

Shelley did see the very sculpture to which Lessing's treatise responds—*Laocoon and His Sons*—in the Vatican Museum in Rome in March 1819, whilst he was working on *Prometheus Unbound*, and he describes it in some detail in his so-called 'Notes on Sculptures in Rome and Florence', which he probably composed in November of that year.⁹ Although Shelley's 'Notes' do not mention Lessing, there are parallels between the two men's responses to the statue, and, in particular, in the manner in which both seek to assess the conflicting representation of pain and dignity. This conflict is the subject of the first two chapters of Lessing's *Laokoön*. Shelley, in his 'Notes', similarly describes:

Intense physical suffering, against which he pleads with an upraised countenance of despair, and appeals with a sense of its injustice, seems the predominant and overwhelming emotion, and yet there is a nobleness in the expression and a majesty that dignifies torture.¹⁰

And even if Shelley had no direct access to Lessing's *Laokoön*, the passage in question was influential and often cited, and so Shelley could have come across it in one of the periodical reviews, or through his friends Leigh Hunt (1784–1859) or Thomas Love Peacock (1785–1866) or others in his circle with an interest in Classicism and Classical aesthetics.

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⁹ For discussion of the composition and (complex) textual provenance of Shelley's 'Notes', see Frederic S. Colwell, 'Shelley on Sculpture: The Uffizi Notes', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, xxviii (1979), 59–77; and E. B. Murray, 'Shelley's "Notes on Sculptures": The Provenance and Authority of the Text', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, xxxii (1983), 150–71.

¹⁰ Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Notes on Sculptures in Rome and Florence', quoted from David Lee Clark (ed.), *Shelley's Prose: Or, The Trumpet of a Prophecy* (Albuquerque, 1966), 344.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT 'MISS J'

In the notes to her recent edition of Harriet Martineau's *Autobiography*, Linda H. Peterson identifies 'Miss J', the young woman who accompanied Martineau on her visit to America (1834–36), as 'Louisa Jeffrey ... a daughter of Francis Jeffrey (1773–1850) whom [Martineau] had met in London'.¹ This information is certainly incorrect. To start with, in his last will and testament Lord Francis Jeffrey names only one daughter, and she is called Charlotte.

Ever since Herbert McLachlan's *Records of a Family* was published by Manchester University Press in 1935, the correct information has been freely available: 'the companion and friend of Harriet Martineau on her American travels' was 'Louisa Caroline, daughter of the Rev. John Jeffrey of Billingshurst'.² Here I propose to add to what little we know of her.

According to the *Monthly Magazine*, the Rev. John Jeffrey, incumbent of the Billingshurst Baptist Chapel, married the 'eldest daughter of Wm. Taylor, Esq. of Tottenham Court Road, and granddaughter to the late Rev. Henry Taylor, well known for his celebrated defence of the Arian doctrine ... and many other valuable theological pieces'.³ A church record confirms this: the wedding of Louisa Caroline Taylor to John Jeffrey was solemnized at the Old Church, St Pancras, London, on 18 October 1805. She had been born on 11 December 1783 and christened on 18 December at St Mary's, Whitechapel. Their daughter, also named Louisa Caroline, was born in Horsham (the nearest town to Billingshurst) on 10 August 1806. (Harriet Martineau was born on 12 June 1802, just four years earlier.)

Unfortunately for John Jeffrey and little Louisa, Mrs Jeffrey died of consumption on 3 January 1808, at the age of 24. In a notice printed in *The Athenæum* later that year she is described as 'endowed with an excellent and cultivated understanding, a kind and affectionate disposition, and a mind in every respect calculated to promote and insure domestic

¹ Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography*, ed. Linda H. Peterson (Ontario, 2007), 331.

² H. McLachlan, *Records of a Family 1800–1933. Pioneers in Education, Social Service and Liberal Religion* (Manchester, 1935), 7.

³ *Monthly Magazine*, 1805, 371.

felicity. She has left an infant daughter'.⁴ Worse, John Jeffrey died on 15 June 1815, shortly before Louisa's ninth birthday.

I have little doubt that both the Taylors and the Jeffreys ensured that she was well looked after. Her mother had been much loved: writing to his wife in 1810, Louisa's grandfather William Taylor (1755–1843), described taking a ride close to where his family used to live, 'but the whole scene brought to my Mind my dear Louisa so forcibly that my Yearning Heart was only relieved by floods of tears'.⁵ His granddaughter attended a school in Horsham run by her aunt, Ruth Jeffrey (McLachlan, p.111, footnote). By her late twenties, when Louisa visited America, it is evident that in personality she took after her mother: Harriet Martineau found her to be

not only well educated but remarkably clever, and, above all, supremely rational and with a faultless temper; she was an extraordinary boon as a companion. She was as conscientious as able and amiable. She toiled incessantly to spare my time, strength and faculties. She managed the business of travel, and was for ever on the watch to supply my want of ears—and, I may add, my defects of memory. Among the multitudes of strangers whom I saw, and the concourse of visitors who presented themselves everywhere, I should have made hourly mistakes but for her.⁶

As Martineau was severely deaf—she travelled with two ear trumpets—she relied on Louisa to record and report back to her on the general conversation that she could not catch. She also used Louisa as both tour organizer and research assistant, seeking out the information that Martineau wished to learn. In other words, Louisa was crucial to the success of the American tour.

That said, we may wonder how Harriet Martineau came to meet Louisa and invite her to accompany her. (Although Louisa paid for her own crossings, all further expenses were

borne by Martineau.) Here we can be less affirmative, there being no direct evidence, but there are at least two possibilities.

First of all, Louisa's mother was (as we have seen) the 'eldest daughter of Wm. Taylor, Esq. of Tottenham Court Road', and Harriet Martineau was the niece of a famous William Taylor who lived in her home town of Norwich. Despite the identical names, genealogical research makes it clear that the two women were not even distantly related. On the other hand, if Louisa spent time with her relatives in London, it is possible that Martineau met her there, for she lived and worked in the capital while writing her articles on social economy.

What little I have been able to ascertain suggests that, between leaving school and departing for America in 1834, Louisa spent a good deal of her time with her mother's family. To start with, her great uncle Henry Taylor, who died in 1822, left the interest on £1,000 (worth about £125,000 today) to Louisa, for life, in his will. The interest on a thousand pounds was not a fortune, but it assured her independence—and explains how she could afford the trans-Atlantic crossings. For the last twenty years of his life, great uncle Henry lived at Banstead with his sister-in-law Mrs Peter Taylor, 'Aunt P' to Louisa. When Aunt P died in 1837, having outlived her husband by almost fifty years, it was Louisa, who had been at her bedside, who reported the news in a letter to her relatives in London.⁷

It is worth noting the character of Mrs Peter Taylor (née Butterly) as recorded on 24 June 1782 by her brother-in-law William Taylor (Louisa's grandfather): 'I look upon her to be one of the most worthy, most rational women in the world; the more you are acquainted with her, the more will you esteem her. She has indeed many good qualities which are not possessed by either of my Sisters, who are nevertheless both amiable women'. If after leaving school Louisa was a companion to her Aunt, then she had an excellent model to emulate.

A further glimpse of Louisa can be found in the 900-page book about the Taylor lineage, *Some Account of the Family of Taylor*, compiled and edited by her cousin Peter Alfred

⁴ *The Athenaeum*, 1808, 205.

⁵ Peter Alfred Taylor (comp. and ed.), *Some Account of the Family of Taylor (formerly Taylard)*. One hundred copies printed for private circulation (London, 1875), 618.

⁶ Martineau, *Autobiography*, 331.

⁷ Taylor, *Some Account of the Family of Taylor*, 507.

Taylor (1819–91). She remained in contact with him throughout her life (as we shall see in a moment), and in the 1870s, while he was preparing the book, she wrote to correct his memory of visiting his grandparents at Harwich in 1825, when he was six years old, for *she was there too*.⁸

Many of Louisa's Taylor relatives were clergymen who became Unitarians at about this time—as did Harriet Martineau. This opens up another, more promising, line of enquiry through Martineau's celebrated brother James. Born 21 April 1805, he was three years younger than his sister, and they were very close. In 1822, after a brief period as an apprentice engineer, he enrolled for training as a Unitarian minister at Manchester College, which was then situated in York. He introduced Harriet to several of the two dozen or so scholars attending the College at that time, and she became engaged to one of them, Hugh John Worthington, but he died before their marriage could be celebrated. Another of James's friends was John Relly Beard (1800–76), the future Unitarian minister, educator, theologian, translator, and prolific writer. Like all young scholars, the students at York ranged from the light-hearted and playful (given to pranks), to the more sober, serious, and studious. The former were dubbed 'sinners'; the latter 'saints'. 'Beard was regarded as the idol of the "sinners"', while James' (who had been 'an unusually grave and thoughtful little boy') 'was counted chief of the "saints"' (Carpenter, 8 and 38).⁹ This did not prevent Beard from winning more prizes than James, carrying off the coveted award 'For Diligence, Regularity and Proficiency' for two years in succession. The two remained life-long friends, regularly meeting and exchanging letters.

Beard came from Portsmouth—where one of Louisa's uncles was a Unitarian minister—and in June 1826 he married the sweetheart of his teens, Mary Barnes (1802–87), also of Portsmouth.¹⁰ For some reason, Mary Barnes

was not schooled locally; instead she was sent to the school in Horsham run by Ruth Jeffrey, and there her best friend was none other than Louisa Jeffrey.¹¹ I cannot swear that Louisa was present at the Beard–Barnes wedding in the parish church at Portsea, but she certainly visited the Beards' marital home in Manchester. Her name lived on for a while in the tragically brief lives of the Beards' youngest daughters, Sophia Louisa (1841–45) and Annie Louisa Caroline (1846–56), and also in one of their grandchildren.

Like most Nonconformist ministers, Beard set up a school in his home to supplement his stipend. Such was its success that in 1833 he built a house large enough to accommodate boarders as well as day boys alongside his growing family. 'The school possessed a library, large playground, scientific apparatus, a gymnasium, and garden plots for cultivation by the boys. . . . Mrs Beard . . . had charge of the domestic arrangements'.¹² She will surely have appreciated the helping hand that Louisa could offer on her visits.

The principal teacher that Beard employed (for ten years) was the Revd James Riddell McKee (1805–83). Beard's eldest daughter Sarah (1831–1922) recorded in 1911 that McKee 'made a great pet of me when I was a little girl and, for his sake, I have always loved Irishmen'.¹³ On Louisa's visits to the Beards, she too came to love McKee: they were married on 2 January 1844. Although they initially lived in Tavistock, where McKee was minister of the Unitarian chapel there, they were soon back in the north with a school at Pendleton, which was attended by the Beards' youngest son, James Rait Beard. Thus the two families maintained a close relationship. In later years, both Louisa and her daughter, Ellen ('Nelly') Courtauld McKee (1844–1929), were very active in promoting women's rights: both are listed among the 1,521 signatories of the women's suffrage petition of 1866, for instance. (Louisa's cousin P. A. Taylor, the Radical MP for Leicester at the time, and his wife Clementia assembled the petition signatures for presentation to Parliament by John

⁸ *Ibid.*, 591.

⁹ Carpenter, J. Estlin, *James Martineau: Theologian and Teacher. A Study of his Life and Thought*, ed. Philip Green (London, 1905).

¹⁰ McLachlan, *Records of a Family*, 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 115.

Stuart Mill, who declared it the first clear demonstration that women wanted the vote.) Harriet Martineau corresponded with Louisa and her daughter Nelly until the end of her life.

Returning to John Relly Beard, he and Harriet Martineau both contributed to the *Monthly Repository* during the 1820s and 1830s, and they certainly exchanged a number of letters. (In 1843, Martineau regrettably asked all her correspondents to destroy her letters.) After her return from America, Beard included four hymns by Martineau in his *Collection of Hymns for Public and Private Worship* (1837). And the links continued: in 1841 Martineau published *The Hour and the Man*, on Toussaint Louverture. Ten years later, Beard echoed its title in his *Life of Toussaint Louverture* (1853), writing, 'Yes, here is the man, and the hour is coming'.¹⁴ Could Mary Beard have recommended Louisa Jeffrey to Martineau in one of the early exchanges?

I have found no clear record of how Harriet Martineau and Louisa Jeffrey came into contact prior to their departure for America. But their social circles were very close; they may have met by chance, or by recommendation. This, at any rate, is all we know about the admirable 'Miss J'—for the time being.

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¹⁴ John Relly Beard, *Life of Toussaint Louverture* (1853), 74.

'TENEBRIFIC CONSTELLATIONS': CARLYLE, ADDISON AND BURNS

OF the six illustrative quotations the *OED* gives for the adjective 'tenebrific'—'causing or producing darkness; obscuring', three are taken from Thomas Carlyle, a fact that historians of the *OED* are unlikely to find surprising. When Richard Chenevix Trench lectured at the Royal Philological Society 'On Some Deficiencies in Our English Dictionaries' in 1857, he suggested the inclusion of the term 'tenebrific' in future dictionaries partly on the basis of its liberal deployment throughout

Carlyle's oeuvre.¹ For Trench, the word 'tenebrific' itself, the very existence of words such as these in eminent writers such as Carlyle, called for an entirely new lexicographical practice and the establishment of an entirely new dictionary, in a lecture which became a galvanizing moment in the history of the creation of the *OED*.²

The history of Carlyle's use of 'tenebrific' offers a fascinating philological story. He deployed this somewhat obscure word on no less than eight occasions across his published corpus in various different contexts: he describes a 'tenebrific criminal' in his essay on 'Ballie the Covenantor' (1842), and the adjective reappears twice in the course of his *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (1845), where it is used to describe literary works.³ The word was also something of a favourite in Carlyle's *History of Friedrich II* (1858), used there on three separate occasions: twice to chastise people, as in 'Ballie the Covenantor', and once to describe the suffocating atmosphere Friedrich experienced during the second Silesian War.⁴ But this note is specifically interested in Carlyle's use of the word in two pieces dating from earlier in his career: his essays on the *Life of Schiller* (1825) and on 'The State of German Literature' (1827).

¹ See Richard Chenevix Trench, *On Some Deficiencies in Our English Dictionaries* (London, 1857), 115.

² Trench would be appointed the *OED*'s first editor, but his role as Dean of Westminster meant he could not give the position the attention he had hoped, stepping aside in favour of his friend, Herbert Coleridge. Coleridge died of tuberculosis in 1861, replaced by another mutual friend and member of the Royal Philological Society, Frederick James Furnivall, who employed the Scottish lexicographer, James Murray, to oversee the project.

³ See Carlyle, *The Complete Works of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. Henry Duff Traill, 30 vols (London, 1896–99), VI, 15, where James Heath's *Chronicle of the Civil Wars* (1662) is dismissed as 'a tenebrific Book [that] cannot be read except with sorrow, with torpor and disgust', and see also *Works*, VIII, 86: 'They [most histories of the Protectorate] are not very luminous; but if they were well let alone, and the positively tenebrific were well forgotten, they might assist our imaginations in some slight measure.'

⁴ In the *History of Friedrich II*, the adjective is used to dismiss unworthy biographers as 'pedants and tenebrific persons' (*Works*, XII, 319), then to describe Jean-François Boyer, Voltaire's adversary at the Académie Française (*Works*, XIV, 188), before its final use to describe Friedrich's experience during the second Silesian War (*Works*, XXIX, 237).