The Martineau Society

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Martineau Society Subscription Information:

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* UK: Individual members £20 // Concessionary rate £10 // Institutional membership £45. Life membership rate is £200.

* Overseas: Individual members $37.50 // Concessionary rate $25. This may be paid in dollars to Prof. Elisabeth Arbuckle, Condo. Montebello M526 Trujillo Alto PR00976 USA.

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Editor's Note

The second annual Harriet Martineau Lecture from the Writers' Centre Norwich was given at the Norwich Playhouse at the end of May – this time by the author, Kate Mosse. The celebrated novelist, famous for the best-selling *Labyrinth*, drew a large audience as did Ali Smith at the first Harriet Martineau Lecture last year. It was another occasion enhancing Harriet's modern reputation.

Kate Mosse began the Lecture by describing Harriet Martineau as "a great women who deserves to be a household name" and went on to explain why her legacy is so important to writers in the twenty-first century. But Kate Moss did not attempt to describe Harriet's writings and, indeed, acknowledged that what she knew of her arose from the writing of one of our Society's members, Stuart Hobday. Kate thanked Stuart for enabling her "to get under Harriet Martineau's skin". Instead, she related her own historical writings, particularly her best-selling Languedoc trilogy including *Labyrinth,* to Harriet's success as a former of attitudes and a free-thinking woman in the man's world of the nineteenth century. Harriet Martineau's fiction, particularly *Deerbrook,* was and is, just as important as her other writings. It shows "fiction can be as powerful a tool to change opinion as facts... Fiction with an accurate history of facts enables imagination to fill in the gaps."

Harriet Martineau was, in Kate Mosse's view, passionate to look and explore. Her influence on other writers has been very powerful – "For when all else is done, only words remain. Words endure."

This issue of the *Newsletter* has contributions describing the actions and influence of some of Harriet Martineau's friends. Elisabeth Jesser Reid, the driving force behind and founder of Bedford College for higher education of women, is the subject of Elisabeth Arbuckle's article. An article about the education of women and the Unitarian upbringing and adult lives of Eliizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau comes from our President, Ruth Watts.

Sharon Connor explores the relationship of Harriet Martineau with her mother, Elizabeth. Was Harriet as unconventional as Margaret Oliphant thought or was she a sort of woman who stands out in every century? Was she a "modern woman" in the sense used in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and, as in other areas of ideas, well before her time? The reader might find some interesting interpretations in Gaby Weiner's article on Harriet's early writings.

Finally, we have a eulogy from Sophia Hankinson following the sad death of her friend and a member of the Society well known to those of us in Norfolk, Rachel Young.

Many thanks to all our contributors. Please forgive the errors you will without doubt find. They are wholly those of your editor and reflect ineptitude with a laptop. Do, nevertheless, enjoy your reading of the summer *Newsletter.*

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An Opulent Unitarian, Lady Elisabeth Jesser Reid (1789-1866)

Elisabeth Sanders Arbuckle

"An opulent Unitarian lady," William Lloyd Garrison described Elisabeth Reid to his wife in summer 1840. Garrison was the American abolitionist idolized by Harriet Martineau, who had come to the World Anti-Slavery Convention held at Exeter Hall in London. Ill at Tynemouth, Martineau sent a note of "love and sympathy" to her friends at the Convention. Disgracefully, females were not allowed to be seated with the main body of delegates but were forced to sit in the gallery. When Garrison arrived, he joined the ladies along with other men who in protest declined to participate. While he stayed in London, however, Garrison met a number of noted philanthropists like Lady Byron, one of his meetings with that lady taking place at dinner and tea in the home of Elisabeth Reid.[1]

Elisabeth Jesser Reid was the younger daughter of wealthy Unitarian ironmonger William Sturch and a devoted friend of Martineau's, thirteen years her senior. In 1821 she had married the older physician, John Reid, and when he died the following year he bequeathed her his valuable house in Grenville Street, Brunswick Square. With inherited property from both her husband and her parents, Reid became a spirited do-gooder supporting causes like radical American abolitionism. In 1840 she helped to distribute copies of Martineau's first major onslaught on American slavery (other than brief accounts in her "American" books), The Martyr Age.[2]

Later at Tynemouth, Martineau received numerous gifts from Reid that included "a beautiful telescope on a brass stand, with a map of the flags of various nations" to help her pass the time in identifying the varied shipping along the coast.[3] Next Reid had the lower sash of Martineau's window replaced by "a single sheet of plate glass,--a singular luxury," Martineau gloated, allowing her to see what was happening

outside with the window closed (including the doings of her neighbors).[4]

At times Reid spent several months in Tynemouth, probably staying at the elegant Bath Hotel a few doors along Front Street from Martineau's room at Mrs. Halliday's. On one occasion when Henry Crabb Robinson came to see Martineau, Reid got rooms for him at the Bath Hotel too. When Carlyle visited Martineau in 1841, Reid and a young companion dined with Carlyle in Martineau's room. Yet the long journey from London by stagecoach could be hazardous, and once Reid's coach was overturned. She was unhurt, but a wheel narrowly missed her maid's head causing the frightened girl to weep incessantly for several days.

Slightly inexperienced in worldly matters, Reid found her admiration for Martineau sometimes cost more than she'd expected. In summer 1842 she commissioned the Neapolitan painter, Gambardella, to travel from London to Tynemouth to paint two portraits of Martineau. Then (to Jane Carlyle's amusement) she hotly reprimanded Gambardella for his high fees.[5]

Undeterred in providing for Martineau's comfort, however, Reid next "made a stir" about procuring "the best room out of the next house, & breaking down the wall . . . between that & [Martineau's] room" to allow her friend to have two rooms. Reid wished to pay for the extra annual rent of £15 and offered "a spare carpet large enough for both rooms."[6]

When friends and well-wishers presented Martineau with a generous testimonial fund in 1843, Reid urged her to spend £100 on a complete silver service of tea and coffee pots with cutlery. The men who had organized the fund were dumbfounded, but Martineau wrote blithely that any "London parcels" for her could be deposited "at the house of my dear friend Mrs. Reid."[7]

While Reid then spent three years in Italy with her brother and sister-in-law, she must have pondered a major new charitable project.[8] From childhood, she had dreamed of a college for women and in 1849 she gave funds for founding such an institution. Reid's college was not to be like the new [Church of England] Queen's College, meant to provide vocational training for governesses, but a real college for women. An innovation on Reid's part was including three Lady Visitors (non-academic friends who sat in on classes taught by male professors) in the governing body of the college. Yet Reid was to be disappointed in the initial failure of the Ladies College in Bedford Square to win understanding and support, especially from men. Friends accused her of radicalism and "romantic excess" in regard to women's education. Indeed, Martineau once apologized to Lady Byron for Reid's absent-mindedness. Reid's other limitations included not knowing French, a free-wheeling style of writing and un-businesslike management of her affairs–all no doubt owing to her lack of formal schooling.

While Reid was staying at Tynemouth on an earlier occasion she helped prevent Martineau from taking too great a part in the "cheap books club" project. Afterwards she was away during Martineau's startling recovery under mesmerism followed by her journey to the Near East.[9] On Martineau's return to London, however, she stayed with Reid at the home on York Terrace Reid shared with her unmarried sister, Mary Sturch. Reid and her maid also came as guests at The Knoll and when Martineau's mother died Reid arranged "quiet drives" to save her friend "from being

overwhelmed with visits from strangers."

After Martineau agreed to write *History of the Peace* for Charles Knight, she almost panicked at "the quantity and variety of details" to be covered. Reid became frightened: she had never seen her friend like this (Martineau of course soon rallied and plunged into the work.) The following year Martineau accepted Reid's offer of a loan to buy land for a building society at Ambleside, meant to provide affordable housing for worthy neighbors.

Reid's own dream, the Ladies College in Bedford Square, was to be inaugurated in October 1849, four terms after Queen's College. The new institution was supported by Reid's preliminary loan of £1,500, and two of the three trustees, Erasmus Darwin and Hensleigh Wedgwood, were Martineau's old friends. As formally stated, the purpose of the college was to make "better wives and more understanding mothers," to impart culture with a moral purpose, or "the elevation of the moral and intellectual character of women, as a means to an improved state of society."[10] Hensleigh Wedgwood worked all summer arranging scholastic matters as well as a lease on a house in Bedford Square belonging to the Duke of Bedford. In addition to naming professors, lady visitors and a matron, furnishings were provided, rules drawn up for students and a report on Bible study dealt with. Yet organizational matters could lead to conflict between male and female members of the general committee. Among those helping Reid on the founding committee were men like Francis William Newman (professor at University College, London), whose unorthodox views were almost to be responsible for the destruction of the college. In addition to religious differences among the staff, in the first three years of the college low staff attendance became a major difficulty. Professors who resigned were hard to replace, they were poorly paid and did not always come at the scheduled times. An anonymous note of 1851 asked if Reid was aware of the fact "that certain parties [had] discussed the probable disposal of her wealth and the expedience of bringing certain influences to bear upon her."

In that year Reid failed to sign some deeds for the Ambleside building society, over which Martineau strongly entreated her. While she stayed with her brother Robert at Edgbaston in January 1852, however, Martineau spread word of the college among "fathers of daughters." Though the troubles centering on F. W. Newman had come to a head in March, by the following November Martineau could cheer: "On with you dear friend, in educating women!"[11]

For the next three years, mostly cordial letters flew back and forth between Martineau and Reid. Then in January 1855 Martineau was diagnosed with what she called "heart ailment" and returned from London to spend the rest of her life at Ambleside as an invalid. Now correspondence with Reid was sometimes strained. On one occasion Martineau informed Reid that she could not withdraw the additional money she'd given for a reading room at Ambleside because it was deposited in a Kendal bank. "I have been scrupulously careful to tell you everything that took place in regard to your bounty fund," Martineau wrote snippily. A year later when the Ladies' college was in financial trouble, Reid wanted to withdraw entirely from the building society. Martineau now answered sarcastically that she needed no convincing "of the goodness of the College enterprise," but "[I] hardly think your money invested here could save it, if it is on the verge of bankruptcy!"[12]

After finishing her autobiography in 1855 Martineau wished to tidy up her affairs and to repay Reid's loan to the building society. Her "factory pamphlet" on meddling industrial legislation she hoped would bring in £200 she told a friend. That would relieve "anxiety about the money Mrs. Reid . . . laid fast here," she told a friend, though Reid had written "spontaneously" to Maria that Martineau had "never asked her for a shilling." Martineau's plan was to buy the two cottages built with Reid's money to leave to two of her nieces, and at the moment she could muster most of the money. Reid's delight was "extreme," Martineau chortled, for she could "add two rooms to the college, and paint and paper it throughout." Reid, she sniffed, could "have no interest" in Ambleside once she was gone.[13]

In 1856 Reid was indeed lamenting the shabbiness of the college rooms. Her £1,500 had melted away she told Henry Crabb Robinson. The college was too "in advance of public opinion," the committee having failed to calculate on "the opposition of the clergy." In conjunction with the college, a preparatory school had been opened, however, and Reid was writing to thank Robinson for a gift. Although they had plenty of "Maps & globes," his gift (possibly a time chart) would be good for the older school girls "before they leave for the College complete Course of History." Does Robinson know any "unmarried lades who have any money?" She often had to choose between "entering of a young lady on the Books;--between the succour of a helpless girl, pining & longing for such aid as we can give & a little beautifying of the place."[14]

In November of that year Reid went to stay at Ambleside and noted to Crabb Robinson that Martineau could still "write a fine leader, and plan something useful for her neighbours." In May, Martineau was eating sparingly but having "a glass every day or two [of] Mrs. Reid's champagne . . . before afternoon nap."[15]

Reid had written emotionally to Martineau about college troubles on one occasion:

> My dearest friend, for such come what may, you will be to me as long as we both live. . . . I have read [your] letter again & again. I have not as usual shewn it to Mary [her sister] but Isa R[ankin] being in the house & in a position exactly the converse I read to her that passage relating to the College.

The Duke of Bedford's agent, it seemed, was threatening to cancel their lease, and Isabella Rankin was no help. No action was taken, however, and the following January Martineau wrote that she hoped "the D. of Bedford's people [would] let [Reid] alone." In April Martineau rejoiced when Fanny Wedgwood (a lady visitor) reported "the non molestation about the house."[16]

Reid's insouciance concerning business evidently came to a head in 1860. Martineau told Fanny Wedgwood she was "sorry, and intensely puzzled" about the college difficulty. Reid had sent "two successive statements, contradictory on every point:" first, that they could go on "in defiance of notice to quit, trusting that their landlord 'would not dare–to proceed.'" Martineau was aghast and "sure there must be some mistake." Reid had answered "angrily on the ground of 'counsel's opinion' [and] 'law on our side,'" further puzzling Martineau.

> "Poor Mrs. Reid says the Duke and agent are trying to oust the College 'because' they know it can't get another house: and also she ends with assuring me that I may trust the honour of the Committee, though she is on it!" (Martineau was just then cross with Reid for trying to stop her obituary of

Anna Jameson in the *Daily News*, Jameson having been a long term "lady visitor" at the college.)[17]

Reid's dedication to the college included having students stay in her home, each paying £10 to £12 per term–a matron being offered only "board & room." When a separate residence was found for students where they had a place to sit and read, expenses were greater than expected and the numbers fell. Yet to Eliza Bostock in 1860 Reid described the Ladies College as an "Underground Railway," i.e., a secret rescue mission. Reid was making a new will in dread lest the college merge with the school, and she stipulated that her heirs should help students but make parents pay as much as possible. Secrecy was to be stressed in all dealings. The college should not pay for "piano" (lessons), or German or Italian before the third session. And Reid would leave her Grenville Street property to the college.[18]

In the spring of 1861 Martineau wished to settle disposition of the remaining £350 of Reid's loan to the building society. She would assume the loan if she could be sure her friend was "in a state to understand the affair." In 1862 Reid took offense at Martineau's attack on Americans in the National Anti-Slavery Standard over "the Trent affair" (the boarding of a British ship by an American naval officer). Martineau told Fanny Wedgwood she regretted Reid's silence had thought it was time for "another tiff." The "feeling au fond", she explained, was Reid's jealousy of her other friends, and the American Maria Chapman was "a real misery to her." Indeed, Reid asked why Martineau "did not expect the Millennium in the North [of the U. S.] Immediately," and their correspondence continued to languish. In 1865 Martineau became newly worried about Reid after "having been in correspondence with Eliza Bostock (about the Middleclass Education Commission)."[19]

Though often frustrated and abused, Reid muddled through. In March 1866 Martineau could exclaim "How happy the college girls are!" The letters of her "dear little niece [Ellen's daughter] overflow[ed] with happiness." A recent note from Reid, however, seemed to be the last she would write.[20]

Elisabeth Reid died on Good Friday in 1866. Before her death she created a trust of the greater part of her property to be administered by Eleanor Elizabeth Smith of Oxford, & two "lieutenants," Eliza Bostock and Jane Martineau (secretary of the college). "What you tell me of dear Mrs. Reid is just what I was wanting to know," Martineau wrote to Bostock. Were the administrators "thinking of a scholarship or two at the college? Or a new department of study? Or a provision of some special advantage not yet existing for want of means?" If anything was proposed, Martineau wished to know. "I am afraid [Reid] suffered some needless anxiety about the Negroes lately," Martineau went on. "But she did witness Emancipation; & we may be thankful for that (though) disappointed as she declared herself about the education of girls, she cd/ not but see how it has advanced in her time, -- & how much by her means."[21]

With some upsets, Reid's college survived to become part of the University of London as Bedford College open to both men and women.21 Yet Reid's frustrated struggles highlight the difficulties faced by nineteenth-century women who wished to break free of society's strictures. Among Reid's supporters, Julia Smith (a lady visitor) gave a last estimate of her work. Reid's failures, she declared, were better than others' successes, though the effects were "not exactly the effects she looked

for and worked for.”22

Green Plaque GFDL

(Do note the misspelling of Elisabeth. Elisabeth Jesser Reid’s German father had no confusion, unlike the English, over the spelling of his daughter’ name. *Ed.)*

1. William Lloyd Garrison to Helen E. Garrison,[29 June, 3 July]1840 in The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison. A House Divided Against Itself 1836-1840, ed. Louis Ruchames (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1971) 2: 656, 660-61.

2. In 1839 Reid accompanied Martineau, Julia Smith and Isabella Rankin on their Italian journey: Harriet Martineau (henceforth HM) to Elisabeth Jesser Reid (henceforth EJR), April 1839 [summary], Harriet Martineau. Further Letters, ed. Deborah A. Logan (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh UP, 2012) 520; Isabella was the daughter of Aunt Rankin at Bristol to whose school Martineau was sent in 1818

(Isabella left the others at Geneva, and Martineau was finally brought home an invalid).

3. See Anna Jameson to Lady Byron, [1, 2, 4, 5, 6-7 and 10 [mis-dated 9) April 1842, Anna Jameson: Letters and Friendships, ed. Mrs. Steuart Erskine (London: T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., 1915) 106-209.

4. HM to Richard Monckton Milnes, 29 July 1844, Trinity College, Cambridge MS Houghton 16/69 (partly published, The Collected Letters of Harriet Martineau, ed. Deborah Anna Logan [London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007] 2: 327).

5. See Thomas Carlyle to Jane Welsh Carlyle [26 August 1842] and Jane Welsh Carlyle to Jeannie Welsh, [16 November 1842], The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle, ed. Clyde de L. Ryals, et al. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1970--)15: 50-52 and 186-92.

6. HM to Richard Martineau, 17 September [1842], Collected Letters 2: 128-29.

7. HM to Basil Montague, 31 December [1843], Collected Letters 2: 213-14.

8. See Margaret J. Tuke, A History of Bedford College for Women 1849-1837 (Oxford UP, 1939); Martineau's letters to Reid used by Tuke have disappeared (see Logan, Further Letters 519-20).

9. The "cheap books club" project was suggested by Hugh Seymour Tremmenheere, commissioner for inquiring into the state of the population in mining districts: see Harriet Martineau's Autobiography (London: Smith, Elder, 1877) 2: 316-19.

10. Tuke 28.

11. Tuke 28; HM to EJR, 20 July, 22 August, 5 September and Autumn [1851]; 29 January, 30 March and 27 November 1852, Further Letters 535-38.

12. Further Letters 542-43.

13. HM to Fanny Wedgwood, 21 November [1855] and 15 February 1856, Harriet Martineau's Letters to Fanny Wedgwood, ed. Elisabeth Sanders Arbuckle (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1983) 133-37 and 143-47 (henceforth HM/FW); Maria was Martineau's niece and companion.

14. EJR to Henry Crabb Robinson, 27 October 1856, Dr. Williams' Library, MS Henry Crabb Robinson Bundle 2.1.a.

15. Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson, ed. Thomas Sadler (London: Macmillan, 1869) 3: 449 [diary entry for 13 November 1856]; HM to Snow Wedgwood, 4 May 1857, HM/FW 149-55.

16. [EJR] to HM, Wednesday, 4 March [1857], Harris Manchester College, MS Harriet Martineau, fols. 167-169 (Isabella earned her living as a governess); EJR to HM, 31 January and 15 April 1858, Further Letters 546 and 546.

17. HM to Fanny Wedgwood, 29 March 1860, HM/FW 193-95; Martineau had fallen out with Jameson partly over mesmerism; see "MRS. JAMESON," Daily News, 29 March 1860, page 2, cols. 2-3.

18. EJR to Eliza Bostock, c. 1860, Tuke 316-18.

19. HM to Fanny Wedgwood, 2 March 1866, HM/FW 265-69.

20. HM to Elizabeth Ann Bostock, 26 April 1866, Further Letters 138-39.

21. Bedford College moved to a Regent's Park site in 1908 and in 1985 formally merged with Royal Holloway College (University of London) to become Royal Holloway and Bedford New College; subsequently, the Bedford part was "lost'" and it is now known as Royal Holloway (in 1985 the

Regent's Park buildings were acquired by an American university to house a college chiefly for international students and named Regent's College).

22. Tuke 17.

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Elizabeth Gaskell   Wiki Commons

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Elizabeth Gaskell, her Martineau connections and a liberal education for women

Ruth Watts

There were numerous connections between the novelist and biographer Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau as Valerie Sanders showed over a decade ago.[1] Here I want to compare the educational experiences, ideals and practices of Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau, referring to some of the connections with other Martineaus at the same time.[2]

Elizabeth's educational ideals, like those of the Martineaus, came much from the Unitarianism into which she was born. Her father William Stevenson was, briefly, a Unitarian minister.[3] She was brought up among Unitarians in Knutsford and had many Unitarian relatives, friends and connections; her husband later was minister to one of the prime Unitarian chapels, Cross St Manchester. She shared his faith in a rational religion which denied the Trinity and doctrine of original sin, optimistically believing that humanity held the possibility of true goodness like that of Christ if only all were properly educated to develop all their potential both for virtue and for participating in changing society for the better.[4]

Unitarian educational ideals developed through the more liberal dissenting academies and especially through the writings of Joseph Priestley which were based on David Hartley's extension of John Locke's principle of the association of ideas.[5] They stressed that children were formed by individual associations and circumstances and that environment, not hereditary factors, was the key to development.[6] Their assertion that both female and male could and should be educated to the highest possible degree was supremely important since even middle-class girls rarely received the same quality of education as their brothers. Unitarian girls were more likely to receive a more equal education whether at home in liberal, cultural households where all, of whatever sex, shared ideas, taking active interest in social, literary and political matters or, for some, at new private schools, many of them run by Unitarians.[7]

This education, based on scientific, child-centred methods of teaching and learning and including modern subjects such as English, modern languages, modern history and science, needed to start from infancy. It was not merely intellectual, but always deeply interlinked with moral and physical education. The underlying aim was moral, leading its participants from birth to the morality of a rational religion, producing 'enlightened' men and women for a liberal, humane, rational, scientific society.[8] These should be people who could think for themselves and follow the truth as they saw it, the Unitarian insistence on private judgement, freely exercised by all, rather than blind obedience or adherence to doctrines and custom, being complemented by their argument that real virtue depended on all women and men exercising their God-given capacity to reason and choose to live virtuously. For this all needed to have their intelligence developed.[9]

These important principles, interpreted and disseminated by Unitarian educationalists, men and women, in books for all ages and both sexes, in practice at home and in a wealth of educational institutions, deeply affected both Elizabeth and Harriet.[10] Both read the books of Unitarian educators such as Anna Barbauld, but also read much else. Elizabeth's lessons in Knutsford included much sewing, English literature, French and dancing.[11] An important education was also gained through her daily intercourse with her relatives, the lively and energetic large Holland clan and their wider connections.[12] Harriet was taught at home by older brothers and sisters, was an omnivorous reader and lived in the cultured Unitarian circles of Norwich.[13]

Elizabeth went away to the Misses Byerley's school near, and subsequently in, Stratford. She had family connections to the six Byerley sisters involved in the school who were great-nieces of the Unitarian Josiah Wedgwood. They became churchgoers themselves and rented Anglican pews for the girls but retained their Unitarian and educational networks. The school gave much teaching of modern languages, made a priority of teaching English and its literature and helped girls obtain 'polish'.[14]

Elizabeth experienced a good exemplar of the best standard of conventional education given to middle class girls.[15] Between them the Byerley sisters, four of whom married and two of whom became published authors, advocated roles for women which placed them firmly within the home yet stressed that all women, including servants, needed a sound education to operate with efficiency, moral understanding and resolution and to contribute to the collective good – a message expressed regularly in Elizabeth's later books. Different sisters questioned a wife's "passive acquiescence to the will of her husband", noted domestic tyrants were averse to their 'womankind knowing more than how to sew a seam, or manufacture a pudding" ensured bequests to the others would be free from any husband's control or management.[16] These ambivalent attitudes towards women's role and rights were ones with which Elizabeth was to battle constantly as is evinced in her letters and writings.

Harriet enjoyed two years at a mixed grammar school, taught by a Unitarian and then had fifteen months at the school of her loving Aunt Kentish and her clever daughters in Bristol where she also imbibed the teachings of the Unitarian educationalist Lant Carpenter who taught her to revere Priestley's edition of Hartley.[17]

With no higher education for women, both Harriet and Elizabeth continued studying at home. Elizabeth's father encouraged her studies, advising that women should 'bestow their approbation only on those men who regard and trust them as equal to themselves in their capacity for knowledge and usefulness'.[18] There was no suggestion, indeed, that Elizabeth should hide her learning as Harriet complained she had to do.[19] Elizabeth was fairly fluent in French and Italian – a factor which would be very useful in her constant travels to France and Italy later and eagerly read widely and deeply both old and the latest authors, her later books being full of allusions to her reading. Harriet had a passion for translating Latin and Italian, studying the Bible and philosophy.[20]

Both young women also continued to learn much within their familial and liberal

circles, their visits elsewhere including Newcastle and Scotland which left lasting impressions both of place and people. In Newcastle Elizabeth stayed with her distant relative the Rev. William Turner, a lovable, charitable and knowledgeable educationalist whom Harriet had loved since the age of seven when visiting relatives in Newcastle. Like Elizabeth she was a good friend of Ann Turner.[21] Both women were deeply influenced by such prime Unitarian educators as Turner and their Unitarian conceptions of education and beliefs that women too, as Hannah Greg said, should be educated 'in the notion of their being individual and rational and immortal beings'.[22] At the same time, they imbibed the notion that this liberal education also aimed to create women who could run their homes and educate children with greater understanding than the norm, establishing intellectually vibrant, cultured, socially concerned homes, where supportive wives sympathised and shared in their husband's concerns. [23]

Such ideals and new interpretations of them which emerged particularly as such well-educated women began to baulk at the restrictions on their lives and roles, surrounded Elizabeth as she moved to Manchester when she married William Gaskell in 1832 by which time Harriet was a well-known author. William was to become closely involved in various initiatives for educating both middle and working class men. He lectured in the 1840s at Manchester New College when it returned to Manchester as did James Martineau who stayed with it in its moves to London, then Oxford. He and William had both been students in the College at York.[24] Elizabeth knew James and his family quite well. She appreciated James's developing interpretation of Unitarianism but obviously found him overly serious, for example, dreading that he and his family would interrupt her family holiday in Glyn Garth in 1853, saying she wanted to be free, not 'talking sense by the yard'.[25] Both William and James gave higher education to women, William privately to women such as the gifted Winkworth sisters while James lectured to both sexes in Liverpool in the 1830s and Manchester in the 1840s, foreshadowing the University Extension lectures by decades. Talented women like Susanna and Catherine Winkworth and Anna Swanwick testified to the immense intellectual change this made to them.[26]

Elizabeth liked intellectual women such as the Winkworth sisters because they were not pedants but had real understanding of life and literature, based on evidence not effusions of emotion, yet they evinced warm humanitarianism and humour. She stressed the necessity of women thinking for themselves on all matters including religion and politics provided this was based on real evidence and experience.[27] As she later insisted to her daughter Marianne:

> I like you to take an interest in politics because I like you to have many and wide interests but I want you to give good reasons for all your opinions or else you will become a mere partisan.[28]

In all this Harriet could concur.

The two women similarly deepened their education by reading, their widespread family connections and much travel in Britain and abroad both on the continent and, for Harriet, America, and Egypt too. Travel indeed, stimulated each of them to an almost spiritual dimension of the power of nature reflecting their own deep love of Wordsworth's poetry and of places like North Wales and Lake District which soothed, charmed and brought beauty into people's lives.[29] Such experiences furnished them with ideas and helped them build vital intellectual, literary and social networks a

number of which they shared and in which they included each other. They maintained and extended such networks through prolific correspondence, demonstrating their abiding interest in new ideas, religion, politics, social reform, travel and literature.[30] They attended exhibitions and lectures provided they deemed it within propriety to go, although some intellectual meetings were prohibited to women and even the more cerebral journals might be difficult to obtain as Elizabeth bemoaned in 1859, thinking this might turn her to 'Women's Rights'.[31] Harriet, of course received even the Blue Books from MPs when writing her political economy tales yet she would not accept social invitations except 'where my acquaintance was sought, as a lady, by ladies' and worried about silly women spoiling the meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.[32]

From their various correspondence, actions and writings, indeed, it can be seen that both women imbibed ideals of womanhood which combined 'womanly' and motherly virtues with awakened intelligence and independence of thought and action within propriety – Unitarians were enough of social outcasts to insist on this. Insofar as Elizabeth believed that only independently thinking women could intelligently direct their own lives and those of others, she believed in women's rights. She signed the petition for a Married Women's Property Bill in 1856, the first agitation set in motion by the emergent women's movement of the 1850s to 1870s, although she was doubtful whether legislation could prevent husbands coaxing or tyrannizing their wives out of what they had. 'However', she added, 'our sex is badly enough used and legislated against, there's no doubt of that'.[33] Believing in the need for women's self-reliance, she was cautious about what women could do:

> I would not trust a mouse to a woman if a man's judgement was to be had. Women have [many fine] qualities, but are at best angelic geese as to matters requiring serious and long scientific consideration. I'm not a friend of Female Medical Education.[34]

The latter was another long, bitterly fought campaign beginning in the 1850s. Yet, even before the Crimean War, Elizabeth knew and deeply admired Florence Nightingale, another woman from a Unitarian background, for her amazing intellect, fun, charity and scientifically researched and practised work on nursing.[35] She was quite prepared to allow her daughter Meta to become such a nurse. She noted, however, that Parthenope Nightingale had to take up her sister's' home duties' to enable the latter to do her public work36 and this disjunction in what women's duties were between god-given talents and their 'natural duties' as women, wives and mothers pervaded both Elizabeth's life and writings. She realised that women derived strength and dignity from independent work not just in 'completing, sweetening and embellishing the existence of others' and that unmarried women especially needed employment, yet, in her own life, despite her supportive husband, she questioned how far women could reconcile home duties and a creative or professional life.[37]

Harriet too preferred 'womanly women', disliked pedants but admired true intellectuals such as Anna Barbauld and Mary Somerville who were also moral and had well-run homes. She was sure, like Elizabeth, that well-educated women made the best housekeepers, mothers and teachers of the young and welcomed developments that allowed women access to more skilled employment. A constant correspondent of Florence Nightingale and chosen populariser of her nursing and

sanitary reforms, she welcomed the scientific, practical and moral training demanded by the new profession but also campaigned for women to become doctors.[38] As a lifelong feminist she also signed the Married Women's Property Bill, found it absurd that a tax-payer and influential writer like herself had no vote, campaigned vigorously against the Contagious Diseases Act of the 1860s and welcomed the growth, albeit slow, of rights for women.[39] She firmly believed that this growth had to rest on proper education:

> Every woman who can think and speak wisely, and bring up her children soundly, in regard to the rights and duties of society, is advancing the time when the interests of women will be represented, as well as those of men.[40]

She detailed such education and way it should materialise in homes in Household Education.[41]

Elizabeth tried to follow these ideals as a mother. The anxious thought she and William put into the education of their four daughters illustrated their deep belief that each one should have the education that was suitable for their individual needs. In her letters, as in her diary written for three years when her two eldest daughters were babies and toddlers, Elizabeth gave continuous thought to what and how each child was learning according to her character and bent. This was whether the girls were being taught regularly at home by teachers who came to their house , by their father or within the family There was much attention to music, art and drawing, English, French and, with Meta certainly, German, Italian and maths – the latter of which she studied with her father. Above all, however, the concern was how to develop thoughtful, caring, humane people of lively and rational minds, ready to take part in the civic and educational as well as the social life around them, educated through example, discussion and persuasion rather than corporal punishment .[42] Each girl later went to a school carefully selected for her. In the case of Meta, the most intellectual daughter, Rachel Martineau's school in Liverpool was chosen. Elizabeth rejoiced in the Italian, German and music, taught by James Herman , leader of the Liverpool concerts, she would learn there. James Martineau taught Latin, mathematics, history, botany and the New Testament at the school to the delight of pupils such as Julia Wedgwood.[43] None of Elizabeth's girls went to either the newly established Bedford or Queen's Colleges, or later did paid work, but they were educated further, both by mixing in their parents' extended Unitarian and literary circles and by much travel in Britain and abroad to Germany, France and Italy, especially with their mother. The girls certainly became involved in local education and in current issues such as the relief of mill workers hit by the American Civil War just as Elizabeth herself did.[44]

Elizabeth showed through fiction how females are educated through upbringing and experience as much as formal education. The quality of the education was what mattered. They needed to learn what made a good home,45 but most important were sound, lasting principles of behaviour learnt early so to be prepared for learning through life and experience and this was learnt best from mothers – a good mother that is. Mrs Gibson in *Wives and Daughters* was not principled enough. Her daughter Cynthia was seemingly better educated than her step-daughter Molly but not in reading, understanding or moral upbringing. In Elizabeth's book *Ruth* the effect of having no mother and of an over-indulgent mother and a rigid doctrinaire father, are all shown to have lasting effects on their children.[46] This was vital to

Elizabeth because, like Harriet, what mattered most to her was moral health, not the dry morality important to most educationalists but living love and goodness which progressive educationalists like the Unitarians allied to awakened intelligence if not necessarily learning. Ruth demonstrated that mere innocence could be foolish ignorance and was not sufficient to protect girls. She learnt 'truth' through living with good people and through being a mother, 'natural' maternal affections and skills shown to be skills supremely important for women's own development, that of their families and the wider world. 47

Understanding was more important than intellectual education, although the latter could help the former and open up the mind. Molly Gibson, in *Wives and Daughters* had to struggle to get more than a basic intellectual education at home but, nevertheless, eagerly learnt all she could through her father's 'unusually good library' and, later, a scientific friend but was horrified when her stepmother called her a 'blue-stocking', the epithet constantly hurled at knowledgeable women since the eighteenth century.48 Elizabeth made clear here, however as she did in Cousin Phyllis that there was a new world of science, technology and engineering opening up in which women could join at least to the extent of being interested and becoming knowledgeable friends and partners.49 Certainly, well-educated daughters were shown to be better companions to fathers intellectually than their mothers could be. A number of Elizabeth's heroines, however, had little formal education; indeed, Sylvia in *Sylvia's Lovers* emphatically rejected such but learnt to change the harder way, through bitter experience.50 These and other characters showed they could and did learn by experience because, or once, their intelligence had been awakened – like, indeed, the experience of Hester in Harriet's *Deerbrook*.51

Elizabeth's women showed that their various educations enabled them to act morally on their own initiative even if this upset others. They demonstrated that independence of thought which Unitarians extolled even if they also wished their women to keep within the constrictions of propriety, although Unitarian women were perpetually at the forefront of breaking conventions about what women's rights and roles were as both Elizabeth and Harriet did. Harriet risked great danger for her views on slavery in the USA, Elizabeth knew that the messages in *Mary Barton* and *Ruth* particularly were unpalatable truths for many of her readers, including members of her husband's congregation, yet they did accept her right to publish as she pleased.52

Elizabeth was also deeply interested in and involved in working-class education and conditions, including teaching in the Mosley Street Sunday school and inviting the girls to her own house on Sunday afternoons.53 Harriet, of course, tirelessly supported moves for national education and enthusiastically lectured to local workmen and their families in Ambleside.54 She would have appreciated Elizabeth's depiction of the ostrich-like attitudes of the uneducated, the partially educated and the weakly educated in *Sylvia's Lovers* 55 and her showing how, in *Mary Barton*, Mr Carson came to realise that the interests of one were the interests of all so all needed 'educational workers capable of judging, not mere machines of ignorant men.'56

Indeed, both women educated the public by their writings, teasing out their deeply felt and thought-out ideas in fiction. The first famous writings of both concerned political economy, Harriet seeing it as her duty to teach the public properly about it,

Elizabeth professing to know nothing of political economy, yet certainly basing her book on personal observation and knowledge and allowing one of her working-class characters to dismiss political economy showing that there were circumstances where it was impossible for people to survive unaided and the rich 'ought to know' the circumstances of the poor.57 That far, at least, the two women could concur as both wanted more understanding between the classes but did not advocate changing the economic system. Harriet's tales *Briery Creek* and *The Scholars of Arneside* for example, illustrated a cooperative educative community and the need for all to have access to education respectively.58

Elisabeth Gaskell in 1864   Wiki Commons

The two women were certainly not copies of each other. They had differing characters and lives and differences of opinion, for example over Elizabeth's *Life of Charlotte Bronte*, an author whom they both knew.59 Harriet left Unitarianism. There were always nuances of view between them yet they were involved in similar networks and their own education helped them to promote similar ideals of a liberal

education for women.

They both postulated that women as well as men should grow morally through developing their intelligence so they could make rational choices and think for themselves, so they could observe and understand society and people better and play their part at home or outside in making it a better place for all, as they did themselves.

[1] Valerie Sanders, 'Harriet Martineau and Elizabeth Gaskell', *The Gaskell Society Journal* 16 (2002), 64-75

[2] I shall refer to them by their first names because of their families being considered.

[3] John Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell. The Early Years* (Manchester; Manchester University Press, 1997), 34-6

[4] Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860* (London, Longman, 1998), 105, passim; Jane Whitehall, ed., *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton 1855-65* , (Oxford, 1932), 598; Josie Billington, 'Faithful realism: Ruskin and Gaskell', *The Gaskell Society Journal* 13 (1999), 1-14

[5] David Hartley, *Observations on Man* 2 vols. (New York, Delmar, 1976,, Ist ed. 1749) I, 65; Ruth Watts, 'Harriet Martineau, the Unitarians and Education', *The Martineau Society Thirtieth Newsletter* (2012), 3-10

[6] Joseph Priestley 'Introductory Essays to Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind' (1790; 1st ed. 1775) in *The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley* (ed.) J.T. Rutt, 25 vols., 1817-31 [hereafter termed *Works*] vol. III, pp.167-96; 'The Doctrine of Philosophic Necessity Illustrated' (1782) *Works*, III, p.521; Hartley, *Observations,* I, 82, II, 453

[7] For example see John Aikin, and Anna Barbauld, *Evenings at Home* (Edinburgh, William Nimmo, 1868, 1st ed. 1793)

[8] Priestley, "Introductory Essays, 167-96; Hartley, *Observations*

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[9] J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, eds., *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* (Manchester: Mandolin, 1997; 1st ed. 1966), 784-5. See how Mary Wollstonecraft was influenced by Richard Price on this in Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the feminist imagination* (Cambridge, 2003), 2-3, 6-7, 40-1, 67, 103; Saba Bahar, 'Richard Price and the moral foundations of Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism', *Enlightenment and Disssent*, 18 (1999), 1-15

[10] Watts, *Gender*, passim; Chapple, *The Early Years* 23, 32-3, 38-42, 405-6

[11] Winifred Gérin, *Elizabeth Gaskell,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 20-22; Elizabeth's reading included, for example, Mrs Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, Goldsmith's *History of England*, Rollins *Ancient History*, Lindley Murray's *Grammar*; Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography* 3 vols. (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1877), I, 34,42

[12] Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell A Habit of* Stories (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), 13-19, 26-31; Chapple, Early Years, 136-55, 165-75, 179-93, 222-4, 230-2.

[13] Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography*, I, 53-6, 69-72

[14] Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 236-8, 246; Gérin, 11-14, 17, 20-9; Phyllis D. Hicks, *A Quest of Ladies The Story of a Warwickshire School* (Birmingham, 1949), 7-15, 30, 61-2, 80-2, passim.

[15] Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, 52; Guérin, *Gaskell*, 29; Watts, *Gender*, passim

[16] Hicks, *A Quest*, 73, 72-4; 98, 90-1, 116-8

[17] Martineau, *Autobiography*, I, 90-6, 103-5

[18] Quoted in Uglow, *Gaskell*, 41; see Chapple, *Early Years*, 283,286-8

[19] Martineau, *Autobiography*, I, 100-01

[20] Philip Yarrow, 'Mrs. Gaskell and France', *GSJ* 7 (1993),16-36; Martineau, *Autobiography*, *101-16*

[21] Chapple, *Early Years,* passim; Uglow, *Gaskell*, 288-309, 324-6, 343-73, passim; Martineau, *Autobiography*, 32-4, 128, 139, passim

[22] Peter Spencer, *A Portrait of Hannah Greg 1766-1828* (Styal, 1985), 6,10-13, 17-21, 29-30; Watts, 66-70, 88-9, passim.

[23] Ibid., passim; Chapple, *Early Years*, 351-69; Harriet Martineau, *Household Words* (London: Edward Moxon, 1849) (Available online at http://essays.quotidiana.org/Martineau/household_education/)

[24] Chapple, *The Early Years* 23, 32-3, 38-42, 405-6; Barbara Brill, *William Gaskell 1805-84 A Portrait* (Manchester: Manchester Literary and Philosophical Publications Ltd., 1984), 19-25; J. Estlin Carpenter, *James Martineau*, 26-56, 241, 271, 280-89, 338-42, 385-98, 462 ff., 513

[25] Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, 239

[26] Watts, *Gender*, 156, 160-1

[27] Chapple, *Early Y ears*, passim; Margaret J. Shaen ed., *Memorials of Two Sisters: Susanna and Catherine Winkworth* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1908), passim

[28] Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, 832

[29] Ibid., passim; Uglow, *Gaskell*, passim

[30] Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, passim; John Chapple and Alan Shelston, eds., *Further Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* (Manchester University Press, 2003), passim; Martineau, *Autobiography*, 101-07; Deborah Logan, ed., *The Collected Letters of Harriet Martineau*, 5 vols. passim.

[31] Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, 567.

[32] Martineau, *Autobiography* 1, 178-9, 333; II, 137

[33] Quoted in E. Haldane, *Mrs Gaskell and her Friends* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1950), 251

[34] Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, 419

[35] Ibid., 305-9, 316-20, 327, 382-3, 522

[36] Ibid., 316

[37] W.R.Greg, 'Why are women redundant?' in *Literary and Social Judgements* (1868), 338-9; Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, 106,681, 693-6, passim

[38] Logan, ed., *Harriet Martineau's Writing on British History and Military Reform* 6 vols. (London, Pickering and Chatto 2005), VI 2005 161-202, 241-2, 258-91, 301-5 ff.; III, 162-3; V, 105-6

[39] Gayle Graham Yates, ed., New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 51-83, 216-24, 239-67, passim

[40] Martineau, *Autobiography* 1, 401-2

[41] Martineau, *Household Education*, 221-6, passim

[42] J.A.V. Chapple and Anita Wilson, eds., *Private Voices. The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), 11-71; Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, passim

[43] Ibid. 214, 259-60; Watts, *Gender*, 135-6

[44] Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, passim

[45] Ibid.

[46] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex; Penguin, 1969; 1st publ. 1864-6); *Ruth* (London: Dent, 1967; 1st ed. 1853)

[47] *Ruth*; see also Anita C. Wilson, 'Elizabeth Gaskell's subversive icon: motherhood and childhood in *Ruth*', *The Gaskell Society Journal* 16 (2002),85-111

[48] *Wives and Daughters*, 65, 339-41, passim.

[49] Ibid., Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cousin Phyllis and Other Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981; 1st ed.1865)

[50] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006; 1st ed.1848)*: Sylvia's Lovers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982; 1st ed.1863), 106, 245, 321, 416, 421, 478.

[51] Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex; Penguin, 1970; 1st publ. 1854-5), 51, 55, 120, passim; *Cousin Phyllis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982; 1st ed.1865) *Wives and Daughters, Ruth*; Harriet Martineau, *Deerbrook* (London: Virago, 1983a, 1st ed. 1839)

[52] Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography* (London: Virago,1983; 1st ed. 1877), II,7-92; Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, 67-71, 220-7

[53] Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, 27, 33, 98-105, 229, passim; Uglow, *Gaskell*, 82, 90, 141, 146, 300, 319

[54] Martineau, II, 301-10; Logan, *Martineau's Writing*, 2005, 1, 358-9, II, 58, 89-92, 252-4; III, 171-3, 183, 193, 284-5, 386-7; IV ,58-62; V, 61, 1001-02, 127-78

[55] Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, 276

[56] Gaskell, *Mary Barton,* 460

[57] Ibid., 45, 14-15, 25-8, 220-1, 455-8, passim; Harriet Martineau, *Illustrations of Political Economy* (London, Charles Fox, 1832-4 publ. at http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=QRI1AAAAMAAJ...)

[58] Ibid., No. 22 *Briery Creek* (http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=AUPQAAAAMAAJ...); *The Scholars of Arneside, Illustrations of Taxation* No. 5 (London, Charles Fox, 1834)

[59] Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, 335-42, 392, 430, 437-41, 453, 467, 497

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Not very much of a woman at all

Sharon Connor

In her article for Blackwood's Magazine the journalist and author Margaret Oliphant condemned Harriet Martineau as having been 'not very much of a woman at all'[1].

Harriet Martineau   Wiki Commons

Oliphant's main criticism was focused on Harriet's autobiographical recollections of her mother Elizabeth Martineau, which Oliphant viewed as 'unfavourable' and was a representation which revolted her. Certainly Harriet's memories of her childhood were unflinchingly portrayed in her 1855 *Autobiography*, and subsequent critics have reductively depicted this mother-daughter relationship in an almost wholly negative light, with Mitzi Myers concluding that Harriet's emotional self sufficiency forced her into becoming 'the mother she had always wanted to have – sympathetic, confident, just and serene'[2]. I however would suggest that because neither Harriet nor Elizabeth conformed to conventional social and cultural ideals of either 'mother' or 'daughter', their close yet complex relationship has been misunderstood.

Siv Jansson points to the 'burdensome expectations' placed upon women in their role as mothers in the nineteenth century, an ideology which demanded they set an example of 'meekness'[3] to their daughters. Meek is not an adjective one would use to describe the strong and purposeful Harriet and Elisabeth. This sentimental stereotype of motherhood was not necessarily the only bedrock for forming a prolonged and healthy mother-daughter relationship, particularly as that relationship evolved with the passage of time. Harriet's very forthright letter in 1833 to her mother, written to outline the arrangements for her (and Harriet's aunt) impending move from Norwich to Harriet's home in London, would on first reading appear defensive and quite unwelcoming, and has frequently been used to illustrate an emotional distance between Harriet and her mother:

> Dearest mother ....*We*, however, know that removal to be necessary, whether you come to London, or fix your abode elsewhere: there is another chance, dear mother, and that is of my marrying. I have no thoughts of it. I see a thousand reasons against it. But I could not positively answer for always continuing in the same mind. It would be presumptuous to do so; and I especially feel this when I find myself touched by the devoted interest with which some few of my friends regard my labour. I did not know till lately anything of the enthusiasm with which such services as I attempt can be regarded, nor with what tender respect it could be testified. I mean no more than I say, I assure you; but, strong as my convictions are against marrying, I will not positively promise.

While the suggestion that she might marry can be read on one level as a tool with which Martineau was trying to dissuade her mother from making the move (or indeed considering it permanent) to live with her, the tone of Martineau's letter as a whole is optimistic and conciliatory. More, she appears to be voicing the emergence of a young woman who had recently begun to establish in her own mind an image of what this potentially fulfilling and exciting future might hold for her.[4] What this letter does exemplify is the honest and forthright manner Harriet was confident enough to use to her mother, because of her security in that maturing relationship.

A letter from Elisabeth to her daughter-in-law, Helen, written in the aftermath of Harriet's decision to end her romantic relationship with John Hugh Worthington, demonstrates just how very well Mrs Martineau understood her daughter, and believed in her emotional and moral abilities:

> My Dear Helen, You will excuse a hastily written letter, I have several to write,

> but I cannot feel easy at deferring a communication which I believe will relieve your mind & that of other friends, on Harriet's account. – Her final determination is made, & communicated to the parties of Leicester of the affair brought to an end. I have thought her very anxious, & thoughtful, ever since the receipt of J.H.Ws short letter, & I saw she watched with anxiety, the arrival of the next, which his mother said was in hand. But it never came, & we concluded the reason was that he was not able, whether from want of mental or bodily power; the fact was inconsistent with the reports of the rapid progress he was making towards convalescence. That his poor mother caught at every gleam of hope [...]Poor woman, my heart goes out to her & all J.H.Ws family. [....] My dear Harriet is I hope already more comfortable. She slept better the last two nights, & has this morning set out for Dudley – [...] Now that her mind is made up of the affair over for ever I hope she will soon return to her usual occupations – she is always cheerful & hopeful & trustful where she ought to trust. 5.

The letter may have been hastily written, but it is incredibly informative. The overall tone of the letter is one of a mother's deeply felt disquiet for the trauma her daughter had undergone. Much has been made of Harriet's apparent difficult relationship with her mother, but such clear terms of endearment as 'My dear Harriet', and her genuine concern for Harriet's emotional wellbeing display real maternal concern. Harriet may have written in her *Autobiography* how, 'I really think, if I had once conceived that any body cared for me, nearly all the sins and sorrows of my anxious childhood would have been spared me' (Vol. 1 p.29) so though she may have *felt* unloved, this did not mean that she *was* unloved. The news that Harriet had brought an end to the affair, would, Mrs Martineau believed, bring 'relief' to Helen's (and other's) minds. The assumption to be made here is that Harriet's decision would have been considered the right one to make by those who personally knew of those involved in the situation, and understood Harriet well.

What these brief epistolary exchanges do illuminate is that Harriet and Elizabeth Martineau's relationship transcended that of the culturally prescribed indoctrination of a mother being, and teaching her daughter to become, a 'bland, adoring and gently tearful'6 woman. These strong-minded, independent women did not seek the affirmation of a sentimental ideology, but instead navigated their way through to a different relationship, (and one that suited their personalities) than that offered by society.

1 Oliphant, M. 'Harriet Martineau' 'Blackwood's Magazine' April 1877

2 Myers, M 'Unmothered Daughter and Radical Reformer: Harriet Martineau' in *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature* (Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1980) (p.79)

3 Jansson, S. 'The Representation of Maternal Death in Nineteenth Century Literature' in 'Diegesis: Journal of the Association in Popular Fictions' Spring 2000 (p.31)

4 Although Harriet is vague as to the reality of having an actual suitor, a charming letter from Charles

Darwin to his grandmother, written in 1838, shows that Harriet had attracted the attentions of several young men, including Charles' brother Erasmus. The letter describes, 'Miss Martineau, who has been as frisky lately [as] the Rhinoceros. – Erasmus has been with her noon, morning, and night. [...] She is a wonderful woman: when Lyell called he found Rogers, Ld. Jeffrys, & Epsom calling on her.'

5 Unpublished letter from Elizabeth Martineau dated March 16th 1827, Norwich BANC MSS 92/754z

6 Zimmerman, B. ''The Mother's History in George Eliot's Life' in *The Lost Tradition* (p.83)

Margaret Oliphant   Wiki Commons

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***True Love and Purple Prose*[1]**

Gaby Weiner

Deerbrook was in its day a pioneering and innovative novel. This can be gauged from the fact that Harriet Martineau had difficulty in finding a publisher, though she was a well established writer by this time. In 1839, the reading public was conditioned to romances, high adventure, and the fantasies of the aristocratic novel. She was, thus, breaking new ground by wanting to write about middle class life with an apothecary as a hero, and a heroine who came from Birmingham. However she was taken aback at her publication difficulties:

> I was not aware then how strong the hold on the public mind which "the silver-fork school" had gained...People liked high life in novels, and low life, and ancient life: and life of any rank presented by Dickens...but it was not supposed that they would bear a presentment of the familiar life of every day
>
> (Martineau's *Autobiography*, 1877, vol. 2: 114-5).

As the first novel of an already established writer, *Deerbrook* was well received by the literary journals and drew favourable comparison with the works of Jane Austen. For example, a review in the *Athenaeum* assessed it "a village tale, as simple in its structure and unambitious in its delineations, as one of Miss Austen's; but including characters of a higher order of mental force and spiritual attainment than Miss Austen ever drew – save perhaps *Persuasion*".[2] It went into two editions though it was not a best seller as was overshadowed by the outpouring of 'domestic' fiction which followed in the 1840s and 1850s. *Deerbrook's* literary merits were compared with the works of the 'golden' novelists of the day, such as Charlotte Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot, and its reputation judged 'minor' rather than 'major'[3]

Deerbrook pre-figured George Eliot's work. Set in a rural village among the professional middle classes, Harriet Martineau attempted to blend the personal lives of two sisters with social comment and analysis of the village to which they have come to live. Village life is portrayed as a hive of gossip, innuendo and personal rivalries within the context of closely- observed class differences. Its author revealed her political and class affiliations in her portrayal of the upper classes as self-publicising, corrupt and bigoted, and the 'workies' as deprived, superstitious and easily led. Her main (middle class) protagonists thrive on a succession of crises, and though she was careful to distinguish between hardship and destitution (the latter on which she laid the blame for riots, crime and social unrest), their happiness increases in proportion to their ability to become self-sufficient.

The book was interpreted in two different ways; as the forerunner to the newly emerging domestic novel and as a vehicle of sexual self-expression. Harriet Martineau pioneered the 'domestic' novel. *Deerbrook* and other 'domestic' novels emerged as the consequence of numerous influences in the early nineteenth century; radicalism, reform, evangelicalism and romanticism.

Jane Austen   Wiki (public domain)

These values, according to Colby[4] were reflected in the creation of a new genre – the bourgeois love story – parochial, domestic and filled with the minutiae of daily living[5]. Certainly, these features are present in *Deerbrook*, for example, in Harriet Martineau's portrayal of the duties of the newly-wed Hester:

She saw at once the difference in the relation between tradespeople and their

customers in a large town like Birmingham, and in a village where there is but one baker, where the grocer and the hatter are the same personage, and where you cannot fly from your butcher, be he ever so much your foe. Hester therefore made it her business to transact herself all affairs with the village tradesmen. She began her housekeeping energetically, and might be seen in Mr. Jones's open shop in the coldest morning of January, selecting her joint of meat; or deciding among brown sugars at Tucker's, the grocer's.

(Martineau, Harriet (1839) *Deerbrook*. London: Smith, Elder & Co: 197-8)

Harriet Martineau also used *Deerbrook* as a vehicle to dwell on some of the most intimate parts of her personal experience, real or imaginary. Figes (1982) for example, claims that she allows the following discussion between two of the main characters of the book, Margaret who is the heroine and the less beautiful of the Ibbotsen sisters and Maria, the crippled governess, to explore issues of love and sexual passion.

(Maria) I was speaking of love – the grand influence of a woman's life, but whose name is a mere empty sound to her till it becomes suddenly, secretly, a voice which shakes her being from the very centre – more awful, more tremendous than the crack of doom.

(Margaret) But why? Why so tremendous?

(Maria) From the struggle which calls upon her to endure, silently and alone; - from the agony of a change of existence which must be wrought without any eye perceiving it. Depend upon it, Margaret, there is nothing in death to compare with this change; and there can be nothing in entrance upon another state which can transcend the experience I speak of. Our power can be but taxed to the utmost. Our being can be strained till not another effort can be made. This is all that we can conceive to happen in death; and it happens in love, with the additional burden of secrecy…

The struggles of shame, pangs of despair, must be hidden in the depth of the prison-house. Every groan must be stifled before it is heard: and as for tears – they are a solace too gentle for the case. The agony is too strong for tears…

It is not so strange as at first sight it seems. Every mother and friend hopes that no one has suffered as she did – that her particular charge may escape entirely, or get off more easily. Then there is the shame of confession which is involved: some conclude, at a distance of time, that they must have exaggerated their own sufferings, or have been singularly rebellious or unreasonable. Some lose the sense of the anguish in the subsequent happiness; and there are not a few who, from constitution of mind, forget altogether 'the things that are behind'. When you remember, too, that it is this law of nature and providence that each should bear his and her own burden, and that no warning would be of any avail, it seems no longer so strange that while girls hear endlessly of marriage, they are kept wholly in the dark about love

(Martineau H., (1839), *Deerbrook,* London, Edward Moxon, p. 159-60, 160-1)

It is difficult to know what to make of these passages given that Harriet Martineau was particularly critical of women writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Charlotte Bronte for being the victims of passion[6]. It was these passages, however, which Charlotte Bronte recognised as an influence on her own writing[7]. As an experienced author and aware of the book's selling potential, Harriet Martineau may have been writing about purely imaginary and fictionalised feelings in order to increase book sales. Some of the more lurid passages give the impression that this certainly could have been the case. On the other hand, she may well have been remembering past romantic feelings, necessarily kept secret because of the social conventions of the time. She wrote *Deerbrook* in her mid-thirties, as a relatively young woman. She could have been describing feelings she had, say, for her brother James, or for William J. Fox, the editor of the *Monthly Repository*, with whom she spent many hours, or for her doomed fiancé James Worthington, or for someone she met during her stay in London.

We shall probably never know. But coming from a woman whose identity was shaped primarily by science, rationalism and non-passion, such writing certainly offers an interpretive challenge to readers of her work today.

[1] First presented at annual meeting of the Martineau Society, Edinburgh, 2006.

[2] Unattributed (1839) *Athenaeum,* 597, 6, April, pp. 254-6

[3] Showalter, Elaine. (1979) **A** Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing. London, Virago Press, p. 19.

[4] Colby, Vineta (1974), *Yesterday's Women*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 212:

> The shifting of attention from aristocrat to middle-class family life, from leaders of men to simply employers of men - businessmen, matrons managing their servants, governesses educating their children, clergymen guiding their flock - all this was the material of Dickens, Thackeray, and Trollope as much as of the Brontës, George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, and - to put her in such exalted company - Harriet Martineau.

[5] Colby, p. 212.

[6] See Martineau, Harriet. (1877), *Autobiography.* Vol. 1, p. 400.

[7] Letter from Charlotte Bronte to Harriet Martineau, quoted in Martineau, Harriet (1877) *Autobiography.* vol. 2, p. 323

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"She'll never make old bones": some thoughts on Rachel Young

Sophia Hankinson

The few who remember her in her heyday, as a colleague and friend (the two were synonymous with her anyway), and as a speaker on a wide variety of subjects, will recall the wonderful gift she had of bringing to life whatever she was talking about.

She was not a visual person – she once told me she stored facts in her head as though they were on index-cards – yet she invoked images of the past in the way a 'pop-up' book does from the flat page. Those who heard her lectures remember this, and the wonderful rapport she immediately established with her audience, taking them into her confidence, as it were.

"She'll never make old bones" said the midwife at her birth, putting her aside and turning to tend the mother. Rachel was proud to tell this tale, and how she and her mother 'had other ideas', no doubt forming an especially strong bond. The mother must have been a remarkable woman, believing firmly in education for girls as for boys (unlike her husband, who thought it a waste of time and money). Survive Rachel did (olive oil had a lot to do with it, I never quite understood how), and in spite of the arthritis which afflicted her from her twelfth year, became tough enough to be a Land Girl, alone in a leaky caravan on a chicken-farm in WWII. By this time she had achieved the outstanding feat of graduating with first class honours in history from Somerville College Oxford.

It was the mother who took little Rachel, week after week, to the evening lectures which were available in their village, regardless of being the only females present. Rachel no doubt, if too young to understand the subject, absorbed the atmosphere and learnt what held an audience and what did not. Rachel was able to repay this debt of care later, when she moved to Norwich, whither her family had moved, and looked after her parents there.

In recent years of retirement in 'sheltered housing', she continued for several years to run a series of Wednesday afternoon lectures for fellow-tenants in the common room there, on a wide variety of subjects, often with guest speakers, drawing questions out of the audience with her "interesting you should say that"…; and she continued to lead tours of her adopted city as long as she was able.

Rachel had the rare gift of being as good a listener as she was a lecturer, and was an early member of the Norwich Samaritans. She brought all these gifts to her final official job as Assistant Director (at the Castle Museum, with special care of the Bridewell, Strangers Hall and St Peter Hungate). Here she was exceptional in having as deft and gentle but firm a touch with objects as with people and items of information. I recall her transformation of an otherwise rather stark room at Strangers Hall with a little glass bowl of Christmas roses, as I do her phone call when my mother had a stroke, though both are half a century ago. With the same touch she was adept at defusing a situation or conflict of personalities – invaluable in any group of specialists trying to work together.

Even the last time I saw her, just before Christmas, she never complained ("what is the good of complaining when there is nothing to be done about it?" was her motto), and told me what efforts the carers, though understaffed, made to give everyone a happy Christmas. Then she was ready with her "Interesting you should say that….", to draw out of me some comment about a visit to Hunstanton, and following it with an anecdote about her own visits there in the '50s. She also recalled the happy Christmases her mother contrived (without upsetting her husband, who had no truck with such things – "and yet they remained a devoted couple"). And I can hear now, the gentle "Well, it's ever so nice of you to have come….", an undeniable dismissal when a visit had been long enough – tactful to the last!

To me personally and in two of my particular concerns, the Octagon Unitarian Chapel and the Martineau Society) she was a stalwart friend. In the late 1980s/early '90s we spent an hour or two at a time on the Vestry Library at the Octagon, she at the table with pencil and paper, I perched on a ladder to reach the upper shelves, finally reshelving the books in sections (little knowing that the next project – having display boards fastened over the doors which had hidden them – would involve heaping the entire library on the floor in disarray and replacing them at random!). She was also the first critic and unacknowledged editor of what became an updated history/souvenir picture book of the Octagon Chapel.

Having published so little of her own research, it was surprising that she suggested that some of the material she found in our family papers (lodged in the Record Office: in those days it was possible to borrow one box at a time) should be published by Larks Press.

Another common interest was Victorian (especially women's) education and Harriet Martineau, and our meetings became tutorials; one could say she acted as midwife to the embryonic Martineau Society. It was not an easy birth, but echoed her own in the persistence which we began to recognise as 'Harriet at Work'.

Rachel was not a 'party person' and hated any kind of fuss: visitors came by appointment and were not offered even a drink of water. She lived very simply: offered a menu for the 80th birthday lunch some of her friends were organising, her choice among more exotic desserts was apple tart. She has avoided her centenary.

I am also indebted to Rachel for my present life-style: it was visiting her in her sunny bungalow, where she seemed so content, that gave me the idea that, if I ever wanted to move from King's Lynn, this would be a possible alternative. And when I arrived she was very helpful with pithy comments about some of my new neighbours, gave me the phone number of the visiting hairdresser and other useful tips. I recall, too, her unexpected response to my saying how quiet the area is at night: "Yes, isn't it, especially considering we are on the edge of the red-light area".

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Recent New Members (UK unless stated)

Brinley Price (Feb.14), Irene Hardity (Apr.14) and William Thomas (Apr.14)

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The Martineau Society

The Martineau Society was founded in the early 1990s by members of the Octagon Chapel, Colegate, Norwich, to foster interest in the descendants of Gaston Martineau, surgeon and Huguenot refugee who settled in Norwich in 1695.

Their skills developed in many fields: medicine, art, writing, engineering, education, religion and industry and the Society publishes papers on their lives and correspondence with others in these fields and with their other contemporaries.

The Society is a registered charity (no. 1064092) and holds an annual conference which includes an AGM, papers and visits to places connected with the Martineau family. The Society issues *The Martineau Society Newsletter* twice each year, containing scholarly articles and news of events and publications.

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The Martineau Society Newsletter submissions of 2,500 – 3000 words or less may be sent to Bruce Chilton, Newsletter Editor:

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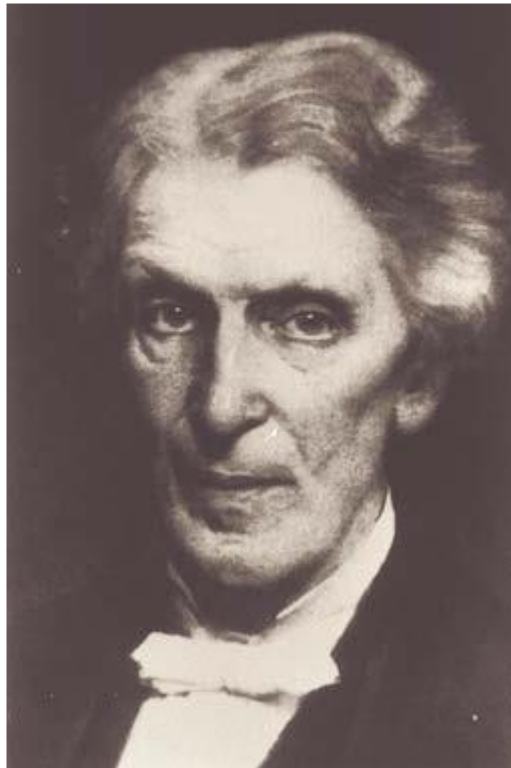
Friends are assigned to us for the sake of friendship; and homes for the sake of love; and while they perform these offices in our hearts, in essence and in spirit they are with us still. The very tears we shed over their loss are proofs that they are not lost; for what is grief, but love itself restricted to acts of memory and longing for its other tasks – imprisoned in the past, and striving to be free? The cold hearts that never deeply mourn lose nothing, for they have no stake to lose: the genial souls that deem it no shame to weep, give evidence that they have, fresh and loving still, the sympathies, to nurture which our human ties are closely drawn. God only lends us the objects of our affection; the affection itself he gives us in perpetuity.

James Martineau *Endeavours, 1, xxii.*



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