

The Martineau Society

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Editor's Note

The Harriet Martineau lecture at The Norfolk and Norwich Festival in May was a treat! The Festival is now a boisterous annual event and the Harriet Martineau lecture promoted by the Norwich Writers' Centre at the behest of our Society member, Stuart Hobday, is reemphasising the connections with the Martineaus. Philip Meadows Martineau, Harriet's uncle, was a founder of the Festival in 1772 to raise funds for the proposed Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.

Sarah Perry, the author of the much-acclaimed novel "The Essex Serpent", gave this year's Harriet Martineau lecture to a packed audience in a huge marquee in Chapelfield Park, Norwich on a sunny Spring afternoon.

Sarah's address, "Essex Girls", opened with an appreciation of Harriet Martineau (for which she thanked the book by Stuart who was sitting on the front row) and explained that while Harriet was really a "Norwich girl", she led a list of bold, influential, reforming women all of whom concentrated on righting social wrongs.

Kim Kardashian, the film star and businesswoman, is an example of a modern Essex girl who works tirelessly to draw the world's attention to the genocide of the Armenian people and destruction of Armenian culture.

A real Essex girl was Rose Allen who was burned at the stake in 1557 at Colchester for her Protestant religious beliefs. She is a central figure in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563) which was used by Queen Elizabeth to uphold England's new religion. Rose would rather die than let the state dictate her religious conscience. Essex girls were and are political radicals

Emily Hobhouse (1860 -1926) was cited by Sarah as an Essex girl, born in Cornwall, who brought to public attention the British treatment of the Boers in South Africa in 1900. Her tour in Africa and her report on the "concentration camps" used against the white farmers and their black workers led to a commission of inquiry. It even changed Lord Kitchener's mind.

Sarah completed her list with an Essex girl from Chelmsford. Anne Knight (1786-1862) was a Quaker who supported the anti-slavery campaign in the 1820-30s. She was outraged when denied access to the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840 and began what became the struggle for female suffrage and equal rights.

Sarah said she deplored the differing criteria which governed and often still governs the lives and reputations of men and women. Why are the reputations of women, in particular that of Harriet Martineau, diminished and “written out of history”? These women are emblems of all women. She ended “I am often accused of presenting the women above as aberrations of normal women. Nonsense. I can produce dozens more!” It was an excellent event.

The articles in this edition of your *Newsletter* are all about Harriet, truly an Essex girl. Many thanks to our contributors. The errors are, as always, entirely of your editor.

Passing of Two Presidents of the Martineau Society

It is with much sadness we report that Sophia Hankinson, whose idea it was to found the Martineau Society in 1991, died peacefully in the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital early on Tuesday 18 June, 2019.

Sophia was a life-long member of the Octagon Unitarian Chapel in Norwich. At the meeting there on Sunday 23 June, your editor gave this first tribute:

Sophia was a very strong Unitarian woman and, when she felt it necessary, a fierce Unitarian woman - independent and free. She was educated at Norwich High School where she became Head Girl before going to Oxford. She chose a career in Museum administration and finished as Curator of the museum at King's Lynn.

Sophia was a genuine reformer – she bubbled with ideas and many she put into effect. She founded the Martineau Society with others in 1991. Sophia was a model for a bold, young woman in any age. Her commitment, support and care for the Octagon Unitarian Chapel and its people was life-long. She was the daughter of Ralph Mottram who was an author admired across the world and a Lord Mayor of Norwich. Sophia was the last of the Mottram family in an unbroken line of family members of the community since its foundation in 1698.

Thanks to all members of the Octagon who visited Sophia in her nursing home and in hospital. Sophia died with some form of Dementia – a brutal irony for such a fine mind – but in a late lucid period she said how pleased she was that the Octagon Chapel was continuing to grow healthily.

More sad news came as this edition of the *Newsletter* was about to go to the printers about the death in April of Elisabeth Sanders Arbuckle. Sharon Connor, the Society's secretary, wrote immediately – “Elisabeth showed me nothing but generosity and support since I joined the society more than a decade ago, and our conference trails will sorely miss her lively presence.”

Please send your tributes and memories of Sophia and Elisabeth for inclusion in the Autumn edition of the *Newsletter* to the editor (contact details at the end).



Harriet Martineau by Richard Evans Wikipedia

Beauty and the Bitch: Women's Worth and the Problem of Plainness

Josephine A. McQuail

After her account of her travels in 1834-6, *Society in America*, Martineau, "[t]ired of being confined to facts" (Wheatley 195), decided to try her hand at a novel. The idea for the plot, a tale of contrasting sisters and their courtship and marriage, reputedly came from what turned out to be an apocryphal story: a "family friend . . . [who] ' had been cruelly driven by a match-making lady, to propose to the sister of the woman he loved, -- on private information that the elder had lost her heart to him, and that he had shown her attention enough to warrant it' " (Sanders xiii-xiv). In *Deerbrook*, the sisters are of course the Ibbotsons, Hester and Margaret. *Deerbrook* receives scant attention, sadly. One of two novels by Martineau, it creates a fascinating sketch of a sibling dynamic as well as sketches of stultifying atmosphere of a small English village and its repressive effect on women, who are not able to express their affections openly, causing many of the plot twists, such as they are.

The Importance of Female Beauty

From the very beginning of the novel, Hester's beauty is widely remarked upon. Mrs. Grey, the matchmaking woman and distant relation of the sisters who causes so much consternation, and her daughter Sophia, whose name betrays ironically a lack of wisdom despite the etymological roots of it, converse on first meeting them: "' How very handsome Hester is. . .' 'I wonder . . . that nobody ever told us how handsome we should find Hester. I should like to see what fault Mrs. Rowland can find in her face' " (12). Sophia then replies, "It is rather odd that one sister should have all the beauty . . . I do not see any thing striking in Margaret' " (12). Yet, Martineau seems to deliberately confound the notion of beauty in making Margaret so attractive to men, despite Hester's superior physical beauty. TWO of the principal male characters fall in love with Margaret. Hope, who marries Hester, has actually been more drawn to Margaret, as his letter to his brother later makes clear. Why is Martineau so drawn to the theme of beauty, and what are we to make of this theme? In this novel of middle class life published in 1839, Martineau explores the destinies of women through three main characters, the Ibbotson sisters, and the governess for the two families of the Greys and the Rowlands, Maria Young. Indeed, *Deerbrook* has been justly called the first governess novel, and later, Charlotte Brontë, as author of perhaps the greatest novel about a governess ever, *Jane Eyre*, published 8 years later in 1847, would enter into correspondence with and meet Harriet Martineau, complimenting Martineau on her *Deerbrook*. Maria Young's plot is only a portion of the story of the three volume novel *Deerbrook*, however, but gives a vital picture of the fate of a woman who does not marry and becomes a governess.

Martineau herself is responsible for at least some of the neglect of the novel. In her *Autobiography* she says of “the laborious portions of meditation” that “neither morally nor artistically can they be justified –” and “I do not think it would be fair to judge me from it, any later than the time in which it was written” (116). Yet, the novel may be credited with a great deal of brilliance, and even genius. Many critics have noted that the novel was before its time in its sketch of the middle classes – a segment of society that would be described by George Eliot and the Brontës, Gissing and Trollope, and numerous others in subsequent decades. Interestingly, the way that the novel opens with descriptions of the scenery of the seemingly idyllic village of Deerbrook establishes the theme of beauty in more than just human looks, and thus, with the novel’s very first words, the deception practised by apparent beauty is made obvious. The apparent ideal English village of Deerbrook is industrializing, and so its façade is pretty, but contains hidden ugliness:

Of this pretty village, Mr. Grey’s was the prettiest house, standing in a field, round which the road swept. There were trees enough about it to shade without darkening it, and the garden and shrubbery behind were evidently of no contemptible extent. The timber and coal yards, and granaries, which stretched down to the river side, were hidden by a nice management of the garden walls, and training of the shrubbery. (7)

The description of the village is a mirror of the description of the sisters who are the novel’s primary characters. The outward physical appearance of the sisters has a corresponding dark facet. The sisters’ arrival certainly causes a sensation, not only because of their novelty, but because, especially, of Hester’s beauty. Margaret and Hester are perhaps almost melodramatic figures of the light and the dark heroine. In fact, though she is equally important to the action of the novel, Margaret is a sort of flat character, whereas Hester is very vivid in her extreme flaws of temper. We also do not learn of Hester’s flaws until later in the novel (beyond a slight hint perhaps which, when one looks back on it, may be seen as stark foreshadowing).

It is interesting that Martineau should bring in this subtle link to industrialization between the town’s darker façade and that of at least Hester in *Deerbrook*, because, in Naomi Wolf’s still seminal work, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* (1992), Wolf points out how women’s beauty was a marketing tool in the marriage market:

Since men have used women’s ‘beauty’ as a form of currency in circulation among men, ideas about beauty have evolved since the industrial Revolution side by side with ideas about money, so that the two are virtual parallels in our consumer economy (20).

The very presence of the two sisters in the town, and especially Hester’s beauty, causes everyone to speculate on who she will marry, and indeed, upon the first entrance of the sisters into village society houses are rented out to the mythical new couple, and wedding dresses are being sold in imagination. In the Greys’ home, Mrs. Grey comments as early as in the first chapter of the novel in an exchange with her husband:

“Do not you think Mr. Hope thinks Hester very handsome Mr. Grey? . . . But do you not think he must have been struck with her? I should like very well to have her settled here, and the cornerhouse of Mr. Rowland’s might do nicely for them. I do not know what Mrs. Rowland would think of Mr. Hope’s marrying into our connexion so decidedly’ ” (18).

In town the milliner discusses wedding dresses and is in a rare state of excitement over speculation on the fates of the sisters and especially Hester’s marital hopes:

Hester’s beauty, and what Mrs. Grey had said about it to her maid, were discussed just at the moment where Hester, passing the shop . . . She was pronounced beautiful; and it was hoped that some gentleman in the village would find her irresistible. It was only rather strange that no gentleman was in attendance on her now (50).

As the novel unfolds, we get the basic elements of the tale Martineau had heard second-hand. The mix-up is sketched; Hope (ironic and melodramatic name, that) is told by the busy-body Mrs. Grey who has brought Hope and the two sisters together originally (they are her distant cousins) that he has led Hester to believe that he loves her. In actuality, we know from Hope’s letter to his brother that he has fallen in love with Margaret, and not Hester. Mrs. Grey tells him that he is honor-bound to propose to Hester, and he mulls the issue over, speaks to Margaret (who is also under the impression that Hope loves her sister) and proposes to Hester. Not only Mrs. Grey’s assumptions but also village gossip has of course united Hester and Hope, though. Martineau through the novel is giving us her own diatribe on female beauty and society’s obsession with it.

The Beauty Myth

What Naomi Wolf terms “the beauty myth” is operating in Deerbrook’s culture. Wolf says of beauty: “The quality called “beauty” objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it. This embodiment is imperative for women and not for men, which situation is necessary and natural because it is biological, sexual and evolutionary . . . ” (12). Of course this is the “beauty *myth*” and “None of this is true” as Wolf goes on to state. Looking at the novel, though, we see the beauty myth in heavy operation. Edward Hope is described partially through the eyes of the Ibbotson sisters:

“The sisters could not be surprised at this when they saw Mr. Hope. The only wonder was, that in the description of intellectual society of Deerbrook Mr. Hope had not been mentioned first. He was not handsome, but there was a gaiety of countenance and manner in him under which the very lamp seemed to burn brighter” (16).

The women of the novel judge each other on the scale of what Naomi Wolf terms a ‘beauty quotient’ We have already seen how Margaret’s lack of extraordinary beauty causes her to be harshly denigrated by even women – but the two men, Hope and Enderby both judge Margaret the superior person and choose her as their preferred love object!

Hope himself has two sisters, and to his brother Hope writes that he has prevaricated with his grandfather to ensure that his sisters get an equal portion of the estate when his grandfather dies. When, after his grandfather's death Hope finds that his grandfather has reneged on his promise to divide the estate as settled upon as fair to his sisters and brother, he insists that he take only the 100 pounds, even though at this point Hope and Hester, now his wife, have so little money they have had to sell all of their items of value, including their horse and Hester's sister Margaret's watch. Can there be any doubt that Charlotte Brontë, who told Martineau how much she had enjoyed *Deerbrook*, published 10 years before *Jane Eyre*, was inspired by this detail when Jane divides her inheritance equally between herself and her Rivers' cousins? But also in his letter to his brother in India, Hope enters into a lengthy description of the Ibbotson sisters, describing the beneficent influence of them on the community. Putting words into his brother's mouth, the question of the all-important evaluation of female appearance comes up: " 'Are they handsome?' is your next question. The eldest, Hester, is beautiful as the evening star. Margaret is very different. . . . She *is*, and that is an end of the matter. . . ." (98). Ironically, Hester is not "as worthy of worship" (98) despite her stunning physical beauty. We find it is not the Angel in the House whom Hope marries, but more the bitch in the kennel or the harridan from hell (though we have worse examples of that breed in the novel which we will examine shortly). Upon marriage to Hope she confesses her bad character, which chills him. Perhaps Martineau's ideas are not based on as firm a philosophy as to allow extensive analysis and definitive conclusions about a psychology of beauty, but clearly a leading point is that idealization of female beauty is mistaken and deluded. The women of Deerbrook Society are more deluded by beauty than the men, as we have seen. Mrs. Gray, Sophia, the shopkeepers Mrs. Howell and Miss Miskin, all these women are obsessed with female beauty.

Isn't this another stroke of genius on Martineau's part? How much responsibility do women have themselves in promoting the 'beauty myth'? Perhaps more than we acknowledge generally, although Martineau is perhaps as naïve as Virginia Woolf thought Charlotte Brontë in her depiction of male characters in some ways. Ironic as it may be, the men seem indifferent to Hester's stunning beauty. Mr. Grey, when goaded by his wife, seems not to care about his wife's question: " 'Do you not think Mr. Hope thinks Hester very handsome, Mr. Grey?' " (18). Despite Mrs. Grey's eagerness to marry Hope and Hester off, Hope, as we know from his letter to his brother (and that letter is another stroke of genius, not one of the "laborious portions of meditation" (A 2 p.116) that critics and Martineau herself condemned, in that it allows us access to Hope's mind 100 years before stream of consciousness) – Hope is actually indifferent to Hester's beauty and is in love with Margaret. Unfortunately for Hope, though he perceives it, Enderby is also unmoved by Hester's beauty and in love with Margaret. Ten years before *Jane Eyre*, again, the stunner is usurped by the "plain Jane" – or in this case, the "plain Margaret" – although Mrs. Grey takes enough notice of Margaret to admit: " 'Margaret would not be thought plain away from her sister' " (12).

What does Hester, or for that matter Margaret, really look like? To me, this is another stroke of genius on Martineau's part. We never get a description of the physical

appearances of the characters that comes close to matching the opening description of the landscape and homes of Deerbrook itself, except for the widow Mrs. Plumstead on her mad chase after the poor woman from the country who had somehow angered



Fritz Eichenberg, illustration to *Jane Eyre*, Adèle, Lady Ingram, and her daughters, the beautiful Blanche, and Mary Ingram

the widow while selling butter, which we will look at later. We don't know what color Hester's hair is, the shape of her lips, her complexion, none of the usual things which novelists go on about, nothing. We are not told, so we must imagine what the ideal woman's image would have been at the time of the writing of the novel.

In *Deerbrook*, Martineau's dwelling on the question of the power of feminine beauty may seem anomalous but actually it is quite deliberate. In analyzing society, too, Martineau herself was preoccupied with perceptions of women's beauty as can be seen in "Criticism on Women" (1839). She spends a great deal of time examining Queen Victoria's youthfulness and the way that anonymous commentators attacked her fitness for office. Victoria accedes to the throne the same year as Martineau's novel *Society in America* is published, two years before *Deerbrook*

A Variety of Women: Governess, Bitch, Wife

In *Deerbrook*, the array of female characters and their roles typify the roles for women at the time Martineau wrote, although we have an interesting array of working women in the governess Maria and Morris, the servant of the Ibbotson sisters. In portraying Maria as off the marriage market because of her disability, Martineau was perhaps in a sense predicting her own future. With her deafness, she was already disabled to some extent; as far as beauty, Martineau received some cruel comments from the Darwin family. Her friendship with Erasmus Darwin caused some consternation among his friends and relatives, but in 1838 his brother Charles remarked that "if her character was not as secure, as a mountain in the polar regions she certainly would lose it. . . How fortunate it is, she is so very plain; otherwise I should be frightened" (quoted in Webb 175). The way Martineau's physical appearance was denigrated makes it seem strange that she herself would spend so much time on this question in *Deerbrook*. With Maria, the governess, we see some of the same effects of negatives that Martineau experienced, but as Hope's letter to his brother tells us, the Ibbotson sisters even cheer *her* up. Maria's occupation of governess is generally fulfilling to her; however, she is missing romantic love, and we see the sad delight when Maria finds the gift of a German book from Phillip Enderby in the school room desk, thinking for a minute that it is a gift from the man she, as a young woman, had feelings for and still does, but then she realizes the book is in the desk that Margaret has been using for German lessons from Maria, and that the secret gift is meant for the latter and not her.

The nineteenth century doctor Thomas Bell gives a vivid description of how both men and women who "from religious zeal devote themselves to an eternal chastity, often contract an obligation which is above human power. Nature rejects it; and the vital action often produces the singular phenomena of priapomania or nymphomania" (141). Dr. Bell diagnoses the effects of repression for, as he has said, an outlet for "the passion for sexual love . . . is almost as obligatory, as the appetite for food" (140). Of course we do not get any such outburst of erotic frenzy *per se*, but we do get the hysterical rampage of the village scold, Mrs. Plumstead. The children had been promised a picnic in the summer house and all were assembled for tea. Suddenly, among the servants who were watching the families' amusements, is a disturbance, sounding like " 'somebody killing a pig' " (105). Mrs. Grey's maid Alice finally answers her query: " 'O, ma'am, it is Mrs. Plumstead! And she is coming this way, ma'am. She will be upon us before we can get to the house. O ma'am, what shall we do?' " (106).

Mrs. Plumstead, the widow, is one variety of the female hysteric; another is, of course, Hester herself. Hester obviously has psychological problems. It comes up early in the novel when she apologizes to Margaret in a veiled way:

“ ‘ I have sometimes thought that I must be hopelessly bad, when I have found that the strongest affection I have in the world has made me unjust and cruel to the person I love best. I have a jealous temper, Margaret; and a jealous temper is a wicked temper’ “ (22).

She confesses to Hope before marriage how jealous she is of her own sister: Just a few days after her marriage to Hope, she has she has another breakdown,



Venus de Milo pl. xiv,
Kalogynomia, by T. Bell

remembering the broken promise made to her father to protect her sister, and we fear for Hope:

‘I shall never make you happy, Edward . . . O hear me!’ cried Hester, in great agitation. . . . When we came here, and Margaret and I felt ourselves alone among strangers, we promised the same confidence I vowed to my father. The next thing was, -- perhaps you saw it, -- I grew jealous of Margaret’s having another friend, though Maria was as ready to be my friend as hers, if I had only been worthy of it . . . “ (170-1)

Later, tension between Margaret and Hester allows Martineau one of her most profound digressions about the situation of dependents. The narrator condemns the “amount of woe caused by their selfish unconsciousness . . . such as may well make their weakness an equivalent for other men’s gravest crimes. . . .” (244).

With the portrayal of Hester’s personality could there be something of a self-portrait of Martineau? She was certainly abrupt and quarrelsome sometimes in her friendships, which she often terminated. This idea of “selfish unconsciousness” is also brilliant. Hester may be only the lesser version of the infighting and jealous of the rivalry between Mrs. Grey and Mrs. Rowland, and the terrible and cruel machinations against Phillip Enderby and Margaret, his affianced.

Enderby, however, is not without blame himself when his sister deludes him. Hope may be long-suffering in his love for Margaret while being married to her sister; Martineau, in contrast, shows Enderby condemning Margaret as “impure,” even though it is Hope’s desires that are confounding and disruptive. Once Enderby’s sister Mrs. Rowland has begun her campaign against Margaret, in the subsequent plot, the women are the ones who get the blame of being unchaste. If Hester is chastened; Margaret made unchaste through Hope’s even unspoken desire for her, in the eyes of Enderby. Is it coincidental that the eventual breach between Margaret and Enderby (played out in fact by Hope and Enderby) takes place in the ruined chapel when the parties composed of the Grey and Rowland families go on their long-delayed excursion? Another important meeting with Enderby takes place between Hester and him in the village church after the epidemic --apparently cholera (Sanders xxviii) -- has abated.

Is it any wonder that Mrs. Plumstead is on the rampage? Though she is not as well-developed a character as Charlotte Brontë’s Bertha Rochester, she is perhaps a manifestation of female Rage. Though the “bitch” is chastened by Hope – both Mrs. Plumstead and his own wife – and the novel redeems them all, in the 1960s one pamphlet called for embracing the bitch – “The Bitch Manifesto.” The author, “Joreen,” declares: “As adults, Bitches may have learned the feminine role, at least the outward style but they are rarely comfortable in it. . . . on the outside they have frequently grown a thick defensive callous which can make them seem hard and bitter at times. . . . (Freeman).



Fritz Eichenberg, *Jane Eyre*, Bertha as the "Vampyre" appearing to Jane in Jane's bedroom, Thornfield Hall

Martineau personally ~~to some degree embraced the image of the "bitch."~~ She gives us the generally demure Ibbotson sisters in *Deerbrook*, but they themselves have a bit of the "bitch" – not just Hester in her personality, but in their desire to avoid the company of women like Mrs. Rowland or even the Greys.

Martineau, in her fierce independence, her quarrels, her sureness of herself and her opinion of course has much of the "bitch" about her. This makes her a good candidate to take up the pose of anthropologist or sociologist. Being an outsider naturally helped her to evaluate societies, even her own, dispassionately and fearlessly. Yet, even in her stance as anthropologist or sociologist Martineau condemned some social practices, namely slavery. Practices affecting women she also condemned, as is obvious in *Deerbrook*. Returning from her visit to the U.S. in the 1830s, she was a total Abolitionist, and against even recompensing slave owners for their slaves were slavery to be abolished.

Martineau's clever writing style allowed her to oppose "the beauty myth" of her own time, even railing against fashions that became the style in the 1850s. She begins the 1859 "Dress and its Victims" with the brilliant puzzle: "There are a good many people who cannot possibly believe that dress can have any share in the deaths of the 100,000 persons who go needlessly to the grave every year in our happy England, where there are more means of comfort for everybody than any other country in Europe" (Martineau, *OW* 229). Destructive beauty practices concern Martineau later; her 1839 novel *Deerbrook* may seem to be very conventional, but in it she first explores the disruptive effects of beauty on men, women, and society.

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Toxic Attitudes: Martineau's "Criticism on Women" and the Rhetoric of Shame

Kinsey Potter

Abstract - Martineau's view that patriarchal society limited women's status coincides with Wollstonecraft's observation of how female minds were dulled in a society that prohibited them education. Martineau also saw that women choose an obedient place over education. Contemporary studies of shame, like Merleau-Ponty's, which observe shame causes a woman to "lose ... [a] sense of reality" (165), explore shaming of women-- still a powerful tool in discrediting women. Both Martineau and Wollstonecraft demonstrated intrinsically in their works that society needed to be analyzed and perfected before women could achieve rights. Both expressed their vision of a better future for women, and the more liberated position of women today is undeniably due to them. Paradoxically, both writers underscore Kristeva's conclusion that shame can "preserve what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship" and allow women to embrace their power as a *real* human being (15) by subverting patriarchal power structures.

A 19th century deaf woman and pioneer feminist, Harriet Martineau, saw the shaming of women, particularly the lack of education granted to them due to their gender, as possessing the potential to, as later formulated by the French theorist and feminist Julia Kristeva, "preserve what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship," or the relationship of women and men based on their shared blood instead of societal termed differences, and allow women to embrace their power as a

real human being by subverting patriarchal power structures (Kristeva 15). In other words, Martineau believed that education could overcome societal perceptions and subsequently transform the idea of shame. Despite the illnesses she suffered and gender based discrimination she faced, Martineau succeeded in showing the women of her time the importance of embracing what shames them and transforming the experiences of their shame into the determination to be educated and viewed as equal to their male counterparts. Undeniably, the more liberated position of women today is due to writers such as Martineau.

Women can view what “shames” them as an individual power through education. Harriet Martineau’s life and experiences show that society doesn’t have to be revolutionized. It simply needs reform. Women themselves need to reverse their self-perceptions, for *women* play a strong role in society, just as men do. In order to better understand the argument of a need for revolution and a reversal of self-perception, it is necessary to understand the definition of shame itself. According to the Shame Resilience Theory based on experiments under Brene Brown, a professor of research in social works, women experience shame “as a web of layered, conflicting, and competing expectations that are, at the core, products of rigid socio-cultural expectations” that are “often imposed, enforced, or expressed by individuals and groups” (46). These expectations act as “unwanted identities” that discourage women “from sharing opinions that might make others feel uncomfortable or taking an unpopular stand on an issue” (Brown 46).

In Martineau’s time, the main “unwanted identity” was being masculinized, which demanded for an equal education to men, particularly because “the sum and substance of female education” was “training women to consider marriage as the sole object in life, and to pretend they don’t think so” (“Woman”). In other words, an educated woman who could find strength in writing/gaining knowledge was potentially damaging her profession as a wife, which consequently shamed her for going against societal norms.

In addition to being discouraged to write/take advantage of education because of her gender based shame, Martineau also possessed the shame of illness, specifically a hearing impairment (Ablow 677). She equated shame with pain, in her case quite literally, in which both entities have “the potential to be attached to new associations, experiences, or beliefs.” In other words, she believed that, similar to a bone becoming stronger after having broken, the pain of shame could be used to strengthen the inflicted person, perhaps inspiring them to reach higher.

Ultimately Martineau’s experience proves that a woman’s shame can become her strength. The “sufferer from pain,” or the woman facing the shame of her gender, can thus emerge “in her account as the ideal legislator, albeit one who is prohibited by her condition [of shame; for example, her gender or her illness] from acting in the world.” Martineau never sought to hide her illnesses, and many of her writings address “issues of sickness, health, and disability in explicitly personal terms,” causing the reader to assume that shame, in Martineau’s mind, is an illness in itself (Ablow 677).

Through understanding the idea of shame, it is evident that shame itself subsides in the societal realm, only becoming shame once attributed with “going against societal norms.” Judith Butler, the author of *Gender Studies*, rationalized that “gender is a social artifice,” in which the shame of one’s gender “reflects nothing that exists eternally in nature” but instead “derive[s] from customs that embed social relations of power.” In other words, the effects of shame as well as shame itself is “shaped by forces that are social rather than biological.” So, like Martineau’s physical illness which gave her shame, the female body itself is a cause of shame for the woman due to societal conceptions of the difference in men and women from birth.

To further exemplify the role of society in determining shame, one may look upon Mary Wollstonecraft, an 18th century feminist writer, philosopher and advocate for female rights. Wollstonecraft was shamed for her reputation as possessing a bastard child and having relationships with men who were already married, such as the famous artist Henry Fuseli. Her infidelity was not uncommon during her time period, but the fact that she was physically a woman and was being unorthodox with her *body* created a shame that eventually tainted her reputation. In other words, although men of high stature held the same amount of infidelity, if not more, it was the idea of the woman’s body that *society* created that, in turn, shamed Wollstonecraft. Martineau “believed in reform, not revolution,” which she knew was only possible if women and men alike were to face the narrow morals and expectations that society implemented. Kristeva, the aforementioned theorist, points out that men and women’s “only difference is ... [their] unwillingness to have a face-to-face confrontation with the abject,” which, arguably, is shame (209). In other words, the fear of facing change in society from both genders only feeds the concept of unequal gender roles in society. The unwillingness to face the shaming of women caused the inability to offer women an education, for a fear of change in society.

To further examine the exact roles that society did grant women, one must point out Martineau’s article “Woman,” in which she paints the views of society associated with different subjects in relation to women. She states that, regarding philosophy, “she may pursue only fancifully, and under pain of ridicule;” regarding science as “only a pastime, and under a similar penalty;” considering art as “declared to be left open: but the necessary learning, and yet more, the indispensable experience of reality ... denied;” and lastly regarding literature as “also said to be permitted, but under what penalties and restrictions?”

While society held these beliefs in fear that an education for women would prohibit them from their sole duty of marriage, thus distributing the shame of education as being an unwanted identity, Martineau believed that women should be educated so that they *could* be “better wives and housekeepers.” She believed that “it was a good political move to focus on issues that could unite women,” and “she wanted women to be true partners in their marriages” (Boucher 327). Martineau didn’t necessarily wish to *change* the characteristics associated with womanhood, but she instead wished to entomb those characteristics in the embrace of a much yearned

after education, which she believed society would be thankful for. Subsequently, society does not need to change or face revolution, its perception simply needs reform.

Furthermore, women, as well as men, need to reform their own self perceptions. Wollstonecraft claims that a woman's gender causes her to be viewed as being in a "state of perpetual childhood" (215). In other words, her lack of education causes a woman to be seen as children to their husbands instead of intellectual companions, or even friends. The only way women could rise in the world (shamefully) is through marriage, a concept that women themselves live by even today, if only for comfort. If the sole definition of society is based on the roles of its men and women inside and outside of marriage, then to *change* those roles would raise an unsure societal future, an ideal that neither gender wants.

Women sought obedience over intelligence out of comfort, a concept that Wollstonecraft explains when she states in her *Vindication* that "blind obedience is ever sought for by power; tyrants and sensualists are in the right when they endeavor to keep women in the dark, because the former wants slaves and the latter a play thing." If society chose to "strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, there" would "be an end to blind obedience" as well as a woman's dependence on a man as her protector (212). However, in a world as savage as the societal world, the masculine virtues of a man cannot fully save a woman, and there is no viable reason why a woman should not take advantage of any education she can in order to better herself and the future of her relationship.

With all challenges to any pecking order, in this case wife vs. husband or woman vs. man and the idea of educating women in marriage, comes those opposed, which feed the negative self-perceptions of women and thus continuously impose shame. In her "Criticism on Women," Martineau describes the attacks on women seeking education from those who worship the closed societal conventions and possess a "fear of the law of libel" and use this fear to mock the weaker specimens as Crokerisms, with the individual themselves being a Crokerite. Martineau states:

"Were a stranger to seek throughout the empire for the men who have spared no woman who has dared to differ from them in politics ... an Austen, an Edgeworth, or a Martineau ... he would find them in the Crokerites." (68)

In other words, the "Crokerisms" of society are the views that women are not capable of education. The "Crokerites" are those who possess those views. Martineau continues her representation of those in society who slandered women in her time for seeking to be educated as Crockerites by stating that women are "the most piquant and the safest objects of abuse a reviewer can select" due to not being protected "by law from the worst slander to which they can be subjected" (69). If a Crokerite is the lion, the woman is the lamb, and the lamb does not wish to challenge the societal pecking order.

In turn, women *expected* to be shamed because of their place in society, making them easy and continuous targets for the Crokerisms of their male counterparts, or even women counterparts who simply believed that a “woman cannot.” The shame of the importance of beauty, manners, and the fact that “every affection of their natures rises up to make them use their influence to prevent their brothers and husbands from taking up their quarrel” allows Crokerites, subsequently society in general, to disrespect a woman’s entire morale.

Martineau believed that women could use the weaknesses that society, or Crokerites, viewed in them (their shame of being the lesser gender) to strengthen their determination to be better wives and mothers in addition to granting them with more power to seek education, in turn using education to reform society. In other words, women do not need to *change* their place as wives and mothers in society, nor do they specifically need to change the opinions of the Crokerites. Instead, women need to understand that their experiences as women in society are in no way related to their potential in other fields. Martineau’s deafness was an experience that she needed to realize should not affect her writing, as a woman’s place in society as the *weaker* and more gentler gender should not affect her right to an education. It is necessary for societal perception to be embraced as a *distorted* perception, in which the shame that is associated with what is *believed* to be the intended nature for a woman is actually a flame that can spark her determination to “exercise freedom of mind in deciding upon what duty is, and the methods by which it is to be pursued” (Martineau 293).

Merleau-Ponty, a prominent French philosopher, paints this picture of shame through his metaphor that, in societal “perceptual communication,” a woman is a portrait consisting of “a familiar face with an expression which is immediately understood.” He continues to say that the face only expresses its meaning through “the arrangements of the colours and lights which make it up, the meaning of the gaze being not behind the eyes, but in them....” According to Merleau-Ponty, a “touch of colour more or less is all the painter needs in order to transform the facial expression of a portrait...” And a touch of education is all that women need to transform their distorted perception that *society* views when gazing at the portrait of women as a whole.

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Harriet's Deafness

Georgette Vale

Harriet had sensorineural deafness - a problem with the inner ear. In the past it was also called perceptive deafness - but in Harriet's day they probably did not differentiate between different types of deafness or understand it. I liked the bit in the autobiography where the eminent surgeon, Joseph Toynbee, asked if he could have her ears after her death for research purposes – and she said she would have been willing to help but she only had one pair, and they had to go with the head which had already been promised for the study of phrenology.

If the person has a problem with the outer ear or the middle ear they get conductive deafness. The effect is like having the sound turned down on the radio. Amplification can help here (unless it is extreme) because it makes things louder so there is more sound to get through.

In the inner ear there are hair cell receptors which pick up different frequencies. If a person has sensorineural deafness, some of the hair cells are damaged whilst others are still functioning. Most people with sensorineural deafness have lost the high

frequencies, but still retain the low frequencies. To get a very simplified idea of what it may be like, think of a dreadful announcement on the train – you can hear it alright, but you have no idea what it is saying! Now imagine what it would be like if every conversation you have is like that.

The tell-tale wording which confirmed to me that she has sensorineural loss was when she related her meeting with Malthus. She had dreaded meeting him because of his hare-lip and cleft palate (not the accepted terminology these days). However she said “His vowels were so sonorous – and it occurred to me that vowels are all I ever do hear”.

Consonants are usually of higher frequencies – and that where the real understanding of speech is. I can try to give you an example of this - although it is difficult writing it rather than saying it out loud. When I do training , I give out the vowels from a well-known phrase or saying – try saying them out loud – a ee a a i i a - most people don't get it from the vowels alone. I then give them the consonants –m r h d l tt l l m - and then a few people have got it. I then tap out the rhythm - dum dum da da dee dee dah – and it starts falling into place for a lot more people. If I give them the context and tell them it is a nursery rhyme about a baby animal most people will have realise that the next bit is “its fleece was white as snow”.

Women generally have higher pitched voices than men - and children much higher still. Many people with high frequency loss will say they hear men better than women. The other person that Harriet managed to hear well was Sidney Smith. Looking at a picture of him, I bet he had a strong, deep voice.

Harriet used an ear-trumpet which would only have amplified all sounds – the high frequencies as much as the low frequencies. The fact that she found this useful would seem to suggest that she may have had an element of conductive deafness as well.

I know of no syndrome that would cause someone to be born without the sense of taste or smell who subsequently loses their hearing. I have worked in the field of Sensory Impairment for 30 years and I have asked equally experienced colleagues, and we have come to the conclusion that Harriet just had a double dose of bad luck. I specialise in Deafblindness and there are quite a few syndromes where people lose those two senses at different stages in life. In our profession we use the term dual sensory loss to refer to the loss of sight and hearing. This is classified as a unique disability because the loss of one sense cannot compensate for the loss of the other.

The senses of taste and smell are intrinsically linked with each other – so that is not so surprising that someone would lose both of those at the same time. Interestingly William Wordsworth also had anosmia. I wonder if they ever compared notes about it. To live without those senses is indeed rather a trial and many people would be horrified at the thought. There are dangers involved too - not being able to tell if food is off, or if there is a gas leak. However the difficulties caused by the loss of hearing would lead to major communication difficulties and people can become very isolated. It is extremely tiring having to concentrate hard on everything anyone ever says to you. Depression and other mental health issues are very common.

Harriet would have had to have had a very strong personality to be able to get through life – but I think we all knew she did anyway!

Harriet lost her hearing gradually from the age of about 12 to the age of 18. If she had lost her hearing much younger then she would not have easy access to the English Language (what a shame that would have been). However she was well aware that she was losing her hearing in what is now called the teenage years which are formative in anyone's life and she much have felt very much apart at the time. Her brother had told her not "make herself irksome" and so very early on she made the vow never to ask anyone to repeat what she did not understand - relying on friends to make sure she know what was important. Misunderstandings must have been rife

Lip-reading is indeed a skill that some people manage better than others. It is not necessarily linked to intelligence. Much of it is guesswork which is why it is easier if you have clues such as the context and the rhythm of speech. You need to have good lighting on the face of the speaker and of course the speaker needs to face the person they are speaking to.

No wonder Harriet did not like visiting the Wordsworths on winter evenings to have a conversation by the fireside glow – and she says that William would keep turning head half way through a sentence – and then he would take his false teeth out! Harriet had no chance.



Florence and Parthenope Nightingale by William White (1836)
National Portrait Gallery

The Childhood and Education of Florence Nightingale and Harriet Martineau

Carol Chilton

What was it that made Florence Nightingale such a formidable women of her time - a great reformer of the nursing profession and the care of the common soldier in wartime? What was it about Harriet Martineau that she became, like Florence Nightingale, such a formidable, exceptionally talented women and the first female journalist.

Florence Nightingale was born on the 18th May 1820 in a large rented villa called 'La Columbaia' on the edge of Florence in Italy to William and Fanny Nightingale. Her parents had married two years before and were on an extended honeymoon touring Europe. Her sister, Parthenope, had been born just a year before Florence in Naples.

Florence had an impressive pedigree from both maternal and paternal sides of the family. Her maternal grandfather, William Smith, was a distinguished Member of Parliament fighting for social reform. He was the political mainspring for the abolition of slaving by Britain. He was also a friend of William Wilberforce who was the popular face of the anti-slavery movement. William Smith was MP for Norwich, an avowed Unitarian and a member of the Octagon Chapel in Norwich. He was instrumental in bringing political rights to that religious minority in 1813 which made it legal to practice Unitarianism with the statute known as “Mr Smiths’s Bill” and formally as the Doctrine of the Trinity Act 1813.

William Smith was also an unusual ‘hands on’ father. He believed in the best education of both his sons and his daughters. Three of his sons went to Trinity College, Cambridge – though their Unitarianism prevented them from taking a degree. His daughters were taught mainly at home by their older siblings, parents, governesses and tutors. The children had full access to his impressive library. Smith’s liberal influences clearly came down to Florence.

Florence’s paternal grandfather, William Shore of Tapton Hall near Sheffield, started the first banking business in Ecclesall nearby in 1774. He had skills of trade, mathematics, accounting and managerial expertise.

The Smith and the Shore families met in 1803 when William Smith visited to Tapton Hall. The Shores were Unitarians and were supporters of William Smith. From this friendship arose the marriage between William Smith’s daughter Fanny and William Shore’s son William Edward. In 1815 when William Edward was 21 years of age, he inherited his great Uncle Peter Nightingale’s estate through a fee entail, a legal trust to prevent the person inheriting destroying the family’s wealth. Peter’s estate had to move to the nearest male relative who happened to be William Edward, Peter’s sister Anne’s son. At the age of 21, William Edward assumed the surname of Nightingale and became a very wealthy man, inheriting an estate and an annual sum of £7-9000, today worth £700,000!

Three women were great influences on Florence Nightingale. Two were aunts on her mother’s side and the third was her paternal grandmother. Both her aunts were feminists. Aunt Julia, a spinster and known as ‘Stormy Ju’ (by Florence) was a dynamic character. She divided her life between caring for her many sick relatives and public causes. She knew Harriet Martineau and Elizabeth Jesser Reid because of her interest in women’s education. The second aunt, Patty was very intelligent and devoted much of her life to being her father, William Smith’s secretary. Both these women showed Florence the possibilities open to a girl.

Florence’s paternal grandmother, Mary Shore, was very religious and she would say her prayers three times a day, kneeling by her bed. How much did this effect young Florence’s ideas of religion? Mark Bostridge writes in his book “Florence Nightingale” that Florence recalls:

“We children knew that grandmother went up to say her prayers and we could hear her voice in the passage, speaking to God with such passion and earnestness – as if He was in the room, which He certainly was”.

Florence had a very privileged upbringing. The family was very wealthy and had two family homes supported by servants. The family had many visitors. Florence and her sister, Parthenope, had a happy childhood up to the age of seven. It was a peripatetic life spent between their homes at Lea Hurst in Derbyshire and Embley Park, near Romsey, Hampshire. When their parents were away the two girls would spend time with one of their aunts accompanied by their nanny. There were lots of cousins to play with.

Florence loved the beautiful countryside of the two homes. She loved the flowers, birds, and animals and was categorising them before the age of seven. On walks in the countryside Florence would collect flowers and press them. She described them analytically and where they were picked. Statistics came early and easily to Florence.

Florence loved to nurse animals and on one occasion tried to rear a nest of baby mice, most of whom died! There is the story of Florence saving a sheep dog, called Cap by mending his broken leg. Her interest in medicines is shown in a notebook she wrote when seven. She recorded the dosage of James Compound, a common medicine, of “16 grains for an old woman, 11 for a young woman and 7 for a child”.

During these early years both Florence and her sister Parthenope excelled in reading and writing, loved languages and knew French from babyhood through their French maids. Florence’s zest for life was remembered by her sister as “overflowing with fun and wild spirits of every kind”. But this was to change when Florence was seven years old.

Here, we need to go to the beginning of Florence and Parthenope’s lives. Fanny, their mother, had a difficult time with Parthenope’s delivery. She was very weak but desperate to breastfeed Parthenope as Fanny’s sisters were breastfeeding their infants. Unfortunately, Fanny did not have enough breast milk and Parthenope nearly died of dehydration. Fanny hired a wet nurse. But a close bond was formed between Fanny and her daughter, Parthenope. When Florence was born, Fanny did not attempt to breast feed because she was so weak and hired a wet nurse. Florence was not a weak baby while Parthenope still needed a lot of attention from her mother due to the child’s frailty. Fanny and Florence did not bond as well. Gillian Gill in her book – *Nightingales: The Extraordinary Upbringing and Curious Life of Miss Florence Nightingale* is quite scathing of Florence’s mother. Gill felt that Fanny would have been quite content to have had just the one child who would become her aide and be a mirror of herself, which Parthenope was. Florence, on the other hand, Gill says, took after the Shore family and Fanny’s two sisters, Julia and Patty. Florence had brilliance, a great thirst for education and she was very stubborn – “attributes more of a boy than a genteel girl”. Florence’s mother did not like the way Florence was, at times, unkind to her sister. Fanny sought to protect

Parthenope. Fanny thought Florence was spoilt by too much attention, self-absorbed, unkind and inflexible. Her moral character needed to be reformed.

It appears Fanny, was obsessive. She wanted exclusive and firm control over her daughters. Fanny and her sisters had absorbed the Lockean education theory. This is a definition of the Lockean education theory :

”When born, the mind of the child is like a blank slate — “tabula rasa”, to be filled later with the data derived from sensory experience. It logically ensues that education plays a crucial role in the moral development and social integration of any human being. Education means shaping according to each individual's temperament and skills, exercised without brutality, but in a rigorous and pragmatic manner.”

Fanny knew what she wanted on Florence's 'blank slate'. Florence, now aged 7, was to put away story books, scientific projects, learn to play better, take more exercise and become, in Gill's words, “sweet, obedient, happy, grateful, active little girl people liked”. About this time Fanny and William were often away, sometimes together and sometimes apart. Fanny decided that a governess needed to be found who would carry out all her wishes.

In 1827 Sarah Christie the new governess For Florence and Parthenope arrived. Sarah was in her twenties, not married and evangelical. She would obviously want to please Fanny. The next three years was a very unhappy time for Florence. Mark Bostridge in his book “Florence Nightingale” makes the comment that the effect of Miss Christie's regime on Florence was to change her from “a voluble little boy” into a child who was increasingly morose and withdrawn. It was also at this time that Florence started daydreaming, an activity she thought sinful. She struggled with daydreaming for years and Florence's letters show this nearly lead to a breakdown when she was 31 years old.

Fanny was very demanding. She expected reports from Sara, from both her daughters and any of the aunts the girls stayed with. Poor Florence had no problems with her studies but it was the “reforming of her body and soul” that was most painful. She was very stubborn at times and would be punished by having to sit still or being denied permission to go outside. Florence wanted to please her mother and she must have longed for acceptance and praise. There is a rather pathetic letter found in her handwriting that Florence wrote to her mother in January 1830 when she was 9.

In 1830 Sarah Christie left to get married. What was to happen? Who would continue the education and shaping of Parthenope and Florence? Their father, William Edward Nightingale who was known to the family and friends as Wen, came to the rescue. He had seen his highly gifted daughter Florence, as Gillian Gill writes, “turn from a lively, pert, accomplished, infinitely curious little Florence into a gloomy, sanctimonious puppet mouthing the sentimental pieties of evangelical traces and

second rank poets like Felicia Hemans". Even Parthenope commented on the change of her sister under Sarah Christie's influence in her unfinished biography:

"Then came a very clever governess who misunderstood Florence completely, and turned inwards all the overflowing energy and busy childlike. Two to three years altered her accordingly – and troubled her with the introversion which she long suffered with".

I promise to
Take run before breakfast to gate or to and from (?) ½ hour's walk
Before dinner, long walk after, or if cold and dark long walk before and ½ an
hour's after
To do 20 arms before I dress, 10 minutes before breakfast and 10 after
exercises,
If ill done ten more
To practice 1 hour a day if you like it as I shall not have so much to do and ½
regularly
Not to lie in bed
To go to bed in proper time
To read the Bible and pray regularly before breakfast and at night
To visit the poor people and take care of them who are sick
To take medicine when I want it
To go regularly after breakfast
On Sundays to go to Church when there is anyone to go with me,
To read any book you put out for me
To read to Aunt Mai and save her trouble
To read this paper everyday
To write to you
I think I should be much better here than elsewhere. I should have fewer
temptations.

Quoted in Gillian Gill's 'Nightingales' 2005, p 100.

Florence Nightingale's Note to Mother in 1830

Wen was a brilliant man. He had been educated at a dissenting academy, Edinburgh University and Trinity College, Cambridge. He was one of the founding members of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, including the Statistical Section established by Charles Babbage in 1833. This institution allowed women to contribute papers and take part in proceedings. Wen had a great library covering classics, scientific monographs, poetry, fiction and books on philosophers from Plato, Aristotle to Hobbs and Locke. He also believed in the education and empowerment of women. Wen devoted the next seven years of his life to educating, nurturing and

taking interest and pride in the progress of his two daughters. He worked his daughters hard and expected their best in return.

Florence for the next seven years was in an intellectual heaven. Wen would teach his daughters what he knew and see how they responded. If positively, he would follow the topic through. He developed lesson plans and exercises for his two daughters. Mark Bostridge wrote that “young Florence would get up at 3am to do her Greek study”. Over breakfast the two girls were expected to go over the previous day’s lesson. By the time Florence was 16 her subjects included chemistry, geography, physics and astronomy, statistics and mathematics, composition and philosophy. She was fluent in French and Italian; she was reading Homer and Plato in Greek at which, like Wen, she was very skilled. She also knew Latin and Hebrew. By 19, she had added German. Was the impetus to learn German a result of Victoria’s coronation the previous year?

There are two further observations of Florence up to the age of 17 which are important. When Florence was 11 years old, her Aunt Mai, Wen’s sister gave birth to a son named William Shore Smith. Florence doted on him. Edward Cook in his book ‘The life of Florence Nightingale’ quotes Florence as saying “The son of my heart” and “while he is with me all that is mine is his, my head and hand and time” When young William was four, his mother left him in the care of Florence’s old nurse, Mrs Gale, whilst Aunt Mai went for convalescence in Harrogate. Mrs Gale became ill and twelve year old Florence looked after her “son of my heart” day and night. On her return, Aunt Mai found William thriving. After this episode, Florence was seen as someone who could care, nurse and help people. This meant a lot to Florence. She at last gained approval from her mother. This willingness of Florence to ‘serve’ her family was recognised and valued.

Florence’s extraordinary skill at mass organisation, caring and nursing was seen at 17 during floods and flu epidemic at Embley Park and in the nearby village of Wellow. She took charge of nursing her parents, 15 servants, the sick in the village and still got up early in the morning to do her studies. Mark Bostridge tells us that on 7th February 1837 at the age of 17 and shortly after this event, Florence experienced a call from God “God spoke to me and called me to his service”. God was to ‘call’ Florence twice more in her lifetime.

Let us move to Harriet. Harriet Martineau was born on 12th June 1802, 18 years before Florence Nightingale. Harriet was born in Gurney Court, Magdalen Street in Norwich into a liberal Unitarian family. She was the sixth of eight children of Thomas and Elizabeth Martineau.

The Martineau’s came from Huguenot immigrants. They were noted for their works in medical, intellectual and business fields. Gaston Martineau, a surgeon, was the first to arrive in 1686. Gaston’s grandson David Martineau had 5 sons, Thomas Martineau was the fifth son and Harriet’s father. He spent his life in Norwich as a

textile manufacturer and was a deacon of the Octagon Chapel. His wife, Elizabeth Rankin, came from a Unitarian family of sugar refiners in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.

Thomas and Elizabeth, being Unitarians, held progressive views on the education of girls like the Smiths and the Shores. Their four sons and four daughters received similar educations. Harriet grew up in a household where free thinking and an enquiring mind were encouraged.

What was her childhood like? Harriet had an unhappy childhood beginning as a baby. She had a wet nurse who did not have enough milk, and at 3 months Harriet suffered with diarrhoea and dehydration. She had intolerance to cow's milk. She became quite a sickly, delicate baby, suffered with indigestion and discomfort and was probably quite miserable.

Harriet also suffered with her nerves and had irrational fears accompanied by panic feelings. Her imagination would run away with her causing her to feel terror and unhappiness. Harriet never shared these feelings with anyone. In her autobiography, she wrote she thought that if more attention had been taken of her, she might have received understanding, kindness and love. If this had been the case, Harriet thought her obstinacy, crossness and unhappiness could have been avoided. She went on to say in her autobiography that her older brothers and sisters were rough and did not show her respect. She wrote "They meant no harm, but injured me irreparably"

Harriet was a very religious child. She was not afraid of God and longed for Heaven. At only aged 7 she contemplated suicide in order to go to Heaven. She felt God would not be angry and would have understood her unhappiness. In her autobiography, Harriet wrote of waiting for angels to fly thorough one of the eight oriel windows of the Octagon Chapel where she sat each Sunday and carry her to Heaven and her God. She also wrote of her brother James and herself digging their way to Australia and then deciding to lie in the hole and think what it must be like being dead and buried!

Perhaps it was because of her childhood feelings of injustice that Harriet developed a passion for justice. When Harriet was seven years old, the family went to visit her maternal grandparents in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. Harriet's mother brought back 14 year old Ann Turner, the daughter of the local Unitarian minister. Harriet, in her autobiography writes of Ann's friendship and "it fell out all the more easily for her tendencies being exclusively religious, while I was only waiting for some influence to determine my life in that direction". Anne encouraged Harriet to confession and morning and nightly prayer but Harriet found no comfort. Harriet tried for many years not to cry each day but failed. Ann tried to show Harriet an example of Harriet's mother's love for her by pointing out that Elizabeth would sew endlessly her children's clothes and stockings sometimes through the night. Was this not love?

From age of 9 to 11, Harriet and her sister Rachel were taught by their elder siblings. Although the subjects covered were reading, arithmetic, French grammar, Latin and

writing, Harriet in her autobiography states that she would have done better at a school during those years. Her nervous disposition stopped her asking questions and saying much. On one occasion Harriet asked her older brother, Thomas that if God foreknew everything, how could we be blamed or rewarded for our conduct? Thomas replied that she was too young to understand.

Harriet loved music. She could only really excel with her piano playing when alone. Sadly her deafness put an end to music.

Her education became exciting and meaningful when she and Rachel went to a day school run by the Reverend Isaac Perry. He had been a Methodist minister and converted to Unitarianism thereby losing his pulpit and school. However he continued to teach and Harriet and Rachel joined his small class of boys. Harriet loved it and thrived on the learning and worked hard. Vera Wheatley in her book "The Life and Work of Harriet Martineau" writes "it made up for everything and provided, as it did for the rest of her life, an inexhaustible spring of delight". Reverend Perry instilled three educational loves into Harriet's life. The first was Latin. She read Cicero, Virgil and Horace. Harriet loved Saturdays when there was 4 hours of Latin prose and verse. She would take a book by Tacitus to bed with her at night alongside Milton's "Paradise Lost" to help her get to sleep!

The second gift that Rev Perry gave to Harriet was his teaching of Composition. His approach was very methodical – Proposition, Reason and the Rule, followed by the Example, Confirmation and lastly the Conclusion. Composition was Harriet's favourite exercise and she excelled. Mathematics was Perry's third gift. Harriet wrote she loved numbers "covering my slate with sums, washing them out and then starting again". Both were subjects necessary for her future writings on Economics. It was during these two years that Harriet entered into an intellectual life which became a "refuge from moral suffering". Sadly for Harriet, Rev Perry had to close his little school because it did not pay. Harriet and Rachel returned to being educated at home with tutors. The family read aloud together covering topics such as history, biographies and critical literature. For the women there would also be the constant needlework and music copying. The Martineau family's newspaper was The Globe and through its articles it provided the young Harriet, who loved reading it, with further ideas of 'Political Economy'. There were also the daily walks which Harriet hated.

By the age of fourteen Harriet's increasing deafness was effecting her social communication with everyone. Harriet says in her autobiography that she had to suffer comments like "none are so deaf as those who will not hear". At last she says the family did become aware of her deafness but again blamed her for not asking things to be repeated or to have talked about the problem.

Harriet's next leap forward in her education was when she was sixteen and in poor health. She went to stay in Bristol for 15 months with her Aunt, Mrs Kentish, who ran a boarding school. Because of her deafness, Harriet could not enter fully into the

education in the classrooms. So the world of private study became available. She read History, analytical books on logic and rhetoric, poetry and she loved it all. She also liked the countryside and now liked walks. It was at Bristol that she came under the influence of Dr. Lant Carpenter, the Unitarian Minister. Harriet writes "As for me, his devout and devoted Catechumen, he made me desperately superstitious, - living wholly in and for religion, and fiercely fanatical about it"

Harriet's favourite brother was James who later became a philosopher. She adored him. Harriet wrote in her autobiography that her first studies in Philosophy were carried out "with care and reserve" as she puts it. After rising at 5am in the morning to further her studies she met up with James at 7am, who read Latin or Italian with her. Late at night she avidly read the Bible, commentaries on religion, the philosophical works of Locke and Hartley and her idol, Reverend Lant Carpenter. Her close friend in Bristol was Mary Carpenter, Lant's daughter, who later became an acclaimed educationist and social worker.

So what was it in their childhoods that Florence and Harriet had in common? Both Florence and Harriet had problems with wet nursing. Gillian Gill in her book says that Fanny told Florence that she had been unable to breast feed her. Gill feels that Florence resented this. Harriet felt her bad childhood health was due to wet nursing. Both Florence and Harriet had poor relationships with their mothers. Both Florence and Harriet felt they were not their mothers' favourites. Florence and Harriet had elder sisters who they felt were their mother's favourites. These elder sisters were probably more like their mothers. Florence and Harriet were different and probably difficult to love!

Florence's governess, Sarah Christie and Harriet's friend, Ann Turner tried to improve their characters to bring about their "moral change". Florence at the age of 7 knew that only by 'reforming' could she get her mother's loves and she strived to change. Harriet's shyness and deafness was a great barrier to her family relationships and particularly with her mother.

Writing skills were most important throughout their lives. Both were great letter and journal writers from early age.

Religion played a huge part in shaping both Florence and Harriet's thoughts and actions. Florence was three times "called by God" to serve him. Harriet developed a deep sense of personal injustice and wanted to do something about injustice generally.

Florence at age 11 and Harriet aged 9 fell in love with a new born baby. For Florence, it was her cousin William, "son of my heart". For Harriet, it was her younger sister Ellen, "new life for me". This giving of such love filled a vacuum in their hearts. They both wanted to give love at these ages and receive love back. This the babies gave them unconditionally.

Both women were highly intelligent and both very focused on learning. Florence had a great thirst for knowledge and was always asking questions. She had a tremendous power of concentration, obsession for detail and became self-absorbed. She loved developing scientific projects. Statistics appeared to come naturally to her from a very early age. Harriet was enthusiastic for languages, writing and mathematics headed in another direction. She was a philosopher, an ideas person and strongly wanted to communicate her knowledge of wide ranging subjects and ideas to the public.

In conclusion, the childhood influences on these two women and their responses were very alike.

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Harriet Martineau - Wiki Commons

Recent Deaths of Members

Elisabeth Sanders Arbuckle and Sophia Hankinson (see *Editorial* above)

Recent New Members (UK unless stated)

Bob Gamble, Josie McQuail (USA) and Peter Waterman

The Martineau Society

The Martineau Society was founded in the early 1990s by members of the Octagon Unitarian 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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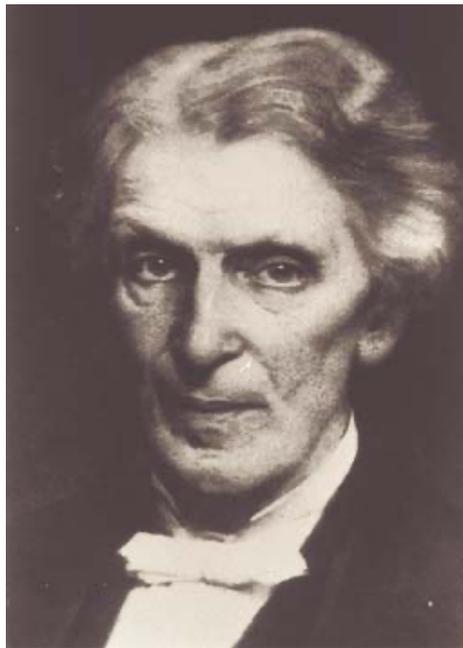
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The ethical spirit is often supposed to be cold and scrupulous and negatively correct, shrinking from innumerable things and worshipping nothing...but once sweetened with the waters of regeneration and initiated into its divine relations, it breathes the air of quite another world; discovers that the best vigilance against evil is to fling yourself away into some humane and purifying good; and, since the life of God is the life of love, gains assurance that, with an infinite ally, the battle of righteousness can never lose hope and heart.

James Martineau Essays, IV, xii



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