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## VALERIE SANDERS and GABY WEINER (eds). *Harriet Martineau and the Birth of the Disciplines: Nineteenth-Century Intellectual Powerhouse*.

Valerie Sanders and Gaby Weiner (eds). **Harriet Martineau and the Birth of the Disciplines: Nineteenth-Century Intellectual Powerhouse**. Pp. 256+xii. (The Nineteenth Century). London and New York: Routledge, 2017. Hardback, £95.

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In the immediate aftermath of the women's marches held in Washington, DC, and around the world in mid-January, twitter lit up with photographs from a 1908

suffragette march in London. Some demonstrators at this large march carried banners of their women writer-heroes with them; indeed, one photograph taken by the pioneering photo-journalist Christina Broom shows banners for Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and, lurking a bit further in the cloudy background, Harriet Martineau. The positioning is apt. While Harriet Martineau has never been revered as influential in the way of Austen and Brontë, neither has she been lost to history, most especially women's history. Harriet Martineau has never needed the kind of recovery work that has enabled obscure women writers from the period to be read by scholars today. Yet neither has she been fully integrated into our histories; her fit has been difficult to establish, her value and claims to canonicity questioned, her contributions understood in isolation to one another.

This truly excellent volume of essays collected by Valerie Sanders and Gaby Weiner aims both to reckon with these long-standing challenges and, ultimately, to move Martineau scholarship forward. While the collection emerged out of an annual meeting of the Martineau Society held in 2013, it lacks the looseness that can sometimes undermine a volume of essays gathered haphazardly to put into print work presented at a conference. Instead, Sanders and Weiner have quite thoughtfully worked with contributors both to comprehend Martineau's 'oeuvre' and to situate it in its most essential historical context—i.e. the mid-Victorian years that saw the both a lively emphasis on social reform and political activism and the emergence of a variety of new disciplines and fields of knowledge. From this basis, they structure the volume to explore what they call the 'foundational characteristics' of Harriet Martineau and her contributions to disciplines and fields of knowledge.

A couple of the distinctions that Sanders and Weiner isolate in their introduction are worth drawing attention to. First, they claim for their volume an intention to be comprehensive, to chart and analyse not just Martineau's influence in her time but since (and to this end they credit not just late nineteenth-century women's movements but also the feminism of the 1980s with renewing and sustaining attention to Martineau). Secondly, they acknowledge and grapple with an issue that informs nearly every aspect of Martineau's identity and work—i.e. her deep-seated sense of herself as a 'populariser'—not an originator—of important ideas. Echoing the work of other Martineau scholars, Ella Dzelzainis and Cora Kaplan, they affirm the judgment that their subject is 'too easily categorized simply as a populariser' (p. 7) and set out to construct a far more nuanced picture of her range of contributions,

one that assesses influence and relevance, then and now. Thus, some chapters focus on work that situates Martineau squarely in her time (as, for instance, Beth Torgerson's treatment of Martineau in relation to sciences of the mind like mesmerism and phrenology or Sharon Connor's study of her contributions to emerging fiction standards at mid-century). Others, like Gaby Weiner on Martineau's feminism, find her 'of her time' and 'also often ahead of it' (p. 168). Reflecting on Martineau's newspaper and magazine contributions, Valerie Sanders similarly describes her as a 'precursor of the modern journalist' (p. 199).

It is really useful to start, as the volume does, with Lesa Scholl's study of the *Autobiography*, for she elicits just how central the idea of intellectual development is to all of the work. Subsequent chapters affirm the insight, with John Warren's analysis of Martineau's interest in childhood noting the ways the autobiography 'telescopes Martineau's intellectual shifts' (p. 212) and Deborah Logan's thoughtful study of Martineau's correspondence noting the 'intellectual clarity' of the autobiography. Scholl subtly juxtaposes Martineau's efforts to 'compass some one department of knowledge at a time' to the 'intellectual map' that eventually reaches beyond the scope of her life (p. 28). The contributors to this volume arguably follow Martineau's lead, orienting readers to the key areas of work—political economy, education, sociology, and history—and to key modes of writing—travel writing, journalism, and letters that constitute primary areas of Martineau's contributions. While the volume's subtitle describes Martineau somewhat grandiosely as an 'intellectual powerhouse', the best essays delineate the complicated ways her writing proved influential—or not. For example, Ruth Watts in the chapter on 'Martineau and popular education' correctly reminds us that despite Martineau's 'abundant output', she did not write a groundbreaking work on educational philosophy or found an educational institution or take the lead in educational reform. Instead, as her tales and works like *Household Education* evidence, 'she saw herself as a popular educator and national instructor and she was' (p. 43), a verdict seemingly affirmed when Deborah Logan, quoting Martineau's early biographer Maria Weston Chapman, describes Martineau's letters as 'full of charm and instruction' (p. 231).

The chapters by Scholl and Watts establish for readers Martineau's 'foundational characteristics'. The volume's remaining 11 chapters are divided into 'contribution to disciplines' and 'contribution to fields of knowledge'. The chapter by John Vint and Keio Funaki on 'Harriet Martineau and classical political economy' is a good

choice to lead the section on disciplines, since Martineau's work on political economy was so central to her career and emerging reputation and brought her, as the authors point out, 'immense critical and popular acclaim', despite some shortcomings in her understanding of Ricardo. If not 'path-breaking', the *Illustrations* were an 'accurate reflection of the classical economic literature at the time' (p. 63). Assessing Martineau's work as a historian, Alexis Easley convincingly stakes a claim to the path-breaking, showing that through her interpretation of women's lives and experiences as historical, 'Martineau laid the groundwork for the women's movements of the 1850s and for her own later contributions to the discourse on women's rights' (p. 115). Susan Hoecker-Drysdale and Michael Hill offer complementary essays on Martineau's relation and contribution to the field of sociology, with Hill focusing on the founding of the discipline as well as the institutional problems that have since plagued it and Hoecker-Drysdale homing in on Martineau's beliefs and theories about work and occupation. Stressing Martineau's accessibility to a large and literate public as well as her penchant for broad-based investigation, Hill summarizes: 'Martineau was a thoughtful theorist, an astute methodologist, a peripatetic empiricist, and a consequential social critic' (p. 70).

'Peripatetic' is an intriguing term to use in relation to Martineau, for while the range and scope of her interests could lead one to think that she wandered from topic to topic, the chapters in this volume work cumulatively to construct an understanding of the ways her strong disposition to be engaged with her society drove her capacious authorship. Iain Crawford's smart chapter on Martineau's travel writing usefully invokes the term 'wisdom writer' to describe her 'dispassionate, reason-based voice' (p. 183). In a sense, Martineau's legacy is as much a product of this disposition as anything else. As Sanders and Weiner summarize in the concluding pages of this volume, Martineau 'was essentially in constant dialogue with her own culture' (p. 236).

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