lessons, so that their readers would have the requisite literary knowledge and conversational skills to understand these languages and to travel, particularly in France and Italy.<sup>xvi</sup> Many detailed, well-illustrated articles taught the beauties and virtues of the countryside and architecture of home and other countries<sup>xvii</sup> especially France and Italy to which affluent women might well travel.<sup>xviii</sup> The magazine included much historical, social and cultural information, hoping to prevent readers from becoming typical English travellers, returning from abroad 'no wiser than they

started'.<sup>xix</sup> It extolled the wisdom of 'simple country folk'<sup>xx</sup> and, ranging around Europe and the East,<sup>xxi</sup> praise for the Muslims of Mount Lebanon and different types of workers in India just two years after the Indian War, indicate its generally sympathetic and tolerant views, despite the occasional stereotypical, even racist, comment. India, of course, might well be a country where a British middle-class woman had male relatives or might go herself some day.<sup>xxii</sup>

Harriet, who had been well-educated in Latin and French herself and who delighted in travel far beyond that expected by *The Ladies Treasury* might well have been pleased with the interest and advice given here. Her own books on her extensive travels, such as *Society in America*, delved even more deeply into the multitude of sources which could tell her about the interrelationships of institutions, of behaviour and moral norms, the geographical, climatic and economic bases of society, the way women were treated, the class structure, religion, family, education, politics and degree of liberty. In *How to Observe Morals and Manners*, indeed, she wrote the first methodological treatise on how to observe and study a society.<sup>xxiii</sup> In her many writings on India (which she never visited), she showed concern for the disadvantaged and understanding of the differences of cultures and the double standards of the colonials. She wanted peoples to learn from each other, but, nevertheless, she believed ultimately that all would benefit from the spread of western science, knowledge and economics.<sup>xxiv</sup>

There was some of such knowledge in *The Ladies Treasury*. There was nothing on the physical sciences but there were regular ones on natural history, all very well-illustrated and some pearls of science occur in articles on practical matters such as how to preserve hair!<sup>xxv</sup> There was much more on history with the monthly 'An Hour with Mama' taking four young ladies aged between 14 and 20 through British history from the Druids to King John by early evening conversations between them, their mother and grandmother in the various locations in which they live throughout the fashionable year. The aim was to gain a greater understanding of history than they would have learned at school so that they can pick up historical allusions when reading political debates to Papa or looking at great paintings or 'grand public buildings'. Their method of conversation based on combined knowledge did at least accept that females can actually debate history, thus braving the norms of Victorian culture.<sup>xxvi</sup> These females showed appreciation of different viewpoints despite some very decided preferences on the 'perfection' of 'the Saxon character', the wickedness of Eleanor of Aquitaine and the truism that the best of men all 'had devoted and excellent mothers.' They wonder how a scholar like Henry I could be so evil, accept that the English treated the Irish savagely and persecuted the Jews unjustly while they appreciated that the Muslim leader Saladin was generous and kind and 'the noblest and best of men'.<sup>xxvii</sup>

These monthly sessions in privileged surroundings drew the young ladies from other distractions even in London, albeit the eldest daughter proved the wisdom of her parents educating her to be an intellectual companion to a 'sensible man' by attracting a fiancé there, having first aroused his interest through being able to settle a dispute over dinner concerning the claims to the throne of Stephen and Matilda.<sup>xxviii</sup>

The group were happy that the subjection of medieval women has now given way to 'liberty and independence', equality of husband and wife and the impossibility of a woman becoming a 'slave', 'toy' or 'drudge' in a real Christian household.<sup>xxxix</sup> Despite some questionable assumptions here, the magazine uses this historical feature and biographies to publicise and praise women for public or intellectual virtues, welcoming the present ubiquity of the 'learned lady' while not wishing to accept 'the preposterous theories of American enthusiasts'.<sup>xxx</sup>

Harriet Martineau's later support of the vote for women, their right to become doctors and their campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts might have made her appear more like one of those 'American enthusiasts',<sup>xxxix</sup> and, in the breadth of her writing and interests she could well be called a 'learned lady'.<sup>xxxii</sup> One of these interests was history and it is interesting to see what she made of this. Deborah Logan who has edited Harriet's *History of the Peace ... a History of England from 1816-1854 ...* has commented on what a fine historian Harriet developed into in spite of masculine prejudice against women being such. *The Spectator*, for example, assumed she could not be objective. Harriet in return thought that James Anthony Froude, considered to be a prime historian of the time, was very subjective. She used a very wide range of sources, including the *Annual Register* which allowed her to bring into her account those normally excluded from history. Indeed, she ahead of her time in seeing, as Joseph Priestley had done in the eighteenth century, social and cultural history as essential to the overall understanding of history. She linked literature, history and biography and showed how educational, industrial and scientific developments shaped both culture and modern society. Even so her absorbing histories have faded from view until recently.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Through her writings on history, Harriet's opinions on women and their education can be discerned. Biographical details in her *History ...*, for instance, showed her admiration for women like the writer and educationalist Anna Barbauld, famed for the 'richness of her mind, and the remarkable beauty of her style', the traveller lady Hester Stanhope 'a kind of chieftainess of the Arabs' and the writer Maria Edgeworth who interested her century in the Irish, raised the character of fiction and was beloved as the 'friend of little children'.<sup>xxxiv</sup> She also picked out 1839 as memorable 'to at least half the nation' for beginning 'what must become a course of legislation on behalf of the rights of women' because, with much difficulty, the Infant Custody Act was passed. This Act allowed innocent separated mothers to have custody of their children under seven and access to older children at recognised times so hardly seems revolutionary to us. The fact that it was at the time demonstrates how far women's rights had to go as Harriet and other reformers realised.<sup>xxxv</sup> Harriet, whose promotion of a modern, 'enlightened' education for all on Hartleian lines was derived from Joseph Priestley, wanted women to receive the best education conceived.<sup>xxxvi</sup> She said roundly in *Household Education*, 'I must declare that on no subject is more nonsense talked ... than on that of female education, when restriction is advocated'. She ridiculed that fact that females were forbidden the dead languages because they would not enter those professions which required them when, at the same time, it was chiefly reasoned that boys needed these subjects 'to improve the quality of their minds'. Similarly, when it was argued that females were incapable of abstract

thought, she could cite good female mathematical and classical scholars to show that this was not true. If women could learn French and arithmetic, they could learn Latin and mathematics. If they were called light-minded and frivolous, then they needed graver studies. Although her support for a full, enriching education for females was strong, however, she also made clear that such would not detract from developing womanly women. Well-educated women, after all, would never neglect their *proper* occupations:

Men do not attend the less to their professional business, their counting-house or their shop, for having their minds enlarged and enriched and their faculties strengthened by sound and various knowledge; nor do women on that account neglect the work-basket, the market, the dairy and the kitchen. If it be true that women are made for these domestic occupations then of course they will be fond of them. "... For my part, I have no hesitation in saying that the most ignorant women I have known have been the worst housekeepers; and that the most learned women I have known have been among the best, - whenever they have been early taught and trained to household business, as every woman ought to be." <sup>xxxvii</sup>

Harriet cites as an example the superb housekeeping of a woman who taught herself Euclid after listening to her brother's lessons and subsequently studied mathematics, Latin and Newton's *Principia* and became a great astronomer – presumably Mary Somerville whom she knew and admired for her scientific prowess, her 'womanly' conversation and manners and the 'order and beauty' of her home, only wishing both that the brilliant scientist had had sufficient worldly confidence to defy social conventions at times and to have been able to stay in Britain rather than live abroad in Italy - a country 'unworthy of her'. <sup>xxxviii</sup>

The *Ladies Treasury* expressed more conservative views, albeit cautiously progressive. Even so it did greet with delight the annual meeting at Bradford of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, <sup>xxxix</sup> selecting for special praise both the wholehearted welcome the President of the Association, Lord Shaftesbury gave to female cooperation in the beneficial work of the Association, <sup>xi</sup> and the urging of Bessie Rayner Parkes's to open up respectable employment beyond that of teaching to educated women. Endorsing with pleasure this latter view, the magazine wished that soon 'educated women will have appropriate work to do, as they now have the wish, talent, and energy to do it,' <sup>xli</sup> The support of Lord Shaftesbury for the Association's unusual and radical step of admitting women on more or less equal terms as men was somewhat gendered in that he was grateful to engage the energetic cooperation and publications of 'one-half of creation' but immediately distinguished their necessary 'minute, individual and personal' contributions, their 'tact, sentiment, and delicacy' from the 'principles, ... big treatises, and ... large scale' work of men. <sup>xlii</sup>

Women certainly played a small but significant role in the Association's proceedings and this much promoted their struggles for the Married Women's Property Acts, reform of women's education and other causes. <sup>xliii</sup> Of the few women who gave papers at this time, Bessie Parkes and Jessie Boucherett <sup>xliv</sup> - were members of the

most radical feminist group of the day, the Langham Place Group who began the Women's Movement of the 1850s to '60s and published *The English Woman's Journal* in 1857 of which Parkes was editor from 1857 to 1864. This parallel journal to *The Ladies Treasury* was published from 1860 by the group's own Victoria Press which also published the *Transactions of the NAPSS*.<sup>xlv</sup> There was great correlation, therefore, between *The English Woman's Journal* and the Social Science Association. The *Journal* regularly published many of the papers given by women,<sup>xlvi</sup> and, although it also had other features, largely sought reform on a whole range of issues affecting women.<sup>xlvii</sup> *The Ladies Treasury*, in contrast, supported the Social Science Association's work on women's education and employment without being a radical journal.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Harriet took great interest in this society, although poor health and decreasing mobility precluded her from taking part. She was pleased that many of those aspects of life to which she had given great attention, especially commercial matters, employment and women's rights and education were highlighted in the meetings. She was concerned that the very title of the Association was a misnomer since it was too early to say that a 'science' of society existed for such must be derived from laws of society based on a true understanding of the nature of man [sic] and this did not yet exist. Nevertheless, she thought it good that the public was being educated by the diffusion of greater knowledge about social issues and important legislation on these was subsequently taking place.<sup>xlix</sup>

*The Ladies Treasury* of 1859 was not into reform the way Harriet Martineau was yet did support some of the radical demands of what was to become known as the 'Women's Movement'. Like the first successful general illustrated magazine – Mrs Beeton's *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, published 1852-79,<sup>i</sup> it represented both conventional gendered views and admiration of contemporary women writers and reformers, and tried both to satisfy fashionable female interests and take women beyond merely domestic spaces.<sup>ii</sup>

## Conclusion

Magazines such as *The Ladies Treasury* were intended for women whose lives were expected to be spent largely at home or in domestic surroundings yet it helped its readers to have and to seek wider horizons both at home and abroad. It addressed middle-class women, although it shared its concerns over the education and employment of the hard-working poor with its readers. The illustrated magazine format was a way of reaching a very wide public, a relationship fostered by its answers to correspondents.<sup>iii</sup> Thus it was significant when such a respectable magazine welcomed initiatives linked to more radical movements on women's education, rights and employment. In these general ways the magazine might have been approved of by Harriet Martineau, although on some aspects such as political economy she decidedly would not have done. Her writings and very life constituted a more radical, more far-reaching example of what woman could do then and in the future. Her 'spirited pen' was acceptable to *The Ladies Treasury* but for limited purposes.

i The Ladies' Treasury (LT) Vol. III (London: Ward and Lock, 1859), 340-1; no provenance is given for the story.

ii LT, title page; later details from the British library catalogue.

iii LT, preface, 'To our subscribers and the public'.

iv LT, 119, 346-7. See 285 for 'Children's autumn dresses' set out-of-doors

v LT, 27, 95

vi E.g. LT, 2-6, 34-8, 67-71, 98-104, 130-4, 163-7, 194-8. There are some direct paragraphs on moral themes - LT, 82, 168-70, 281, 318

vii LT, 325-6. See also 81-2 e.g. LT, 138-42, 234-7, 267-70

viii LT, 293-4, 303-4

ix Gayle Graham Yates ed., Harriet Martineau on Women (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 229-38: this is from an article she published in *Once a Week*.

x Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography* 3 vols. (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1877, 2nd ed.), 2, 143, 414; Harriet Martineau, *Household Education* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1870; 1st ed. 1848), 286-7

xi Martineau, *Autobiography*, II, 225, 253-7, 407-9; Gayle Graham Yates ed., Harriet Martineau on Women (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 120; Jo Manton, *Mary Carpenter and the Children of the Streets* (London: Heinemann, 1976), 113-14

xii Harriet Martineau, *Demerara* (1st ed. 1833) in Deborah Logan ed. *Harriet Martineau's Writing on the British Empire. Vol. I*, (London: L. Pickering and Chatto, 2004), 69-85; Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography* 3 vols. ed. Maria Weston Chapman (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1877) vol. I, 197-8; Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography* vol. II, London: Virago, 1983, 1st ed. 1877: 11-92; Harriet Martineau *The Hour and the Man: A Historical Romance* (London: Edward Moxon, 1841)

xiii Harriet Martineau, *Deerbrook* (London: Virago, 1983; 1st ed. 1839); Harriet Martineau, *Illustrations of Political Economy* (London: Charles Fox, 1832-3)

xiv LT, passim

xv LT, 127;

xvi LT, 7-8, 11, 58, 155, passim

xvii LT, 104, 199, 225-6; see also stories 108-9, 295-8.

xviii LT, 5, 6, 65, 66, 101, 104, 112, 114, 129, 130, 176-8, 197, 199, 207-10, 225-6, 239-40, 258, 305-6, 309, 322, 354, 361, There are frequent articles on Austria too - LT, 37, 38, 97-8, 229, 275-8, 338

xix LT, 199

xx *Ibid.*, 65 .

xxi LT, 12-13, 33-4, 135-8, 193-4, 334. many of the stories are set in other places, for example the story 'Mien-Yuan' 258-63, 302-3 set in China.

xxii LT, 334, 10, 42, 78-9, 144, 172, 174, 204, 308, passim

xxiii Martineau, *Autobiography*, 5, 61-5, 69, 93; Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* 2 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1837); Susan Hoecker-Drysdale, *Harriet Martineau First Woman Sociologist* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1993), 50-2

xxiv *Ibid.*, 121-4

xxv LT, 17, 73-4, 105-6, 133, 134, 141, 142, 149, 151, 165, 167, 169, 170, 200-2, 213, 215, 261, 263, 272

xxvi LT, 14.. See, for example, Mary Spongberg, *Writing Women's History since the Renaissance*, (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 86-129..

xxvii LT, 52, 179-84, 243-6, 279, 298-302, 331

xxviii LT, 14., 51, 82, 115, 147, 179, 211, 242, 278, 298, 330, 374-7

xxix LT, 211-12, passim.

xxx For example, LT, 8, 49-50, 146-7, 231-4, 245, 246; 270-1; see also 44-6, 365, 366

xxxi Gayle Graham Yates ed., Harriet Martineau on Women (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 25-6, 81-3, 134-9, 216-24, 246-67

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xxxii See e.g. R K Webb *A Handful of Contributions to the Daily News by Harriet Martineau 1852-1866* (Presented to the Library of the University of Birmingham, 1959)

xxxiii Deborah Anna Logan ed., *Harriet Martineau's Writing on British History and Military Reform* 6 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005) Vol.1 *History of the Peace: Being a History of England from 1816-1854 with an Introduction from 1800-1815* (taken from the Walker and Wise edition for USA, 1864 and hereafter History), xv-xxv. A N Wilson, *The Victorians*, (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 30, 74, 302. LT, 341. Barbara Caine points out that Harriet Martineau was often at odds with the dominant feminist approach, but she does recognise her stand on some women's rights though not others and says she wrote like a man – Barbara Caine, *English Feminism 1780-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 70-81.

xxxiv Martineau, *History*, Introduction, 422, 454, 704

xxxv *Ibid.*, 421-4

xxxvi *Ibid.*, 422; Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860* (London: Longmans, 1998), 33-40, 90, 121, 125, 154-5, 207

xxxvii Martineau, *Household Education*, 221-2

xxxviii *Ibid.*, 223-4, Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography* 3 vols. (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1877, 2nd ed.), 356-8

xxxix LT, 351

xl *Ibid.*.

xli LT, 377, passim

xlii *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science* 1859 (London, John W. Parker & Son, 1860), 10

xliii *Ibid.*, xxxv, 2-3 See Lawrence Goldman, *Science, gender and Social Reform* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46-51, 114—42, 240-1

xliv They gave unpublished papers: 'On 'The market for educated female labour' and 'The industrial employment of women ...' respectively - *Ibid.*, 727-9. Three men gave published papers on matters affecting female education and employment: *Ibid.*, 308-16, 366-76, 411-17

xlv Pam Hirsch, *Barbara Leigh Smith Baldachin: Feminist, Artist and Rebel* (London: Chatto and Windups, 1998), 184-91, 196-205.

xlvi *The English Woman's Journal* 1858, vol II, no.5, 122-5; 1859, vol. II, no.11, 289-97; vo. III, no.1, 13-18; Candida Ann Lacey ed. *Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group* (New York and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987)141-73, 180-89, 281-6, 295-304.

xlvii Margaret Beetham and Kay Boardman eds., *Victorian Women's Magazines: An Anthology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 61-2, see also 63-4

xlviii See for example the arguments against women having the vote in *The Ladies Treasury* 1868, vol.4, 171-4 reprinted in Beetham and Boardman, *Magazines*, 151-2

xlix Hoecker-Drysdale, *Harriet Martineau*, 135-6

l Beetham and Boardman, *Magazines*, 32

li E.g. *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, 1855, vol.III, , title page, 74-9, passim; 1859, vol.VII, 341-3, passim; LT, frontispiece

lii Beetham and Boardman eds., *Magazines*, 3-5

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## ***Dorothy Wordsworth, Harriet Martineau and the Lake District***

### ***Pamela Woof***

The connection could hardly be more tenuous. Dorothy Wordsworth, unlike Wordsworth, both as a person and a writer, has scarcely any presence in Harriet Martineau's experience, yet the response of each woman to the Lake District casts a light upon the other's. Dorothy Wordsworth, on 27 July 1800, in her first summer at Grasmere, writes the day's entry in her *Journal*, a *Journal*, incidentally, unpublished until the 1890s, and only then in a substantially edited form, more than forty years after the writer's death:

We heard a strange sound in the Bainriggs wood as we were floating on the water it *seemed* in the wood, but it must have been above it, for presently we saw a raven very high above us - it called out & the Dome of the sky seemed to echoe the sound – it called again & again as it flew onwards, & the mountains gave back the sound, seeming as if from their center a musical bell-like answering to the birds hoarse voice. We heard both the call of the bird & the echoe after we could see him no longer.

(27 July 1800)

That was Dorothy Wordsworth, registering how a single sound, through mountain echoes and through echoes from the sky itself as from a dome, can double that sound into distinct sounds and create something musical. Harriet Martineau on the other hand needed more than a single bird and the high distant echo of its voice; she needed an entire rookery:

I like the noise of the creatures – their amazing din in the February mornings, when they are beginning their building: but better still do I like their earliest morning flight . . . I know now how to look for them. When it is still only beginning to be light with us, but when the sky takes the pearly or pinky hue which belongs to a winter dayspring, I look steadily up into the sky, and presently see an immeasurable flock, just at the point of vision, sailing over the valley – sometimes winging straight for Lady le Fleming's beeches, sometimes for the Ambleside elms, and sometimes wheeling round, as if they had time for another sweep abroad, and another chance of seeing the sun, before going to work upon their new nests.

(*A Year at Ambleside*, February, 54)

How directly and confidently Harriet Martineau presents herself as well as the birds: 'I like the noise of the creatures . . . but better still do I like . . . I know now how to look for them.' Her emphasis is on vision rather than sound and our attention is drawn to the purposiveness of the writer who on February mornings deliberately looks up for

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the flight of the birds and sees in their regular morning activity an equal purposiveness: to glimpse again the sun before going to work upon their new nests. For both the creatures and the human observer there is an understood pattern in life's routines. Harriet Martineau's entire writing for each of those twelve months of *A Year at Ambleside* in the late-1840s (for publication throughout 1850) is similarly purposive. It is to take into her experiment of living in Ambleside and exploring the Lake District, the imaginations of readers in America who had even less knowledge than she had of what it might be like. She wanted to communicate her own joy at it all, as well as its practical and social aspects.

A Journal has no such intentions. Wordsworth and Dorothy in July 1800 had no purpose: 'we were floating on the water'; they were not going anywhere; the bird, its hoarse voice and its musical echo were an unlooked-for gift, grace -notes in nature's harmony. Yet theirs, too, was an experiment in living.

Harriet Martineau had come to Ambleside, alone except for her maid, in her mid-forties in the mid-1840s, vigorous after half a life of such solitary thinking, such energy of writing on public issues, such travel and speaking, such resilience against hostility for her advanced and humane ideas; such trouble from her family, such suffering and loneliness from deafness and illness, such courage in understanding herself, such adventurousness in undertaking the mesmeric treatment. She would not now cease to be energetic but she wanted also to try out an experiment in peace.

Dorothy Wordsworth in 1800 was no such public figure. In private life there was more likeness: like Harriet Martineau she had a brother who was greatly loved, but as the Wordsworths had no parents either to care for or to be supported by, Dorothy Wordsworth lived with her brother from age twenty-two, and by the time the two of them came to the central Lake District and to Grasmere, she had already kept house for that brother for four and a half years. The place to her was new and wonderful. She had been born on Christmas Day 1771 in Cockermouth, and from the garden of their father's house the Wordsworth children would be able to see, nine miles away, in Wordsworth's words 'distant Skiddaw's lofty peak'. Cockermouth town was closer to the sea than to the hills, and on the very edge of the Lake District. It has little presence, either in Wordsworth's *Select Views of the Lakes*, 1810 (later his *Guide to the Lakes*) or in Martineau's *Guide* of 1855. Again, the market town of Penrith where Dorothy in her mid-teens lived with her grandparents was equally distant from the central fells. In any event, Dorothy Wordsworth, the one girl among four brothers, was taken after her mother's death when she was six, to live with her mother's cousin in Halifax. She was brought up in this Yorkshire mill town and remained there until she was fifteen and a half. She was not unhappy, though totally without contact with Cockermouth; her father died, never visited by her, while she was away, and her brothers did not meet her for some nine and a half years.

In Penrith at fifteen at her grand-parents', though longing for Halifax, she re-learned that she had brothers and they, school-boys at Hawkshead in the central Lakes, and

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staying for a while with their grandparents in the holidays, re-discovered that they had a sister. They all mourned, belatedly and for the first time together, the early deaths of their parents and their lack of a home of their own. Wordsworth went on to Cambridge and Dorothy, when she was seventeen, left Penrith to accompany her just-married Uncle, the Rev. William Cookson, to his new Rectory at Fornsett in Norfolk. There she lived in a small village in flat countryside helping with the babies who arrived regularly, writing to her old Halifax school-friend and enjoying letters and two visits, one from her brother William, and one from Christopher, her younger brother. She left Fornsett when she was twenty-two and legally out of the guardianship of her uncle. She went to Halifax for six weeks. Wordsworth, troubled and back from troubled France, joined her there, and the brother and sister in 1794 set off, mainly walking, towards Keswick in the Lake District, where a former Hawkshead school-friend of Wordsworth's was able temporarily to lend the penniless Wordsworth a house. Dorothy was with him for some five weeks. It was during that first walk to Keswick with her brother that she spent a single night in Robert Newton's inn at Grasmere. She would not return for almost six years and then it would be to Dove Cottage and to make a home. In those six years, she stayed variously: with cousins in Newcastle upon Tyne; with the Hutchinson girls, known from Penrith days, and living with their farmer brothers at Sockburn in Yorkshire; in Halifax with Aunt Threlkeld who had brought her up; and then, with Wordsworth from 1795 she lived at Racedown in Dorset, in another house lent by friends; at Alfoxden in Somerset in order to be near Coleridge; at Goslar in Germany to learn German; and, back from Germany, with the Hutchinsons again, now in County Durham. She and her brother were wanderers, and she caught eagerly at Grasmere at the end of 1799 as though it was home.

And in a way it was, though she had never lived there. Her town childhood and town girl-hood and her restless twenties counted for nothing as against her imaginative sense of place. Her brother's Hawkshead boyhood was indeed among these hills and lakes. In frozen snow-bound Goslar he had written out his memories in blank verse of what it was like to be brought up here in all seasons and weathers. Only Dorothy was with him in Goslar. Writing out some of these verses to send to Coleridge, talking, and listening to Wordsworth's musical paragraphs, Dorothy discovered her brother's Lake District. His deep need for this place as home became also hers. The two of them were the remnants of the original Cockermouth family and they clung to each other and to the idea of creating anew a home.

Harriet Martineau's settling in Ambleside towards half a century later seems rather an act of will than the result of such emotional pressures, recognised and half-recognised, as the Wordsworths had. Miss Martineau, recovered from long illness, simply set about it. She didn't fall into the first empty house she came upon; she didn't rent; she built a house to her liking. Even in that she made a change in Ambleside. And she wrote about it, explaining it for distant trans-Atlantic readers. She wrote about the town notables: Mother Stewart with her weather-beaten face, her gipsy look and pipe, and her son slowly driving a cart from Staffordshire where

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mother and son had been buying crockery for Miss Martineau and her new house, only going too far when Mother Stewart wanted her customer to buy 'mantel-piece ornaments, some scarlet or green castles, with blue towers . . .' (*A Year at Ambleside*, March, 66). Harriet Martineau had certainly looked about her while she was in temporary lodgings beside Windermere, and had learnt how most cheaply to buy for and furnish her house.

Forty-five years before, the Wordsworths, not knowing local ways, had stopped in Kendal on their way to Grasmere in late December 1799 and bought things for their empty rented house taking them in a post-chaise the next day. It would seem that it was not until the middle of June 1800 that these bills were paid: 'Sent 3-9-0 to the Potter at Kendal' (16 June 1800). By that time, six months into Grasmere, Dorothy had discovered a more local source: 'we walked to Rydale after tea, & up to the potter's.'

It was a joy to meet in Harriet Martineau's account of 1840s Ambleside someone I knew, as it were, from Dorothy's 1800 Journal, and I am not referring to Wordsworth, the old poet who planted two umbrella-shaped stone pine trees for Harriet Martineau's garden (one survived), or to Mary Wordsworth or to any of the gentry class. I am thinking of Mrs Nicholson. 'Mrs. Nicholson, the post-mistress, is a favourite with us all', wrote Harriet, in her February instalment:

I doubt whether anything exists, is done, or is suffered, in Ambleside, without Mrs. Nicholson being told of it . . . I love to go there, but I keep away, if possible, at post-hours. . . A better time is in the early morning, before any other shop is open, when there is always one of the Nicholsons preparing the shop and willing to serve me with postage-stamps and spare five minutes for talking over our Building Society, or my cows . . . Mrs. N. can seldom be induced to leave home; and I therefore felt it a great honour when she lately came with her daughter H. to see my field and my cows, and take tea with me . . .

(*A Year at Ambleside*, February, 55-6).

Thus Harriet Martineau illustrates for her American readers the cohesion in the community and we remark with what ease and speed she had moved to the town's focal centre of news and gossip, the Post Office. Her Building Society of course was a major economic innovation, her two cows were clear evidence of household management and the whole anecdote is a declaration of social equality: 'as they departed', she wrote, 'I felt that never since my house was built had truer ladies passed its doors.'

This same 'somewhat infirm and suffering' old Mrs. Nicholson of the 1840s, post-mistress of Ambleside since her husband Joseph's death, was chatting in April 1850 of the old poet Wordsworth as he lay dying at Rydal Mount. She was gossiping with

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Mrs. Davy, wife of the local Ambleside doctor (brother of Sir Humphry); Mrs Davy recorded the conversation: she spoke of how Mrs Nicholson went back, in the manner of the old, on her earlier days of acquaintance with the poet and his sister, when they lived at Grasmere, and when, as she said, they would often walk to Ambleside together after dark, in order to repair some omission or alter some arrangement in the proof-sheets of his Poems, which had been posted for the press.

‘At that time, said Mrs. N., ‘the mail used to pass through at one in the morning, so my husband and me used to go early to bed; but when Mr. and Miss W came, let it be as late as it would, my husband would get up and let them in and give them their letter out of the box, and then they would sit up in our parlour or in the Kitchen, discussing over it and reading and changing till they had made it quite to their minds, and then they would seal up the packet again, and knock at our bed-room door, and say ‘Now, Mr. Nicholson, please will you bolt the door after us? Here is our letter now for the post. We’ll not trouble you any more this night.’

(Quoted from a manuscript of Mrs Davy by George McLean Harper, William Wordsworth, New York 1960, II, 315-6)

Such Wordsworthian nocturnal disturbances had taken place fifty years before, when Agnes Nicholson in 1800 had been a young wife of twenty-one. She recalled the Wordsworths’ anxiety about verbal detail, but she would never know that beyond her post-office she herself would have a still further presence in Dorothy Wordsworth’s mind, as she had now, in 1850, since the 1840s tea-drinking, in Harriet Martineau’s. Dorothy Wordsworth was old and mentally ill in the 1840s. A meeting between herself and the energetic Harriet Martineau was impossible, and so Mrs Nicholson, met by both writers more than forty-five years apart, remained unrecognised as a common acquaintance. It was early June 1800. Dorothy Wordsworth had been for two weeks alone in Dove Cottage (the first time she had ever been alone anywhere), her brothers William and John having walked into Yorkshire to visit their friends the Hutchinsons. In her solitude, in the middle of May 1800, Dorothy began her Journal. On 2 June she recorded,

A cold dry windy morning. I worked in the garden & planted flowers &c - Sate under the trees after dinner till tea time. John Fisher stuck the peas, Molly weeded & washed. I went to Ambleside after tea, crossed the stepping-stones at the foot of Grasmere & pursued my way on the other side of Rydale & by Clappersgate. I sate a long time to watch the hurrying waves & to hear the regularly irregular sound of the dashing waters . . . Inquired about lodgings for Coleridge, & was accompanied by Mrs Nicholson as far as Rydale. This was very kind, but God be thanked I want not society by a moonlight lake – It was near 11 when I reached home. I wrote to Coleridge & went late to bed.

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(2 June 1800)

Clearly Dorothy went to the focal post-master's as the most likely place to find out possible lodgings for Coleridge now also back from Germany, and for his family, but young Mrs Nicholson, though kindly, as a walking companion did not interest Dorothy. Feelings in solitude, amid scenes of beauty, particularly in moonlight, even, as was often the case when the scene promoted melancholy, were to be encouraged, not avoided. Dorothy Wordsworth was a child of the Age of Sensibility. The Journal is full of moonlight, shifting cloud-scapes at night, shadows in starlight, and the sense that just to sit a long time to watch the hurrying waves and listen to their regularly irregular sound was justification enough. This was the age of Romanticism, and, to speak too crudely, it would modulate into an age of action, of progress, and become the Victorian world that Harriet Martineau so generously entered. And of course there are no clear-cut boundaries. All morning on that 2nd June 1800 Dorothy Wordsworth had not been musing; she had been active, had worked in the garden, planted flowers &c and been alongside her neighbour servants, John Fisher sticking peas, Molly weeding.

The garden was at the centre of the chosen paradise, and for each settler in the Lake District, even amid the bountifulness and beauty of surrounding nature, a garden had to be made. The Protestant work ethic of Paradise Lost lies somewhere behind each garden. Milton had no concept of idleness in Eden, and Eve is too aware of the need for labour 'to tend plant, herb and flow'r ... /Lop overgrown, or prune or prop or bind . . . wind/ The woodbine round this arbour, or direct / The clasping ivy where to climb' (*Paradise Lost*, IX, 205-19). Unfallen, as fallen, man had to work; so had Dorothy Wordsworth, so had Harriet Martineau. Both had been brought up in earnest dissenting households where sensible household knowledge, plain sewing and, certainly in Dorothy Wordsworth's young Halifax world, serious reading and discussion were valued. Mental vitality was part of each woman's normal day, as was the perception that one might try to be useful to others, the private few or, in Harriet Martineau's case, the public many. Yet it would never have occurred to Dorothy that she might have supervised her own servants' reading, as Harriet Martineau did. The status quo of social hierarchies at home was not questioned by the Wordsworths though it had not been difficult for Dorothy to support Wilberforce against the slave-trade in the early 1790s. She had admired Wilberforce and been happy at age eighteen to distribute for charity the ten guineas per year he had allowed the enthusiastic girl when he met her at Uncle William's in Norfolk. In Grasmere Dorothy's work was care for Wordsworth, his poetry, the house and garden. And in the creation of that garden, Dorothy Wordsworth, in the first spring of 1800, was constantly out with her basket:

I rambled on the hill above the house gathered wild thyme & took up roots of wild Columbine. Just as I was returning with my 'load', Mr and Miss

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Simpson called. We went again up on the hill, got more plants, set them .  
(5 June 1800)

We went up the hill to gather sods & plants & went down to the lakeside &  
took up orchises &c – I watered the garden & weeded.

(7 June 1800)

Jenny Dockray in the village gave her 'white and yellow lilies and periwinkle &c which I planted' (28 May 1800). By the autumn of 1800 the house had roses and honeysuckle planted against it, 'and it is covered all over with green leaves and scarlet flowers, for we have trained scarlet beans upon threads, which are not only exceedingly beautiful, but very useful, as their produce is immense' (letter to Jane Marshall, Dorothy Wordsworth's old Halifax friend, 10 September 1800). They grew vegetables and fruit, Wordsworth dug and spread dung. The sister and brother not only worked, they sat for hours in their garden; in cold weather they took out their German fur cloaks to lie on, read books and talked, walked up and down and wrote in the garden.

Harriet Martineau, like Dorothy Wordsworth, went out to bring the treasures of the fells in concentrated richness into her garden. She and her maid Jane

went to the bridge at Clappersgate for some of the yellow stone crop which grew there . . .

They went with Mrs Davy to get permission to take heather from an enclosure of Lady le Fleming's of Rydal. They helped themselves to primroses, and 'with our trowels in use, we take up wood anemones and sorrel . . . ' They go to Mr. Quillinan's to beg daffodils and 'dig diligently under the trees and on the grassy terrace'. Six different ferns they see near a wall in Grasmere; 'We ply our trowels till our baskets will hold no more.' They then find themselves hungry and eat sandwiches. (*A Year at Ambleside*, March, 67-70). Dorothy Wordsworth in 1800 had happily dug sods from the fellside, but in 1845 Wordsworth firmly informed Harriet Martineau that 'the fells were the property of the dalesmen, and that it takes 100 years to replace turf so cut' (*Autobiography* II, 233). Yet somehow large and mysterious gifts of sods arrived at The Knoll.

Each of the sets of gardeners was creating a paradise. Harriet Martineau uses the word itself and comments in her *Autobiography*,

I soon found that I must pay a serious tax for living in my paradise: I must, like many of my neighbours, go away in 'the tourist season'.

(*Autobiography*, II, 266)

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She launches into a vivid account of the summer months, the 'steam-monsters' on Windermere, the excursion-trains that bring 'thousands of curious vulgar'. She herself went away 'to the sea, or some country place where I could be quiet.' Her successful *Complete Guide to the English Lakes*, 1855, would scarcely counteract the tourist consequence of her own celebrated presence in the centre of this celebrated region. Yet one doubts that Harriet Martineau, unless she were ill, would ever be entirely quiet. It was in her nature to put before people the chance to improve: journalism and books, lectures and teaching, education in hygiene, money, property-ownership, food cultivation, medicine, information on the progress of war, freedom for human beings of whatever race; she simply had a hand in progressive ideas. Thus she needed people, talk, and to visit London; certainly she needed quietness to write, but a disciplined quietness. The paradise (when it was not over-run) was the setting. Regular hours of work, regular solitude in her study were essential, times when visitors were not admitted. Although her abode in the spring and summer of her life, as she termed her middle-age Lake District experiment, was far from the city, in Ambleside she led, not the life of the contemplative in a rural retreat; she led a life of action. It was intellectual action but it was action: it had purpose and plan and a fervour for change. It was work. And it was public.

Forty or fifty years earlier for Dorothy Wordsworth the paradise of the Grasmere house and garden seemed so unthreatened that the idea of it extended to the whole valley. There were, of course, the first ominous signs:

In the morning W cut down the winter cherry-tree I sowed French Beans and weeded. A coronetted Landau went by when we were sitting on the sodded wall. The ladies (evidently Tourists) turned an eye of interest upon our little garden & cottage.

(9 June 1800)

Such tourists were few and of the acceptable higher social ranks; railway trains and multitudes were yet unconceived. Even so, by 1805, the Wordsworths were beginning to think that it was all becoming rather busy and Dorothy wrote 'we begin already to think that there may be many places which we should now prefer (letter 7 Nov. 1805)'. And Wordsworth, introducing his long poem *Home at Grasmere* with the notion that the whole valley was paradise, found that idea, in an absolute way, unsustainable: the manuscript lay unfinished for years.

But the private life of the Wordsworths within their circle of friends and family, within their house, garden, and immediate landscape, was good. Dorothy settled to the place and to its people, not people in social groups, nor only to the more established individuals such as George Mackereth of Knott House Farm from whom the Wordsworths hired horses, or his brother Gawain, Innkeeper of the Swan; she called on poorer folk, such as Aggy Fleming, widow of a slater with many children who 'looked shockingly with her head tyed up', (10 Dec. 1801). She listened and gave

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attention and time, and so could realise the suffering of her own neighbours because of the loss of their land through an opportune moneyed purchaser. She entered into Peggy Ashburner's sorrow at a personal level. She, Mary Hutchinson who was staying in November 1801, and Wordsworth had all walked out while their goose was roasting for dinner. After dinner,

sent Peggy Ashburner some goose. She sent me some honey – with a thousand thanks – ‘alas the gratitude of men has &c’ I went in to set her right about this & sate a while with her. She talked about Thomas's having sold his land – ‘Ay’ says she I said many a time, ‘He's not come fra London to buy our Land however’ then she told me with what pains & industry they had made up their taxes interest &c &c how they all got up at 5 o'clock in the morning to spin & Thomas carded & that they had paid off a hundred pound of the interest. She said she used to take such pleasure in the cattle & sheep – O how pleased I used to be when they fetched them down, & when I had been a bit poorly I would gang out upon a hill & look ower t'fields & see them & it used to do me so much good you cannot think

. . .

(24 November 1801)

Dorothy, embarrassed and moved by Peggy Ashburner's excessive gratitude for the goose and her need to pay back in honey, then quotes in her Journal entry from a poem Wordsworth had written on a similar theme, which ends,

I've heard of hearts unkind  
Kind deeds with coldness still returning.  
Alas the gratitude of men  
Has oftener left me mourning.

(‘Simon Lee’, 101-4)

Peggy had gone on to tell Dorothy about the family's hopeless effort to save their land from the man from London, and the pain its loss caused. Dorothy, back home, recounts the conversation to Wordsworth, Mary, and Molly their servant as they sit by the fire without work (without sewing or mending) for some time in sympathy with the Ashburners. Their ordinary life then re-asserts itself; they read aloud, Wordsworth reads Spenser, ‘We were making his waistcoat’, and Mary reads from the seventeenth-century poet Daniel. They can do no more about Peggy Ashburner's problem, or the problems of many others; they offer sympathy and local charity. Wordsworth, indeed, writes verses on the Ashburners' story, but these do not in the least alter social and economic conditions. He had already written a far finer poem on an old shepherd's fear of losing his land and the consequent loss of his son, but the poem ‘Michael’ had had no power to change the thinking of Charles James Fox or of anyone else.

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Harriet Martineau, fifty years later, in her *Guide to the Lakes*, written as much for well-to-do residents as for tourists, makes the point prominently that the labouring class are too often at the mercy of their rich neighbours, that they suffer in health and morals as much as the poor of great towns. And of course, against the interests of the rich, she helped actively to improve their lives. Neither the individual sympathy of Dorothy Wordsworth, or Wordsworth's words, would have been enough for her.

Beggars on the road, discharged soldiers and sailors, and the needy poor told their sad stories sometimes to Dorothy alone, sometimes to her and Wordsworth. Dorothy often wrote them down, Wordsworth occasionally used them to trigger his memory; the Wordsworths gave pennies and they wrote. It was Wordsworth's view, and Dorothy subscribed to it, that poetry because of its truth would expand the imaginations and sympathies of the middle class readers of poetry. A new empathy would of itself ultimately create a more just society.

Harriet Martineau wanted immediate effect, wanted it for more than just a few people in one locality and wanted it public. Though settling in Ambleside, she needed the larger world; it was natural to her to publish. Dorothy desired publication only once, and that was for money for another continental pedestrian tour, not to improve the lot of humanity; even so, she didn't manage to get her *Recollections of a Tour in Scotland*, 1803, to the press. Her vivid account of the desolated Green children suddenly orphaned after a night of snow and mist was, in a sense, published, in that several manuscript copies were made (Harriet Martineau read a copy lent her probably by Mrs Davy). Dorothy's account, far back in 1808, was localised and its intention particular like all her charity; it had been written solely to raise money for the poor and bereft Green children. It was fact, not fiction. Dorothy's imagination did not move to the creation of plot or character. Nor was the novel in 1800 the great medium for enlarging the mind that it would become by Harriet Martineau's time.

But both writers used prose to make sense of their new Lake District worlds. Dorothy began her journal with no intention but to give her brother pleasure 'when he comes home again', and we see her settling into Grasmere day by day, often hour by hour. Days and hours were not planned: Wordsworth could on an impulse write his 'Poem to a Butterfly' at breakfast, 'his shirt-neck unbuttoned, & his waistcoat open', his Basin of Broth untouched (14 March 1802); Dorothy could suddenly see in an ordinary walk something of the numinous in a birch tree, how it 'glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower . . . it was like a Spirit of water' (24 November 1801) and all the time the reading and the baking, the walking and the talking went on. The prose is near to life itself, jumping from moment to moment, now visionary and precious, now commonplace, and as such, precious too. Harriet Martineau settling into the prose of her new life in Ambleside writes with consciousness of what she was doing,

I sat in the light of the fire, feeling what it was to have entered upon the home in which I hoped to live and die; to work when I could and rest when I

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could work no more

(*A Year at Ambleside*, April, 72).

She did work; when October came and the season of disease and death to Ambleside people living in unsanitary conditions,

in my walks during the shortening days, my thoughts were occupied with what could be done to rouse my neighbours to consider and act in defence of their health and their life.

(*A Year at Ambleside*, October, 130)

Her thoughts resulted in the Building Society.

Again, she recounts a common sight:

A lubberly boy lies on the grass, basking in the sunshine, and bids the little, pale girl – his sister or playmate – watch the gate. When a car comes, she opens the heavy gate with difficulty and toil. A penny is thrown. He signs to her to pick it up and bring it to him . . . He wrenches the money out of her hand, pockets it, motions her to her hot station again, and composes himself to sleep till the next wheels are heard.

(*A Year at Ambleside*, September, 125)

Harriet Martineau writes this in the vivid present tense and makes use of the anecdote, as a friend of hers had in conversation, to demonstrate the powerless position of poor women, in fear of men, and made to work from childhood; for her the story points too to the negative side of tourism: that tourists have reduced local children to a state just short of beggary and humiliation. She gives us pictures, ideas and analysis; she rouses the reader to want change in social conditions. Yet if there is a documentary journalism initiating her writing, there is richly showing through it a feeling and responsive human being.

These women in their times settled into their homes like the women they were. Dorothy Wordsworth wrote for love, not social use, and so again and again, the same trees in the old places, the same gates, the same rocks and outlines of hills, the same roads are walked, the same poems read. There are different seasons and different weathers; all come and go and return and are the same essentials that feed a hunger in the human spirit, a hunger for stillness, permanence and something beyond. There is no order to the days, no regular times for sleep or work or walks or reading. All feeds meditation, and all springs from love. It carries its own pain, for it is a luxury to live like that; it involves work but it is not work that announces a recognised social identity. We can only be grateful that both these women, Dorothy Wordsworth and Harriet Martineau, settled as adults in this very vicinity, the one

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recording daily domestic life and also seeing that flowers could be part of a huge natural elemental and timeless celebration of wind, water and earth as daffodils 'tossed & reeled & danced & seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the Lake'; and the other analysing society and giving thought and energy to improving the everyday happiness of people not living in eternity, or having any sense of a timeless world, but existing for their one and only life in time and history. We need both.

Pamela Woof is the President of The Wordsworth Trust

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#### ***HM's Translation of Auguste Comte's Positive Philosophy: Some Observations on the Mathematics section.***

***Alan Middleton***

I am indebted to Sue Killoran, Fellow Librarian at HMC, for finding an on-line copy of Comte's *Cours de Philosophie Positive* so that I could compare Harriet's translation with the original, [I use her first name because there are references to James later] and for allowing me to copy an extract from Harriet's book, which appears later in this paper. Sue has also kindly searched for the history of Harriet's editions of Comte on the University network (which is the privilege of college librarians). Also, I have found Deborah Logan's five volumes of Harriet's letters very helpful, for there are many references to Comte in the letters, from 1851 onwards. Typically, writing to John Chapman, April 1851, Harriet says, 'My reason for asking about Comte was that I cannot account for his being so little known (or understood) in England;- even my brother James making an enormous mistake about his philosophy, at the outset of

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his magnificent article, - the Battle of the Churches.' [Westminster Review, Jan. 1851]. There are several references, in the Letters, to 'brother James', so she has not blotted him out completely from her memory, just that 'he has forfeited my esteem.' [Letter to Helen Martineau 14/7/1851]

If you have read Harriet's version of Comte you will know what a masterpiece it was, but I have not seen any major literary work devoted to it. Vera Wheatley mentions it briefly. Gaby Weiner has used it in her *Thesis* in the section on Sociology, and Barbara Todd, in *Harriet Martineau at Ambleside*, refers to the book as 'a two year intellectual marathon which she had hugely enjoyed'. R K Webb says most about it in *Harriet Martineau: A Radical Victorian*, for instance he remarks that a clergyman, W M W Call, had already started on a translation and offered his MS to Harriet. This is also referred to by Rosemary Ashton in her book, *142 Strand*, saying that Call had translated about half of Comte, but she does not indicate whether this included the Maths section. Strangely, the Revd W Call is not acknowledged in the preface to the *Translation*, or in the *Autobiography*, but when writing his own *Preliminary Discourse on the Positive Spirit*, Call is gracious enough to acknowledge Martineau as the 'accomplished translator'.

I do not pretend to be a scholar on the Martineaus or Comte and have not searched widely; I, therefore, offer apologies to any writer who has tackled Harriet's version of Comte and whom I have missed: I would gladly receive any information on such work.

So, with conscious trepidation I venture to offer some comments upon the translation of Comte but, even though Martineau has condensed Comte's original, the contents of the two volumes are so vast that I have limited this paper to the chapter on Mathematics. On p39 of the translation, it is asserted that '...it is only through Mathematics that we can thoroughly understand what true science is.' And p42, Mathematics is 'the true rational basis of the whole system of our knowledge.' Ah! this is it! Comte's Philosophy in Martineau's words.

In Martineau's own words as an introduction we read on page vii of the preface, 'The growth of a scientific taste among the working classes of this country is one of the most striking of the signs of the times'. And on p viii '... any who question the general soundness of the exposition....will simply neglect the book, and occupy themselves as if it had never existed. It is not for such that I have been working, but for students who are not schoolmen;...'

As Martineau gets into her stride she mentions 'ten elementary formulas' (p49, C) and 'the values of these ten functions' (p50, C), but does not offer an explanation as to what they are, whereas Comte lists them, see Fig. 1. It could be that Martineau considered there was no real need to show the mathematical 'functions' in a book on Philosophy but I would say that Comte's list would be helpful for 'the working class' to see what was being discussed. Comte's version includes many equations and

examples throughout the maths section, whereas Martineau obviously made a decision not to include anything in mathematical symbols. Maybe she thought what a trial it must be for the typesetter!

$y=a+x$ .... fonction <i>somme</i> ,	$y=a^x$ ..... fonction <i>exponentielle</i> ,
$y=a-x$ ..... fonction <i>différence</i> ,	$y=\ln x$ ..... fonction <i>logarithmique</i> ,
$y=ax$ ..... fonction <i>produit</i> ,	$y=\sin x$ .... fonction <i>circulaire directe</i> ,
$y=a/x$ ..... fonction <i>quotient</i> ,	$y=\arcsin(x)$ fonction <i>circulaire inverse</i> .
$y=x^a$ .....fonction <i>puissance</i> ,	
$y=\sqrt[a]{x}$ .... .fonction <i>racine</i> ,	

Figure 1. Comte's 'ten elementary formulas'.

The absence of maths examples doubtless contributed to Martineau being able to reduce the total number of pages, compared to Comte's original - HM's 2 volumes in place of Comte's 6 - but why did she describe the differential and integral calculus three times? Was she following Comte's text too closely? (It was one of Martineau's criticisms, that Comte repeated himself). Or was it an example of her rule - once written, never changed. As Prof Webb says (p304,RV), 'the speed with which the translation was done must be taken into account in judging it'. There were other factors which enabled the number of pages to be reduced, Comte used 200 words per page whereas Martineau used 400 w.p.p.

Let us for the moment assign ourselves to one of 'the working classes', and let us read an extract from the Chapter on Mathematics. For the mathematicians among you this is an extract from the section on the differential and integral calculus, and remember, Martineau is writing for the 'working classes' or 'students who are not schoolmen'.

Vol 1, p71, of HM's translation.

"In forming differential equations, we rarely restrict ourselves to introducing differentially only those magnitudes whose relations are sought. It would often be impossible to establish equations without introducing other magnitudes whose relations are, or are supposed to be, known. Now in such cases it is necessary that the differentials of these intermediaries should be eliminated before the equations are fit for integration. This elimination belongs to the differential calculus; for it must be done by determining, by means of the equations between the intermediary functions, the relations of their differentials; and this is merely a question of differentiating. This is the way in which the differential calculus not only prepares a basis for the integral, but makes it available in a multitude of cases which could not otherwise be treated. There are some questions, few, but highly important, which admit of the employment of the differential calculus alone. They are those in which the

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magnitudes sought enter directly, and not by their differentials, into the primitive differential equations, which then contain differentially only the various known functions employed, as we saw just now, as intermediaries. This calculus is here entirely sufficient for the elimination of the infinitesimals, without the question giving rise to any integration.”

End of extract. [One might say, ‘Ugh!’]

On (p72,C) Martineau refers to the foregoing extract, ‘We have nothing to do here with the application of either calculus, which are quite a different study from that of the principles of differentiation and integration.’ Martineau is obviously conscious that her readers might have some difficulty in coping with the subject and offers a slightly abrasive word of advice to the working class: on (p31, C) we read, ‘.. if we cannot understand the positive method in the abstract, but only by its application, it is clear that we can have no adequate conception of it but by studying it in its varieties of application.’ But Martineau makes no provision for studying the application of Mathematics - not a mathematical sign or equation in the whole chapter. So, as a member of the ‘working classes’, if I am still *with it* and I want to understand the use of maths, I must buy another book on the subject of Mathematics.

Bob Webb questions Martineau’s understanding of the subject, (p305, RV). Martineau says that she sought the advice of Professor Nichol, of Glasgow University, and asked him to read through the Mathematics and Physics sections; Prof Webb notes that ‘he [Prof Nichol] made no changes except to add some footnote comments’ (p304, RV). I have not been able to find any record of those footnotes.

Well, whatever feelings readers had about the maths section, the popularity of Martineau’s translation of Comte in general was such that it went to two editions in her lifetime. The copy of Martineau’s 1853 translation which I borrowed from the HMC Library has a newspaper sticker in the front advertising the 2nd edition, 1875, price £1: 1s, for two volumes, or in today’s (2008) terms ≈ £106.00.<sup>1</sup> ( I wonder how many ‘working class’ students would buy it at that price today?) A posthumous third edition was printed in 1896 (20 years after her death), in which Frederic Harrison<sup>2</sup> has written an Introduction.<sup>3</sup>

Harrison records that a French translation of HM’s original edition was incorporated by Comte into his *Course*. And so I conclude with a word of praise from Harrison’s Introduction, ‘It is a singular fact in literary history, and a striking testimony to the merit of Miss Martineau, that the work of a French philosopher should be studied in France in a French re-translation from his English translator...’

Note.

(C) = Harriet’s translation of Comte.

(RV)= Bob Webb’s *Harriet Martineau: A Radical Victorian*.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Consumer Price Inflation since 1750'. Jim O'Donoghue and Louise Goulding (Office for National Statistics), Grahame Allen (House of Commons Library) *Economic Trends* 604, March 2004

Net factor for 1896 to 2008 = 100.6

<sup>2</sup> Frederic Harrison, an enthusiastic disciple of Auguste Comte, was president of the English Positivist Committee 1880-1905.

<sup>3</sup> Today a facsimile copy of this edition is available from Amazon Books. The text is the same as previous editions but the pages are shorter and, therefore, the relative page numbers are different. An element of confusion is introduced since the text makes reference to page numbers of the earlier versions.

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***“There are men of whom you cannot speak as being conspicuously religious; who even present a nature hard and unimpressible to the appeals of devout sentiment and doctrine...but whose cheek burns at a tale of injustice; who turn away with loathing from meanness and cruelty; whose word is a rock, rooted in the very substance of the world; who are stirred to their inmost depths by the spectacle of heroic honour and incorruptible fidelity; and who themselves win from others, if not noisy admiration, yet the silent trust and steady dependence which are yielded only to moral strength and wisdom. Are these men without religion?”***

*James Martineau, Essays, IV.*