

*‘Now try and recollect if you have done any good to-day’.
Household, individual and community in the early fiction
of Harriet Martineau, c. 1825-41*

**Thesis submitted for the degree of D.Phil. in English Local History at
the University of Oxford
Michaelmas Term 2013**

John Binfield Warren

Jesus College

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SHORT ABSTRACT

A re-evaluation of the early fiction of Harriet Martineau (1802-76) is timely. In failing to interrogate the reciprocity between Martineau's interpretation of personal experience and her fiction, scholars have not fully appreciated its purpose. Thus, modern criticism has accepted Martineau's dismissive judgement of her earliest tales. *Five Years of Youth* (1831) has been labelled a pastiche of Jane Austen, and the *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832-4), which established Martineau's fame, have also been subject to bruising attack – as poor art, and ideologically mendacious. Most scholars see the novel *Deerbrook* (1839) as a conventional romance.

Although Linda Peterson and Lana Dalley rightly identify in Martineau's fiction the trope of domesticity and its political dimension, the argument of this thesis is more specific. Message and discourse, whether couched as political economy, children's adventure or romance, were shaped by Martineau's 'heartland concepts'. The product of her subjectivity, these core values were a sense of duty (initially allied to a previously-unacknowledged soteriology of 'safety'); a welcome offered to adversity as a stimulus to progress; an attack on superstition as an enemy to intellectual and moral progress; and household relationships which were inclusive of children and servants and stimulated community engagement.

Martineau's definition of community, predicated on a sense of belonging, initially reflected the networking of her Norwich household. It was subsequently redefined as wherever her own household could meet a local need. This interpretation is supported by an analysis of Martineau's engagement with her adopted community of Ambleside, where, in putting into practice her fictional teachings, she demonstrated reciprocity in action.

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LONG ABSTRACT

Harriet Martineau (1802-76) and controversy were familiar bedfellows through her long writing career. Controversy was stimulated by a sense of bafflement as the one-time writer of devotional tales proclaimed with enthusiasm her faith in science and her loss of faith in God. If her fame was followed by relative obscurity, perplexity and a sense of the controversial have never been absent from the scholarly attention subsequently bestowed. Indeed, the scope and nature of her activities serve to bewilder. She was, after all, a popularizer through fiction of the so-called science of political economy; a translator of Comte; a journalist; a writer of analytical travelogues; an author of tales for children and a novelist.

Martineau's career was shaped by her perceived duty to teach, and fiction was often the preferred method. This thesis identifies the central preoccupation of her fiction: namely, the relationship between individual, household and community. That relationship, and the meanings she gave to household and community, are revealed through exploring the interconnectedness of Martineau's art and life.

Analysed in conjunction with local and other sources providing insights into Martineau's subjectivity and interpretation of her experiences, fiction provides key insights into the nature, origins and underpinnings of her 'heartland concepts': namely, Martineau's core values, both intellectual and emotional. Thus, the reciprocity between

personal, familial, household and community context, her self-fashioning and her fiction gives the latter much of its message and its literary form. Those heartland concepts appear in characterization, tropes, plotting and metaphor. Martineau's early fiction was shaped by her views on how right relationships within a household must fully encompass servants and children, and her works increasingly considered how those relationships should interface with the community. Personal affliction was presented as a stimulus to improvement and a litmus test of the moral standing of those responding to the needs of others. The final core value is linked to Martineau's assumptions about the ever-present potential for individual and societal progress through knowledge: all forms of superstition were labelled a barrier to advancement. Each heartland concept was underpinned by the peremptory call of duty to household and community, which Martineau first interpreted in soteriological terms and then as a secular moral imperative: 'social piety' became social activism. These findings represent a significant departure from current academic debate, which has almost entirely eschewed the key local perspectives obtained by uncovering Martineau's upbringing in Norwich, the impact of her sudden literary fame in terms of a fraught household in London and her practical engagement with the communities of Tynemouth and Ambleside.

Part 1 interrogates Martineau's early novella *Five Years of Youth* (1831), which has received short shrift from Martineau and scholars alike. Valerie Sanders and Valerie Pichanick see it as palely imitative of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), and Pichanick complains that it is biographically unhelpful and lacks the intellectual rigour of Martineau's review articles. Caroline Roberts and Shelagh Hunter, writing respectively

on Martineau's texts in the context of the shifting discourse of Victorian ideologies and on Martineau's fusion of action and ideas, ignore the novella altogether, despite its relevance to their themes. This thesis, by situating the novel in Martineau's developing core values and her interpretations of familial, local and community experience and cultural resources, reveals it to be a tool for Martineau's exploration of individual responsibility in terms of household and community duty and the threats to duty posed by sensibility. Martineau chose sensibility as her theme because, defining it as debilitating emotionalism, she identified it as the great failing of her sister-in-law Helen Bourn Martineau, who thereby sullied the memory of Martineau's beloved brother Tom. She also refashioned Martineau family acquaintances to allow her to discuss sense and sentiment in other contexts: hence, her character Casimiro Elvi is here identified as the Italian political refugee Evasio Radice. She crafted a Mazzini-like figure from the family friend to reflect on how the severest of sorrows could, by means of sense rather than sentiment, be channelled into sympathetic action.

It is also argued that *Five Years of Youth* is underpinned by a previously-unrecognized soteriology of 'safety' which was the product of trends within Unitarianism and Martineau's reading of the work of David Hartley, Joseph Priestley and the Unitarian polemicists Thomas Belsham and Lant Carpenter. She envisaged an afterlife for which a painful, fiery preparation would be necessary for those souls unfit for God's presence. To be 'safe' meant to have lived a life of 'social piety' in household and community. Selfish sentiment might compromise social piety and render one 'unsafe'. This message had particular resonance for Martineau. First, she was to marry a fledgling Unitarian minister,

John Hugh Worthington, and envisaged in their life of social piety the safest route to the afterlife. She refused to visit him in his terminal illness, and biographers have interpreted her behaviour as rooted in psychological uncertainties. This thesis argues that her refusal stemmed rather from a fear of personal progress towards 'safety' being compromised by the onslaught of sentiment. Secondly, even though her brother's life had rendered him 'safe', his widow had thrown away the inspiration of his example through sentimentalism and a shocking remarriage.

Between 1827 and 1829, Martineau wrote several short tales, mainly for the publisher Houlston. Some have received critical attention, but largely as precursors to the work which gave her the status of a literary lioness: the *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832-4). Scholars have alleged that the Houlston tales and the *Illustrations* cravenly pursued the capitalist agenda of a manufacturer's daughter whose attitudes were bolstered by the moral and political economy of Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus. In *The Turn-Out* (1829) and *The Rioters* (1827), she purportedly proffered a defence of bourgeois hegemony and free market economics against the twin threats of strikes and machine breaking; and in the *Illustrations of Political Economy*, *Illustrations of Taxation* (1834) and *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* (1833-4), she penned stories which were supposedly complicit in their acceptance of patriarchy and attempted to assuage the guilt of the middle classes confronted by working-class suffering. Elaine Freedgood alleges that the tales acted as tranquillizing agents to quell bourgeois anxieties by upholding the ultimate beneficence of economic laws. Deirdre David argues that, in accepting woman's 'auxiliary usefulness', Martineau massaged middle-class susceptibilities.

Questionable ideology, it seems, betokens poor art. Martineau's characterization is deprecated: Claudia Oražem claims that Martineau's adults in particular are mere caricatures, with dialogue to match. Freedgood concurs, and sees their crudeness as the result of a deeply-unfortunate admixture of economic doctrine, realism and myth, flavoured with outbursts of melodrama.

Part 2 of this thesis challenges most elements of the above interpretations by offering greater contextualization and detailed textual analysis. Most positively, Sanders, Oražem and Lana Dalley have rightly drawn attention to the way in which Martineau situated her political economy in pictures of domestic economy, and there has been some attempt (most notably by Felicity James) to trace the influence therein of the children's tales of Barbault and Aikin. However, a detailed analysis of Martineau's cultural context reveals that, whereas Barbault's family members in her *Evenings at Home* (1792) were mouthpieces for ideas, Martineau's employment of her heartland concepts as the crucial underpinnings of her fiction means that she portrayed relationships *within* the household and linked them to relationships with a broader community. Nor was the Martineau fictional household restricted to nuclear family, but encompassed servants and relatives in need. Barbault and Aikin posited links between nuclear family and nation, but sidestepped community completely and did not explain how correct ideas might lead to correct relationships: their family members discuss, but do not interact.

Scholars have rightly noted that Martineau applauded Hannah More's use of fiction to

teach a moral message. This thesis posits a more intimate relationship. It notes their shared interest in the practical piety taught by Philip Doddridge and reveals, not only strong echoes of More's presentation of binary opposite households in some of Martineau's *Illustrations*, but also specific instances where borrowing takes place at the level of plot and description. But it is the differences between Martineau and More which most strikingly expose the nature of Martineau's own teachings. More's characters operate at the level of *exempla*. Their moral standing is unaccounted for, whereas Martineau's characters are often the product of environment and circumstance. One might, of course, argue that this determinism is itself a product of Martineau's enthusiastic Necessarianism. Indeed, scholars who have unwisely accepted the accuracy of Martineau's *Autobiography* have identified the supposedly instantaneous acceptance of Necessarianism as key to Martineau's writings. Freedgood, for instance, claims that she worshipped at the altar of laws both Necessarian and economic as a cure for childhood phobias. However, it is here argued that Martineau's acceptance of Necessarianism was more gradual and nuanced. If her fictional characters are often the product of their environment, they are not uniquely so, and appear to have sufficient free will to overcome their circumstances.

The very tales in which Martineau allegedly peddles her crudest propaganda for the beneficence of economic laws prove to be compromised by powerful portraits of working-class suffering, refracted through pictures of corrupted individuals, shattered households and communities in turmoil. By no means all her characters are one-dimensional, and at times her artistic and emotional investment in their fates is allowed to

deflect the overt economic message. It is also difficult to see the tales as endorsing submission to patriarchy, since women frequently play the key role in defining household and community interactions.

Part 3 offers an innovative interpretation of the period in which Martineau established her own household. It is argued that her novel *Deerbrook* (1839) offered a sophisticated reshaping of personal experience and cultural resources through the prism of fiction and operated as a model for the relationship between individual, household and community which she endeavoured to put into practice within the constraints of a restricted household in Tynemouth and through a fully-fledged household in Ambleside. Critical opinion largely characterizes *Deerbrook* as an embarrassing and anomalous attempt at romance. Pichanick, Deborah Logan and to a lesser extent Sanders are disappointed by its apparent conventionality in focusing upon marriage. Similarly, Jane Wood sees two key characters, Hester Ibbotson and the disabled governess Maria Young, as women for whom Martineau offers fortitude as their sole recourse when love fails to bring happiness. On the other hand, there have been some attempts to identify less conventional elements. Caroline Roberts argues that Martineau presents Maria as a detached observer, and one immune to the masculine hegemony represented by the clinical gaze of the surgeon Edward Hope. R.K. Webb and Tabitha Sparks agree with Roberts that the novel has a didactic purpose, but argue that Hope is heartily endorsed by Martineau as an embodiment of rational progress. Where Sparks sees a tension between romantic and medical/scientific epistemologies, Webb concludes that romance remained its defining characteristic.

This thesis, however, finds that *Deerbrook* uses romance as the medium through which Martineau communicated core messages born of the heartland concepts. Affliction teaches Hester to repair the household relationships in danger from her corrosive jealousy, and her duty to the household feeds on and is fed by the way in which the Corner House becomes a model of social activism when the plague-stricken community needs it most. Martineau's preoccupation with household explains her complex portrayal of Maria Young, whose lack of a household renders her noble qualities largely powerless. The keen insights of the servant Morris and her role as chorus identify her as a full member of the Corner House family, and the baleful effects of superstition on ignorant villagers are unflinchingly delineated.

The *Deerbrook* findings complement the results of an interrogation of archival sources and correspondence in a re-evaluation of Martineau's life in Tynemouth and Ambleside and inform a new interpretation, not only of her life in the townships, but also of her literary work in Tynemouth. Her five-year period of prostration in Tynemouth is generally seen as a hiatus in her career, and her writing as the product of debilitating illness (*Life in the Sick-Room*) and financial need (*The Playfellow* tales for children). However, *Life in the Sick-Room* proves to be much more characteristically engaged and much less morbid than her *Autobiography* and modern criticism have allowed, and *The Playfellow* tales are not so much conventional yarns of derring-do as stories replete with the teachings dictated by the heartland concepts. Moreover, local study reveals that she made the first tentative steps towards practical social activism in a household which was

circumscribed by her physical limitations but which was, given the absence of her mother, nonetheless her own. In negotiating with her landlady for improvements to the sanitation in her rented house, she projected similar improvements on to the neighbourhood, and came into conflict with a local landowner/clerical elite. Thus, Tynemouth represents the preliminary stages of Martineau's attempt to practise what she had consistently preached in terms of individual, household and community. In Ambleside, where she lived from 1845 to her death in 1876, Martineau used a relatively short period of good health to encompass those teachings in bricks and mortar. The spatial arrangements of the house she built, The Knoll, reflected her view of the nature of household. Its drainage systems were to be an example to the community, and Martineau's offered her model farm as a lesson, not only in husbandry, but in the transformation of servants through self-reliance. This thesis also undertakes the first evaluation of Martineau's chosen agent for the transformation of working-class Ambleside as a whole: the Windermere Benefit Building Society. Its cottages were to act as a catalyst for replacing profligacy and intemperance with home-loving prudence and for the short-circuiting of the attempts by a High Church elite to control the workers through limiting the housing supply. It was found, however, that the Building Society and its cottages did not prove as attractive as Martineau had hoped, and that her insistence on respectable tenants compromised their supposed power to transform.

Local history, then, is a vital component in this thesis. Predicated on the study of community, it exposes and demonstrates Martineau's core values and the ways in which she sought to apply those values to communities. Local history itself is riven

by debates about the meaning of community, and recovering Martineau's approaches to its definition makes a significant contribution. It is here argued that a sense of belonging is fundamental to a sense of community, and that Martineau's sense of belonging accepted place but transcended it. Initially, community meant Unitarian/nonconformist networking in Norwich but with an attachment to the city itself through the roles of the head of the family, Philip Meadows Martineau. Subsequently, as she set up her own household, Martineau's sense of belonging was the product of a sense of duty: the community was where that household could have the greatest impact in response to local need.

Acknowledgements

A number of debts have been incurred in the process of researching and writing, and I have great pleasure in acknowledging them. Staff at the Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham University; at the Northumberland Record Office, Woodhorn; at the Norfolk Record Office, Norwich; at the Armitt Library, Ambleside; at the National Library of Scotland and (by email) at the Bancroft Library at University of California, Berkeley were uniformly helpful, patient and forthcoming with materials which were seldom easy of access. One of the pleasures of engaging in this research has been the opportunity to meet scholars whose support has been unstinting. I should thank the following for expertise generously shared: Sue Killoran, Fellow Librarian at Harris Manchester College, Oxford; Dr Peter Nockles and Dr Graham Johnson at the John Rylands University Library, Manchester; The Rev. Dr Ann Peart, President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches; Richard Hall of the Cumbria Record Office, Kendal; Dr Clive Wilkins-Jones of the Norwich Heritage Centre; Dr David Wykes, Director of Dr Williams's Library, London; Dr William Radice of SOAS, University of London and, most particularly, my supervisor, Dr Jane Garnett, whose encouragement and wisdom have been unfailing.

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List of abbreviations

Armitt – Armitt Library, Ambleside.

BANC – The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

BUL, *HMP* – Harriet Martineau Papers, Special Collections, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

DWL – Dr Williams’s Library, London.

HM – Harriet Martineau (primary material: letters, books, articles).

HMC – Harris Manchester College, Oxford.

IPE – *Illustrations of Political Economy*.

IoT – *Illustrations of Taxation*.

PLPI – *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*.

Illustrations – *Illustrations of Political Economy, Illustrations of Taxation and Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*.

JM – James Martineau (primary material: letters, ‘Biographical Memoranda’).

JRUL, UCC – Unitarian College Collection, John Rylands University Library, Manchester.

KRO – Cumbrian Record Office, Kendal.

NoRO – Norfolk Record Office, Norwich.

PRO – Public Record Office, Kew (The National Archives).

TC&WAAS – *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*.

WBBS – Windermere Benefit Building Society.

WG – *Westmorland Gazette*.

WHRO – Northumberland Record Office, Woodhorn.

Introduction

*‘Now try and recollect if you have done any good to-day’.*¹

Harriet Martineau (1802-1876), lionized for her popularizing of political economy through the unlikely medium of fiction, was also a journalist, a novelist and writer of children’s tales, the translator of Comte, a historian, and a pioneer sociologist. Her contemporaries rarely knew what to make of this polymath, and what they did make was varied and curious. From heartfelt Unitarianism, she travelled the distance to an enthusiastically-proclaimed atheistic materialism. Her *Letters on the Laws of Man’s Nature and Development* of 1851 offended religious beliefs of virtually every hue. Her once-adored brother and Unitarian minister James wrote an excoriating attack on her co-writer and correspondent, Henry Atkinson, suggesting that his dilettante blend of science, phrenology and mesmerism was convincing only to those addicted to supine hero-worship. He included his sister in the number of the hopelessly misled.² Indeed, when she announced a spectacular cure to her five-year illness through mesmerism, this long-time proponent of the application of science and reason to the understanding of human society offended most of the scientific community. She wrote her own, rather self-deprecatory obituary for the *Daily News*,³ but had also arranged for the publication of an unrevised, posthumous autobiography (written over twenty years earlier in the mistaken belief that she was dying). Even her most ardent supporters thought it at best misjudged

¹ The words of Mr Byerley to his daughter Anna, in Harriet Martineau’s novella *Five Years of Youth; or, Sense and Sentiment* (London, 1831), p. 20.

² James Martineau, ‘Mesmeric Atheism’, *Prospective Review*, 7 (June 1851), pp. 224-62.

³ Harriet Martineau, ‘An Autobiographic Memoir’, *Daily News* (June 29 1876); reprinted in Maria Weston Chapman (ed.), *Harriet Martineau’s Autobiography* (2 vols., Boston, 1877), ii, pp. 562-73.

and at worst an uncharacteristic exercise in self-glorification and vituperation. She entrusted the autobiography to an American fellow-abolitionist, Maria Weston Chapman, and sent to her a cornucopia of letters and other intimate records; yet, she had instructed every other correspondent to destroy her letters.

The novelist and biographer Margaret Oliphant took the opportunity afforded by the publication of the *Autobiography* in 1876, not only to launch an atrabilarious attack on it as ‘a harangue from the tomb’ and ‘a terrible instrument of self-murder’ sharpened by the ‘vulgar hand of her American editress’, but also to express her own bafflement at Martineau’s apparent influence and popularity. Her faint praise was intentionally damning.

She had produced one clever book, ‘Deerbrook,’ and one little story more than clever, the ‘Feats on the Fiord,’ and had written many good newspaper biographies and other articles... She was a very sensible woman; yet not very much of a woman at all, notwithstanding her innocent and honest love of Berlin wool... We cannot but think that she has been very much overrated as a writer.⁴

There are echoes of Oliphant’s opinion and attitudes, and sense of puzzlement, in more recent scholarly interest in Martineau. Her insistence that women had a natural propensity for domesticity has been seen as compromising her view of women’s intellectual potential, and her fiction and its teaching have often been characterized as artistically and philosophically insignificant. In so judging, scholars have followed some of the scathing pronouncements and the version of personal progress provided by Martineau’s own *Autobiography*. A reappraisal of the *Autobiography* will serve as an introduction to the

⁴ Anon. (Margaret Oliphant), ‘Harriet Martineau’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 121, (April 1877), pp. 472-96.

new interpretation of key features of the interplay between her work and life – in particular, the relationship between individual, household and community - which is represented by this thesis.

“Now try and recollect if you have done any good to-day”.⁵ Mr Byerley’s admonition to his erring daughter Anna appears in Martineau’s *Five Years of Youth* of 1831: a novella largely unregarded by scholars and breezily dismissed by Martineau in the *Autobiography* as a work with which she had no desire to reacquaint herself. As with much of the *Autobiography*, this is misleading: its discourse of personal progress occludes fundamental continuities in Martineau’s core values and their ideological bases, and, since Martineau saw fiction as a key mechanism for the transmission of moral teaching, it is important to recognize consistent teaching across time and literary genre. Her vocabulary and hermeneutics changed, but her view of the relationship between individual, household and community was consistent. Indeed, Mr Byerley’s words might be Martineau’s life-long motto and were as totemic to the woman who penned her autobiography in 1854 as they were to a young girl brought up in a middle-class Unitarian household in Norwich in the 1820s. Being able to answer that question to her own satisfaction was the impetus behind the precocious child asking new acquaintances for ‘maxims’; behind her projected marriage; behind the adult’s first writings for the Unitarian periodical *The Monthly Repository*; and behind her fiction, be it in tract form (the tales largely for the Shropshire publisher Houlston), novellas, the full-length novel *Deerbrook* of 1839 or the *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832-4). It was the *Illustrations* which brought her literary fame and to the attention of the political elites.

⁵ See fn. 1, p. 6.

The need to have done a manifest good, that most potent of shibboleths, was stimulated variously by Norwich household relationships, by her adolescent reading, by her education, by the flavour of Unitarian/nonconformist networking, by the potential role as a minister's wife afforded by her short-lived engagement to John Hugh Worthington, by the radical circle around W.J. Fox (editor of the *Monthly Repository* at the time of the launch of her literary career) and by the opportunities for social activism which were apparent even in her five-year prostration on a Tynemouth sick-bed. Those opportunities were most manifest in the way in which she used her newly-built house and household in Ambleside as an *exemplum* for her adopted Lakeland community, where she lived from 1845 to her death in 1876.

The potency and peremptoriness of Byerley's call to duty shaped the *Autobiography* in the same way that it shaped Martineau's life. Autobiography was a duty to be performed where others could learn from it, and Martineau had started an autobiography as early as 1831: her then obscurity was irrelevant. The duty to teach meant that her self-presentation was refracted through the messages to be taught. Modern scholarship has generally seen the published autobiography as a manifestation of Martineau's reinterpretation of her life as one shaped by changes of opinion – in particular, her loss of religious faith. Thus, Valerie Pichanick comments that 'She wrote in large part to explain her conversion from religious orthodoxy, and the representation of her early beliefs is distorted by her later attitude';⁶ and Linda Peterson argues that Martineau accounted for her intellectual and moral progress through imposing a Comtean paradigm and thus claimed personal growth

⁶ Valerie Kossew Pichanick, *Harriet Martineau: The Woman and Her Work, 1802-76* (Ann Arbor, 1980), p. 285.

as an epitome of the advance of society itself. According to such readings, the *Autobiography* portrayed Martineau's life and opinions as a series of episodes marked by paradigm shifts which represented the progress to be made by society and writ small in the individual.

This thesis, however, situates the *Autobiography* more firmly on the one hand in Martineau's consistent core values and on the other in the precise circumstances of its writing. It is accepted that the *Autobiography* sought to impose a schema on her life and career which was the product of the bruising controversy surrounding her materialist proclamations in the Atkinson letters, and of her apparently aggressive anti-theological stance and the welcome she offered to Comte's stadial Positivism. Indeed, her 1853 translation and abridgement of Comte's *Cours de Philosophie Positive* duly consigned Christianity to an epoch of superstition. Granted, a combination of rhetorical demands of rebuttal and reproof and the proximity of death may account for her acerbic judgments on contemporaries, the relentless pace and her present-minded rampage through her own past, for its structure into 'periods' and the sub-divisions into 'sections' - some with provocative headings such as 'Anti-theological progression'. A sense of the shortness of time remaining to her explains the interpolation of virtually an entire review article in volume 1 under the heading 'Literary Lionism'.⁷ But neither rhetorical demands nor uncharacteristic haste can explain the lengthy dwelling on childhood or key omissions, such as the bitter break with her brother James; nor do they explain the discourse of

⁷ Martineau's unease at reprinting an article at length perhaps accounts for her curious set of justifications for so doing. These include the redeeming of a promise made earlier in the *Autobiography*, her supposed (and implausible) inability to use the powers of hindsight to improve on her contemporary comments and her unwillingness to dwell on her reception into London society. See *Autobiography*, i, pp. 141-2 & 205.

household and the domestic which permeates the whole work. For example, the traumas of her childhood were attributed to failings of household relationships. Her mother's 'setting-down' system of discipline and consequent lack of tenderness left the young Martineau sullen and obsessed with a vengeful desire for martyrdom;⁸ and the unjust treatment of servants left her outraged.⁹ Conversely, liberation from the sick-bed of Tynemouth and the opportunity to set up her own household were greeted with the comment: 'No true woman, married or single, *can* [her stress] be happy without some sort of domestic life'. And that happiness was to be expressed through a household in which servants were to be true members and where its values were to be projected onto the neighbourhood.¹⁰

Some scholars have noted the orientation of domesticity and have been left uncomfortable as a result – particularly when attempting to situate the *Autobiography* within the standard typology of Victorian women's life writing. Peterson is uneasy with Martineau's predilection for household duties as manifested in the *Autobiography*; it smacked of the domestic memoir and therefore was an awkward admixture of autobiographical types, since Martineau allegedly grafted it on to spiritual autobiography and public/professional memoir. Peterson claims that domesticity was reintroduced 'for the sake of the intellectual and political progress of women'.¹¹ However, it is argued here that the domestic *topos* was introduced because Martineau saw correct relationships

⁸ *Autobiography*, i, p. 15.

⁹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 16.

¹⁰ *Autobiography*, i, pp. 497-8. '...my own ideal... was a house of my own among poor improvable neighbours, with young servants whom I might train and attach to myself'.

¹¹ Linda Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing* (Charlottesville and London, 2001), p. 79.

within the household as fundamental to progress for all. Nor it is possible to accept Peterson's view that the *Autobiography* 'describes her midlife retirement to the Knoll, Ambleside',¹² since her house was a focal point for a practical and energetic agenda aimed at improving the education and living conditions of the working classes. It is significant that Martineau should stress that the meeting to form the Windermere Benefit Building Society – perhaps the key to her attempted social reforms – was 'held in my kitchen'.¹³

The Knoll as portrayed in the *Autobiography* was not a haven to shelter from the strain of coping with profound deafness or the encapsulation in bricks and mortar of a separate sphere of womanly domesticity,¹⁴ but an embodiment of the teaching on household that fashioned Martineau's fiction (and other writings) at the level of message and metaphor. This explains her phrasing and tone when describing her first night in the newly-built house. Servants and mistress share in the setting up of what is more than a home (a 'new household'). They converse rather than chat, and point the way forward to the role that Martineau adopted as mentor.

The first night...when we made our beds, stirred up the fires, and locked the doors, and had some serious talk, as members of a new household, will never be forgotten, for its sweetness and solemnity, by my maids or myself.¹⁵

¹² Peterson, *Traditions*, p. 72.

¹³ *Autobiography*, ii, p. 9.

¹⁴ Linda Peterson comments that Martineau's decision to move to Ambleside rather than return to London was arguably 'motivated not by an abstract or essentially feminine desire for domesticity, or by a belief in the moral virtues of domestic life, but by the real physical and emotional strain that her deafness caused.' *Traditions*, p. 76.

¹⁵ *Autobiography*, i, p. 520.

The interpretation of the *Autobiography* offered in this thesis reconciles Martineau's emphasis on woman's aptitude and need for the home with her view of the equivalence of male and female intellectual potential and her subscription to the 'history of my opinions' model of contemporary male autobiography. Valerie Sanders rightly reminds us of the patriarchal hermeneutic which saw autobiography itself as an 'unwomanly' genre, given that it typically demanded abilities of analysis, synthesis and introspection deemed intellectually inaccessible and emotionally inappropriate for women. Reflections on one's intellectual development or the lessons of past experiences would be open to the charge of vanity,¹⁶ but Martineau recorded her own successes and dared to dwell on her emotional experiences.¹⁷ Sanders also argues that Martineau in effect inverted the spiritual autobiography by equating progress with loss of religious faith rather than a conversion experience. On the other hand, we have noted that the *Autobiography* is in tension with its own linear triumphalism in placing such stress on childhood and domestic and household relationships; it is also in tension with the context and continuity in Martineau's core values. Thus, one might also add that Martineau's dismissive pronouncements on Unitarian theology and ministry do not reflect their shorter-term

¹⁶ Valerie Sanders, *The Private Lives of Victorian Women. Autobiography in Nineteenth Century England* (London, 1989). Women in the unusual position of being public figures might pen reminiscences or recollections, but to concentrate on one's own opinions was to transgress. Sanders tellingly cites the warning against Martineau's lack of tenderness and unfeminine egotism in W.H. Davenport Adams's *Child-Life and Girlhood of Remarkable Women* (1883).

¹⁷ This may well explain Oliphant's gibe that Martineau 'was not very much of a woman at all' (see p. 7): Oliphant is, after all, discussing a supposedly unfeminine autobiography. Oliphant's own autobiography was distorted by anxiety over her unfeminine role as head of the household and breadwinner. Her wearisome self-fashioning included self-effacement, self-deprecation and a scrupulosity which betokens an obsessive regard for the reader. Her fretful agonizing over whether or not she was boastful on a very specific occasion is a case in point. See Elisabeth Jay (ed.), *The Autobiography of Margaret Oliphant* (Oxford, 1990), p. 135. Oliphant's autobiography perhaps illustrates the fluidity of the genre, since she wanders in and out of spiritual journal (with direct appeals to God), domestic memoir and even a public journal. She does so in part due to the traumatic deaths of all her children, for whom early sections were intended, and in part through a recognition of the need to market the work to provide an inheritance for her niece.

impact on Norwich family life, networking and chapel culture and their longer-term impact on Martineau's sense of duty and on social activism.¹⁸ Martineau's self-fashioned identity in the *Autobiography* is presented as the product of the 'conversion' to a materialist morality, but this is both misleading and unsuccessful. True conversion offers an answer to the question "Turning from what to what?",¹⁹ but Martineau exaggerated the extent and nature of the change, since those core values remained a constant, and devoted her most powerful and touching writing to a younger self with whom she clearly continued to identify.²⁰

If the *Autobiography* should be seen as a richly didactic source which, in conjunction with other sources, provides key insights into Martineau's core values, their origins and intellectual underpinnings, then her early fiction itself has similar potential. Simon Skinner notes the conjuncture between polemics in Tractarian review articles and polemics in the Tractarian novel, and opines that the historian can learn as much from 'the commonplace popular literature of a period as from its more celebrated deposits'. He cites an early Houlston tale by Martineau as an example of commonplace social problem

¹⁸ See below, pp. 139-44 for a discussion of the long-term influence of the Unitarian educationalist Lant Carpenter, the concept of social piety and the Martineau family's chapel networking. Sarah Williams places the importance of the family/chapel relationship in its historiographical context by explaining its key role in shaping domestic ideals such as femininity, and so suggests that the Davidoff and Hall thesis on the shaping of attitudes to women (and religious discourse itself) by class and gender is an over-generalization. See Sarah C. Williams, 'Is there a Bible in the house? Gender, religion and family culture' in Sue Morgan & Jacqueline deVries (eds), *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940* (Abingdon, 2010), pp. 11-31.

¹⁹ See D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005), p. 12. Hindmarsh comments that historical context and textual analysis can offer an answer to the question fundamental to the conversion context itself: namely, the transformatory experience.

²⁰ Sanders comments that the *Autobiography* 'begins like an impressionistic novel'. See Valerie Sanders, *Reason over Passion: Harriet Martineau and the Victorian Novel* (Brighton, 1986), p. 138.

fiction.²¹ Of course, historians should approach fiction with an extra wariness and a methodology which allows for the identifying of unwitting as well as the witting testimony communicated through imagery, tropes, plotting and characterization. Recapturing an overt message will almost certainly mislead.²² Martineau's fiction might indeed be richly didactic, but an understanding of the relationship between her subjective experiences and her writing is needed to establish fully the nature of her teaching.

Scholars such as Deirdre David and Elaine Freedgood have concentrated on the formally didactic passages in Martineau's oeuvre and have frequently used them as a stick with which to beat Martineau as an unreflective agent of the bourgeoisie and thus as a fellow-traveller of patriarchy.²³ But to recover Martineau's explicit and implicit intentions also demands a nuanced understanding of her contextual influences and a recognition that the relationship between fiction and context is not without reciprocity, since Martineau's engagement with fiction becomes part of the context itself. As this thesis demonstrates, an appreciation of the significance of family and locality proves to be fundamental. This subjectivity, where Martineau made sense of her experiences and her own identity through the cultural and religious influences at play, shaped her early fiction in ways yet to be identified – in large part because local history has not previously

²¹ S.A. Skinner, *Tractarians and the 'Condition of England': The Social and Political Thought of the Oxford Movement* (Oxford, 2004), p. 68.

²² Gertrude Himmelfarb comments that 'the "social message" [of the 'social problem' novel]... may lie elsewhere, in ideas and attitudes communicated less overtly, in language, style, plot, characters, and scenes which were not intentionally didactic or programmatic'. See her *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (London, 1984), p. 407. See also pp. 213-9 for a discussion of the tropes, characterization and settings of Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy* where it is argued that the ideas and attitudes in some tales compromise the didactic/programmatic intent.

²³ See Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (London, 1987) and Elaine Freedgood, 'Banishing Panic: Harriet Martineau and the Popularization of Political Economy', *Victorian Studies*, 39, 1 (Autumn 1995), pp. 33-53.

been fully incorporated into critical analysis. Interrogation of previously-unmined local sources illuminates Martineau as individual, member of a household and participant in community cultures. The insights obtained, used in conjunction with Martineau's non-fictional writings and combined with close textual analysis of her fiction at the level of literary form, provide a particularly fertile exemplification of the reciprocity between Martineau's writing and life. Thus, even Catherine Gallagher's impressive discussion of the intellectual underpinnings of Martineau's didactic fiction, which she traces to the Unitarian/Necessarian tradition, needs to be reformulated to take account of that reciprocity. Where Gallagher sees inconsistency between pessimistic content and optimistic tone, she attributes it to a contradiction in Martineau's model of causation which was the result of combining providential beliefs with mechanistic doctrines.²⁴ Alternatively, Claudia Klaver situates such dissonance in the manner in which the power of fiction distorts the 'supposedly static content' of the *Illustrations*.²⁵ For Mary Poovey, Gallagher and Klaver's identification of Martineau's supposed contradictions is the result of a residual and traditional literary formalism which privileges an ideal of organic unity.²⁶ This thesis, however, through combining analysis of discourse with Martineau's interpretation of local context, acknowledges such dissonance but argues that its origin is to be found in the importance Martineau attached to household relationships and their links to community, as evidenced by her consistent use of household and community as narrative trope.

²⁴ See Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form 1832-1867* (Chicago, 1985), pp. 52-61 in particular. Gallagher relies over-heavily on the *Autobiography* for her account of Martineau's Necessarianism. See below, pp. 132-3.

²⁵ Claudia Klaver, *A/Moral Economics: Classical Political Economy and Cultural Authority in Nineteenth-Century England* (Columbus, 2003), p. 58.

²⁶ Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Chicago, 2008). See 'Interchapter 2', pp. 337-47 in particular.

To interrogate Martineau's understanding of community is to situate the thesis in the context of current debates on the definition of the term. Indeed, as John Beckett acknowledges, methodological debates in local history over the last fifty years essentially focus on 'how "community" is interpreted by the local historian'.²⁷ Debate in the pages of *Family and Community History* is couched in terms of Ruth Finnegan's five-fold typology, whereby community can be seen as a locality, a grouping with common interests but not necessarily localized, a locality or grouping bound by close ties, a sense of mutual belonging and an invitation to observe common ties and interests. Dennis Mills, in calling for historians to offer a more consistently analytical approach founded on explicit definition of what they mean by community, offers Finnegan's model as an *exemplum*.²⁸ Bernard Deacon and Moira Donald choose to emphasize Finnegan's identification of sense of belonging as fundamental to the meaning of community and see it as a process rather than attachment to specific locality.²⁹ On the other hand, Keith Snell's discussion of eighteenth and nineteenth century poor law situates a sense of belonging in a legal and emotional attachment to a locality - the parish - given that the poor at least were obliged to accept that a concept of community tied in with parish and settlement law. Snell does not of course argue that the parish was the sole focus of belonging and community, and notes that nonconformist religious groupings represent one of several alternatives.³⁰ In her Norwich upbringing, however, the Unitarian

²⁷ John Beckett, *Writing Local History* (Manchester, 2007), p. 189.

²⁸ Dennis Mills, 'Defining community: a critical review of "community" in *Family and Community History*', *Family and Community History*, 7, 1 (May 2004), pp. 6-10.

²⁹ Bernard Deacon and Moira Donald, 'In search of community history', *Family and Community History*, 7, 1 (May 2004), pp. 13-18.

³⁰ K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006). See also Snell's 'Belonging and community: understanding of "home" and

Martineau had a more complex sense of belonging, which wove in and out of locality and specific religious grouping and had an affective element in terms of close friendships. To recover it is to recognize the importance of networking based largely, but not uniquely, on the city's Unitarian chapel, the Octagon, contacts with some other nonconformists based on a shared sense of civic duty and also her family pride in the city-wide status of Philip Meadows Martineau, her uncle and head of the family. Indeed, the Martineau household in Magdalen St was the centre of such networking, which also transcended the city boundaries with its links to influential Unitarian figures such as Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Lant Carpenter. Even so, the young Martineau's extant correspondence most frequently situated community in the personal relationships and the networking associated with the family and Octagon chapel culture of Norwich.³¹ Characteristically, Martineau also linked it to social activism. Indeed, it has been possible to use archival sources such as the Octagon Chapel Brotherly Society minute book to identify further details of the social activism within the Unitarian/nonconformist communities which were mentioned but undeveloped in personal letters. For instance, Martineau's regard for her Norwich contemporary John Withers Dowson, both personal and as a model of commitment to the welfare of others, emerges from the intimate references in her correspondence, and the Unitarian manuscript sources confirm the extent of his engagement with chapel and community.³² But for Martineau, as probably for Withers Dowson and most certainly for some other Unitarians, that commitment to community

"friends" among the English poor, 1750-1850', *Economic History Review*, 65 (February 2002), pp. 1-25.

³¹ One should also recognize that some personal correspondence was fashioned in part by the possibility that a particularly profound letter might, sermon-like, be shared and commented on. Awareness of multiple readership might well have impacted on discourse, although Martineau was adamant that her own letters were not so intended and was strident in her demands that they remained 'safe' and ultimately returned or otherwise disposed of lest they entered a non-private domain. She used the word 'traitor' to describe those who provided biographers with private letters. *Autobiography*, i, p. 3.

³² See pp. 85-90.

was underpinned by soteriology: in service to the community lay a safe passage to God's presence. In this way, her sense of belonging was intimately connected to her subjectivity and the way in which she interpreted her own sense of self through the cultural resources open to her – some of which of course transcended locality. She felt she belonged, then, to a series of communities which, in J.D. Marshall's formulation, interpenetrated each other.³³

The persistence of the clarion call to social activism, and the ways in which Martineau herself responded to it, are evidenced by further linkage of correspondence with local sources for Tynemouth and Ambleside. It has proved to be particularly important to establish the nature of the social elites in both those communities, and to focus on relations between Anglican clergy and secular powers, since the correspondence suggested that Martineau's attempts to improve living conditions and education for the working classes were thwarted by a clerical/landowner alliance. Thus, such sources as enumerators' books, tithe apportionments, directories, local newspapers and the Clergy list help to establish the plausibility of Martineau's critique. However, Martineau's sense of belonging in terms of her adopted communities inevitably represented a departure from her Norwich experience, since she was physically unable to make a chapel the centre of any networking in Tynemouth, and, given her rejection of religious faith, philosophically unable to do so in Ambleside. In Ambleside in particular, her sense of community appears superficially to be territorial, since she hoped to transform the township in terms of social conditions for the workers, but her networking transcended

³³ See J.D. Marshall, 'Communities, Societies, Regions and Local History. Perceptions of locality in High and Low Furness', *The Local Historian*, 26, 1 (February 1996), pp. 36-47.

the boundaries of the township as she attempted to enlist support from friends with or without any interest in or knowledge of the community. Similarly, her clerical opponents (such as the Rev. John Tatham of Rydal) were not restricted to Ambleside parish boundaries but clearly formed alliances with landowners who lived in Ambleside. Martineau, in short, appears to have come to define community as wherever her household could have an impact and the networking which made that impact possible. This is in marked contrast to the household and community engagement of her contemporary Emma Darwin, who was also brought up in a Unitarian milieu. Darwin's extant correspondence is imbued with the network of her extended Wedgwood family, but not with the range of social activism so marked in Martineau's letters. When Charles and Emma Darwin moved to the village of Down in 1842, she appears to have attempted to assume the expected social role of village patroness. But even her daughter Henrietta Litchfield, who selectively edited her mother's letters, was obliged to conclude that she did little good, since she was unable to build up genuine personal relationships with the poor and so failed to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving.³⁴ Litchfield was perhaps thinking of the distributing of bread tokens which were redeemable at the local bakery and which may have encouraged indigence.³⁵ In any event, Darwin's charities reflected her position as wife of the magistrate living in the large house in the village. For Martineau, community might primarily be a place, but it was also a process. After all, Martineau publicized her efforts in the tiny farm attached to The Knoll in an attempt to

³⁴ Henrietta Litchfield (ed.), *Emma Darwin A century of Family Letters 1792-1896 Edited by her daughter* (2 vols, London, 1915). See ii, pp. 164-5 in particular.

³⁵ A lengthy recent biography of Emma Darwin uncovers no community engagement beyond such charities. See James D. Loy & Kent M. Loy, *Emma Darwin A Victorian Life* (Gainesville, 2010).

establish a community of interested readers.³⁶ Thus, the complex and changing meaning of the term in the case of Martineau suggests that one should heed the warning of Deacon and Donald: an over-rigid definition of community is unlikely to be helpful.

Neither does Martineau's form of social activism readily correspond to over-rigid definitions of 'civil society'. Her social engagement would appear to equate to what Robert Putnam has called 'civic virtue', which was most potent when 'embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations',³⁷ but her readiness to subject those relations to withering scrutiny and to enlist the support of those outside confessional or ideological networks in the service of a local cause sit uneasily with any such model. Equally, the importance she attached to household as an agent of change does not conform to the model of civil society as a free association of autonomous individuals. Nevertheless, Martineau's activism and her reliance on networks which were freely entered into and which existed outside state control suggest that, however elusive the term 'civil society' might be, it should not be discarded as a broad conceptual framework. And, indeed, such findings rest upon the kind of 'primary archival and textual research' which Jose Harris has identified as key to a more nuanced understanding of 'civil society'.³⁸

The insights of local history also correct the hermeneutic bias engendered by neglect of local context in Martineau scholarship. Its absence has led both to a distorted

³⁶ HM, *Our Farm of Two Acres*, (New York, 1865). It was first published in serial form in *Once a Week*, (1859). In using the word 'our' rather than 'my', Martineau chose to emphasize the shared nature of the enterprise with its roots in household rather than in her legal right of sole ownership.

³⁷ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone. The collapse and revival of American community* (New York, 2000), p. 19.

³⁸ Jose Harris, *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford, 2003), p. 11.

understanding of Martineau in biographical terms and to a lack of insight into the purposes of her fiction. In part, this may stem from a relative lack of reflexivity within the discipline of local history until recently³⁹ and an uncertainty over its relationship to other forms of history. Local history has rightly been criticized for a ‘truffle hunting’ approach which uncovers in a positivist, empirical way the individual case with an attention to fine detail, but lacks the willingness to contextualize that detail or to offer an overarching explanation which relates a specific finding to a generalization.⁴⁰ Francesca Trivellito acknowledges that the ‘truffle hunting’ term has also been applied to microhistory given its frequent emphasis on “‘the exceptional normal’” individual in a specific social setting, but points to the usefulness of revealing the incongruous and atypical in identifying broader themes and trends.⁴¹ It might be argued that Martineau is a suitable case-study of the ‘exceptional normal’, and that such an approach to her life as an acknowledged free-thinker in the heartland of High Church orthodoxy in Ambleside most certainly illuminates contrasting social and political mores. However, as Trivellito accepts, microhistory is less valuable in identifying change and continuity over time - an essential element in an understanding of Martineau’s core values.

³⁹ The call for greater reflexivity in local history is made by Andrew J. H. Jackson in ‘Local history and local history education in the early twenty-first century: organisational and intellectual challenges’, *The Local Historian*, 38, 4 (2008), pp. 266-73.

⁴⁰ See Kate Tiller, *English Local History An Introduction* (Stroud, 1992). Using Ladurie’s appealing terminology, Tiller distinguishes between ‘truffle hunting’ and ‘parachuting’. The truffle hunters are ‘given to grasping an incomplete diet of tasty morsels, and never raising their heads sufficiently to see the shape of the surrounding woodland’, whereas the parachutists apply sweeping generalizations; local historical evidence is conveniently slotted into the metanarrative. Tiller concludes that ‘the local historian needs to balance the best elements of both perspectives’ (p. 23).

⁴¹ Francesca Trivellito, ‘Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?’, accessed 13 August 2013, at <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/Oz94n9hq>. Earlier and similar defences of microhistory appear in István Szijártó, ‘Four arguments for Microhistory’, *Rethinking History*, 6, 2, (2002), pp. 209-15 and Giovanni Levi, ‘On Microhistory’ in Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 97-119.

This thesis, in exploring the relationship between individual experience, its subjectivity and didactic fiction, relates the specific to the general in recovering a cultural context which is both local and supra-local. Thus, if we build upon J.D. Marshall's argument that the ultimate subjects of local history are 'interacting groups of people',⁴² then we note how networking both local and beyond impacted on the development of Martineau's core values. These values were fed by the influence of specific individuals, by Martineau's interpretation of her family life, and by her reading, which was often directed by those whom she saw as her religious and educational mentors. It is hard to overestimate the importance, for example, of the personal influence and the writings of the Rev. Lant Carpenter and his concept of 'social piety', where true religion was defined by its practical contribution to the needs of the community. And yet, it is absent from the most recent Martineau biographies.⁴³

Charles Phythian-Adams has theorized the relationship between the particular and the general in positing the need for a recognition of the importance of a qualitative understanding of patterns of social linkage 'between individuals, between social entities, and between those same entities and yet higher orders of social and cultural reality'.⁴⁴ If 'higher orders' may be taken to include broader intellectual and cultural movements, then the Phythian-Adams model is influential in this thesis. Thus, in Part 1, an understanding of the individual is linked to the social entity of Unitarian networking, and further linked

⁴² J.D. Marshall, *The Tyranny of the Discrete. A Discussion of the Problems of Local History in England* (Aldershot, 1997), p. 100.

⁴³ In *The Hour and the Woman: Harriet Martineau's "Somewhat Remarkable Life"* (DeKalb, 2002) Deborah Logan makes no reference whatsoever to Carpenter. A brief mention of Carpenter's role in directing Martineau towards Necessarianism appears in Pichanick, p.11 in particular.

⁴⁴ Charles Phythian-Adams (ed.), *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1858: Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (Leicester, 1993), p. xiii.

to broader religious and cultural movements: namely, to a particular soteriological stance and to contemporary understandings of sensibility. Without this approach, the novella *Five Years of Youth* would be consigned to the highly-selective emphases of the *Autobiography* – and impatiently dismissed – or to the equally selective emphases of modern scholarship – and, once more, discounted.⁴⁵ Similarly, Part 3 investigates the relationships between Martineau and social and religious elites in Tynemouth and Ambleside, and links Martineau’s interpretation of those relationships to her core values as presented in the novel *Deerbrook* (1839) and her children’s tales *The Playfellow* (1841-3). Thus, Chapter 9 makes the case for a potent correspondence between fiction and life by linking the novel *Deerbrook* to Martineau’s life in Ambleside. Wedding local history sources and fiction has the additional value of further underlining the distortions of the *Autobiography* since, as we have seen, its schema discards continuity and consigns much early fiction to a rejected past. But that sense of duty, and its specific foci, remained constant. Martineau might reject the term ‘social piety’ when she rejected piety, but its fundamentally practical application remained inviolate.

What, then, does our discussion of the interplay between Martineau’s literary work and life experience reveal? This thesis posits an analytical framework which is identified within Martineau’s intellectual and cultural context and uncovered at work in her fiction. The framework develops what will be termed her ‘heartland concepts’. Martineau made specific her inexorable sense of duty. She identified right relations within the household, including the treatment of children and the integration of servants, as the necessary foundation for social activism: the values of the household were to be projected onto the

⁴⁵ For examples of impatient dismissal of *Five Years of Youth*, see pp. 44-5 below.

community. Those right relations demanded a respect for individual progress for all family members, including children and servants. This calls into question the nuclear/extended family model, since residence in the home rather than kinship defines family and does so both in Martineau's fiction and in the Knoll.⁴⁶ Individual progress was, in Martineau's view, inhibited by superstition, and education was to develop the capacity for rational thought to fight superstition's baleful effects. Characteristically and consistently, Martineau gave to the household the prime responsibility for such education. Finally, affliction and adversity represented the catalyst for, and test of, duty both inside and beyond the household. Given Martineau's profound deafness and its mishandling by her family as recounted so powerfully in the *Autobiography*, the creative interface between personal experience and art is particularly striking in this final heartland concept. Parts 2 and 3 of this thesis locate and exemplify it within her fiction as a litmus test for the other heartland concepts at work within, or stymied by, members of a household.

Although the three parts of this thesis are subdivided, it maintains a tripartite approach as dictated by the analytical underpinnings of the heartland concepts and Martineau's teachings in her key works of fiction. Part 1 explores the origin of the concepts and links them to the novella *Five Years of Youth*. Part 2 analyses the development of the heartland concepts in the period of Martineau's rise to literary fame through her *Illustrations of*

⁴⁶ See Naomi Tadmor, *Family & Friends in Eighteenth-Century England. Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge, 2001). In her first chapter, 'The concept of the household-family', Tadmor argues that a family was defined as all who lived under one roof and under the authority of a householder. Tadmor's research method pursues keywords in texts and analyses them within the social and textual context. She sees the novel as source which, given the multiple perspectives presented through the variety of characters, provides a 'richer and therefore possibly more faithful historical record of complex family concepts [than the personal diary]' (p. 42, fn. 93).

Political Economy, Illustrations of Taxation, Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated and their precursors. Part 3 analyses the culmination and practical application of the concepts in the period of opportunity occasioned by the establishment of Martineau's own household and identifies the teachings of the novel *Deerbrook* as the model for the application of her values to the community of Ambleside.

Part 1, then, focuses on Martineau's early fiction in the form of the novella *Five Years of Youth* (1831), the growth of her core values and their complex relationship to the shaping of the narrative of the novella. Its full title – *Five Years of Youth; or, Sense and Sentiment* – has perhaps encouraged scholars to label it as a lumbering pastiche of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*: understandably so, since Martineau's tale similarly features two sisters characterized by contrasting mental and emotional states.⁴⁷ Other scholars, such as Caroline Roberts and Shelagh Hunter, have ignored it altogether. This is surprising, as *Five Years of Youth* has much to say about the relationship between sentiment and action, which would appear relevant to their themes:⁴⁸ Roberts aims to place Martineau's texts in the context of shifting discourse of Victorian ideologies, and Hunter argues for Martineau's fusion of action and ideas in a 'poetics of moralism'. By contrast, this thesis situates the novella in a formative period of Martineau's life in which the core values developed; it rehearses and distils that subjectivity as Martineau made sense of experiences and influences. In this way, *Five Years of Youth* is to be seen as a reshaping of elements of Martineau's Unitarian culture both local and national which

⁴⁷ Sanders describes *Five Years of Youth* as a 'kind of junior *Sense and Sensibility*': junior, perhaps, in the ages of the main protagonists and in the jejune writing. *Reason over Passion*, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Caroline Roberts, *The Woman and the Hour. Harriet Martineau and Victorian ideologies* (Toronto, 2002); Shelagh Hunter, *Harriet Martineau: The Poetics of Moralism* (Aldershot, 1995).

have not been previously recognized. In particular, the novella offers a reworking of the doctrine of ‘safety’ – the quest for soteriological security to be earned through social piety – which was the product of the influence of Lant Carpenter, Martineau’s reading of Joseph Priestley and the Unitarian minister and theologian Thomas Belsham, together with the local activism of a number of Norwich Unitarians and other Nonconformists. Martineau’s reactions to a series of personal tragedies and traumas - the deaths of her beloved eldest brother Thomas Martineau Jr, of his infant son, and of her fiancé, John Hugh Worthington - have generally been interpreted by scholars as evidence of personal insecurities,⁴⁹ but without any recognition of how they were interpreted by Martineau herself in the context of ‘safety’. All were, to Martineau, ‘safe’ in heaven, without the need for any painful and unsafe period after death where the less innocent, the less dutiful, the less conscientious, and those without a strong commitment to social piety, would be made fit for the presence of God. Chapter 1 takes this new understanding of Martineau’s subjectivity and demonstrates how *Five Years of Youth* was the result of the interplay of chosen themes with her core values: how, for example, the criticism of Anna Byerley’s ‘sentiment’ focused not so much on the heedless and selfish emotionalism often associated with sensibility but on the inanition and reveries which incapacitated her; her elder sister Mary, on the other hand, was safe in her social piety. Indeed, Martineau made specific use of her Norwich milieu and contacts with the radical circle around the future MP W.J. Fox to provide herself with plot and characters against which the two sisters were to be measured. It would of course be facile to suggest that Martineau simply

⁴⁹ R.K. Webb claims that Martineau manifested ‘sexual uncertainties’, ‘neurotic behaviour’ and ‘hysterical self-righteousness’ when faced with her engagement to John Hugh Worthington. He opines, for instance, that ‘It would be a guess with more than a little justification that Miss Martineau was latently homosexual’. *Harriet Martineau: A Radical Victorian* (London, 1960), p. 51.

appropriated acquaintances and slotted them in an unmediated way into her novella. Mr Byerley and family may be based on Martineau's knowledge of the radical Benjamin Flower and his daughters, but chapter 3 demonstrates how relationships in particular were altered to suit Martineau's didactic purpose and heartland concepts. This thesis makes the first identification of the character Casimiro Elvi with the Italian political refugee Evasio Radice (well known to the Martineau family) and explores the manner in which Martineau refracted the context of liberty and nationalism through the prism of her core values.

In focusing on the interplay between context, core values and fiction in the period of Martineau's engagement with political economy and rise to literary fame, Part 2 establishes the importance Martineau attached to fiction as a moral agent through a discussion of her key periodical articles on the work of Walter Scott, and uncovers the nature of Martineau's engagement with women writers of fiction, Hannah More (1745-1833) and Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1824), not only in terms of didactic purpose, but also at the textual level of mimesis, both witting and unwitting. Martineau chose, on the advice of Lant Carpenter, to scrutinize More and Barbauld in depth in an important series of articles, 'Female Writers of Practical Divinity', for the *Monthly Repository* of 1822. Martineau's creative engagement with More, Barbauld and Carpenter was refracted through the influences of her own household (both positive and negative) and the Unitarian and nonconformist networkings within and beyond Norwich. Carpenter's concept of social piety was reinforced by his personal example and published writings; from More and Barbauld, she saw how it could be stimulated by the medium of fiction.

And from Barbauld, known to the Martineau family through personal contact, she additionally saw how fiction might stimulate progress through rational debate.

Scholarly recognition of the impact on Martineau's fiction of Carpenter, More and Barbauld has been limited. Claudia Oražem⁵⁰ and Sanders comment briefly on the elements of applied economics in a domestic setting in More's tales. Josephine McDonagh discusses domestic economy in Barbauld's writings, but makes no link between Barbauld and Martineau.⁵¹ Shelagh Hunter's chapter 'Mrs Barbauld's daughter' has, despite its title, little to say about what Martineau owed to Barbauld. Felicity James notes that the Barbauld and Aikin children's tales encouraged Martineau to see how political economy might be linked with the ideology of household and family,⁵² but does not explore key differences in the way in which Barbauld and Martineau presented their scenes of domestic discourse. Thus, the detailed comparison offered by chapter 4 reveals that, whereas Barbauld's family members were mouthpieces for ideas and rarely interacted socially and emotionally, Martineau's employment of the heartland concepts as the crucial underpinnings of her fiction meant that she portrayed relationships within the household and linked them to relationships with the community. Thus, the household of Cousin Marshall in the eponymous tale is loving in its relationships and a true partnership exists between the clever wife and the dull but respectable, sober and frugal husband. The couple's children are taken into their parents' confidence when troubles abound; their

⁵⁰ Claudia Oražem, *Political Economy and Fiction in the Early Works of Harriet Martineau* (New York, 1999).

⁵¹ Josephine McDonagh, 'Barbauld's Domestic Economy' in Anne Janowitz (ed.), *Essays and Studies 1998 Romanticism and Gender* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 62-77.

⁵² Felicity James, "'Socinian and political-economy formulas': Martineau the Unitarian' in Ella Dzelzainis and Cora Kaplan (eds), *Harriet Martineau: Authorship, society and empire* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 74-87.

opinions are valued. And it is the Marshall household which is a model to its neighbours; charitable, caring, willing to take in orphans rather than consign them to the workhouse.⁵³ Barbauld explicitly saw the home as the nation writ small, but, unlike Martineau, did not attempt to explain how it might be writ larger as neighbourhood.

Furthermore, chapter 4 identifies instances where Martineau appeared to have borrowed directly from Hannah More in terms of the format and monthly publication of the *Cheap Repository Tracts* and at the level of incident and character outline. The *Illustrations* frequently made use of a refined version of More's 'binary opposite' of individuals and households, albeit without More's facile rewarding of goodness with worldly success and health and punishing badness with abject failure and death. The refining is manifested in a more nuanced characterization and an unwillingness to distribute success and failure according to worth. Philip Nelson in 'The Land's End' is a member of the 'good' household, but is flawed by superstition; Cousin Marshall is a member of the 'good' household, but her end is little better than grinding poverty.⁵⁴

A detailed analysis of family context demonstrates the way in which the heartland concepts, together with Martineau's mining and fashioning of autobiographical elements, informed and shaped her contemporary fiction, which included the early tales for the Shropshire religious publisher Houlston in the late 1820s. For example, the earlier instability and then the final collapse of the family business in 1829 gave impetus and justification for the attempt to earn increasingly-necessary money through her pen, which

⁵³ See pp. 220-1.

⁵⁴ See pp. 210-11; 221.

in turn also encouraged her to develop further her view of the moral imperative which was the correct response to affliction. It is argued that this core value is refined in her fiction as a metaphor and trope for self-worth.

Such findings call into question much received opinion on Martineau's fiction of this period, including the author's own (as expressed in the *Autobiography*). The Houlston tales were largely dismissed by Martineau as 'trumpery'⁵⁵ and have been ignored or given short shrift by scholars, in part on the grounds that they and the *Illustrations of Political Economy* relentlessly pursued the didactic agenda one might expect of a manufacturer's daughter who was particularly well read in the moral and political economy of Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus: namely, a defence of bourgeois hegemony and free market economics against strikes and machine breaking (hence *The Turn-out* of 1829 and *The Rioters* of 1827). Claudia Oražem, for instance, claims that Martineau's adults in particular were more caricature than character, and that her dialogue creaked under the weight of the implausible spouting of economic doctrines.⁵⁶ For Freedgood, Martineau's uncomfortable hybrid of economic laws, myth and realism results in characters so compromised and crude that their life-spans in the memory of the reader are woefully short, and often terminated in bursts of ill-advised melodrama.⁵⁷ But such judgements, which link poor art with questionable ideology, are inadequate. Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate that Martineau's characters are often far more than mouthpieces for bourgeois economics. Affected by circumstance and environment, by mischance or malevolence, they grow and diminish: Jane Bridgeman in 'Cousin

⁵⁵ *Autobiography*, i, p. 93.

⁵⁶ Oražem, *Political Economy*.

⁵⁷ Freedgood, 'Banishing Panic'.

Marshall', for instance, comes close to redemption from the corruptions of the workhouse, only to be betrayed in the end.⁵⁸ Secondly, scenes of working-class distress are simply too shocking, and solutions too tentative and uncertain, to leave the didactic elements uncompromised. In 'The Land's End', the depression of 1818 could not be withstood by the most prudent 'tributer' in a Cornish tin mine, and the scene where parish officers tried to remove the cradle of his dying child is deep pathos, not melodrama.⁵⁹ Martineau's overt messages in the Houlston tales and the *IPE* do indeed object to any actions on the workers' part which supposedly damage an employer's productive capacity, since the interests of employers and workers are theoretically identical in a capitalist economy. But such didacticism is nuanced by the author's emotional engagement with the impact of distress (however supposedly short-term) on the households of the working classes. In short, effective household relationships are sabotaged by extreme want, and so Martineau's core values come into conflict with economic ideology. The result is the didactically uncertain but emotionally powerful ending to *The Rioters*, where the narrator's sympathy – and that of the author – is directed towards those whose despair led them to riot, and whose family is relieved, not by market forces, but by personal benevolence.⁶⁰ Similarly, Martineau's approach to union agitators in 'A Manchester Strike' is relatively even-handed and certainly does not denigrate their motives.⁶¹ In this way, it is difficult to accept the arguments of Ivanka Kovačević,⁶² who complains that Martineau lacked any sympathy for the working-class

⁵⁸ See p. 221.

⁵⁹ See p. 214.

⁶⁰ See pp. 168-70.

⁶¹ See p. 216.

⁶² Ivanka Kovačević, *Fact into Fiction: English Literature and the Industrial Scene 1750-1850* (Leicester, 1975).

struggle, or of Elaine Freedgood,⁶³ who alleges that the tales acted as short-term (and therefore not fully effective) opiates to soothe the anxieties of the bourgeoisie through the convenient argument that the distress of the workers was the temporary by-product of immutable economic laws. On the other hand, Catherine Gallagher rightly points to how Martineau's plotting endows some of her working-class characters (such as William Allen in 'A Manchester Strike') with the status of tragic heroes, but goes on to claim that her generally optimistic tone sabotages the tragedy, in that Martineau's Necessarianism and her belief in Providence combined to posit an ultimately beneficent working of economic laws. However, Gallagher neither identifies nor acknowledges the importance of the household trope which colours both plotting and characterization: it is this core value that leads to what chapter 6 calls 'the disjuncture of distress' and the harrowing pictures of working-class families in a despair which political economy does not relieve.

In short, Part 2 demonstrates that Martineau's teaching and medium are far more complex than has been previously adduced. Martineau's fiction was the product of a complicated but identifiable interplay between her interpretations of cultural contexts, individual, familial and community experiences and the creative act. Her purposes in the *Illustrations*, then, cannot be limited to alleged bourgeois economic posturing but instead encompassed her core values. Her tales wove in and out of those heartland concepts, sometimes emphasizing a particular one as part of the imaginative process, and sometimes demonstrating how one positive good could be negated by the absence of another. The most telling example, perhaps, is 'The Scholars of Arneside'. Its central character, Nurse Ede, is a loving mother, but Ede is ignorant and cannot provide the

⁶³ Freedgood, 'Banishing Panic'.

answers that children need. Most of her family fall into superstition, and its effects are so baleful precisely because they can sabotage duty most lovingly performed: Nurse Ede dies amidst accusations of witchcraft and in the face of indifference on the part of her own child. The terrible irony of the title is all too manifest.⁶⁴

It is the discourse of household relationships that best exemplifies Martineau's attitude towards gender relations. Thus, households where couples did not work in partnership were flawed; dominance in any form had the potential to corrupt both household and community. This is not to suggest that Martineau proffered households where husband and wife or parent and adult child lived in an unlikely state of parity both moral and intellectual: good and bad households and most points in between were shaped more by one adult than another, and that adult might be female. Where a household depended upon a single adult, Martineau most frequently placed a woman in the role of authority. Where it was a force for good, its female head nurtured the individuality of the other members of the household and encouraged their autonomy and growth: hence, Martineau's Ella in 'Ella of Garveloch'.⁶⁵ When a force for bad, it corrupted household relationships which encompassed, as we have seen, servants: hence, the rebellion of the loyal and loving servant Morgan against the destructive avarice of Jane Farrer in 'The FARRERS OF BUDGE-ROW'.⁶⁶ This analysis allows us to challenge the contention that Martineau's feminism was compromised by her unwillingness to throw off the patriarchal yoke. In an objection to Martineau's supposed submissiveness, Deirdre David takes a phrase from the self-penned obituary: writing of her *A History of the Thirty Years' Peace*

⁶⁴ See pp. 211-13.

⁶⁵ See p. 223.

⁶⁶ See pp. 226-7.

(1849-50), Martineau had referred to its ‘auxiliary usefulness’ and David converts the two words into a stick with which to beat Martineau on the grounds that she was complicit with hegemonic patriarchy. In short, her writings about women (and the industrial working class, for that matter) ‘share a central contradiction in the call for them to be educated so that they may rationally assent to their ancillary status’.⁶⁷ However, our analysis of household relationships in several *IPE* tales reveals that womanly submission in the face of unthinking male dominance was strongly deprecated and led to catastrophe. The most telling examples are Dora Sullivan in ‘Ireland’, who allows her ignorant father to dismiss her warnings about the terms of a lease – leading to the destruction of all household relationships, including her love for her own child – and Hester Morrison in ‘Berkeley the Banker’, whose desperate attempts to be valued by her husband implicate her in his criminality.⁶⁸

Examining the reciprocity between context and writings both fictive and non-fictional reveals that Martineau’s feminism is best understood as the concomitant of her core values, expressed in particular through the discourse of household and household relationships. In its reminiscences of early London literary life, the *Autobiography* veered into a discussion of the rights of women, and anchored it in individual responsibility, self-discipline and benevolence beyond personal love. The bitterness of broken relationships, so often and so wrongly adduced as a justification for advancing the cause of women, were not to dictate such calls. In Martineau’s view, they were to be voiced by the woman who can ‘think and speak wisely, and bring up her children soundly, in regard to the

⁶⁷ David, *Intellectual Women*, p. 53.

⁶⁸ For a discussion of ‘Ireland’, see pp. 228-9 and, for ‘Berkeley the Banker’, p. 228.

rights and duties of society'.⁶⁹ Martineau insisted that women had a natural propensity for domestic life, and should have every opportunity to fulfil it – which meant undergoing appropriate moral and intellectual training to meet the very considerable demands of household roles and responsibilities. On a number of occasions, Martineau asserted that there existed no fundamental difference between male and female intellects. Thus, in an 1823 *Monthly Repository* article on female education, written under the male pseudonym 'Discipulus', she argued that girls had the same capacity for mental development as boys, and should have every opportunity to further it.⁷⁰ In *Household Education* (1849), her discussion of intellectual training did not distinguish between boys and girls, and adduced several instances of intellectual gain using her own experience as evidence.⁷¹ In the *Monthly Repository* article, Martineau explicitly endorsed Mary Wollstonecraft's views on identical intellectual potential irrespective of gender, but, as chapter 3 demonstrates, she deprecated her lack of self-control and presented Wollstonecraft as an archetypal victim of sensibility who thereby damaged women's cause.⁷² Individual morality could be separated neither from duties to household or community nor claims to the role of sage. It is the contention of chapter 7 that the tragedy of her character Maria Young in *Deerbrook* is that, despite her moral and intellectual stature and what Martineau usually sees as the salutary teaching of adversity (in her case, lameness), she is disempowered because she belongs to no household.⁷³ Acknowledging the centrality of the household

⁶⁹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 303.

⁷⁰ HM, 'On Female Education', *Monthly Repository*, 18 (February 1823), pp. 77-81.

⁷¹ See HM, *Household Education* (London, 1849), pp. 186-9 in particular.

⁷² *Autobiography*, i, pp. 301-3. See also below, pp. 107-10.

⁷³ Chapter 7 takes issue with those such as Caroline Roberts who claim the portrayal of an empowered Maria Young as evidence for Martineau's considerable feminist credentials. See pp. 241-2.

theme overcomes the difficulty faced by some scholars in attempting to account for the apparent paradoxes of Young's position.⁷⁴

Indeed, the way in which this thesis uncovers the reciprocities between Martineau's life and work leads to a nuanced understanding of Martineau's feminism. In particular, part 3 investigates the role played by Martineau's households in the townships of Tynemouth and Ambleside,⁷⁵ and demonstrates how her core values connected the domains of private and public as model, extrapolation and concomitance. Martineau's social activism in Tynemouth, which took place despite her five-year physical prostration and in the face of obstructiveness from a social and clerical elite, is for the first time identified in detail. Placing the sick-bed monologue *Life in the Sick-Room* (1844) and the children's tales *The Playfellow* (1841-3) in the context of engaged social practice and acknowledging the interplay between her actions and her published work necessitates a radical reappraisal of the period of her incapacity. Contrary to most received opinion, and particularly that of Maria Frawley,⁷⁶ Ann Hobart⁷⁷ and Diana Postlethwaite,⁷⁸ this thesis does not accept that Martineau's time in Tynemouth should be seen as a hiatus which was in large part the result of the psychological need for retreat, submission and conformity to gender

⁷⁴ Alexis Easley, for example, rather uncertainly claims that 'she remains a redundant yet somehow vitally necessary observer'. See her *First-Person Anonymous: Women Writers and Victorian Print Media* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 56 and below, p. 253.

⁷⁵ Amanda Vickery has called for case studies of the social lives, economic roles, 'institutional opportunities and personal preoccupations of women', rather than relying on texts to establish how women negotiated the private and public domains. See 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, 36, 2 (June 1993), p. 414.

⁷⁶ Maria H. Frawley, 'Desert places/gendered spaces: Victorian Women in the Middle East', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 15, 1 (1991), pp. 49-64.

⁷⁷ Ann Hobart, 'Harriet Martineau's Political Economy of Everyday Life'. *Victorian Studies*, 37, 2 (Winter 1994), pp. 223-51.

⁷⁸ Diana Postlethwaite, 'Mothering and Mesmerism in the Life of Harriet Martineau', *Signs*, 14, 3 (Spring 1989), pp. 583-609.

stereotypes of female physical and intellectual fragility. Admittedly, it is possible to read her writings from that period as personally atypical in their apparent conformism. *Life in the Sick-Room* appears to be a martyr discourse of Christian resignation, and was sweepingly dismissed in the *Autobiography* as morbid and metaphysical. The children's tales *The Playfellow* (1841-3) apparently offered flattering accounts of boys' bravery and derring-do which helpfully maintained patriarchal hegemony. However, *Life in the Sick-Room* is as often energetic and combative as it is plaintive and resigned and should be seen as consistent with Martineau's discourse of 'safety', which hardly lent itself to quiescent, self-pitying, sofa-based torpor. It is also argued that *The Playfellow* tales represented a restatement of Martineau's core values of duty and the stimulus of affliction, typically resonating with concealed autobiography: hardly a set of pot-boilers written to eke out declining savings and dismissed as such by Pichanick.⁷⁹

Chapter 7 of this thesis also argues that *Deerbrook* represented a reworking of Martineau's messages on the correct relationship between individual, household and community through the trope of a middle-class love story. In short, the heartland concepts were recast within the genre of romance but transcended it didactically. Thus, *Deerbrook* explored the tense and potentially catastrophic relationships within the Hope household, where the village surgeon, Edward Hope, lives with his morbidly jealous wife Hester and the woman he truly loved, Hester's sister Margaret. But the title of the novel reflects its true focus: the community of Deerbrook. It demonstrates how adversity, stemming from evils within the village, impacted on the Hopes and stimulated a shared

⁷⁹ See below, pp. 277-88 and Pichanick, p. 127: 'It was almost as if she [Martineau] went out of her way to avoid controversy and to give the public what it liked and expected'.

commitment to duty and community. The Hopes' Corner House (aptly named) turns into a force for good in a selfish and superstitious village. For good measure, Martineau re-emphasized the servant as full member of household: Morris in *Deerbrook* combines the role of wise servant with chorus.⁸⁰ This reading of *Deerbrook* therefore calls into question the more dismissive interpretations of some recent scholars. Seen by Deborah Logan, Pichanick and to a lesser extent Sanders as embarrassingly conventional, the novel is judged to be a sub-Austen romance with love and marriage as its theme. Jane Wood is equally disappointed, since two of its key characters, Hester and the disabled governess Maria Young, are allegedly offered no recourse but fortitude when unhappy in love.⁸¹

On the other hand, Alexis Easley claims that *Deerbrook* represented the attempt by Martineau to analyse gender issues, but, unwilling to be branded an exhibitionist bluestocking, she did so 'behind the veil of fictionality'.⁸² Given the importance Martineau attached to fiction, it is perhaps odd to contemplate her seeing it as any form of concealment. Indeed, Martineau's attitude towards concealment informs Aeron Hunt's reading of *Deerbrook*; her focus on love and desire was supposedly rendered uncertain by a failure to reconcile her ethic of openness in the domestic sphere with the need for privacy: a failure which, according to Hunt, characterized Victorian society's ambivalence about freedom of communication and privacy in both home and business. Hunt's interpretation identifies Martineau's message in her supposed diagnosis of *Deerbrook*'s ills as the result of failures of free and fair communication, but claims that

⁸⁰ See pp. 258-9.

⁸¹ Jane Wood, *Passion and Pathology in Victorian Fiction* (Oxford, 2001).

⁸² Easley, p. 49.

her inconsistencies were exposed through the manner in which she treated romance.⁸³ Tabitha Sparks and R. K. Webb agree that Martineau had a didactic purpose beyond romance. Hope is presented as a force for good, since he represents rationalism and progress in what Sparks sees as a clash between romantic and medical epistemologies.⁸⁴ Webb, however, could not resist the comment that, in the end, *Deerbrook* was ‘a woman’s book’⁸⁵ and so romance remained its defining characteristic. Were that the case, then it is perhaps unlikely that the Martineau of the *Autobiography* should have retained, as she clearly did, her enthusiasm for the book. Indeed, she quoted from a personal letter from her co-author Henry Atkinson complaining of the dishonesty of those who raised religious objections to their recently-published *Letters on the Laws of Man’s Nature and Development* and who had nevertheless praised *Deerbrook* ten years earlier. ‘They like “Deerbrook” – yes, as a picture: but the spirit of “Deerbrook” is not in them, or they would love the spirit of the author of “Deerbrook.”’⁸⁶ In short, he was rooting *Deerbrook* in Martineau’s long-held heartland concepts. So did Martineau, and so does this thesis.

The true teachings of *Deerbrook*, encapsulating the imperatives of Martineau’s core values, reappear in Martineau’s *Household Education* (1848). Chapter 7 suggests that this popular work might almost be seen as the rewriting of *Deerbrook* as a guide to education for secularist parents, and that her conclusion to *Household Education* might similarly be a conclusion to the novel.

⁸³ Aeron Hunt, ‘Open Accounts: Harriet Martineau and the Problem of Privacy in Early-Victorian Culture’, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 62, 1 (June 2007), pp. 1-28.

⁸⁴ Tabitha Sparks, *The Doctor in the Victorian Novel: Family Practices* (Farnham, 2009).

⁸⁵ Webb, p. 188.

⁸⁶ *Autobiography*, ii, p. 55.

Here we have arrived at the ultimate stage of Household Education, - that where the entire household advances together, in equal companionship, towards the great object of human existence, the perfecting of each individual in it.⁸⁷

Household Education includes familiar Martineau themes on the role of the servant as a full member of a household and the right uses of adversity: in brief, it recasts the message of *Deerbrook* and therefore her core values in a theoretical form.

The most significant revisiting of the heartland concepts appeared in the most striking way: in settling in Ambleside in 1845, Martineau pursued those imperatives through establishing a model household in building her home and designing its spatial relationships accordingly, in setting up her two acre farm and the cottage she built for her farm labourer and his wife, in launching a series of lectures for the ‘workies’, as she termed the labouring classes, and pursuing drainage schemes, in setting up a Building Society and in building cottages to transform the irresponsible and profligate. If she had by this time lost her religious faith and discarded the doctrine of ‘safety’, she had nevertheless moved seamlessly from social piety to social activism, and the difference was barely discernible in practice. What was originally a belief that individual religious progress demanded practical action in the community became a belief that moral progress demanded practical action in the community. Scholars have recognized neither the importance of Martineau’s life in Ambleside nor its continuity with her writings and previous experience. Michael Hill and Susan Hoecker-Drysdale have claimed Martineau as a pioneer sociologist, but omit completely her engaged social practice in her adopted

⁸⁷ HM, *Household Education*, p. 324.

community.⁸⁸ Pichanick's biography skates over Ambleside in four pages and attaches as much importance to Martineau's energetic walking as to her 'civic conscientiousness'.⁸⁹ Alexis Easley, keen to present the Knoll as 'on some level' part of Martineau's desire to establish herself and her home 'on the literary map of England, both literally and figuratively', mentions her social activism only to interpret it as part of a literary attempt to depict the Lake District as a region in constant social flux.⁹⁰

Chapter 9, however, reveals that Martineau attempted to live up to her own teachings: *Deerbrook* thus became part of the cultural resources which provided the imperatives shaping her engagement with the community, and that the very tropes of her fiction resurfaced as she struggled with superstition, battled with social and religious elites, aimed to establish in her household right relations with relatives and servants and attempted to lead by example in her model farm and in the Knoll's drainage systems. In attempting to project such models onto her community, she was reacting against the anti-household of Fludyer St, which represented to Martineau her mother's attempt to subvert her daughter's new-found London fame in the interests of her own power and status: Elizabeth Martineau's insistence on joining her daughter in London meant a dramatic return to the old injustices of Norwich. We note, however, that Martineau in Ambleside was herself at times inconsistent and unfair in her activism,⁹¹ but that, in essence, her

⁸⁸ Michael R. Hill & Susan Hoecker-Drysdale (eds), *Harriet Martineau: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives*, (London, 2001).

⁸⁹ Pichanick, p. 139.

⁹⁰ Alexis Easley, *Literary Celebrity, Gender, and Victorian Authorship, 1850-1914* (Newark, 2011), p. 83.

⁹¹ See pp. 319-22.

heartland concepts guided her life as they had shaped her fiction. She perhaps would have not found it difficult to “recollect if you have done any good today.”⁹²

⁹² See p. 6.

Part 1

Five Years of Youth; or, Sense and Sentiment and the origins of Martineau's 'heartland concepts'

'I wrote the Tale... "Five Years of Youth," which I have never looked at since'.⁹³

Introduction to Part 1

Written when Harriet Martineau was twenty-eight and in what it is tempting to see as a gap between writing reviews for the relatively—obscure Unitarian periodical *The Monthly Repository* and the Damascene moment of inspiration that led to the *Illustrations of Political Economy* of 1832-4, *Five Years of Youth* (1831) appears to be a naïvely didactic work attacking the deleterious effects of excessive sensibility on a young girl.⁹⁴ The Martineau of 1855 dismissed it with the breezy and insouciant impatience which characterizes her *Autobiography*.⁹⁵ Modern scholarly commentary is absent or unenthusiastic. Caroline Roberts offers an examination of Martineau's texts in the context of the shifting and contested discourse of political, economic and social relations, but eschews sensibility and has nothing to say on *Five Years of Youth*.⁹⁶ Shelagh Hunter's discussion of the 'poetics of moralism' explores Martineau's fusion of ideas and action, but, given that *Five Years of Youth* tackles the relationship between sentiment and duty, it is disappointing that the novella is ignored.⁹⁷ Valerie Sanders labels the story as weakly-derivative version of *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), especially since, in an apparent echo

⁹³ Maria Weston Chapman (ed.), *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography* (2 vols., Boston, 1877), i, p. 115.

⁹⁴ Martineau wrote *Five Years of Youth* in a period of suspenseful waiting after submitting three entries to a Central Unitarian Association essay competition whereby Catholics, Jews and Muslims were to be presented with a Unitarian critique of their creeds.

⁹⁵ See the introduction, pp. 10-14 for a discussion of Martineau's misleadingly schematic self-fashioning in her *Autobiography*.

⁹⁶ Caroline Roberts, *The Woman and the Hour: Harriet Martineau and Victorian Ideologies* (Toronto, 2002).

⁹⁷ Shelagh Hunter, *Harriet Martineau: The Poetics of Moralism* (Aldershot, 1995).

of Austen, it contrasts the sense of an elder sister with the sentimentality of a younger.⁹⁸ Valerie Pichanick sees it as a ‘slight novella...As the subtitle would indicate, Harriet Martineau tried to recreate an Austen-like domestic novel. It is, however, a trivial work lacking the perception which was becoming apparent in her better review articles’.⁹⁹ Deborah Logan, keen to defend Martineau’s feminist credentials, claims that the novella ‘dramatizes the importance of proper training for young girls’ and, in attacking sentimentalism, challenges a gender stereotype. However, her discussion fails to acknowledge the complexity of Martineau’s treatment of female domesticity and mistakenly reverses the characteristics of the two main protagonists, Anna and Mary Byerley.¹⁰⁰

Part 1 offers a re-evaluation of *Five Years of Youth*, and firmly situates it, for the first time, in Martineau’s familial, local and Unitarian context. This allows us to recover the ways in which Martineau made sense of her own experience and identity in the light of a complex religious, social and cultural milieu and refracted it through didactic fiction. If her fiction was shaped by the context of its production, the fiction itself forms part of that context: thus, it is vital to recognize the interplay between her interpretations of life experiences and her writing. Exploring her subjectivity in this manner illuminates, not only *Five Years of Youth* itself, but also the development of ‘heartland concepts’ - those

⁹⁸ Valerie Sanders, *Reason over Passion: Harriet Martineau and the Victorian Novel* (Brighton, 1986), p. 9. Sanders includes *Five Years of Youth* in a group of early children’s tales which is ‘far less important than the *Playfellow* series she was to write in 1841, and few readers will have noticed her early protests against sentimental literature’.

⁹⁹ Valerie Kossew Pichanick, *Harriet Martineau: The Woman and Her Work, 1802-76* (Ann Arbor, 1980), p. 38.

¹⁰⁰ Deborah Anna Logan, *The Hour and the Woman: Harriet Martineau’s ‘Somewhat Remarkable’ Life* (DeKalb, 2002), p. 140. Logan writes that ‘Anna develops into a sensible young woman concerned with the well-being of others, while Mary, who is emotional and self-centered, is the bane of her father’s existence’. It is Mary who represents sense, and Anna who represents sentiment.

core values which underpinned Martineau's writing and her life in a remarkably consistent manner. In *Five Years of Youth*, and in the circumstances of its writing, the growth of those concepts can be traced as Martineau engaged with issues of correct relationships within families and communities, of duty, of social activism informed by religious faith ('social piety'),¹⁰¹ and with forces such as superstition which damaged the progress of individual and society. It will be seen that Martineau demanded the best intellectual and moral education for daughters, and expected it to be applied to domestic duties; a well-ordered mind should lead to a well-ordered household. She considered that the household should include servants as willing participants in its advancement. Household relationships must help to shape the local community by example, and the novella criticized the main male character, Mr Byerley, for a selfish isolationism. The focus on the dangers of sensibility allowed Martineau to make the claim that distorted sentiment could compromise the sense of duty which should be at once the product of household education, the key to social piety and the result of a commitment to self-improvement.

Since autobiography permeated all her work, it is unsurprising that she should mine her own life and her interpretation of its meaning and purpose as communicated through personal experience for evidence in support of the novella's teachings. Recognizing the relationship between Martineau's life and *Five Years of Youth* has the additional advantage of allowing us to explore the way in which Martineau refracted previously-unrecognized biographical detail through the prism of her core values and attitudes towards liberty and national feeling. Thus, a key character in the story, a political refugee

¹⁰¹ For the derivation of the term 'social piety' as used by Martineau, see the discussion on pp. 139-44 of the influence of the Unitarian minister and teacher Lant Carpenter.

named Elvi, is revealed as a Colonel Radice; Martineau used her personal sympathy for Radice and her regard for his role as a liberal Italian nationalist to shape a didactic strand in the novella. His distress as a refugee, and his thwarted ideals, are not allowed to compromise his willingness to do his duty in support of others.

It is essential to connect Martineau's intellectual and religious context, which included her view of the contested ideology of sensibility, with the specific local context in Norwich and with the Unitarian network there and beyond. That local context was partly shaped by relationships within the Martineau family and household to which Martineau reacted both positively and negatively. Her beloved eldest brother, Tom, represented the Martineau *sans pareil*. The pedestal upon which she placed him was inscribed with his sayings and doings. His was the vital approbation of her ambitions as a writer. His young household was to be the epitome of what the Martineaus should represent to their community, since he was heir to the wider family's influential position within the city (as reflected in the considerable influence wielded by the head of the family, her uncle Philip Meadows Martineau). Tom's marriage, early death and the fraught relationships between the Martineaus and his young widow, Helen Bourn Martineau, underpin *Five Years of Youth*: the theme of sensibility represents an attack on Helen Martineau's alleged failings and the sully of Tom's memory as represented by an unsuitable remarriage. None of the brief critiques of *Five Years of Youth*, nor, indeed, the biographies, recognize the importance of Tom and Helen Martineau to the development of Martineau's world-view and her heartland concepts.

The story is also underpinned by a crucial, but previously unacknowledged, element in Martineau's thought: her soteriology. Through her readings of prominent Unitarians such as Joseph Priestley and Thomas Belsham, and from the Associationism of David Hartley as mediated by Priestley and her mentor Lant Carpenter, she envisaged a preliminary afterlife which would welcome or prepare the soul for heaven. If sin had rendered the soul initially incapable of appreciating its final place with God, that necessary preparation would be agonizing and horribly prolonged. This is her concept of safety. Her adored brother, she believed, was safe: his life of duty and social piety meant that there should have been no painful delay in his journey to his maker. She hoped for safety for herself and for her fiancé, John Hugh Worthington, who died in the midst of their plans for a shared life of rigorous commitment to progress. Sensibility was not, in her terms, safe, since it potentially rendered a person incapable of forming the right household relationships, of fulfilling duty, of seeking personal improvement, of engaging in social piety and, ultimately, of being fit for heaven.

Although the essentials of Martineau's concept of the relationship between individual, household and community were present at the time of writing *Five Years of Youth*, it would be ill-advised to assume that all elements were fully developed as in her later fiction such as the 1839 novel *Deerbrook* or as practised in her own household in Ambleside.¹⁰² In particular, the concept of social piety might demand social activism, but it did so fundamentally in terms of safety in the after-life. Thus, the precise way in which a household might act as a model to be projected on to the community, and, indeed, be stimulated by interaction, was not fully articulated in the story. Indeed, Martineau's

¹⁰² See Part 3, chapter 9 in particular.

presentation of the community in *Five Years of Youth* was marked not so much by a sense of place and locality as by an intellectual and religious networking characterized by visitors and visits rather than proximity and neighbourhood. Here we see the interplay with Martineau's own sense of belonging, which was not focused on a well-defined geographical entity such as a parish. The evidence from her correspondence places that sense of belonging in the family household in Magdalen Street, in the wider Martineau family and its city-wide reputation, in the Unitarian Octagon Chapel, in the Unitarian networking beyond Norwich and in links with other nonconformists. The city of Norwich thus had its importance to Martineau, but as an arena in which the worth of Martineaus, and their social piety, were to be displayed and acknowledged.¹⁰³

Five Years of Youth, then, should be seen as far more than a fledgling writer's homage to a great author or a work of juvenilia for juveniles. Its approach to the discourse of sensibility is not weakly imitative, since its picture of the victim of sensibility proves to be far more negative than Austen's portrait of Marianne Dashwood. Moreover, the symptoms are different: Marianne is addicted to emotional excitement, but Martineau's Anna Byerley is lachrymose, febrile and sedated by lassitude. This version of the dangers of sensibility is not entirely remote from other early nineteenth-century critiques, but does point towards later nineteenth-century attacks on the evils of sentimentality. Whilst endorsing the need to recognize differences in definitions of sentiment, sensibility and

¹⁰³ See below, pp. 57-62. Keith Snell, whilst emphasizing the centrality of the parish to the concept of the home and community in the long nineteenth century, recognizes the existence of alternative foci of community and belonging in Nonconformist groupings, including that of cultural regions. See K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006). See above, pp. 17-21 where Martineau's complex and changing sense of belonging and community is situated in the context of current debates on the meaning of community itself.

sentimentality across the nineteenth century, our discussion of *Five Years of Youth* resists scholars' compartmentalizing of the discourse and the attempt to see sensibility restrictively as a bourgeois tool to cope with the demands of an era of social upheaval and opportunity.¹⁰⁴ In particular, the crucial biographical and local context reminds us that critiques of sentiment are shaped by more than ideology. Martineau shared with some of the critics of sentiment and sensibility a dislike of the over-ready recourse to tears, but she did so, not only because of her intellectual milieu, wide reading, acceptance of associationist psychology and her interpretation of the work of Mary Wollstonecraft and Anna Laetitia Barbauld,¹⁰⁵ but also in part because of her interpretation of personal experience. It is therefore not possible to endorse Pichanick's comment that the novella, as with all Martineau's fiction, 'lacked personal commitment'.¹⁰⁶ In the *Autobiography*, she presented herself as a child forever weeping, and, by the time of writing *Five Years of Youth*, new circumstances and new challenges had dried many of those tears.

¹⁰⁴ See G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1992). Barker-Benfield considers how 'sensibility' might serve the needs of capitalism through encouraging a self-fashioning in which the luxury of feeling was the product of material luxury. Sensibility might also be seen as a failure to delay self-gratification where delay was necessary for the accumulation of wealth and the correct moral life. See Catherine Gallagher's discussion of 'somaeconomics' in *The Body Economic: Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ See pp. 107-14.

¹⁰⁶ Pichanick, p. 38.

Chapter 1

The themes of *Five Years of Youth* and the origins of Martineau's critique of sensibility

Introduction: the main themes

Martineau's preface explicitly states her didactic intent. At first sight, she offers an unattractive, Podsnapping admixture of the lumbering and the earnest. Addressed to 'young persons', it posits that the tale may be of use, not only to 'motherless daughters', but also to the unbereft whose affections might be aroused by 'comparison of their own situation and character with those of others'.¹⁰⁷ What follows, however, is a disturbing tale which examines in depth the psychological dismemberment of a young girl whose intellect, powers of action, moral sense and physical and mental health are compromised by excessive sensibility; how fatally is not made clear, since the ending – unusually for a moral fable – is simply unresolved.¹⁰⁸ There are, in short, no death-bed laments, and it is conceivable, if unlikely, that the victim of sentiment improves and survives: there is certainly no evangelical-style conversion experience. The plot itself, as the preface admitted, was not based on the everyday, and Martineau appeared uncomfortable with this. Indeed, her later (1833) article for *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 'Achievements of the Genius of Scott', argued that moral teaching through fiction is most effective when its readers can readily identify with character and circumstance.¹⁰⁹ Moral tales should generally be based on common occurrences to have a near-universal applicability, but her

¹⁰⁷ Harriet Martineau, *Five Years of Youth; or, Sense and Sentiment* (London, 1831), pp. v-vi.

¹⁰⁸ Anon., Art. III. – 'Five Years of Youth; or Sense and Sentiment. By HARRIET MARTINEAU, *Christian Examiner and General Review*, 13, 1 (September 1832), pp. 27-8. The reviewer hopes that the author will write a sequel which would hopefully show Anna's reformation at the hands of the family friend in France.

¹⁰⁹ Harriet Martineau, 'Achievements of the Genius of Scott', *Miscellanies* (2 vols., Boston, 1836), i, pp. 27-56. See also below, pp. 198-200.

preface also claimed that it is ‘desirable, however, occasionally to represent the development of virtues of every-day use...by peculiar influences...since there are always some who are remarkably placed’.¹¹⁰

The two main characters, Mary and Anna Byerley, are certainly remarkably placed. The least unusual circumstance had been the death of their mother when the girls were five and three years of age respectively; the novel opens after the passage of seven years. They are clearly intended to be genteel, as Martineau contrasts their appearance and deportment with that of other young ladies who have received an education in the domestic arts, if not in intellectual pursuits, more appropriate to their station. The inappropriateness of this aspect of their education is attributed to the principles, prejudices and, at times, the selfishness of their father. Mr Byerley demands intellectual engagement from his daughters, and is prepared to employ masters and to educate them himself. He is not, however, prepared to consider sending them to school or to follow advice by employing a mature lady to initiate them into the supervision of his household and its servants. The result is domestic disorder (always a severe indictment on Martineau’s part) – especially as Byerley is frequently preoccupied with radical political causes. On Mary, the impact of this upbringing is otherwise generally positive: she is intellectually precocious, musically gifted and possesses a strong sense of duty. Anna has the same gifts, but they are misapplied because they are distorted through a lachrymose sensibility which feeds an undisciplined imagination; this in turn prevents her from engaging in any form of rigorous application or selfless action. Martineau then introduces a number of key events which impact on the Byerley household and further shape, reflect

¹¹⁰ *Five Years of Youth*, p. v.

and distinguish between the sisters' sense (Mary) and sentiment (Anna). Martineau's diagnosis is that Anna's irresolution and lack of willpower 'proceeded from a premature and excessive exercise of the imagination'.¹¹¹ The Byerleys make the acquaintance of an Italian political refugee, Casimiro Elvi, whose exile inspires in Anna a debilitating sympathy and an assumption that he must be incapacitated by his griefs.

Martineau presents Anna's state of mind as profoundly dangerous, as it distorts all impressions and experiences and – crucially - incapacitates her from sympathetic action. This sensibility is corrosive, and its progress is charted unflinchingly. Anna cannot respond to the Wordsworthian beauty of an evening because she is luxuriating in the melancholy inspired by Elvi's sad story, and is displeased with him because he is capable of setting aside his griefs. Martineau's diagnosis is specific: an untrammelled imagination coupled with indulgence in feelings threatens physical and psychological well-being.

Fundamentally, then, Anna's sensibility is selfish. Her distress at the departure of friends, the Fletcher family, is in danger of incapacitating her from household intercourse – a grave charge indeed from Martineau's perspective. Elvi's departure follows, and, aware of both daughters' sadness, Byerley takes what he hopes will be remedial action. The girls are introduced to other Italian exiles: an incapacitated image-maker and son, in the uttermost want. Martineau launches into a discussion of relative need and the importance of directed, rather than indiscriminate charity; Byerley's doctrine is that the process of sympathy, when directed by well-thought out action, will ensure that feelings are as appropriate as they are warm. However, the doctrine of active sympathy 'did not

¹¹¹ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 135.

quite suit Anna's taste. She made no objection to it in theory; but when she had made sure of the image-man being taken care of by other people, she lapsed into reveries about patriotism and friendship; or rather about one patriot and one friend'.¹¹² *By other people*, indeed; and Martineau's plot places the sisters in circumstances which allow her to comment on Anna's uselessness as a member of a household and as a member of the cultural and political milieu with which that household engages. A visit to London, intended to arouse Anna from reverie and lethargy, does no such thing. Significantly, all the household arrangements in Byerley's frequent absences are left to Mary, and Anna dreams away their stay. She embarrasses everyone by sobbing through an anti-slavery meeting, and yet was annoyed that others did not respect her 'delicate feelings'.¹¹³ Similarly, when Martineau sends the Byerleys to France, Anna sneers at Mary's desire to share her enjoyment of a moonlit sea with their servant, Susan, which Anna saw as letting down 'the tone of feeling'.¹¹⁴ Since servants are to be seen as fully members of a household,¹¹⁵ Anna's unpleasant remark is an indictment both of herself and of the unthinking discourse of sentiment.

Given the importance attached to the core values of household relationships and social activism, it is no surprise that Martineau was habitually sceptical of the moral worth of eremitical or convent life.¹¹⁶ Martineau explores the issue in *Five Years of Youth* by

¹¹² *Five Years of Youth*, p. 130.

¹¹³ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 162.

¹¹⁴ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 180.

¹¹⁵ See pp. 24-5.

¹¹⁶ See HM, 'Sabbath Musings VI. 'A Hermit's Cave', *Miscellanies*, i, pp. 167-77. This musing attacks the world-denying life of the hermit, defines the highest worship as 'the service of the life' and records 'the devotion of those...passing their irrevocable vow to serve God in their household with a perfect heart'. It originally appeared in the *Monthly Repository* for November 1831 – the same year in which *Five Years of Youth* was published. It is not possible to accept Pichanick's claim that 'A Hermit's Cave'

sending the sisters to visit a French convent. The visit is prefaced by a discussion in which Martineau explicitly links the dangers of sensibility to the romantic appeal of the nun's life. Anna sees the monastic cell as a place, not of self-abnegation, but of protection against invasion of privacy: "the certainty that nobody will come to interrupt one's reading or thinking".¹¹⁷ Martineau uses the word 'reverie' as a marker for morbid and futile imagination, and Anna is reminded that a prisoner in jail 'is quite sure of his reveries being uninterrupted'.¹¹⁸ A telling pair of vignettes¹¹⁹ compares a romantic picture of the sisters visiting the cell of a praying nun with a visit of a single girl to a prisoner in gaol. The reader discovers that the visitor is Mary, and that the prisoner is her father as, in a startling plot development, he is arrested for alleged sedition. Mary is able to summon courage and act; she secures access to her father and stays with him in the stench of a communal cell, whereas Anna is prostrated. She refuses to visit him, and Martineau links her incapacitating emotion to a failure of intellect and will-power: '...the feeble-minded girl was frightfully agitated. She had sunk shivering to the ground, and clung so convulsively to the sofa, that it was impossible to raise her'.¹²⁰ In fact, Anna's behaviour is worse than limply useless, as her sensibility has also ruined her moral sense: relieved that she should be spared any exertion – even in going with Mary to appeal to the magistrate - she nevertheless bids Mary farewell with 'words of jealous reproach'.¹²¹

was a 'paean to the devotions of the solitary'. See Pichanick, p. 174. For a discussion of the range of contemporary views on solitude, see William Van Reyk, 'Christian Ideals of Manliness in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', *The Historical Journal*, 52, 4 (December 2009), pp. 1053-73.

¹¹⁷ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 188.

¹¹⁸ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 191.

¹¹⁹ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 196.

¹²⁰ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 222.

¹²¹ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 229. Indeed, Martineau's emphasis on jealousy between sisters is also a feature of *Deerbrook* (see pp. 255-6), and reflects the jealousy she felt towards her elder sister Rachel. See *Autobiography*, i, pp. 65-7

With her father's release imminent, Anna is prevailed on to take her sister's place. Her father brings her to recognize that her sensibility has rested on the desire for praise, and that her failure to act had compromised her mental, moral and physical health. But she remains incapacitated, and 'demonstrates her filial affection by making her father miserable with her inexhaustible tears'.¹²²

The origins of *Five Years of Youth* and the attack on sensibility

Five Years of Youth should be seen as an early exploration of several key concepts which underpinned Martineau's fiction and life: the imperative call of duty and a rejection of a contemplative life in favour of an informed social activism; the relationship between the right ordering of a household and its potential relevance for the wider community; and the manner in which intellectual development can be separated neither from habits nor from a sympathy which relies for its warmth on an empathetic response. Herein lies the critique of sensibility. Where it exists without the firm control of reason and duty, it is not empathy, but a gratuitously selfish emotionalism, which short-circuits all Martineau's heartland concepts. However, if *Five Years of Youth* is indeed significantly more substantial than critics have suggested, then it should not be seen as a straightforward working out in fiction of a set of ideas. Its plot and characterization are far more complex than would be required for a didactic tale for adolescent girls of the middling classes: in short, it is far too odd. An attack on sensibility need not be advanced by the appearance of Italian refugees, nor by political incarceration in France, nor by an

¹²² *Five Years of Youth*, pp. 253-4.

uncertain ending. Martineau consigns Anna to the care of a pastor's wife, but by no means in the sure and certain hope of any reformation

What, then, lay behind Martineau's decision to write this tale? It will be argued that a series of experiences, relationships and networks within and linked to the Martineau family in Norwich give the novella its impetus and shape. Identifying and exploring these contextual issues will provide, not merely a key to *Five Years of Youth*, but also an insight into the origins of her core values.

The Martineau family and Norwich

Five Years of Youth fed upon the family's social status within the city. That status was defined partly by the Martineaus' relationship to the city's economic, political, religious and cultural elites, and was affected by the nation-wide economic crises of the 1820s which sabotaged the financial security of Harriet Martineau's branch of the family. The decline and collapse of her father's business provided the impetus behind her literary endeavours. Following the final collapse of the manufactory in June 1829 and the final loss their investments, the family had (in Martineau's terms) lost its gentility, and with it the stultifying routine which was 'the ordinary provincial method of ladies with small means, sewing, and economizing, and growing narrower every year'.¹²³ The starkness of this comment from the *Autobiography* is a product of the consolations of hindsight and Martineau's later success, but must not be allowed to obscure the family's continuing pride in its role within the city: a role which, as we shall see, was to have been sustained

¹²³ *Autobiography*, i, p. 108.

by Thomas Martineau Jr – Martineau’s eldest brother. This role, and the circumstances of his marriage and death, were woven into Martineau’s critique of sensibility in the novella.

Her family’s social status also reflected the Martineaus’ place as dissenters within a cathedral city. As Unitarians, they were members of a denomination which was frequently treated with the opprobrium attached to radicals whose supposed free-thinking was seen as a threat to the Established Church and State; however, relations between Unitarians and the bishops of Norwich were often warm.¹²⁴ At the heart of Norwich Unitarianism was the Octagon chapel. Unitarianism was without a single source of authority, and so the Octagon Chapel was subject to no system of national or regional discipline. But it was not therefore remote from the wider Unitarian movement. Its ministers were elected by elders, and its reputation meant that it would expect a high calibre of minister. Appointment of a minister was therefore of considerable moment to the Unitarian community as a whole: an importance reflected in networks which linked Norwich Unitarians to perhaps the most prestigious Unitarian congregation in the country (Cross Street, Manchester) and the troubled but often dynamic Unitarian academy, Manchester College (based in York from 1803 to 1840). Further key questions therefore arise: how important were the Martineaus within this Unitarian networking both inside and beyond Norwich, and what were the links between *Five Years of Youth* and Unitarian intellectual and religious life?

¹²⁴ Henry Bathurst, Bishop of Norwich from 1805-37, made a point of displaying a spirit of Christian unity in relations with nonconformists. Under his presidency, the Norwich Bible Society was noted for its amity, where ‘co-religionists of various shades of opinion joined hand in hand’. See Cecilia Lucy Brightwell, *Memorials of the Life of Mr. Brightwell of Norwich* (Norwich, 1869), p. 41.

Martineau's uncle, Philip Meadows Martineau, was for many years the head of the Martineau clan in Norwich. He provides a useful introduction to a discussion of the status of the Martineau family in the city. His role as a surgeon afforded him a regional and perhaps even a national reputation. James Martineau referred to him in his 'Biographical Memoranda' as 'the eminent surgeon';¹²⁵ an adjective and noun echoed in the brief obituaries in *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Observer* of Philip Martineau's daughter and widow respectively, who clearly owed those obituaries to his posthumous reputation: as the *Manchester Guardian* has it, daughter Fanny was head of the family by virtue of 'being the only child of the late eminent surgeon of Norwich'.¹²⁶ Within Norwich, however, his status transcended the surgical and arguably placed him among the secular elite. *The Norwich Mercury* in December 1823 offered an account of a meeting of the hospital governors to discuss a proposed music festival as a means of fund-raising. It shows Martineau in triumph over the lieutenant of the county, the Hon. John Wodehouse, but also reads like the minutes of an unusually quarrelsome and bibulous meeting of the Pickwick Club.

P.M. MARTINEAU, Esq., in a short but luminous address, enumerated the advantages the charity, the city, and science were likely to derive from the design, and moved that the resolutions of the Quarterly and Weekly Boards be confirmed. COL. WODEHOUSE, the Chairman, strongly objected to the resolution moved by MR. MARTINEAU, and denounced the project as one of the wildest and most injurious that could possibly be resorted to.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ 'Biographical Memoranda' in JM's hand: HMC, MS. J. Martineau 13(1).

¹²⁶ *The Manchester Guardian* (31 January, 1877), p. 6.

¹²⁷ *The Norwich Mercury* (20 December, 1823), p. 1.

Martineau's resolution was overwhelmingly carried against, it might seem, the wishes of the landowning class, whose fears were evidently groundless: a surplus of £2399 was presented to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital after the first festival (in 1824).¹²⁸

The Martineau family clearly felt a real pride in its head – and in his estate on the city boundaries, Bracondale. An 1830 letter from Harriet Martineau to W.J. Fox refers to quarrels at the Octagon and the deafness that prevented her from attending chapel, but concludes: 'As for me, my altar is now in the shades of Bracondale'.¹²⁹ This may also be, in fact, a reference to the second of her 'Sabbath Musings' (published originally in 1831) which is probably set in Bracondale. 'In the winters of my childhood I loved to come when the neighbouring mansion was deserted, and the trackless snow showed the solitude to be complete...the hour was to me a Sabbath, and the place a temple'.¹³⁰ A copy of the *Miscellanies* of 1836 which contains the 'Sabbath Musings' is in the possession of the present writer and was originally owned by Martineau's sister Ellen. There is an attached note which says 'Pencil jottings in Aunt Harriet's copy...Vol 1. Sabbath Musings...II Bracondale, near Norwich'.

P.M. Martineau's pre-eminence in the Martineau family of Norwich and status within the city formed part of the emotional underpinning of *Five Years of Youth*, as mediated

¹²⁸ See A.D. Bayne, *A Comprehensive History of Norwich* (London, 1869), p. 460, for details of 'remarkable' profits. *The Norwich Mercury* claimed that the local economy benefited by at least £50,000 during festival week: see Angela Dain, 'An Enlightened and Polite Society' in Carole Rawcliffe & Richard Wilson (eds), *Norwich since 1550* (London, 2004), p. 205. Perhaps so: but then the editor of the Whiggish *Norwich Mercury* was Richard Mackenzie Bacon, a music-lover and prime mover behind the festival.

¹²⁹ HM to W.J. Fox, ?July 1830, in Deborah Anna Logan (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Harriet Martineau* (5 vols., London, 2007), i, p. 67.

¹³⁰ HM, 'Sabbath Musings II: A Poplar Grove', *Miscellanies*, i, p. 131.

through the reputation and ambitions of his nephew Thomas ('Tom'). It was the family's hopes for Tom, their idolization of him, his marriage, his tragic death from consumption and the re-marriage of his widow Helen (née Bourn) which provided much of the context for the novella.

Tom Martineau: the beau-ideal

Tom was destined to succeed Philip Meadows Martineau, not only as senior surgeon to the hospital, but as a significant force in the city.¹³¹ He was elected assistant surgeon to the hospital in 1819, and was clearly being groomed to follow his uncle into the latter's substantial private practice. The evidence comes from a revealing letter from a petulant Helen Bourn: as Tom's fiancée, she objected to the uncle's influence and unwillingness to countenance a lengthy honeymoon.

You say your Uncle does not approve of yr running away from your business as it hurts your interests - is your business then yr first object in life? It is a pity you did not tell me this sooner - perhaps your uncle would approve of yr being married by proxy.¹³²

P.M. Martineau was instrumental in founding the Norwich Public Library in 1784 (a subscription library), and Tom mirrored such public engagement through his role in the United Friars Society, a congenial mixture of philanthropy, education and fine dining, whose constitution spoke of its aims: 'to emulate the monks and friars of the middle ages in their scientific interests, love of learning and philanthropy, while disclaiming their

¹³¹ Martineau significantly comments that he 'designed to leave his *place in society*' (my emphasis) as well as his 'professional eminence' to the nephew. 'Obituary', 132.

¹³² Helen Bourn letter to Tom Martineau, 1 May 1822: JRUL, UCC/2/21/1/11/174(draft).

religious functions and substituting decent mirth for their rules of austerity'.¹³³ Indeed, it was anticipated that he would be elected abbot: 'Thomas Martineau, a surgeon...should have taken over the Abbey but he pleaded ill health'.¹³⁴ Tom Martineau clearly impressed many: John Withers Dowson,¹³⁵ reminiscing of his school days at the Barbaulds' Palgrave School, commented: 'There were 3 Martineaus from Norwich...whom were held up as objects of respect and admiration. The eldest Thomas...was then in the first class, and 2d boy in the school'.¹³⁶ Tom was also a model of enlightened social activism for the Octagon congregation, since he was intimately involved with setting up and organizing the Sunday School; his sister gave him the credit for assuaging differences of opinion and setting up the rota without which it could not function.¹³⁷

Martineau clearly idolized her brother, and even her *Autobiography*, habitually debunking and dismissive, presented him as virtually without flaw: 'Our revered and beloved eldest brother...One of the sweetest recollections of my life is that I had the honour and blessing of his intimate friendship'.¹³⁸ This is powerful language, and its religious rhetoric is a sign both of the strength of Martineau's feelings and also of the way in which her Unitarian background maintained a hold on her discourse even after its formularies and doctrines had been rejected. Tom's was the approbation that confirmed Martineau's potential as a writer in her own mind after she had secretly submitted an article to the *Monthly Repository* of October 1822 - 'Female Writers on Practical

¹³³ C.B. Jewson, *Simon Wilkin of Norwich* (Norwich, 1979), p. 44.

¹³⁴ Jewson, p. 45.

¹³⁵ See pp. 85-90.

¹³⁶ Typescript of extracts from reminiscences of John Withers Dowson in the *Palgrave School Magazine*: NoRO, FC13/89.

¹³⁷ HM letter to JM, abstract by latter: HMC, MS. J. Martineau 1(14).

¹³⁸ *Autobiography*, i, p. 76.

Divinity'. The successful writer of 1855, penning her autobiography, no longer needed any such endorsement; but her comments in the retrospective narrative are abundant testimony to the strength and longevity of her admiration for her brother.

I have said what my eldest brother was to us, - in what reverence we held him. He was just married, and he and his bride asked me to return from chapel with them to tea. After tea he said, 'Come now, we have had plenty of talk; I will read you something;' and he held out his hand for the new "Repository"...[Tom then proceeded to compliment the very article his sister had written. He was surprised at her silence]. 'Harriet, what is the matter with you? I never knew you so slow to praise any thing before.' I replied, in utter confusion, - 'I never could baffle any body. The truth is, that paper is mine.' He made no reply; read on in silence, and spoke no more till I was on my feet to come away. He then laid his hand on my shoulder, and said gravely (calling me 'dear' for the first time) 'Now, dear, leave it to other women to make shirts and darn stockings; and do you devote yourself to this.'...That evening made me an authoress.¹³⁹

His also were the standards she strove to meet, and the one occasion when he disappointed her was nevertheless pivotal to her intellectual development: her dissatisfaction with his reply (on the question of how, given God's foreknowledge of everything, humans could be blamed or rewarded for their conduct) stimulated the enquiries that led her to Necessarianism, to which she remained wedded throughout her life.

Martineau's deep regard for her brother's memory is evident in her self-penned *Daily News* obituary of 29 June 1876.

The eldest brother of Harriet – a man of qualification so high as to promise to sustain the honour of his name and profession in the old city – died before the age of thirty...There was nothing remarkable about the childhood and youth of any of Thomas

¹³⁹ *Autobiography*, i, pp. 91-2.

Martineau's children, unless in the case of Thomas, the eldest son, already referred to.¹⁴⁰

Helen Bourn captured the adulation: 'Your sister Harriet told me one day she thought you a miracle of learning, & whenever they wanted to know anything they always said "Oh! Let us ask Tom!"'¹⁴¹ Helen Bourn's family in Manchester was, it seems, rather less impressed by Tom's status; ever mindful of their daughter's personal fortune, they muttered darkly about his need to become either a physician, which carried a greater status, or possibly to enter the manufacturing line.¹⁴² There are some traces of Martineau family resentment in the extant correspondence – a resentment fed by their unshakeable belief in Tom's standing, character and acquirements, which in turn reflected the status of the clan. Harriet, for instance, referred to the father's 'absurd resistance unless Tom would give up his profession and come to Manchester as a fustian manufacturer'¹⁴³ and Tom's mother, Elizabeth Martineau, informed Helen that the family disliked the latter's reluctance to make the engagement public: 'We trust dearest Helen you will take into your grave consideration the awkward predicament in which we at present stand - having daily occasion for equivocations & shufflings to which we are greatly unused'.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ HM, 'An Autobiographic Memoir', *Daily News*, 29 June 1876, reprinted in *Autobiography*, ii, p. 562.

¹⁴¹ Helen Bourn letter to Tom Martineau, ?1822: DWL, 24.242/8.

¹⁴² The social status of medical practitioners, particularly in the first decades of the nineteenth century, was ambiguous. The physician, who dealt with theory and diagnosis, was seen as a man of science; the surgeon, who dealt directly with anatomical disorders, was not seen as man of learning. See Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain, 1700-1850* (London, 1995) and below, pp. 245-7. The objections of the Bourn family are discussed in Ann Peart, 'Forgotten Prophets: The Lives of Unitarian Women, 1706-1904' (Newcastle University Ph.D. thesis, 2005), pp. 119-20.

¹⁴³ HM letter to JM, 11 April 1822: HMC, MS. J. Martineau 1(8).

¹⁴⁴ Elizabeth Martineau letter to Helen Bourn, 24 April 1822: BANC, MSS 92/754 Box 8 folder 27.

Helen Bourn Martineau: sentiment and the Martineaus

Helen Bourn married Tom Martineau in the spring of 1823, but he was consumptive; and died on 3 June 1824, having already lost his baby son. There ensued a spectacular breakdown of the relationship between the Martineau family and his widow, and it is through this, and the concurrent death of her fiancé, that Martineau's attitudes towards sensibility were refined.

The Martineaus had clear expectations of the appropriate behaviour of Helen Martineau, and their view of the flaws in her personality made the family keen to articulate them. Harriet's mother, Harriet herself and her sister Rachel required from the widow conduct based upon an emotional steadfastness and an acceptance of the ways of providence. Harriet's letters offered a model response to the loss of Tom to which she felt Helen should subscribe. Clearly, prostration through grief was unacceptable – as was any feeding and untoward display of emotions. She was to accept that 'many quiet years must be in store', that within the Martineau family she could be 'safebosomed either in sorrow or in peace',¹⁴⁵ looking forward to reunion in Heaven with Tom and her little boy. A letter of July 1824 was permeated with a consciousness of sin and thankfulness that Tom was free from its danger and from physical pain. The reference to danger in Helen Martineau's letter above is an echo, perhaps, of this sense of the need for protection, but it is likely enough that the widow was surprised by Martineau's continued reflections:

Do you know, Helen, I can hardly help thinking that I have lost all feeling, so little has been the grief excited by this event [Tom's death]. But I suppose it is partly owing to

¹⁴⁵ HM to Helen Martineau, 7 July 1824, *Collected Letters*, i, pp. 20-1.

the long, long preparation, and to the perfect feeling of serenity which I cannot but have with respect to him...Oh! who that loved him, would wish him back again? No! he is happy, and we will be happy in that conviction.¹⁴⁶

This letter then swerved into an *encomium* of James and his successes both academic and spiritual at Manchester College, York, but what might be seen as an unfeeling irrelevance is more apparent than real, since Harriet was keen to stress how she hoped for sufficient contact with James to gain intellectual benefit, with the result that ‘It makes us very happy to see what a field for useful exertion lies open before us both’.¹⁴⁷ The widow’s apparent failure to respond to sage advice from a younger woman resulted in a further epistolary battering. Having made the mistake of writing to complain of despondency and apathy, Helen was attacked on a number of fronts. Such feelings were labelled as sinful, and the virtues of disciplined study, early rising, physical exertion and engagement with public charities were extolled. Characteristically, these were Harriet’s own recourses and reflected her own household: she wrote of the hours from 5am to 8.30am as a time of personal freedom, wherein ‘you can get several hours to yourself without your mother being aware of it’. Her main themes, however, were the dangers of excitement of the feelings (underlined twice) as occasioned by the twin indulgences of surrounding oneself with people who enjoy talking about feelings and the luxury of the sofa: ‘it is excitement instead of rest to lie and think on the Sofa’.¹⁴⁸ The parallels with Anna of *Five Years of Youth* are palpable: her inability to act and engage herself; her reveries which leave her ‘flushed and feverish’¹⁴⁹ – and, of course, it is to the sofa that

¹⁴⁶ HM to Helen Martineau, 7 July 1824, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 21.

¹⁴⁷ HM to Helen Martineau, 7 July 1824, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 22.

¹⁴⁸ HM to Helen Martineau, 12 May 1825, *Collected Letters*, i, pp. 31-2.

¹⁴⁹ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 207.

Anna clings when incapable of responding to her father's desperate need. The threat posed by feelings to the fulfilment of duty was emphasized by Harriet's mother when herself newly-widowed. In writing to Helen, she commented on the danger: 'I have not my love entered at length on many subjects which are near my heart. I would rather talk with you, & I dare not stir up feelings which may interrupt duty'.¹⁵⁰ Significantly, a letter from Rachel Martineau linked an appropriate sense of duty to Helen's place within the clan Martineau ('we consider you one of us in all respects') and advised her against a misinterpretation of duty in sacrificing herself, through misplaced emotion, to the needs of her mentally-ill father.¹⁵¹ This reading of Helen's propensities is corroborated in the work of Peart, who concludes that 'Of all the women in Helen's correspondence network, she seemed to be the one least engaged in good works and the most absorbed in her own feelings'.¹⁵²

There is indeed further evidence in support of criticism of Helen's tendency to morbid sensibility and emotional self-indulgence. In a letter to J.G. Robberds, Helen acknowledged that 'Some say...I am too much under the guidance of feeling & imagination'.¹⁵³ Moreover, a letter from Robberds' wife Mary - an intimate friend - was affectionate, but punches remained unpulled.

There is perhaps no one but ourselves who know your very peculiar uncommon fancies and feelings...and even we feel so far doubtful as to urge it upon you, my dear Helen, to do nothing precipitate...It sounds rather dull, but perhaps it may be some comfort to come to a calm, sedate person who, if she has not the power of securing the ecstasies

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth Martineau letter to Helen Martineau, July 11 1826: JRUL, UCC/2/21/1/55/40.

¹⁵¹ Rachel Martineau letter to Helen Martineau, 25 December 1823: BANC, MSS 92/754 Box 8 folder 92.

¹⁵² Peart, 'Forgotten Prophets', p. 167.

¹⁵³ Helen Bourn letter to John Gooch Robberds, ?December 1821: JRUL, UCC/2/21/1/7/167(draft).

and raptures, is not apt to descend to invective and threats...though I may sometimes disappoint you as not going to the extent of your feelings, you will always find me your faithful & sincere friend'.¹⁵⁴

Helen Bourn Martineau and the Tagart engagement: the attack on the developing heartland concepts

By 1825, the Martineau family in Norwich had begun to remark on a supposed improvement in Helen's temperament and outlook; this they duly ascribed to the impact of Tom's character, his ordered life and his concern for others which offset what Harriet called her 'weak sentimentality which, it was thought, Mr Robberds encouraged'.¹⁵⁵

However, evidence of a growing attachment between Helen and Edward Tagart, the new and young minister at the Octagon chapel, brought to the fore all the old criticisms of her emotionalism and her lack of a sense of duty, and combined them with resentment at her failure to respect sufficiently the memory of her husband. For good measure, family members were outraged at what they saw as Tagart's presumption and lack of gratitude to a family whose patronage had been so vital when he settled in Norwich and struggled to meet the challenges of serving a congregation not known for its deference towards its minister.

Edward Tagart was born in Bristol in 1804. His father was a wholesale linen-draper with literary tastes: his guests included Coleridge. After the father's death, the relatively impoverished family moved to London and as Unitarians worshipped at the Essex St

¹⁵⁴ Mary Robberds letter to Helen Martineau, 8 September 1826: DWL, 24.242/6.

¹⁵⁵ HM letter to JM, 8 January 1825: HMC, MS. J. Martineau 1(45).

Chapel under Thomas Belsham. Thanks to the self-sacrifice of his brother William,¹⁵⁶ Tagart was sent to Manchester College, York as a candidate for the ministry, and was one of a circle of young men of rare promise which included James Martineau, John Hugh Worthington, Edward Higginson and Francis Darbishire. James Martineau's 'Biographical Memoranda' offer a vivid account of their intimacy and zeal:-

Within a small inner circle of the students there prevailed a spirit of devout and semi-ascetic enthusiasm which bound them together in strong affection and subordinated their intellectual industry to higher inspirations... While this fervour of spirit animated chiefly the most assiduous students, it rendered the dry life of mere intellectual industry intolerable to them, and impelled them to escape, at least on Sundays, into a higher region of activity and affection.¹⁵⁷

Such fervour led them to engage in missionary activity and to build a small chapel in the Yorkshire village of Welburn: an audacious move, considering that the Anglican incumbent was none other than Sydney Smith. A rather more balanced (and less priggish) account is provided by Stephen Harbottle, who points out that the college even in those halcyon days was not devoid of the ill-discipline among the students that had so characterized its time in Manchester, and that William Turner of Newcastle, as Visitor, felt constrained to warn the eager young students against missions which 'should not be allowed to interfere with the great purposes of your residence in this place'.¹⁵⁸ Most

¹⁵⁶ See Charles Tagart, 'A Memoir of the Late Edward Tagart who died 12th October, 1858': DWL, 2013/5.

¹⁵⁷ James Martineau, 'Biographical Memoranda', quoted in James Drummond and C. B. Upton, *The Life and Letters of James Martineau* (2 vols., London, 1902), i, p. 35.

¹⁵⁸ William Turner, address to students of Manchester New College (June 1824), quoted in Stephen Harbottle, *The Reverend William Turner: Dissent and Reform in Georgian Newcastle upon Tyne* (Leeds, 1997), p. 141. On the other hand, some improvement in discipline was likely in that the York Principal, Charles Wellbeloved, changed the curriculum to emphasize the key role of the college in training for the ministry. See David Wykes, 'Sons and Subscribers: Lay support and the College' in Barbara Smith (ed.), *Truth, Liberty, Religion. Essays celebrating Two Hundred Years of Manchester College* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 33-77. The college was certainly supported by influential families, and that

significantly, this network of promising students extended its emotional ties into their respective families. James Martineau married into the Higginson family (Helen), Worthington was engaged to Harriet Martineau, and Darbshire was engaged to another Higginson (Emily). Thus, Edward Tagart's wish to marry into the Martineau family was not an incomprehensible aspiration in itself, although the outcomes of the various attachments were anything but propitious. James Martineau faced opposition from the Higginson family and was forbidden the house: it was seven years before his marriage took place. Darbshire was carried away by consumption, and Worthington suffered a complete bodily and mental collapse. He died insane.

The Tagart and Helen Martineau affair offers further insight into the status of the Martineau family within Norwich Unitarianism and into relations within the family itself. Tagart himself was extremely fortunate on one level to be offered the prestigious position at the Octagon as his first ministerial posting, and probably owed a great deal to his friendship with James Martineau and the willing support of the family as a whole. On another level, like all ministers of the Octagon, he was obliged to cope with a congregation whose leading members did not scruple to evaluate and criticize the performance of the pastor. The self-confidence of the Octagon congregation is implied by the Charge (preached by William Turner) at Tagart's service of settlement at the Octagon. Describing Tagart's illustrious predecessors, Turner commented that 'a congregation which has been favoured with the services of such men very naturally

influence extended into links between the college graduates and appointments to key Unitarian chapels such as Cross Street and the Octagon.

regards itself as somewhat distinguished'.¹⁵⁹ The newly-installed Tagart requested advice from John Gooch Robberds on subjects for sermons, and was advised that he should maintain a friendly intercourse with the key families of the congregation: 'Conversation by the fire-side may often suggest subjects for public instruction'. The Sunday evenings at the Martineau household in Magdalen St were a case in point. Robberds clearly had in mind the Martineau and Taylor families in particular, as he signed off with his regards to the Taylors and to 'my friends in Magdalen Street from one of whom I hope to hear soon'.¹⁶⁰ It did not do, certainly, to fall out with the deacons. Tagart's successor, William Bakewell, supposedly failed to impress some key members of the congregation through a lack of dignity: Harriet Martineau hoped that 'he may gradually work himself free of the prejudices in the congregation which have made him unpopular with his deacons, especially Withers D. [John Withers Dowson]'.¹⁶¹ The James Martineau summary refers to some sort of secession from the Octagon and the employing of a Mr Hawkes to serve the seceders.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ *The Service at the Settlement of the Rev. Edward Tagart, as Minister of the Octagon Chapel, Norwich, August 10th, 1825* (London, 1825), p. 41. The tradition of the chapel meant that a minister who expected deference from his congregation was likely to receive short shrift. The Rev. Theophilus Browne found the Octagon oppositional when, as an ex-Anglican priest, he insisted upon his priestly dignity: '...it began to be apparent that, although he had quarrelled with the Establishment, he retained all its notions of the priestly office... Such conduct produced its natural effect, - an alienation between pastor and people which widened every day'. See John & Edward Taylor, *History of the Octagon Chapel, Norwich* (Norwich, 1848), p. 56.

¹⁶⁰ John Gooch Robberds letter to Edward Tagart, August 10th 1825: JRUL, UCC/2/21/1/30/49.

¹⁶¹ HM letter to JM, 2 January 1829: HMC, MS. J. Martineau 1(95).

¹⁶² HM letter to JM, 14 July 1830: HMC, MS. J. Martineau 1(106). Rump comments rather censoriously on what Bakewell discovered on his appointment in 1828 but provides some clarification on matters of detail: 'The Rev W.J. Bakewell...on coming found some active spirits bent on missionary enterprises. It was not long before their zeal outran his, and a number of the congregation, (Sir Thomas Beevor, Mr. J.W. Dowson, some of the Sothern family, and others), withdrew from his ministrations, found a room...where they conducted their own Services till the arrival of the REV. H. HAWKES, who became their minister for some time. In 1833 Mr Hawkes received a call to Portsmouth, and after persevering for some time the seceders returned to the fold'. See A.E. Rump, *Ministers of the Octagon Chapel, Norwich* (Norwich, 1881), pp. 11-12.

Some of Bakewell's difficulties may also be uncovered from an examination of the minutes of the Octagon Chapel Brotherly Society which, somewhat ironically, had the object of 'Ist and chiefly to promote a friendly & improving intercourse among its members as Christian Brethren'.¹⁶³ Although Edward Taylor was the first President, the moving force behind the Society was Withers Dowson.¹⁶⁴ Bakewell had clearly accepted the office of President shortly after his arrival, but relations with Dowson and others were immediately fraught.¹⁶⁵ Attempted reconciliation failed, and Bakewell found the demands of ministering to the Octagon and its self-opinionated elements a constant trial. The importance of the Martineau family in the dispute is evident in the way Harriet's elder brother Henry moved to defuse the situation (without, it must be admitted, much success) by a quiet word with Withers Dowson¹⁶⁶ and Harriet commented to Fox, 'When some very old members of the conn [congregation] drop off, & if we should leave Norwich (Henry won't) I don't know what will become of the Octagon'¹⁶⁷.

Indeed, it is Tagart himself who best revealed the challenges facing the minister of such a congregation, not the least of which was the influence its chief families asserted as of right over a new minister. It was from the Martineaus (and particularly Elizabeth Martineau) that he received most guidance and support – perhaps with the expectation that the guidance should be followed and the support appreciated. In a letter to his mother

¹⁶³ The Octagon Chapel Brotherly Society Minute Book: NoRO, FC13/37(1).

¹⁶⁴ The meeting of 26th December 1824 resolved unanimously that 'the sincere and cordial thanks of this meeting be given to Mr John W. Dowson the Founder of the Society'. NoRO FC13/37(2).

¹⁶⁵ At the meeting of 9 November 1828, Bakewell had expressed his intention to resign, and was only dissuaded when Dowson (as requested by the Society) waited upon him and urged '...Mr Bakewell to reconsider the subject and assure him that free discussion at the meetings of the Society shall in future be kept within the bounds of decorum'. NoRO FC13/37(5).

¹⁶⁶ HM letter to JM, ?September 1829: HMC, MS. J. Martineau 1(100).

¹⁶⁷ HM to W.J. Fox, ?July 1830, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 67.

in 1825, he commented that Mrs Martineau had advised him to move in with the Taylors, given Edward Taylor's departure for London. Tagart was clearly not enthused by the prospect of the house: 'and though it is old, large, and not, from what I saw of it, in all respects a convenient one, yet Mrs. Martineau says its occupation would give the minister an immediate importance and respectability'.¹⁶⁸

Tagart was clearly beholden to the Martineaus in a number of ways. The illness (and subsequent death early in 1826) of his brother placed a considerable strain on his finances and meant that his mother and sister needed to be provided for. The Octagon congregation generously increased his stipend, and the Martineaus sought financial support to find employ for the sister, Sarah, as a teaching assistant. Even so, Tagart continued to be embarrassed in other ways. He was (in the Martineau view) less than fiscally prudent. On the other hand, his efforts in the pulpit were much applauded. Elizabeth Martineau – never averse to criticizing a pastor's preaching - praised his sermon at the funeral of her husband.¹⁶⁹ However, once it became clear that Tagart was paying court to Tom's widow, relations immediately curdled. We rely largely on James Martineau's summary of his sister's correspondence to him for insights into the Magdalen St perspective. Harriet reported that Helen had behaved badly towards her mother-in-law, was ill-tempered and 'alienated from a past experience which has hitherto been so kind to her'. The explanation for this stems from an apparent intention to marry Tagart: 'Harriet treats it with the greatest indignation and disgust, as worldly in Tagart

¹⁶⁸ Tagart, 'A Memoir', p. 12.

¹⁶⁹ Elizabeth Martineau letter to Helen Martineau, 11 July 1826: DWL, 24.242/2: 'Mr Tagart performed the ceremony in a very impressive manner'.

and both heartless and “mad” in him’: his pursuit of Helen was in large part a pursuit of her relative wealth, which would solve his financial problems.¹⁷⁰

A marriage between Helen Martineau and Edward Tagart represented an attack on a world-view and a value system that underpinned the Magdalen St family and its relationship with the community: indeed, the very frame of mind which was crucial to the development of Harriet Martineau’s heartland concepts. That world-view and those systems were so potent because they reflected a heady combination of feeling, refined and intensified by religious principle; a concept of personal and civic duty; and the peculiar circumstances of a family where relationships were at once deep and problematic. First, the Helen and Tagart engagement was an implicit rejection and besmirching of the beau-ideal; Helen Martineau should not have considered a second marriage, since she had hardly begun to demonstrate her worthiness of the first. Tom’s death should have been an agent for her self-improvement, which was the necessary and only solace. Secondly, Tom’s life was the compelling model for the right relationship between religious faith and social activism. Helen’s role was to follow that example. Thirdly, he had linked the new generation of the Martineau family with the prestige and city-wide status of Philip Meadows Martineau, and his widow should have recognized that she had obligations to honour him by an appropriate and perhaps permanent widowhood. In short, Tom Martineau was and remained, in the eyes of his parents, brothers and sisters, the embodiment of the best that the family had to offer to itself, to its chapel and to its community. To contemplate marriage to a man so apparently flawed as Tagart, so beholden to the Martineaus and so unspeakably ungrateful, ought to be

¹⁷⁰ HM letter to JM, 4 September 1826 and 27 September 1826: HMC, MS. J. Martineau 1(72-3).

unthinkable: Hyperion to a satyr. We should note the reported language of Harriet in what must have been a dramatic tête-à-tête with Helen: ‘...by allowing my thoughts to dwell for one moment on Mr. T I had sullied her brother’s memory – that I had raised myself in the world & in the public estimation by a connection with their family’.¹⁷¹ The strength of Martineau’s feelings is attested to by their persistence. Over twenty years later, she characterized Tagart as ‘an utter cheat and a very mischievous one’.¹⁷²

For good measure, Harriet also had a tête-à-tête with Tagart, and offered a characterization of Helen Martineau which may have horrified him, but which demonstrated how closely she linked Helen’s conduct to the baleful effects of sensibility: ‘According to her, her sister is the creature of imagination, to reason with her is vain; her habits are such that wholly unfit her to be the wife of a minister’.¹⁷³

Of course, it would be unrealistic to rule out how sensitive the family members were to their status within the city. This is further revealed in the way in which both Harriet and Rachel Martineau pronounced on the necessity of the couple leaving Norwich in the event of their marriage. Harriet bluntly stated: ‘You shall not live in Norwich!’¹⁷⁴ In fact, Tagart did leave his congregation, despite his avowed wish not to do so: significantly, he

¹⁷¹ Helen Martineau letter to John Gooch Robberds, 6 September 1826: DWL, 24.242/5.

¹⁷² Martineau’s comments appear apparently *verbatim* in a summary of HM’s correspondence with her long-standing friend Elizabeth Jesser Reid dated 1 August 1849 and refer to a certain ‘E.T’. The original letters have been lost since the writing of Margaret Tuke’s *History of Bedford College* (founded by Reid) in 1939, and one is left with an anonymous typewritten summary (held at the Royal Holloway College, London, RF/103/14) which appears to side with Mrs Reid against HM where the latter had complaints about the former’s inefficiency. However, the identification of E.T. with Tagart is reasonably secure, since the summary refers to E.T.’s attempts to join Bedford College’s Ladies’ Committee, and Tagart’s interest in higher education is well evidenced below.

¹⁷³ Edward Tagart letter to John Gooch Robberds, 8 March 1827: DWL, 24.242/13.

¹⁷⁴ Helen Martineau letter to John Gooch Robberds, 6 September 1826: DWL, 24.242/5.

testified to the influence of the Martineau family in Octagon matters with a parting shot. ‘It is enough to be compelled to acknowledge that I give up the congregation because the lady of my heart will have it so...The moment I am off the spot the Martineaus will have it their own way’.¹⁷⁵ It is likely enough that the Martineau network had simply made his position as minister of the Octagon untenable, since Tagart was initially obliged to take a chaplain’s post in a small chapel opened by a London barrister in York St: ‘The attendance was scanty; the subscribers were very few’.¹⁷⁶

The Martineau family’s interpretation of Tagart’s character and motives is, of course, too partisan to be convincing in itself. His abilities were considerable, and acknowledged by their initial patronage. On moving in 1833 to Little Portland Street Chapel, he was clearly highly regarded: Charles Dickens provided the inscription on the plate presented in 1844 by his congregation in appreciation of his services. He was secretary to the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, a trustee of Dr Williams’s Library, and of Manchester College. He was also a proprietor of University College, London and a member of the Council of University Hall. Tagart was not lacking in self-confidence (or arrogance); at the same time as craving advice from Robberds on his relationship with Helen Martineau, he complained: ‘I have never been accustomed to have my patience tried’,¹⁷⁷ and this self-belief (to put it charitably) later petrified into pomposity. His obituary in the *The Christian Reformer* was laudatory in the customary manner, but the writer would seem to have been the victim of his less appealing qualities.

¹⁷⁵ Edward Tagart letter to John Gooch Robberds, 20 August 1827: DWL, 24.242/32.

¹⁷⁶ Edward Tagart, quoted in Anon., ‘Memoir of the Late Rev. Edward Tagart, F.S.A.’, *The Christian Reformer*, 170, 15 (February 1859), p. 14.

¹⁷⁷ Edward Tagart letter to John Gooch Robberds, 9 October 1826: JRUL, UCC/2/21/1/77/130.

He was not always quick in realizing other men's feelings and convictions...His manner was now and then cold, and did injustice to the sincere kindness which was ever at his heart...it led to the charge of hauteur and undue self-estimation. The same defect of manner sometimes made his associates think he was more willing to be their patron than their friend.¹⁷⁸

Tagart's self-regard was shown in a more positive light by Helen Martineau, who revealingly placed it in the context of the Martineaus' assumption of their own prevailing influence over Octagon matters and compared it to the supposedly more deferential *persona* of John Hugh Worthington:

They [the Martineaus] were then all full of Mr W[orthington] – comparisons, were constantly made between him and Mr T[agart], & always to the disadvantage of the latter...I soon discovered the secret of Mrs M's prejudices - she cannot always make him do as she likes - he has a manly independent mind...Mr W. on the contrary has had no will, no thought but those which Mrs M. & Harriet have dictated to him during his stay here.¹⁷⁹

The reference to Worthington is timely, as the extraordinary circumstances surrounding his engagement to Harriet provide further evidence on the nature of her attitude towards sentiment. Biographers have been much exercised by her apparently callous behaviour when hearing of his complete mental and physical prostration. She did not visit him, broke off the engagement and demanded the return of her letters. Early biographers

¹⁷⁸ 'Memoir', *Christian Reformer*, 76. There is also an intriguing letter of 1851 from Elizabeth Gaskell to her daughter Marianne which urged her to avoid staying with the Tagart family, despite close acquaintance. '...indeed there are *many* places I should prefer to Mrs Tagart's, as I dislike the rude quarrelsome tone there. Helen, Emily [daughters] & Mrs Tagart [Helen Bourn] are all very kind separately, but as a family there is something so decidedly wrong that I should indeed be grieved if you fell into their mode of thinking and speaking'. Elizabeth Gaskell letter to Marianne Gaskell, ?17 February 1851, in J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (eds), *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester, 1997), p. 145.

¹⁷⁹ Helen Martineau letter to John Gooch Robberds, 6 September 1826: JRUL, UCC/2/21/1/67/30.

attempted to divert blame from Martineau herself. Fenwick Miller, that faithful defender of Martineau's womanliness, built up a case which emphasized the genuineness and depth of her love for Worthington. It was based upon conversations with Martineau's collaborator in the *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development* (1851) in which Henry Atkinson told Miller that his advice had been that she should moderate and cut lengthy passages in the *Autobiography* – and so, its cool tone therefore does not reflect the real passion for Worthington. Miller also alleged that Harriet's mother forbade her daughter to 'hasten to his side' when Worthington's doctor suggested that his patient might benefit from a visit from his fiancée.¹⁸⁰ If one were to set aside Miller's tumid prose, there is nothing intrinsically implausible in her analysis.

What is needed, then, is an explanation of Martineau's behaviour following Worthington's collapse which at least recognizes the possible strength of her attachment but also firmly situates her response in her known fear of incapacitating sentiment and her core values. Such an explanation can be found in Martineau's religious beliefs.

Martineau and soteriology

For more recent biographers, the Worthington episode is a puzzle which cannot be resolved by ascribing to Martineau stock feelings of love and devotion; nor can its unfortunate denouement be ascribed to the interference or advice of others. Webb saw it as an example of sexual neuroses which generated 'hysterical self-righteousness',¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ F. Fenwick Miller, *Harriet Martineau* (London, 1884), p. 53.

¹⁸¹ R.K. Webb, *Harriet Martineau: A Radical Victorian* (London, 1960), p. 51.

whereas Pichanick sees the episode as symptomatic of her ‘extraordinary ability to desensitize herself...and to devote her energies completely to a life of the mind’.¹⁸² What neither biographer does is to note the similarity between her behaviour in the Worthington case and her response to Tom’s death: nor do they link Martineau’s reaction to that of James, who resolutely refused to visit his college friend and colleague as he lay in his extremity. Significantly, she supported James’s decision, and hammered home yet again her message to Helen Martineau: ‘I have been dreading lest James should go [to visit Worthington]. I earnestly trust he will not. Where no good can be done, dangerous excitement of feeling should be avoided’.¹⁸³ We recall that she professed not to be emotionally prostrated by Tom’s death, and instead interpreted it as a consummation devoutly to be accepted as a fit ending to a noble and dutiful life: Tom, in short, was revered because of what he had become – further moral progress was scarcely possible, and so he was rewarded with the safety of heaven. She describes her engagement to Worthington as essentially justified by their mutual quest for moral progress through a shared sense of duty: precisely what, in Webb’s terms, Rational Dissenters saw in self-betterment and piety: ‘a fulfilment of God’s promise for the future’.¹⁸⁴

Our first object in loving each other was our mutual improvement; our highest desire, to fit ourselves & each other for heaven. His trial is past; safely past: and if my advancement is to be wrought by other means than I had hoped, I cheerfully give up my own desires, and must make the loss of my friend more efficacious than his help would have been.¹⁸⁵

I think our highest hopes for this world were hopes of improvement and of

¹⁸² Pichanick, p. 21.

¹⁸³ HM to Helen Martineau, 2 December 1826, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 41.

¹⁸⁴ R.K. Webb, ‘Rational Piety’ in Knud Haakensesen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 10-11.

¹⁸⁵ HM to Helen Martineau, 2 December 1826, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 40.

usefulness: if he is dismissed from his labour, if his improvement has reached the highest point it is to attain in this world, I have still the path open before me... He has given me motives, he has given me aids which will retain their power, I trust, till we meet again.¹⁸⁶

Martineau's rhetoric of 'safety' demands explication. From what were Tom and Worthington saved? In her *Autobiography*, Martineau was adamant that 'I never suffered more or less from fear of Hell. The Unitarianism of my parents saved me from that'.¹⁸⁷ So too did her early reading. She pored avidly over the writings of Thomas Belsham (1750-1829),¹⁸⁸ and, although Martineau claimed to have felt uneasy with Belsham's ingenuity in employing figurative meanings for uncomfortable doctrines such as hell and punishment, this is likely to have reflected her mature attitude to biblical exegesis - and perhaps W.J. Fox's assessment of Belsham in the *Monthly Repository* of 1830)¹⁸⁹ rather than her youthful welcoming of Belsham's skill in explaining away eternal damnation.¹⁹⁰ Belsham was heavily influenced by both Hartley and Priestley, and Martineau's attitude to the mechanisms of the after-life was similarly the product of her understanding of an associationist eschatology. David Hartley was the apostle of Associationism, and his

¹⁸⁶ HM to Helen Martineau, 7 December 1826, *Collected Letters*, i, pp. 42-3.

¹⁸⁷ *Autobiography* i, 30. It is conceivable that the brisk Martineau of the *Autobiography* overstates her youthful dismissal of hell. The Elizabeth Gaskell of 1850 did not object to using the word 'hell': 'My idea of Heaven just now is, a place where we shan't have any consciences, - and Hell vice versa'. One might argue that Gaskell envisaged that a soul in heaven was free from remorse, but the letter has an ostensibly playful tone which may imply that Gaskell was not intending to make a theological observation or assuming the non-rhetorical existence of hell. See her letter to Eliza Fox, ?April 1850, *Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, p. 110.

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Belsham was former professor of divinity at Daventry Academy who, on his conversion to Unitarianism, took a similar post at the short-lived New College, Hackney: he was subsequently minister at the Essex Street chapel. His *Elements of the Philosophy of the Mind* (1801) was a well-regarded textbook on metaphysics and psychology as drawn from Priestley and Hartley.

¹⁸⁹ See Anon. (W.J. Fox), 'On the character and writings of the Rev. T. Belsham', *Monthly Repository*, NS 4 (April 1830), p. 249. Fox commented that Belsham 'did his work by the sole agency of the understanding. He could accomplish little or nothing by means of the imagination, or of the affections'.

¹⁹⁰ See *Autobiography*, i, p. 29.

Observations on Man (1749) - familiar to Martineau through Priestley's edition¹⁹¹ - rejected a mind/body dualism in favour of a materialist psychology and insisted upon a corporeal after-life. This meant that those who had sinned would be subject to a corporeal chastisement which was, nevertheless, reformatory rather than permanently punitive: its aim was to equip the sinner for heaven. Hartley speculated that 'With respect to the Punishments of the Wicked in a future State, we may observe, that these may be corporeal...For Sensuality is one great Part of Vice, and a principal Source of it. It may be necessary therefore, that actual Fire should feed upon the elementary body...in order to burn out the Stains of Sin'.¹⁹² These words are echoed in the writings of the educationalist and Unitarian minister Lant Carpenter¹⁹³ whose school Martineau attended and whose acolyte she became. Offering a defence of Belsham's thought against the alleged misrepresentations of Bishop Magee,¹⁹⁴ Carpenter was keen to emphasize that Belsham's words did not represent subscription to the doctrine of purgatory but, instead, to the conviction that God's providence leads towards progress and increasing perfection of human life. Even evil itself tends to its own destruction: in this way, suffering can be a vital tool in the curing of moral evil in this life, and, in the life to come, 'the sinner, purified by suffering, will be fitted for a life of holiness and bliss'. The sinner's pain will

¹⁹¹ Martineau commented of the Priestley edition that she studied it 'with a fervour and perseverance which made it perhaps the most important book in the world to me, except the bible'. See *Autobiography*, i, p. 80. As for Priestley's own eschatology, although he appears to have accepted universalism eventually, he did not always eschew the word 'hell'. Martineau was presumably unacquainted with his *Catechism for Children, and Young Persons* (London, 1791): "'Qu. Where shall you live again, if you have been wicked?" An. "If I have been wicked, I shall go to hell, where I shall be very miserable"' (p. 15). For an able discussion of the Unitarian contribution to the eschatology debate, see Geoffrey Rowell, *Hell and the Victorians: A study of the nineteenth-century theological controversies concerning eternal punishment and the after-life* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 34-5 in particular.

¹⁹² David Hartley, *Observations on Man, his frame, his duty, and his expectations, in two parts* (2 vols., London, 1749), ii, p. 399.

¹⁹³ See pp. 138-44.

¹⁹⁴ William Magee (1766-1831). A noted polemicist, he was consecrated Bishop of Raphoe in 1819; in 1822, he was advanced to the see of Dublin. His *Discourses on the Scriptural Doctrines of Atonement and Sacrifice* (1801) were an attack on Unitarianism.

be ‘intense and lasting’ in proportion to the sin itself, but it will come to an end in the Final Restitution: when suffering has done its work, and the deep stains of guilt have been removed as by fire, suffering will be no longer continued’.¹⁹⁵ Carpenter, in rejecting eternal punishment, rejected the view of God that a doctrine of hell arguably presupposed - namely, that of a vindictive and fundamentally immoral being - and was careful to avoid the use of the word ‘hell’ itself.

The centrality of this doctrine to progressive Unitarian thought¹⁹⁶ was also reflected in the article ‘On Future Punishment’ in the *Monthly Repository* of December 1830 by ‘W.T.’ – probably William Turner.¹⁹⁷ The author considers that, for those of vicious habits, the painful discipline to be undergone will be long and intense, but ‘must be gone through before such persons can be rendered fit to partake in the blessings of heaven’.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Lant Carpenter, *An Examination of the Charges made against Unitarians and Unitarianism: and the Improved Version, by the Right Rev. Dr Magee, Bishop of Raphoe...* (Bristol, 1820), pp. 281-2. Carpenter’s admiration for Hartley underpinned this apology for Unitarianism. He commented that ‘Dr. Johnson never made a wiser remark, than when he placed Hartley’s Observations as next in value to the Bible’ (p. 286).

¹⁹⁶ As suggested in the pages of *The Monthly Repository*, not all Unitarians were confident in a final restoration of mankind, or of the absence of punishment in an after-life. In the June 1820 edition, for example, three letters (in practice, articles) engaged in the controversy. Two rejected the image of a punitive deity, but one denied the scriptural basis of a doctrine of final restoration, and worried that it promoted a potentially-fatal carelessness about sin. This writer, Joseph Jevans, stopped just short of declaring a belief in a place of eternal punishment, but used the word hell in quoting scripture on the fate of the wicked, and ‘dare not say’ that this ‘second death’ would not be ‘literally executed’. See ‘Letter’, *Monthly Repository*, 15 (June 1820), pp. 337-45. Jevans (1749-1839) was the long-serving Unitarian minister at Bloxham, Oxfordshire: see www.unitarianhistory.org.uk/ministerobit1800.html (accessed 7 April 2012). Some correspondents were concerned about the impact of Necessarianism on the deterrent effect of the fear of punishment, and, in so doing, implied a readiness to accept the possibility of punishment in the after-life. See J. S.’s letter of 11 April 1820 to *Monthly Repository*, 15 (May 1820), p. 277.

¹⁹⁷ Martineau described Turner as ‘my mother’s pastor and friend before her marriage’ *Autobiography*, i, p. 25. It was the influence of his daughter Ann which had helped to turn Martineau’s piety into practice.

¹⁹⁸ ‘W. T.’, ‘On Future Punishment’, *Monthly Repository*, NS 4, 48 (Dec 1830), p. 802.

Martineau later gave similar words to her character Dr Sneyd in her *Illustrations of Political Economy* tale ‘Briery Creek’:¹⁹⁹ Significantly, Sneyd was intended to represent Priestley, whose status as ‘the great apostle of Unitarianism’ led to her intensive study of his character and works.²⁰⁰

We might, perhaps, underline the importance of doctrines of the after-life to our understanding of Martineau by reflecting on a moving letter she wrote to Helen Bourn Martineau after Tom’s death, and referring to the earlier death of their infant son. She called him ‘your sweet pureminded child, who has had experience of the love of God, and who has never had cause to fear His frown’.²⁰¹ Martineau clearly did, at the time, fear that frown.

Chapter 1 has uncovered the interconnections between Martineau’s fictional assault on sentiment, the particular circumstances of the status of the Martineau family within Norwich Unitarianism and the ways in which her brother Tom represented an ideal which helped to shape Martineau’s soteriological model of duty, which, expressed as social piety, was identified as key to an understanding of Martineau’s core values. Her vehement response to the Tagart affair and its implicit attacks on that ideal reveal how potent were the links between family, chapel, personal beliefs and a sense of belonging to a broader community: one which was not only founded on Unitarian networks both within and beyond Norwich, but which also recognized a city-wide civic role for the Martineaus.

¹⁹⁹ See p. 208.

²⁰⁰ *Autobiography*, i, p. 81.

²⁰¹ HM to Helen Bourn Martineau, 7 July 1824, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 21.

The Worthington letters may be taken as a statement of Martineau's honest beliefs, and do, as we shall see, complement that obsession with duty and progress which underpinned her life. They also explain how it was that she regarded Worthington as dead to her once it became clear that he would be unable to fulfil their pact of duty and improvement. Quite what role Martineau envisaged for herself as a minister's wife is unclear, since her hearing difficulties precluded some of the Sunday School teaching that her fellow-Unitarian Elizabeth Gaskell undertook in that capacity. On the other hand, her commitment to social piety would have demanded from her a far greater role in chapel home missions and wider Unitarian activism than Gaskell undertook. Certainly, one would envisage a more developed partnership between minister and wife than that outlined in Jennifer Uglow's biography of Gaskell.²⁰²

²⁰² Jennifer Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London, 1999). In a very revealing letter of 1850 to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, Gaskell wrote of her perplexity when faced with the call of home duties (to which she was inclined to give precedence) and a wider sphere of action. See *Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, pp. 117-8.

Chapter 2

The Norwich milieu and the origins of Martineau's 'heartland concepts'

Introduction

Chapter 2 further interrogates Martineau's concept of duty and its relationship to other core values. In particular, the Norwich milieu was where she began the process of exploring the dynamics between individual, household and community progress. Thus, her networking both Unitarian and more broadly nonconformist gave her models of social piety which potentially linked those three elements. John Withers Dowson emerges from her correspondence as the epitome of engaged social practice and a man whose personal qualities (and, perhaps, attractiveness to Martineau) were projected into his civic life.

But her interpretation of her own household meant that there were also painful lessons to learn and practices to shun, and a sense of duty towards its vulnerable members – children and servants – developed out of bitterness and resentment. Personal experience was thus incorporated into her developing heartland concepts, and her encroaching deafness, allied to her role as companion to a young amputee, situated affliction and the correct responses to it as a marker of moral status.

John Withers Dowson as a model of social piety

John Withers Dowson (1800-1879) had hoped to go to Manchester College, York, but his parents insisted upon his entering a clerkship in a Norwich solicitor's office. His *In Memoriam* comments that 'Mr. Dowson's life exemplifies the best fruits of the sedulous

home-training of a pious Unitarian household'.²⁰³ This meant service to the community beyond Unitarianism and nonconformity. He superintended the Octagon Sunday School, but also gave free classes aimed at the workers.²⁰⁴ He was also a member of the local school board, a Poor Law Guardian, Secretary to the Mechanics Institute and a Norwich councillor. Education was his priority, and he set up a school for the middling classes. The author of the memorial provides a vivid picture of Norwich in the first half of the nineteenth century, and from a perspective which Martineau herself would share.

Only those who know the particular difficulties which attended Mr. Dowson's work can realise the extent of self-sacrifice which he freely put forth to overcome them. A cathedral city of decayed institutions and little enterprise...almost hopelessly corrupt in its political aspects, filled with a population precariously employed, and pauperised by an overwhelming multitude of charitable endowments – such was the field in which Mr. Withers Dowson laboured from morn to eve for over half a century – in the cause of self-help and moral advancement.²⁰⁵

What also made Dowson's educational work impressive is that the Unitarian community in Norwich had done surprisingly little for working-class education before he provided the necessary impetus.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Anon., *In Memoriam John Withers Dowson* (Norwich, 1879), p. 4.

²⁰⁴ 'The hours [of the free tuition provided by Dowson in his own home] were six in the morning and eight at night, before his pupils went to their daily work'. See 'Octagon Chapel, Colegate, Norwich': NoRO, QA N003346E.

²⁰⁵ *In Memoriam*, p. 4.

²⁰⁶ 'The powerful Unitarian community was comparatively late in the field [of popular education]...Ellen Martineau (Harriet's youngest sister) indicates that this delay was due to the opposition of the deacons.' W. David Smith, 'Politics, Religion and Education: The Provision of Elementary Schooling in Norwich 1800-1870' in Christopher Barringer (ed.), *Norwich in the nineteenth century* (Norwich, 1984), p. 202. That opposition is perhaps surprising, given that, as Watts has pointed out, the widespread acceptance of associationist psychology (and the opportunity to teach self-reliance) did generally lead to significant Unitarian involvement in working-class education. On the other hand, several key members of the Octagon were manufacturers who did not necessarily dismiss the class-based suspicion of popular education held by many of their orthodox colleagues. See Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the*

Dowson's indefatigable zeal and commitment might be the qualities likely to appeal to a memorialist, but they also permeated Martineau's correspondence. He was clearly a long-standing member of the Martineau social circle and increasingly an intimate: in a letter of January 1824, Martineau commented, 'I have seldom seen Withers open out so much, and never admired him so much before'. His attractiveness is implied in her aside that, given the absence of her brother Henry, she was rather afraid to ask him around so much. One might speculate that Martineau was emotionally drawn to those who, like Worthington, combined attractiveness with a keen sense of duty and social engagement.²⁰⁷ Martineau's letters praised variously his work for Sunday School, the Vestry Library and the Norwich Penny Library. Withers Dowson was clearly at the heart of the latter:

The Penny Library is flourishing too. There is to be a public meeting this evening, by permission of the Mayor; Withers is to explain what has been done, a Committee is to be appointed, subscriptions received &c &c. It has done immense good, and will do more. Withers's Brotherly Society does famously. The fathers of the boys are eager to enter into it, and it seems to deserve the name of the Brotherly society'.²⁰⁸

Founded in 1824, the Brotherly Society was established to 'visit and help the sick' and was avowedly fraternal and democratic: 'at one time the chairman might be a Martineau: at another the local bricklayer'.²⁰⁹ Even so, we have already noted that it was very much

Unitarians in England 1760-1860 (London, 1998), chapter 8 in particular.

²⁰⁷ HM to Tom and Helen Martineau, 3 January 1824, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 10.

²⁰⁸ HM to Tom and Helen Martineau, 17 March 1824, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 18.

²⁰⁹ Richard Hale, 'Nonconformity in Nineteenth Century Norwich', in Barringer, p. 178. Brotherly Society members made weekly subscription payments, and might call upon the Society for up to fifty-two weeks of any acute or chronic illness. There is no indication in the Octagon Brotherly Society Minute Book of payments other than sickness relief, but the *Eastern Daily Press*, marking the centenary of the Society,

yoked to the Octagon hierarchy and to the particular interests of Withers Dowson. Its initial vestry meetings established its aims: ‘to afford relief to certain of its members during illness or incapacity for labour’ and, for its junior members, ‘reading a portion of some moral or religious book to be appointed & explained by the seniors’.²¹⁰ The Sunday School link implied in the Martineau correspondence was made explicit in the meeting of 30 December 1827 – as was its disciplinary function.

This society having arisen from, and being intimately connected with, the Sunday School, & several lads having left the said school without the sanction of their parents, it was resolved that such Boys (as members of this Society) who may at any future time leave the school without giving notice to the Secretary shall be liable to censure.²¹¹

The Penny Library is an excellent example of the way in which Dowson extended his activities beyond the Unitarian circle and formed alliances with other nonconformist denominations. Simon Wilkin, for example, was a fellow shareholder in the Penny Library, and his background and career serve to illustrate the nonconformist networking and genealogical links which characterized the wider communities in Norwich. After his mother’s death, Wilkin was brought up by the Particular Baptist minister of St Mary’s Baptist Chapel, Rev. Joseph Kinghorn, who was a descendant of the Meadows family and, in the words of Jewson, ‘thus connected with the Taylors and the Martineaus of the Octagon Chapel’.²¹² Wilkin set up as a printer and publisher; his partner, William Youngman, worshipped at the Congregational Church at the Old Meeting House (under

refers to an old age and death fund as well as a sickness fund. See *Eastern Daily Press*, Friday 11 January 1924, p. 7.

²¹⁰ The Octagon Chapel Brotherly Society Minute Book, minutes of the meetings of 11 January and 18 January 1824 respectively: NoRO, FC13/37(1).

²¹¹ Octagon Chapel Brotherly Society Minute Book: NoRO, FC13/37(6).

²¹² Jewson, *Simon Wilkin*, p. 5.

the Rev. William Hull). Wilkin became librarian and secretary of the Norfolk and Norwich Literary Institution, set up in 1822 to provide a better service for well-to-do citizens than the Public Library.²¹³ This failed to benefit the poorer classes, and, as noted, Wilkin involved himself in the Penny Library. His educational and intellectual interests were also reflected in his key role in opening a museum as part of the Literary Institute in 1824.²¹⁴ It was Wilkin who published Martineau's first book (in 1823): *Devotional Exercises, by a Lady and her Addresses with Prayers and Original Hymns for the Use of Families and Schools*.

Martineau clearly also found attractive Dowson's ready intellect and thirst for knowledge, and she painted a vivid picture of evening reading parties in a letter to Helen Martineau in November 1825 (after Dowson's marriage); typically, she wrote that 'Withers imparts so much knowledge to other people, that he ought to be always increasing his own stock', and so she had supplied him with a plan introducing him to Hartley and Associationism: 'Withers is beginning to feel the delight which I knew a mind like his must feel in Hartley's Theory of Theopathic affections'.²¹⁵ Thus, she recorded her contribution to the self-improvement which went hand-in-hand with community progress.

Martineau's correspondence reveals something of the warmth of the relationships within Dowson's family. The Dowsons as a whole were clearly much valued, and a letter in the

²¹³ Trevor Fawcett, 'The Founding of the Norfolk and Norwich Literary Institution'. Fawcett comments that 'It was clearly to be a serious, though not stuffy, gentleman's library': NoRO, N027.3(1).

²¹⁴ Alongside Wilkin and Youngman, Jewson lists, as members of the Museum Committee, Sir James Edward Smith, G. Sothern and John Taylor – all Octagon deacons.

²¹⁵ HM to Helen Martineau, 13 November 1825, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 35.

same month referred to his sister Lucy in terms which bespeak intimacy and pleasure in her company: ‘Lucy Dowson is in Norwich, and we have asked her to stay with us, and if she comes we shall have a week[’]s uninterrupted giggle’.²¹⁶ Martineau, then, presented the Magdalen St/Dowson circle as one on which Helen should model her widow’s life, since it represented individual intellectual and moral progress and a commitment to community engagement within and beyond Unitarianism, underpinned by a sense of duty. Its importance to Norwich is underlined.

Relationships within the Martineau household

However, it would be unwise to paint a picture of unalloyed, uniform and consensual daily conscientiousness in the Martineau family, because this would be to ignore the impact of Martineau’s interpretation of her bitterly unhappy childhood. This interpretation itself shaped her core values and, in particular, her view that the household must respect the needs of the most vulnerable and disempowered – its children and its servants. This was not only an intellectual conviction, since both Harriet and James Martineau were fearful of the impact of their own feelings on duty and progress: a fear which stemmed from the particular circumstances of the Martineau household and which had also influenced James’s reaction to Worthington’s illness. The key figure here is Martineau’s mother and the manner in which the household was conducted – in particular, her method of bringing up children. Martineau’s *Autobiography* catalogued an indictment which was as long as it was bitter. That condemnation was echoed in Chapman’s *Memorials* and was summed up most vigorously in a lecture by Florence

²¹⁶ HM to Tom and Helen Martineau, 10 January 1824, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 13.

Fenwick Miller, where the mother was accused of being ‘deficient in the gentler qualities, and wanting in the wisdom of the heart’.²¹⁷ Martineau’s *Autobiography* hit hard: ‘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’.²¹⁸ She believed that her childhood was marred by a failure on her parents’ part to recognize a child’s emotional needs, and that her physical ailments, which included digestive problems and increasing deafness, were in considerable part the consequence; these, she exacerbated by her tendency to indulge in reveries of endurance, martyrdom and sainthood without the sympathetic maternal understanding and guidance which would have curbed such excesses. The account of that childhood was peppered with terms such as ‘severity’, and she linked the severity of her treatment with that of the servants: ‘Justice was precisely what was least understood in our house, in regard to servants and children’.²¹⁹ Her father appeared as a gentle, unassertive being; the tone of the household was set by her mother, who was anything but unassertive. Chapman, having accepted this account as veracious, pounced gleefully upon every opportunity to criticize Elizabeth Martineau’s harsh treatment of her daughter, which was allegedly the result of a ‘setting-down’ system which oppressed in the name of salutary discipline, Chapman quoted extensively from an un-named friend of Harriet’s youth who confessed herself apprehensive to the point of sickness when faced with the imminent arrival of the formidable mother: “‘It was the *setting-down way* she had, which was so terrible to sensitive young people... I remember *no* tenderness towards

²¹⁷ Florence Fenwick Miller, *The Lessons of a Life: Harriet Martineau: A Lecture delivered before the Sunday Lecture Society St George’s Hall, Langham Place on Sunday Afternoon, 11 March, 1877* (London, 1877), p. 10.

²¹⁸ *Autobiography*, i, p. 22.

²¹⁹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 14.

her, but the same severity and sharpness of manner, cleverness of management”²²⁰.

Chapman pursued this quarry into Martineau’s young adulthood, and assumed the worst of her mother’s motives (selfishness) on every occasion, including a recall from London in 1829 where Martineau had attempted to obtain employment as a review writer for periodicals: ‘Mrs. Martineau having decided that her daughter’s hopes of a literary career should be crushed’.²²¹ James Martineau’s ‘Biographical Memoranda’ strove to reject the negative portraits, but in a manner which is at first sight equivocal but concluded with an indictment as severe as that of his sister, albeit without her force of expression and example. He described his mother thus:

Of great energy and quickness of resource; and married to a man of more tenderness and moral refinement than forces of self assertion, she naturally played the chief part in the governance of the household... Her children were trained in wholesome habits & clever arts, and stimulated by her sparkling talk: and though my childhood was not happy, I attribute this, not to any sharp or repressive discipline on her part or my father’s, but to well-meant but persecuting sport on the part of my older brothers, and to the rough treatment at the hands of a great public school; and still more, to the simple absence of any apprehensive sympathy with the growing inner life of the boy.²²²

The last sentence cannot be interpreted as other than condemnatory. Significantly, the MS. has the word ‘discipline’ crossed out and replaced by ‘governance’; the change is more likely to be an attempt at cool-headed balance than a stylistic embellishment. The similarities with his sister extended to his reaction to Worthington’s collapse. As we noted, he chose not to visit him, and there exists a draft letter to him as his intimate friend which tried to justify his decision. Unfortunately, it is difficult to see it as anything other

²²⁰ Chapman, ‘Memorials’ in *Autobiography*, ii, pp. 147-8.

²²¹ Chapman, ‘Memorials’ in *Autobiography*, ii, p. 175.

²²² JM, ‘Biographical Memoranda’: HMC, MS. J. Martineau 13 11/117.

than mendacious, and a testimony to the difficulties a principled and habitually sincere man found in coping with the likely emotional impact of such a visit. After proffering several excuses, he was driven to a part-confession which hardly accorded with his chosen profession: 'I am wholly unaccustomed to the sight of severe illness; and being of rather a nervous temperament, the sight of it impresses me so strongly that I am in danger of being possessed of far too unfavourable an impression of the patient's state'.²²³ It might be argued that his emotional fragility stemmed in large part from his experiences in the household dominated by his mother.

Some corroboration of the effect of Elizabeth Martineau's powerful personality is implied in a letter written by her to an unidentified recipient. Mrs Martineau hoped that her friend was to come to one of the Martineau Sunday evening meetings in the usual manner (with her 'good man'), but 'an alarm has been raised in my mind' (by Thomas Martineau Sr) that remarks that his wife had made at the previous supper might put some constraint on her friend's freedom of speech.

...at any rate, talk as usual for it would give me real concern to have a single idea of yours suppress'd or to have it come forth in any surreptitious guise – sincerity & no disguise in the presence of her who can admire without envy, & love, without jealous [sic] of superior talents.²²⁴

²²³ JM letter to John Hugh Worthington, 6 March 1827: BANC, MSS 92/754 Box 6, folder 128 (draft).

²²⁴ Elizabeth Martineau letter to unidentified recipient, undated: NoRO, MC 257/156. The catalogue identifies the recipient as John Taylor, and has misled Kathryn Gleadle as a result, who follows the attribution: see *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain 1815-1867* (Oxford, 2009), p. 100. The phrase 'your good man' makes this implausible.

The reference to ‘superior talents’ suggests that this may well be addressed to Susannah Taylor (1775-1823), who was a significant figure in Unitarian circles, a noted hymn writer and founder of a literary salon in the city. Ridler sees her as having a forceful personality²²⁵ and Chandler characterizes her as a celebrated controversialist.²²⁶ Mrs Taylor was mentioned in an *Edinburgh Review* article of 1879 entitled ‘The Worthies of Norwich’ and was described as a bosom friend of the writer Amelia Opie and ‘a Norwich lady of a wise and noble spirit...well known to a large circle... for her energetic character and her liberal opinions’.²²⁷ Her ‘good man’ was John Taylor (1750-1826), the second cousin of Philip Meadows Martineau and co-founder of the Norwich Public Library. Elizabeth Martineau was clearly little abashed in such company, despite her relative lack of formal education (as the unusual grammar of her letter attests). In any event, the apology is less than fulsome, and the possibility of her friend offering ideas ‘in surreptitious guise’ is more hurtful than placatory.

In practice, whether Elizabeth Martineau was quite as awful (in both senses of the word) a parent as suggested by her famous daughter is beside the point: Harriet Martineau’s view of the dynamic between her mother and herself and her childhood experience had a formative impact on her writings and life. This is why, in the appropriately-titled *Household Education*, she offered her own experience as at once self-exposure and truth: ‘The early life of that child was to me a long course of intense emotions which, I am

²²⁵ Ann Margaret Ridler, ‘George Borrow as a Linguist’, CNA D.Phil. thesis, 1983.

²²⁶ David Chandler, ‘Norwich Literature, 1788-97: A Critical Survey’, Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1997.

²²⁷ Anon., ‘The Worthies of Norwich’, *Edinburgh Review*, 150, 307 (July 1879), p. 65.

certain, have constituted the most important part of my education'.²²⁸ The metaphor of the bursting heart peppered the childhood sections of the *Autobiography*, and this is why the *Autobiography* so powerfully communicates the memories of childhood – the sight, sound and touch – and why both her fiction and non-fiction offered up those experiences in a way which appears surprisingly unmediated. The opening page of her *Autobiography* described her very first memory:

I remember standing on the threshold of a cottage, holding fast by the doorpost, and putting my foot down, in repeated attempts to reach the ground. Having accomplished the step, I toddled...to a tree before the door, and tried to clasp and get round it; but the rough bark hurt my hands. At night of the same day, in bed, I was disconcerted by the coarse feel of the sheets...and I was alarmed by the creaking of the bedstead when I moved.²²⁹

And here is the episode as it reappeared in *Five Years of Youth* in Mary's conversation with her former nurse.

'You had a wooden step at the door then; and I used to take fast hold of the door-post, and put down first one foot and then the other...the bed creaked, and frightened me; and the feel of the coarse sheets was not like what I had been accustomed to. And that old elm too, how its rough bark hurt my little hands when I used to try to get round it'.²³⁰

The early chapters of the *Autobiography* look unflinchingly at physical handicap, and Martineau incorporated personal experience into her core values. Response to affliction was intimately linked to a sense of duty, of self-worth, and was potentially a litmus test for a sense of community. In particular, there is an extended discussion of the impact on

²²⁸ HM, *Household Education* (London, 1849), p. 58.

²²⁹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 7.

²³⁰ *Five Years of Youth*, pp. 5-6.

her of her friendship with a young girl, ‘E’, who lost a leg and the terrible self-loathing that ensued when she momentarily abandoned her charge and, crucially, her sense of duty to play just one game of hide-and-seek.²³¹ Physical affliction and the correct responses to it are used didactically in several of her fictional works. Her very first tale, *Christmas-Day* (1826), featured a twelve year old girl, Sarah Brunton, whose loss of both parents was presumably considered by the young Martineau as insufficiently testing, and so the sequel of the same year, *The Friends: A Continuation of Christmas-Day*, gave Sarah the salutary experience of going blind. Her *Playfellow* story *The Crofton Boys* (1841) featured an amputee as its hero, and its roots in her Norwich childhood are evident from the comments in the *Autobiography* where she explained that she had written to ‘E’ to confess her uneasiness at what might seem like an exploiting of another’s suffering and ‘had in reply a most charming letter,- free, cheerful, magnanimous’.²³² Crucially, in a letter to the popular writer Mrs Jameson, Martineau identified her reaction to her friend’s affliction as perhaps the single most important formative influence of her life – a startling comment, but a deeply revealing one. Equally startling is the view that the nervous reaction led to her deafness. Her nerves, she averred, were injured by daydreams of endurance and enduring loves: and we recall that day-dreams and reveries were what destroyed her character Anna Byerley.

All my day-dreams were of enduring loves; & I shd have grown up altogether a stoic, if I had not so injured my nerves by these same day-dreams as to render that impossible. To this cause, I am confident, my deafness is mainly ascribable.²³³

²³¹ *Autobiography*, i. See pp. 35-7 in particular.

²³² *Autobiography*, i, p. 36. See also below, pp. 285-6.

²³³ HM to Anna Jameson, 15 July 1841, *Collected Letters*, ii, p. 82. Martineau included Mrs Jameson in her *Biographical Sketches* and praised her literary ability and benevolent intent. However, she judged that ‘her influences would have been of a higher order if she had not been prepossessed by personal griefs and rendered liable to dwell on the scenery of human passions in one direction till it became magnified beyond all reason’. See *Biographical Sketches* (London, 1869), p. 433. It may well be, of course, that

It is important to develop this issue of Martineau's childhood sense of duty. She told the tale of her return from the Carleton visit as 'the absurdest little preacher of my years (between two and three) that ever was. I used to nod my head emphatically, and say "Never ky for tyfles:" "Dooty fust, and pleasure afterwards," and so forth: and I sometimes got courage to edge up to strangers, and ask them to give me – "a maxim." Almost before I could join letters, I got some sheets of paper, and folded them into a little square book, and wrote, in double lines...my beloved maxims'.²³⁴ This is very funny, and intended to be so: but 'Dooty fust, and pleasure afterwards' essentially also dominated the Martineau household and Harriet Martineau's entire life. Chapman quoted from a school-friend's reminiscences of Harriet's relatively happy days at the Rev. Lant Carpenter's school in Bristol (when she was sixteen): "Harriet was considered among us as especially the *good* girl, always working diligently and conscientiously, and never seeming to think pleasure possible till duty was performed".²³⁵ It may not be too fanciful to trace Martineau's advice to Helen Bourn Martineau to seek moral improvement and a sense of purpose through intellectual effort, such as getting up at 5am to make abstracts of Paley's *Moral Philosophy*,²³⁶ to the little girl writing down maxims in double lines, and then to the woman of letters who refused to visit or receive callers in the mornings, which were devoted to her literary work.²³⁷

Martineau's reflection in her letter on her own experience was intended as a warning to Jameson.

²³⁴ *Autobiography*, i, p. 9.

²³⁵ Chapman, 'Memorials' in *Autobiography*, ii, p. 149.

²³⁶ HM to Helen Martineau, 12 May 1825, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 31.

²³⁷ See James Payn here: in *Some Literary Recollections* (London 1884), he complacently proclaimed his success in distracting Martineau from her morning duties, despite her maid's comments: "The fact is, sir...Miss Martineau never sees visitors in the morning. She writes in her study until dinner-time" (p. 100).

The picture emerging here of the author of *Five Years of Youth* is of a young woman with marked intellectual gifts, unusually well-educated²³⁸ and a member of a household of considerable status, not only within the powerful Unitarian community of Norwich, but as also part of the intellectual elite of the city. Indeed, it is the judgment of Chandler that the elite (by the end of the eighteenth century, at least) was made up of two ‘social allegiances’ – the Octagon and the Theatre Royal.²³⁹ But Martineau came to believe, and continued to believe, that all was not well within the Martineau household, where relationships with children (and servants) were at times severe and inconsiderate and stimulated emotions and self-aggrandizing reveries which were physically as well as psychologically damaging to the sensitive child. From a sense of duty informed by piety came a hard-won equilibrium, but an awareness of its potential upset through emotional upheaval was ever-present. The death of her beloved brother and of her fiancé were dealt with in a manner which appears callous but which reflected her sense that God expected his creation to progress as individuals and as a community, and that those who did their duty to the best of their abilities and within the opportunities afforded to them were safe. We have noted that what she meant by ‘safe’ was not safe from the pains of hell, but safe within the approbation of God; no painful process of the sloughing off of sinfulness would be necessary to prepare them for heaven. Undisciplined emotions - sentiment and sensibility - would compromise that safety, and she feared its effect on her sister-in-law

²³⁸ It is Ruth Watts’s judgement that ‘Unitarian girls...often received an excellent education at home and were expected to take full part in the vibrant intellectual life which marked many of these homes’. See Watts, p. 80. Martineau was also educated for two years at the Rev. Isaac Perry’s school in Norwich where the curriculum was identical for boys and girls, as it was at Carpenter’s school in Bristol. Carpenter was of the opinion that both genders should understand the principles of Hartleyan psychology and how the law of association shaped the intellect and affections.

²³⁹ Chandler, p. ii.

in particular. Most of all, she feared the effect on herself. As we have seen, she could not bear to see her stricken fiancé, and she was able to justify her decision because he had fought the good fight and it was over for him. They had wished to fight it together in the interest of mutual improvement, and that was over too. A visit, therefore, was as pointless as it would have been almost unbearably painful. Some might wish to interpret this episode by attempting to establish where reason ended and excuse began, but there is no evidence that Martineau saw it on any level as an excuse. It is inconceivable that she saw herself as simply debilitated by emotion in the manner of Anna unable to visit her imprisoned father: indeed, that episode would have been penned quite differently – and would have been much less condemnatory - had she been using it as an analogy with her own refusal to visit Worthington and as an opportunity for self-exculpation or self-laceration. She was able in later years to admit her danger where the most powerful emotions constantly mingled with duty and an over-scrupulous conscience; in short, in marriage and in children of her own.

If I had had a husband dependent on me for his happiness, the responsibility would have made me wretched... So also with children ... When I am among little children, it frightens me to think what my idolatry of my own children would have been.²⁴⁰

Five Years of Youth, then, represents a reworking of developing values, self-identity and interpretations of personal experience with emotionalism as its theme and didactic fiction as the medium. The fictional and cultural trope of sensibility was not only appropriate but

²⁴⁰ *Autobiography*, i, p. 101.

familiar from her reading of Jane Austen: as Sanders notes, she read *Persuasion* eleven times, and she refers in the *Autobiography* to the ‘old favourites’ – Scott and Austen.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ See Sanders, *Reason over Passion*, p. 7 and *Autobiography*, i, p. 323.

Chapter 3

Five Years of Youth and the context of sensibility

Introduction

We have noted that Martineau wrote *Five Years of Youth* as an attack upon sentiment because it compromised demands for self-improvement, for duty and for the exercise of conscience: it also prevented the rightful use of the emotions in considering the needs of others. Such corrosive influence threatened the security of a painless translation to God's presence, but it also had wider implications. Martineau's criticism of sentiment is at one with her view of the relationship between individual, household and community: individual progress was intrinsic to household progress, and could be compromised by an absence of mutual improvement. Martineau appears to have assumed that household and individual progress was reciprocal, and that community engagement stimulated both. Are we, therefore, to see *Five Years of Youth* as a reasonably typical assault upon the cult of sensibility? If so, we face the problem of establishing how far there existed a single definition or identifiable set of attitudes towards sensibility across the nineteenth century, and, indeed, how far the term is itself stable in meaning and dominant in affective discourse. Fred Kaplan's *Sacred Tears* attempts to distinguish between sentiment as a moral force in the idiom of David Hume and Adam Smith and sensibility as the intense expression of feeling associated with Rousseau, Sterne, Mackenzie and Wordsworth alone among the Romantics.²⁴² However, one might add to the already elusive and slippery terms 'sensibility' and 'sentiment' the further term 'sentimentality' - as Michael Bell puts it, 'a byword for indulgent and lachrymose excess...A popular culture of

²⁴² Fred Kaplan, *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature* (Princeton, 1987).

tears²⁴³ - and note that Kaplan's approach failed to recognize the specifically Victorian contexts which increasingly shaped Victorian sentimentality²⁴⁴ as the century progressed.

Miriam Bailin, in moving away from the Kaplan model, places Victorian sentimentality firmly in the socio-economic context of industrialisation and the rise of the middle classes. She sees it as a tranquillising agent for the bourgeoisie, whose easy tears cooled the fevered brow beset by the stresses of social mobility and the need to proclaim and demonstrate social worth. Thus, sentimentalism offered an emotional release whilst validating social *mores*.²⁴⁵ It worked in part through pathos and concomitant weeping and in part by providing an object lesson in the necessary repression of feelings where the interests of safeguarding a bourgeois principle, precept or icon (such as the sacredness of the hearth) were at stake. Such sentimentality was therefore multi-vocal and offered the reader-as-consumer suitable choice in identifying with different characters at different times: overall, the experience was therapeutic and reassuring. In Bailin's view, Victorian sentimentality took as its focus the outsider who was himself in need, whereas the eighteenth-century version presented the outsider as a man of feeling whose benevolence was stimulated by the sight of others in need.

²⁴³ Michael Bell, *Sentimentalism, Ethics and the Culture of Feeling* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 118.

²⁴⁴ See Carolyn Burdett's introduction to 'New Agenda: Sentimentalities', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 16, 2 (August 2011), pp. 187-94.

²⁴⁵ See Miriam Bailin, "'Dismal Pleasure': Victorian Sentimentality and the Pathos of the Parvenu", *English Literary History*, 66, 4 (Winter 1999), pp. 1015-32.

Sentiment in *Five Years of Youth*

The critique of sentiment in *Five Years of Youth* does not appear readily to fit either the eighteenth-century or Victorian model as characterized, although the issue is complicated by the picture of Mary Byerley, whose exemplary behaviour is not presented entirely in opposition to sentiment, since she possesses a strong sense of empathy. The final chapter, which represents the author's endorsement of all that Mary has achieved, is titled 'Sense with Sensibility'.²⁴⁶ Mary's benevolence, however, is rarely that of the outsider looking in, since her efforts are focused on her own household and its relations with others: Martineau thus paints the picture of a 'household of feeling' rather than a man or woman of feeling, since she demonstrates how Mary underpins right relations in the household, which are compromised in different ways by its other members. Anna's distance from the household and its duties makes her an outsider, but one by her own choice. Indeed, Martineau's constant reference-point is the Byerley household. Anna's sensibility abandons her to lassitude; she fails to receive visitors, is unprepared for her lessons, and incapable of active benevolence. In this, Anna is clearly no Marianne Dashwood, who was impelled towards action through her extravagance of expression and feeling; her attachment to Willoughby propelled her into breaches of propriety which were not countenanced by Austen. But in *Sense and Sensibility* Marianne was not presented entirely unsympathetically or unequivocally condemned, whereas Martineau's Anna Byerley is never presented sympathetically and *is* unequivocally condemned. As for the Victorian model of sentimentality, Anna Byerley's tears are those of fatuous and

²⁴⁶ Martineau, presumably inadvertently, used the term 'sensibility' where she had previously (perhaps in deference to Austen) preferred 'sentiment'. This would suggest the equivalence of the two terms.

debilitating self-indulgence, and weeping is never presented as therapeutic. Nor does Martineau dwell on suffering in a way likely to stimulate the reader's own tears.

Martineau's particular emphasis on the specific dangers of sentiment was not without echo in near-contemporary periodicals, albeit without reference to links between individual, household and community. An anatomizing of the potential dangers of excessive sensibility, for instance, appeared in the *European Magazine and London Review* of 1804. Where sensibility encouraged fellow-feeling, it was a noble thing: but, taken to excess, it led to 'fretfulness and discontent' and an inability to see any good in the present – and its victim (in this instance a man) 'becomes weak-minded and cowardly'.²⁴⁷ Anna's sofa-hugging inanition is a case in point. A review of *Five Years of Youth* in *The Athenaeum* of 1831 commented: 'in the present day of stimulated sensibility, and rage for excitement, not merely in literature, but in daily life, we recommend it very cordially to many mothers for many daughters'.²⁴⁸ A letter by 'Anna Comnena' in the *New British Lady's Magazine* in 1819 placed a Martineau-like emphasis on action as the necessary concomitant to true sensibility: 'There is an high degree of excellence attached to sensibility, when well regulated: it is a sentiment almost divine: and to an exalted mind, *when there is full power to act* [my emphasis], is a great blessing to the possessor'.²⁴⁹ 'Anna' warned against indulging to excess in sensibility: the more we are affected by suffering in others, the more necessary it is to apply reason to direct our conduct. This is the message, of course, directly taught by Mr Byerley when he takes the girls to see the image-maker and explains how, rather than being overwhelmed by

²⁴⁷ 'Isabella', 'On Sensibility', *European Magazine and London Review*, 45 (January 1804), pp. 5-6.

²⁴⁸ Anon., 'Five Years of Youth; or, Sense and Sentiment', *The Athenaeum*, 188 (4 June 1831), p. 358.

²⁴⁹ 'Anna Comnena', letter to the *New British Lady's Magazine*, 7 (January 1819), p. 19.

their distress, he consulted Elvi, who made the necessary enquiries before contacting a London fund for the relief of distressed foreigners. For the *Athenaeum* reviewer, Mary offered a portrait of precisely this ‘balance of imagination and reason’,²⁵⁰ where true imagination is selfless sentiment or empathy and where unbalanced imagination is simply an indulgence in day-dreams about the misfortune of others without action. Reason is vivified and given an object by feelings, but never controlled by them.

Janet Todd’s definition of sentiment reads as a summary of Mary’s worth. Sentiment, at its best, was perceived as ‘also a thought, often an elevated one, influenced by emotion, a combining of heart with head or an emotional impulse leading to an opinion or a principle’.²⁵¹ Indeed, the combining of feeling and reason is a familiar trait in eighteenth-century philosophy. John Mullen, for example, cites David Hume’s *My Own Life* (written 1776) where Hume concluded by declaring himself able to speak his sentiments through the unity of feeling and reasoned opinion which befits a philosopher.²⁵² Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) offered a model of a correct society in which pleasure arises from ‘a certain correspondence of sentiments and opinions, from a certain harmony of minds’.²⁵³ Entering into the thoughts and feelings of others was the key mechanism which regulated the ethical systems of society, although Smith did not claim it was easy to regulate passions (which could overpower empathy) with reason: the key was self-command: ‘Self-command is not only itself a great virtue, but from it all the

²⁵⁰ *Athenaeum*, p. 359.

²⁵¹ Janet Todd, *Sensibility An Introduction* (London, 1986), p. 7.

²⁵² John Mullen, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feelings in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1988).

²⁵³ Adam Smith, quoted in Gillian Russell & Clara Tuite (eds), *Romantic Sociability. Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain 1770-1840* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 7.

other virtues seem to derive their principal lustre'.²⁵⁴ And self-command was precisely what Anna Byerley lost through sensibility.

Sensibility also had a political dimension, though by no means a consistent one. Those who chose to associate it *via* Rousseau with the extremes of the French Revolution presented it as debilitating, anti-Christian and unpatriotic,²⁵⁵ but radicals such as Godwin turned on sensibility as the offspring of decadence among the idle rich: his novel of 1805, *Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling*, presented its eponymous hero as ultimately vicious and corrupt as a result of sentimentality without purpose or object. The novel is, of course, a parody of Mackenzie's advertisement for sensibility *The Man of Feeling* (1771), but, as Jon Mee has pointed out, Mackenzie himself worried about the misuse of sentiment, and commented: 'In the enthusiasm of sentiment there is much the same danger as in the enthusiasm of religion, of substituting certain impulses and feelings of what may be called a visionary kind, in the place of real practical duties'.²⁵⁶ Here once again is Martineau's stern critique of Anna's behaviour: sentiment renders her incapable of meeting even the everyday obligations of the middle-class household. But she is equally incapable of conducting herself appropriately at an abolitionist political meeting, and she disrupts the attempts to decide on practical measures by self-indulgent sobbing. Martineau in this way gives expression through metaphor to her habitual link between individual and household relationships and community, with the addition of the political

²⁵⁴ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London, 2009), p. 284.

²⁵⁵ Jane Austen's attacks on sensibility were written at the time of the wars with post-revolutionary France.

²⁵⁶ Henry Mackenzie, quoted in Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford, 2003), p. 52.

dimension. Thus, her attack on sensibility reflected her core values and was reflected in her discourse.

Sensibility, gender and ‘enthusiasm’

The fluidity of the concept of sensibility meant that it could be linked to ‘enthusiasm’, which itself might be used by critics to attack the political enthusiasms of radicals or the religious enthusiasm of Methodists. But it could also be used to attack the ‘transports’ of emotion to which women were reputedly prone. In all cases, the control which reason should impose on sensibility would be fatally compromised. Martineau’s view of the relationship between women and sensibility took as its focus the life of Mary Wollstonecraft, since, despite her frequent agreement with Wollstonecraft’s views on female education, Martineau criticized her for the compromising of reason by excesses of emotion. Reflecting that emphasis placed by Adam Smith on the need for self-control, Martineau deprecated the damage done to women’s causes by Wollstonecraft’s personal behaviour, which she linked to extremes of sensibility.²⁵⁷

This is not to say that Martineau correctly identified the extent or nature of Wollstonecraft’s attachment to sensibility. Synty Conger’s illuminating discussion of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) suggests that Wollstonecraft’s intention was to present her ideas from the perspective of the person of true sensibility by combining

²⁵⁷ Godwin had presented Mary Wollstonecraft as a heroine of sensibility, but his frankness in exposing her behaviour (including cohabitation and the bearing of an illegitimate child) compromised any sympathy he might have hoped to arouse for his deceased wife. Nor was such a work likely to deflect criticism of sensibility itself.

the purity of emotion with the reliability and cultural legitimacy afforded by reason. Wollstonecraft placed her emphasis on reason in argument, but the polemical tone was avowedly emotional and spontaneous.²⁵⁸ Wollstonecraft saw spontaneity of style as an escape from the striving for elegance which would result in artificiality; such cool and ratiocinative delineation would not reach the heart. Barker-Benfield suggests that she was ‘deeply ambivalent in her views of sensibility’,²⁵⁹ but it is Conger’s judgement, rightly based on a confluence of her life and her writings, that Wollstonecraft’s attitudes towards sensibility represent the ‘paradigmatic shifts of a disciple’;²⁶⁰ namely, from naïve acceptance to critical rejection and then a more measured return in later years. However, following Godwin’s 1798 *Memoirs of the author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, the early nineteenth-century reading of his wife’s life focused on her romantic attachments, supposedly extreme emotional responses to men and attempts at suicide. It would seem that Martineau’s attitude to Wollstonecraft reflected this interpretation of her as an archetypal victim of sensibility, but she did not therefore reject the latter’s arguments on women’s intellectual equality with men, and shared her views on women’s thwarted potential. Writing at the age of twenty under the male *nom de plume* ‘Discipulus’, Martineau’s article ‘On Female Education’ echoed Wollstonecraft in denying that women’s intellectual capacities were biologically inferior to those of men. Martineau did, however, see women’s minds as somewhat differently constituted – towards diligence, rather than enterprise, and a thirst for knowledge rather than ambition

²⁵⁸ In her introduction to the first edition, Wollstonecraft commented ‘should I express my conviction with the energetic emotions that I feel whenever I think of the subject, the dictates of experience and reflection will be felt by some of my readers’. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London, 1985), p. 82.

²⁵⁹ Barker-Benfield, p. xxviii.

²⁶⁰ Syndy McMillen Conger, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Language of Sensibility* (London, 1994), p. 179.

– but, like Wollstonecraft, she rejected society’s assumption that women needed no object beyond the trivial. Both writers accepted that women had domestic duties which could not be neglected, and both averred that the importance of the household was such that ill-educated women could not guide young minds or enter into true companionship with men.

To deny women the opportunity to perform their duties as rational and intelligent members of society was an abomination both to Wollstonecraft and to Martineau. In *Society in America* (1837), Martineau protested against the manner in which American men (particularly in the south) controlled women through courtesy: pampered and protected, they were trivialized and rendered as incapable as members of any harem.²⁶¹ But this argument, however intellectually compelling, was not enough: to Martineau, women must overtly display self-discipline, and their actions – particularly those of women in the public realm – would provide the evidence with which to overcome the objections of doubters. Wollstonecraft’s behaviour compromised this proof, and provided ammunition to those who posited a gender-based definition of sensibility where women’s physiology allegedly predisposed them towards debilitating ‘transports’ of sentiment. Thus, Martineau admired the way in which Wollstonecraft married reason and sentiment in her writings, but saw her life as a caricature of misplaced sensibility and, as with many proponents of women’s emancipation, was keen to avoid being tarred by association. In

²⁶¹ HM, *Society in America* (3 vols., London, 1837). Martineau rejected the doctrine of ‘two spheres’ where the narrow sphere of woman was appointed and defined by men. ‘The broad and true conception is of the sphere appointed by God, and bounded by the powers which he has bestowed’ (i, p. 206). Martineau, as we noted earlier, saw no gender difference in intellectual powers.

the *Autobiography*, Martineau insisted on the consistency through time of her views on the Woman's Cause and on her distance from Wollstonecraft.

It seemed to me, from the earliest time I could think on the subject of Woman's Rights and condition, that the first requisite to advancement is the self-reliance which results from self-discipline...But Mary Wollstonecraft was, with all her powers, a poor victim of passion...I have never regarded her as a safe example, nor as a successful champion of Woman and her Rights.²⁶²

Martineau's use of the word 'safe' is surely significant. Even if it had lost its theological import by the time she came to write the *Autobiography*, it remained potent through its continuing relevance to the intimate interconnection between the way one lived one's life and the right to teach through one's writings. Wollstonecraft had forfeited that right.

On the other hand, Martineau respected the interrelationship between the life and work of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, at whose school, we recall, the Thomas Martineaus senior and junior were educated: 'glorious Mrs Barbauld', as she called her.²⁶³ In her *Biographical Sketches* (on Mrs Opie) she commented that Barbauld 'wrote the little she did write out of a full and glowing mind'.²⁶⁴ Martineau displayed an intimate knowledge of her work through personal contact, perhaps with herself (Mrs Barbauld died in 1825) and more certainly with the Aikin family – Mrs Barbauld's maiden name was Aikin.²⁶⁵ The Aikins

²⁶² *Autobiography*, i, pp. 301-3.

²⁶³ HM to Emily and Rosamund Beaufort, 9 June 1867, *Collected Letters*, v, p. 178.

²⁶⁴ *Biographical Sketches*, p. 333.

²⁶⁵ Lucy Aikin, Mrs Barbauld's niece, is cited by Webb as evidence of Martineau's personality and, according to Aikin, her tendency to 'adopt extreme positions on most subjects, and without much examination.' (Webb, *Harriet Martineau*, p. 37). This suits Webb's view of Martineau, but Martineau herself commented that she rarely met Lucy Aikin and objected to Aikin's publication of correspondence with William Ellery Channing, the Transcendentalist Unitarian, which contained 'unfounded aspersions on myself and others' (*Collected Letters*, v, p. 180).

were Unitarian and had many Norwich and Norfolk contacts. Martineau felt that she knew sufficient about Mrs Barbauld to criticize those who claimed that the popular children's stories *Evenings at Home* (1792) were her work, whereas they were largely the work of her brother, Dr John Aikin: Martineau named the two pieces which were Mrs Barbauld's, and commented 'Mrs B & the Aikins have always anxiously explained this'.²⁶⁶ But it is the *Autobiography* that offered the most unequivocal statement of familiarity with, and respect for, Barbauld: 'We had all grown up with a great reverence for Mrs. Barbauld (which she fully deserved from much wiser people than ourselves) and, reflectively, for Dr. Aikin, her brother, - also able in his way, and far more industrious, but without her genius'.²⁶⁷

What, then, was the relationship between Barbauld, Martineau and attitudes towards 'enthusiasm'? 'Mrs Barbauld's Daughter' is a chapter title of Shelagh Hunter's *Harriet Martineau: The Poetics of Moralism*, but Hunter does not fully develop the nature of any relationship with Barbauld's thought. She places Barbauld in opposition to the cool rationalism of Priestley-style Unitarianism,²⁶⁸ but Barbauld's position was rather more nuanced than Hunter suggests. Her dispute with Priestley is well known and often cited as an example of her identification with enthusiasts for sensibility in opposition to Dry-as-dust empiricists.²⁶⁹ However, one of her key criticisms was that Priestley himself fell

²⁶⁶ *Collected Letters*, v, p. 180.

²⁶⁷ *Autobiography*, i, p. 78.

²⁶⁸ Hunter refers to Unitarianism in general as 'her [Martineau's] austere sect'. See Hunter, p. 58. This comment hardly does justice to the Norwich Unitarian context of vigorous cultural life and card-playing referred to in the *Autobiography*. See in particular i, p. 19.

²⁶⁹ For an interpretation of Barbauld as a proponent of feminine sensibility against masculine rationalist culture, see William McCarthy, "'We Hoped the *Woman* Was Going to Appear": Repression, Desire, and Gender in Anna Letitia Barbauld's Early Poems' in Paula R. Feldman and Theresa M. Kelley (eds), *Romantic Woman Writers: Voices and Countervoices* (London, 1995), pp. 113-37.

into the trap of enthusiasm where he demanded absolute candour in the vigorous expression of conflicting opinions: a view which smacked of the revolutionary excesses of William Godwin. As for Martineau, her 1822 article ‘Female Writers on Practical Divinity’ accepted Barbauld’s view that, whilst free inquiry is ‘undoubtedly necessary to establish a rational belief’,²⁷⁰ disputatiousness would lead to a sabotaging of the reverential spirit. Jon Mee argues that Barbauld had attempted to draw a distinction between unthinking religious enthusiasm or fervour and a spirit of devotion.²⁷¹ This argument is evidenced by Barbauld’s criticism of Methodism on the one hand and her advocacy of the importance of the religious affections on the other. She wished to emphasize the need for passion to be regulated, largely by means of practical piety. If passion needed regulation, then so did regulation need passion: the ideal should be a potent combination of the two, and the result may be the product of, and be measured by, an active but unassuming benevolence. Devotion, then, was a sense of reverence in the quiet proximity of God and the silent doing of one’s duty. This, indeed, is a characteristic theme in Martineau’s *Devotional Exercises, For the Use of Young Persons* of 1823 and reappears in a more highly-coloured form in the preface to the *Miscellanies* of 1836: ‘The highest condition of the religious sentiment is when it has attained repose...In the serenity of this assured faith it is that men endure, at the call of duty...the most protracted and the fiercest woes’.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ HM (‘Discipulus’), ‘Female Writers on Practical Divinity No. II: Mrs. More and Mrs. Barbauld’, *Monthly Repository*, 17 (December 1822), p. 749.

²⁷¹ Jon Mee, *Romanticism*. See chapter 4 in particular.

²⁷² HM, *Miscellanies*, i, p. vii.

The very young Martineau was brought up on Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781),²⁷³ and the preface to the *Hymns* makes clear the author's intention: namely, to connect a child's observation and reason, via the spirit of association, with a sense of wonder at God's presence in nature. The result will be 'that habitual piety, without which religion can scarcely regulate the conduct, and will never warm the heart'.²⁷⁴ The affective presence of God in nature and its stimulus to devotion are similarly to be found in some of Martineau's 'Sabbath Musings'.²⁷⁵ On the other hand, this early Martineau occasionally found Barbauld wanting. In that first published work, 'Female Writers of Practical Divinity', her praise of Barbauld's *Thoughts on Devotional Taste* was tempered by her view that, despite its many excellent qualities, 'it is still too imaginative...there is too much of the language of poetry and romance, instead of that calm, though warm, that sedate, though animated tone of feeling, which the theme demands'.²⁷⁶ This definition of the devout also underpinned key episodes in *Five Years of Youth*, where Elvi speaks of his faith and how he sought the repose of solitude to think through his duty and how it must accord with the ways of providence.²⁷⁷ Duty transcends the personal, and planning a visit to the convent is used to emphasize the maxim that 'God designed man for a social state'.²⁷⁸ The 'Sabbath Musing VI: A Hermit's Cave' (initially published in 1831) similarly attacked the eremitical life as fundamentally impious because it sought to

²⁷³ 'In those days, we learned Mrs. Barbauld's Prose Hymns by heart; and there were parts of them which I dearly loved: but other parts made me shiver with awe'. *Autobiography*, i, p. 26. Learning the hymns by heart was precisely the method advocated by Mrs Barbauld.

²⁷⁴ A. L. Barbauld, *Hymns in Prose for Children* (London, 1872), pp. 6-7.

²⁷⁵ See p. 60.

²⁷⁶ 'Female Writers', p. 749.

²⁷⁷ See *Five Years of Youth*, p. 117.

²⁷⁸ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 187.

extinguish human affections and denied the service offered to God by the married couple ‘in their household with a perfect heart’.²⁷⁹

Clearly, then, the religious sentiment espoused by Martineau at the time of writing *Five Years of Youth* represented a devotional spirit in the manner of Barbauld rather than the enthusiasm that allegedly marked a morbid religious sensibility. But the suspicion remained of Barbauld’s lapses (in Martineau’s terms) into discourse which smacked of excesses of imagination and sentiment. Martineau’s long-term acceptance of Hartley’s Associationism underlined her fear of piety divorced from active benevolence. In her *Monthly Repository* article ‘On the Agency of Feelings in the Formation of Habits’ (1829), she argued that a child’s feelings are so acute that they become dangerous if not connected with some action: in other words, the principle of association was needed to link feeling with action. Piety which is mere feeling meant that benevolence stops at tears or excitement, and she significantly cited the danger of ‘morbid sensibility’ which weakened the intellectual and moral powers:²⁸⁰ the fate, of course, of Anna Byerley. In her *Devotional Exercises*, she offered the imitation of Christ as key to a truly religious life, but the devotion is of the hand rather than of the heart, since it is the practising of benevolence which is the true imitation of Christ. In her ‘Monday Morning Reflection’, she commented, ‘The beloved Son of God was the purest example of its perfections... He fed the hungry, healed the sick, comforted the sorrowful’;²⁸¹ and, in her ‘Tuesday Evening’s Reflection’, she made explicit the importance of such imitation in a manner

²⁷⁹ HM, ‘Sabbath Musing VI: A Hermit’s Cave’, *Miscellanies*, i, p. 176.

²⁸⁰ *Miscellanies*, i, p. 206.

²⁸¹ HM, *Devotional Exercises: Consisting of Reflections and Prayers, For the Use of Young Persons. To which is added A Guide to the Study of the Scriptures*, 3rd edn (London, 1832), p. 18.

which links to her concept of safety and the afterlife: ‘After death, I may be admitted into the presence of Jesus, who died for me, that I might gain entrance into that happy state, let me study his virtues, and imitate them to the best of my power. I am told that benevolence is an essential requisite for heavenly happiness’.²⁸² Christ is explicitly linked to sensibility - ‘...his acute sensibility for the sufferings of all men’ - but she immediately qualified the comment with the call for self-discipline, again based on the model of Christ, and again in the context of Adam Smith’s call for self-control: ‘Self-control could be the only means by which he could subdue his inclinations, balance his affections’.²⁸³

For Martineau, self-control was the necessary curb to that enthusiasm which would jeopardize the social piety which was the best imitation of Christ. To place the model of Christ in relation to a criticism of sensibility was not in itself unusual. Thomas à Kempis’s fifteenth-century *Imitation of Christ* was a widely popular devotional text in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries²⁸⁴ and was frequently interpreted in relation to sensibility in a manner which echoes Martineau’s critique and, indeed, resonates to some extent with her core values. William Van Reyk argues that to imitate Christ meant to practise the virtues of duty and charity and to apply that benevolence within the family. This is redolent of the centrality of the household in Martineau’s value-system, since ‘family’ metaphorically transcended the individual household into a range of

²⁸² *Devotional Exercises*, pp. 38-9.

²⁸³ *Devotional Exercises*, p. 50.

²⁸⁴ The *Imitation of Christ* resonated strongly with High Church, neo-Arminian Anglicans of the spiritually-rigorous variety in the eighteenth century. See Mark Smith, ‘The Hanoverian Parish: Towards a new agenda’, *Past and Present*, 216 (August 2012), pp. 79-105. Its continuing nineteenth-century popularity is attested to in George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), where it offers solace and inspiration to Maggie Tulliver at her most intense and self-abnegatory.

relationships in wider society: indeed, public and private lives were not separate spheres. Although his focus is on Christian ideas of manliness and the relevance of his thesis to women is therefore not developed, Van Reyk suggests that ‘The imitation of Christ was a model of personhood, not just a model for men’.²⁸⁵ As for sensibility, it was not seen as remote from manliness, but from enthusiasm, which allegedly compromised the imitation of Jesus.

However, the imitation of Christ *per se* is less conspicuous in *Five Years of Youth* than in Martineau’s earlier writings. Indeed, references to the person of Christ are almost entirely absent from the novella, and Christianity itself is rhetorically placed within a largely secular moral framework. Martineau’s growing acquaintance with the radical political agendas of the W.J. Fox circle²⁸⁶ perhaps explains the way in which political issues underpin the plot. As Martineau’s horizons changed, the earlier interest in the person of Jesus receded; sense and sentiment were discussed in new contexts. Indeed, part of that context is an interest in contemporary revolutionary nationalism in Europe, which reflected not only her Norwich networking but also acquaintance with some of the unconventional personalities who made up the Fox coterie.

Sensibility, autobiography and Casimiro Elvi/Evasio Radice

Martineau introduced what appeared to be random political elements into the bucolic world of *Five Years of Youth*. Mr Byerley’s radical political interests are criticized by

²⁸⁵ William Van Reyk, ‘Christian Ideals of Manliness During the Period of the Evangelical Revival c. 1730 to c. 1840’, (Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 2007), p. 279.

²⁸⁶ See pp. 122-5.

Martineau only in so far as he allowed them to divert his attention from his own household, and the plight of Elvi, the Italian exile, served to develop the reader's understanding of false sentiment. Her points need not have been made through such devices, and one should therefore account for her choices. As for Elvi, it is the present writer's contention that the character is closely based on the Italian political refugee Evasio Radice (1794-1855), and that Martineau was thereby adapting a figure from the Norwich context who was particularly well known to the family of Thomas and Elizabeth Martineau by early 1822. Martineau used the raw materials of her knowledge of Radice to craft a character with whose personality, ideals and predicament she expected her readers to sympathize, and, by using him as a foil for the excesses of sensibility, to propel those readers towards a recognition of how sentiment and sense might combine.

What, then, is the evidence that Elvi was a fictional construct based on Radice? The Radice Papers in Harris Manchester College, Oxford contain a number of variations of the 'Short memoir of my beloved Evasio' written by his widow Maria (née Hutton), whom he had met in Unitarian circles in Dublin after his appointment in 1824 to the Chair of Foreign Languages at Trinity College.²⁸⁷ Direct contact with the Martineaus was maintained after James Martineau took up his first ministry in the Eustace St Chapel in Dublin a year after Radice's arrival.

Radice had attended the military college at Modena for civil and military engineers. In 1819, he was appointed to teach at the Royal Military Academy in Turin and joined the

²⁸⁷ The relevant sections of Fulke Radice's *The Radice Family* (Ilkley, 1979) are heavily dependent on one version of this memoir and add little to it.

radical liberal Carbonari. Commissioned into the Piedmontese Artillery, he was made military secretary to Charles Albert, heir to the throne of Piedmont, and a man of supposed liberal sympathies. Radice appealed to Charles Albert to lead the 1821 insurrection, but on the prince's betrayal of the liberal cause, Radice fled to Spain and subsequently to England. The memoir comments that 'None but one equally gifted and similarly circumstanced, could conceive the crushing nature of that blow which covered with thick darkness the bright dawn of his country's liberty... and sent him in the bloom of youth and consciousness of power, a wanderer and proscribed exile over the face of the earth'.²⁸⁸

Evidence of strong links with the Martineau family is compelling. Italian exiles to Britain were generally obliged to seek posts as language tutors, and it was with this in mind that Radice went to Edinburgh, where he encountered the future Lord Jeffreys, who, on hearing that he was seeking employment as a tutor in Italian, Spanish and French, burst out, 'it will never do, here – you are too handsome!'²⁸⁹ Sufficiently rebuked, Radice left Edinburgh, and heard of a tutor's vacancy in Norwich, where, apparently, he was not seen as so inexcusably good-looking. He was given letters of introduction by John Bowring, contributor and later editor to the *Westminster Review*, who wrote to the Martineau and Taylor families.

First amongst the many friends he made in Norwich was Mrs. Martineau and her

²⁸⁸ Copy of the 'Short Memoir of my beloved Evasio, written [by his widow] for distribution amongst his nearest friends; and taken from the longer one written for our children': HMC, MS. J. Martineau 16, v(8).

²⁸⁹ 'Rough Copy of my Mother's memorials of my Father's life, written by her after his death': HMC, MSS. Radice 7(12).

gifted family ...Mrs. Martineau was like a mother to him; he joined her breakfast table on Sunday mornings, and accompanied her and her family to the Octagon Chapel, where the Revd. Madge was Pastor.²⁹⁰

The extent of the intimacy is confirmed and clarified by two letters from Radice to Tom Martineau and then to the widowed Helen Martineau. In the letter of 19 December 1822 to Tom, and using his Christian name, he sends him the *Essays* of Montaigne as a wedding present.

My dear Thomas

...To you who are so well advanced in the career of felicity I can only wish it lasting – and for a wreath of parents-like children to contribute to, and to share it with you and your sweet Lady...Certainty of being sometimes remembered by beloved friends...is a dear thought to a homeless...[his elision] fellow. Then forget me not and believe me any where

Your faithful

Evasio²⁹¹

The longevity of the family's contact with Radice is revealed in an undated letter from Harriet Martineau to Radice which encloses an introduction on his behalf to the editor of the *Daily News*. Contextual information suggests a date of 1853.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ HMC, MSS. Radice 7(13).

²⁹¹ Letter from Evasio Radice to Thomas Martineau Jr: HMC, MSS. Radice 6.

²⁹² Martineau refers to her Irish letters published in the previous year – they appeared in 1852 – and the unnamed editor ('whom I regard with hearty esteem') was Frederick Knight Hunt, who died in 1854. The letter itself is relatively formal, but she mentions mutual friends and begs 'my very kind remembrances to Mrs Radice'. HM letter to Evasio Radice, 29 June ?1853: HMC, MSS. Radice Papers, MS1 Harriet Martineau.

Given the welcome afforded Radice in Norwich, it is therefore hardly surprising that there are a number of very close parallels between the character Elvi and Radice himself. The novella consistently emphasizes his liberal patriotism, and includes a powerful section where Mary helps him overcome a momentary melancholy by singing him her father's favourite Spanish song of Liberty '... "Libertà! libertà!" he echoed, starting up and waving his hand, while his eyes sparkled'.²⁹³ Elvi's religious views are clearly derived from those of Radice. Elvi accompanies the Byerleys to church as Radice had accompanied the Martineaus to the Octagon. The 'Short Memoir' says that he had been educated as a Roman Catholic, but was then alienated by the confessional: 'his spirit revolted against it, urged to inquiry and set him free'.²⁹⁴ *Five Years of Youth* has him rejecting Catholicism "in my youth", and he links his non-sectarian religious belief with the struggle against tyranny and oppression – "what but religion could have strengthened me to live?"²⁹⁵ Similarly, when in Ireland, it was because of the oppression of the Catholic population that he refused to call himself a Protestant, even though, at his request, he was buried in the Protestant cemetery of San Benigno in Genoa. He was instrumental in founding the Vaudois Society in Dublin, but it is significant that he was embroiled in a dispute with the Moderator over the accusation that he advanced civil liberty rather than religious liberty.²⁹⁶ The appeal of such ideals to the Unitarian network is unsurprising. As Ros Pesman has pointed out, Mazzini himself 'was adored by a rather restricted circle, for the most part a group of men and women who shared a Nonconformist religious background (mainly Unitarian) and radical political views'.

²⁹³ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 81.

²⁹⁴ 'Rough copy': HMC, MSS. Radice 7(16).

²⁹⁵ *Five Years of Youth*, pp. 113-4.

²⁹⁶ Notebook entitled 'A record of Evasio Radice' with JM's name and address on the flyleaf: HMC MSS. James Martineau 16, v(22-5).

Indeed, Mazzini's vision was of a virtuous and regenerated Italy, and his appeal to duty 'made his vision so compelling'.²⁹⁷ Small wonder that Martineau and family were so taken with a precursor.

Martineau borrowed Radice's distinctive physical appearance for her Italian patriot. His widow recorded the comments of John Bowring on Radice's hair, 'so black, so abundant and so curly',²⁹⁸ and the novella has 'a profusion of black hair, curling back from his prominent forehead in a manner which is uncommon among Englishmen. His countenance was bright with intelligence'.²⁹⁹

However, Martineau's Elvi cannot be merely mimetic, because his status as a man who combines emotion with reason and imagination with action needed to be underlined by providing him with greater sorrows than those of exile and thwarted political ideals. Unlike the young Radice of the Norwich years, Martineau's Elvi is a middle-aged man, which gives her the opportunity to illustrate both his grief and his refusal to be overcome by it. Thus, his son dies on the battlefield, and he is unable even to bid farewell to his wife; but he does not allow himself to be overcome by his sorrows, and is, to Anna's horror, capable of finding solace and even enjoyment in his life in exile. On the occasion of Elvi's unexplained absence, Anna (under the influence of a like-minded friend, Selina) luxuriates in fears of his possible suicide, and Martineau uses the evil of suicide as a metaphor for the ultimate abrogation of duty in an excess of sensibility. But Elvi returns,

²⁹⁷ Ros Pesman, 'The Marriage of Giorgina Crauford and Aurelio Saffi: Mazzinian Nationalism and the Italian Home' in Loretta Baldassar (ed.), *Intimacy and Italian Migration: Gender and Domestic Lives in a Mobile World* (New York, 2011), p. 27.

²⁹⁸ 'Rough copy': HMC, MSS. Radice 7(12).

²⁹⁹ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 42.

and he is, of course, ‘perfectly safe’.³⁰⁰ Given his engagement in social piety and refusal to surrender to sentiment, and what we know of Martineau’s use of the term, we might envisage that Elvi would be equally ‘safe’ after death.

The Byerley sisters, the Flowers and W.J. Fox

Martineau also made use of contacts outside the Norwich circle to provide herself with characters and plot for *Five Years of Youth*. As with Radice, she manipulated them for didactic purposes and was not constrained by biographical accuracy. Both Pichanick and the biographers of the radical minister and MP W.J. Fox³⁰¹ claim that the Byerley sisters originated in the Flower sisters, with whom Martineau became intimate through her association with Fox and the *Monthly Repository*, and that Mr Byerley was modeled on their father, Benjamin. Granted, there are marked similarities. As editor of *The Cambridge Intelligencer*, Flower was imprisoned on the charge of breach of privilege. His later wife, Eliza Gould, had given up her job as a schoolmistress rather than deny the principles espoused by Flower; she underlined her strength of conviction by subsequently marrying him. Her children were seven and five respectively when she died in 1810 (a little older than the Byerley girls at their mother’s death). Byerley followed Flower in refusing to send his girls to school and educated them at home with the help of visiting masters; like Flower, he lacked the time to devote to that education because of his political activities. Similarly, Eliza Flower’s talent for music is reflected in that of Mary, and the two-year difference in age between the sisters is identical. Also, Martineau was

³⁰⁰ *Five Years of Youth*, p. 106.

³⁰¹ See Richard Garnett (concluded by Edward Garnett), *The Life of W.J. Fox. Public Teacher and Social Reformer, 1786-1864* (London, 1910).

nothing loath to model other fictional characters on Eliza in particular: namely, Liese in her *Monthly Repository* tale 'Liese; or, The Progress of Worship'.³⁰² The tale carries the stock Martineau message that active engagement in one's duties and intellectual effort stimulate each other. 'Liese' is set in Reformation Germany and uses the then platonic relationship (1830-1) between Fox and Eliza to cast them as Luther and an ex-nun. Liese acts as his amanuensis and writes hymns which encourage conversions to Protestantism. A letter to Fox of 1 December 1830 provides supporting evidence of the Liese/Eliza link: 'I have two or three things that I want pressingly to say to Liese (may I make a German of her?)'.³⁰³ Liese, then, was the familiar name Martineau used for Eliza, who was herself adept at providing musical arrangements for hymns (and politically radical verses, including some of Martineau's own).

It could also be argued that Martineau had become so entranced by the circle around Fox that she lacked the critical discipline to separate the needs of art from life. On the evidence of James Martineau, this is at least plausible. Despite her mother's reluctance, she was initially able to spend three months of the year in London in the attempt to add to the family's income through review writing, and was welcomed by the Fox circle with kindness and intellectual stimulation: a heady combination. In particular, she became intimate with the Flower sisters, who were wards of Fox after the death of their father in 1829. James Martineau's summary of her letters probably offers an accurate reflection of her sense of excitement and intellectual progress, although the account of his reaction needs to be treated with caution: it smacks of judgement made with hindsight following

³⁰² HM, 'Liese; or, The Progress of Worship', *Miscellanies*, ii, pp. 1-42.

³⁰³ HM to W.J. Fox, 1 December 1830, *Collected Letters*, i, p. 80.

the breakdown of Fox's marriage and the setting up of a household with Eliza Flower in 1835. He dated the original letter as 5 May 1830.

Then she launches into the new relations on which she stands to Mr. Fox and the Flowers...restating the conversations which they have together, in which they tell exactly what they think of each other's experiences and faults...The whole process of self-analysis and mutual admiration and criticism appears to me unhealthy and repulsive, and not without a considerable taint of indelicate freedom. The account confirms rather than lightens my impression of the questionable tone of their free-thinking and free-living clique.³⁰⁴

There is also an odd comment made in his summary of a letter of the previous month: 'She often wants my advice, if she could but have it. If I do not become more accessible, Mr. Fox will step into my place'.³⁰⁵ If this was some form of sisterly warning, it would at least betoken on Harriet Martineau's part an awareness of Fox's controversial standing and suggest that Martineau had not lost her sense of judgement in the excitement of the Fox coterie.

The dissimilarities between the Flowers and the Byerleys point to the ways in which Martineau distorted biography in communicating her core values. There is no evidence that Sarah Flower succumbed to the lassitude engendered by the noxious form of sensibility to which Anna fell victim – especially given her prolific career as poet and hymn writer before and after her marriage to the fellow radical William Bridges Adams in 1834.³⁰⁶ If Byerley was a home-loving and selfish valetudinarian, Flower enjoyed 'a

³⁰⁴ Abstract of letter of 5 May 1830 from HM to JM (made by the latter): HMC, MS. J. Martineau 1(103).

³⁰⁵ Abstract of letter of ?April 1830 from HM to JM: HMC, MS. J. Martineau 1(102).

³⁰⁶ Virginia H. Blain, 'Adams, Sarah Flower (1805-1848)', accessed 22 April 2013, at <http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk2117/view/article/129>. For corroboration of Sarah Flower's sense of purpose, see Timothy Whelan, 'Radical Politics and Unitarian Piety: The Life and Career of Benjamin

good deal of travelling about the country in an old-fashioned one-horse chaise with the idea of cultivating their [his daughters'] powers of observation, which led to many adventures'.³⁰⁷ Byerley's ill-health and his response to it was used in part to account for his failings as head of a household – where domestic disorder frequently reigned – and his failure to link effective household relationships (including his well-meaning but incompetent servants) with the respect he earned for his political activities. Similarly, his unlikely naïvety in falling victim to a spy in France demonstrated that, despite his platform abilities, he lacked political acumen, and the prison cell where his only solace was Mary is a metaphor for his inability to understand how effective activism should be a projection of effective household values.

Conclusion to Part 1

Five Years of Youth; or, Sense and Sentiment represents the selective mining and reshaping of Martineau's own experiences and value-systems in a creative interconnection between her art and life. It should not be dismissed in the manner of recent scholars and of Martineau herself, as it proves to be the product of a complex interplay of local and family context and dynamics with religious, cultural and philosophical ideals which make it significant, not only in the critical biography of Harriet Martineau, but also in our understanding of early-nineteenth-century responses to sensibility. Martineau interpreted her childhood as one marked by a crippling intensity of

Flower, 1755-1829', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 24, 4 (April 2010), pp. 235-53.
³⁰⁷ Garnett, p. 64.

emotion which was exacerbated by the charismatic and sharp-tongued mother and a lack of warmth in the mother-daughter relationship; Martineau coped by accepting the clarion calls of household and community duty and individual progress, where morality and intellectual development went hand in hand. The ways in which community engagement might reciprocally advance household progress in particular were yet to be fully elucidated; the issue was more overtly addressed in her novel *Deerbrook* (1839) and following Martineau's experience of heading a household.³⁰⁸ At the time of writing *Five Years of Youth*, her then Unitarian religious beliefs provided a sense of supernatural purpose to underpin and justify individual duty and progress, and her responses to the early deaths of those she cared for, her brother Tom and her fiancé John Hugh Worthington, were to express a relief that, as warriors in the cause of duty, they were safe amongst the heroic fallen, and not in danger of the failure to live up to their ideals in the eyes of God. We noted that recent scholars have failed to uncover the importance of Martineau's discourse of 'safety', which did not depend upon a fear of eternal damnation and the terrors of Hell, but was predicated on the idea of the reward of meeting again in Heaven. She chose to attack 'sentiment' or 'sensibility' in her novella because she was herself afraid of undisciplined emotion and because it compromised those values. The behaviour of Helen Martineau was, in her sister-in-law's terms, abundant proof thereof, and rendered personally hurtful because it supposedly sullied the memory of her idolised eldest brother and questioned the status of the Martineau family which the widow, it seemed, was keen to reject for a *parvenu*.

³⁰⁸ See below, pp. 292-3.

Indeed, the importance attached to the issue of sensibility by Martineau herself and the way in which she related it to personal experience is evidenced by its presence in her tales *Christmas-Day* and *The Friends* (1825). Martineau dismissed them as ‘trumpery’ from the serene heights of the *Autobiography*,³⁰⁹ but they nevertheless were, as Peterson rightly notes, ‘deeply autobiographical’.³¹⁰ The heroine Sarah relies heavily on her cousin, Margaret, for help in overcoming the disabling tearfulness that prevented her from helping her father in his ultimately fatal illness. The parallel with Martineau’s own experience is telling: the *Autobiography* recounted the influence the fourteen year-old Ann Turner had on the seven year-old Harriet. Ann was the daughter of William Turner, the Unitarian minister at Newcastle who spoke at Tagart’s induction.³¹¹ Her influence was vital in what Martineau called her ‘religious training’, and it was through her that ‘my piety first took a practical character’.³¹²

From the time when Ann Turner and her religious training of me put me, as it were, into my own moral charge, I was ashamed of my habit of misery, - and especially of crying...during all those years, I never did pass a day without crying.³¹³

What Peterson does not note is the particular thrust of that autobiographical element and its link to sensibility. Margaret’s good offices in stopping up Sarah’s well of tears are presented explicitly in terms of sensibility: ‘she had had the benefit of her cousin

³⁰⁹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 93.

³¹⁰ Linda H. Peterson, ‘From French Revolution to English Reform: Hannah More, Harriet Martineau, and the “Little Book”’, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 60, 4 (March 2006), p. 422.

³¹¹ See p. 70.

³¹² *Autobiography*, i, p. 14.

³¹³ *Autobiography*, i, p. 33.

Margaret's assistance in overcoming her excessive sensibility, and setting her affections to work on other objects than herself'.³¹⁴

Christmas-Day and *The Friends* offer more than a confirmation of the extent to which sensibility pervaded Martineau's understanding of herself and others: they also point to a recognition by Martineau that, although the 'setting-down' system of the Martineau household did not meet her emotional needs and therefore triggered in her excessive emotion as a compensation, Sarah suffered from the opposite. She is an only child who is loved dearly, but without any guidance on the control of feelings: her parents 'only erred in one respect, in the want of firmness'.³¹⁵ This is what Martineau feared for herself were she to become a parent. Despite her warnings on sensibility and its devastating impact, she could not be certain that she would not fall a victim once more. Thus, whilst expecting readers to pick up the allusions to Jane Austen, Martineau's focus on sensibility in *Five Years of Youth* and the earlier tales was not intended to imitate Austen, but to develop a more extended critique. The issues surrounding sentiment were part of her own self and her self-fashioning.

³¹⁴ HM, *Christmas-Day and The Friends: A Continuation of Christmas-Day*, 4th edn (Wellington, 1834), pp. 5-6.

³¹⁵ *Christmas-Day*, p. 5.

Part 2

Principle into Practice and Practice into Principle: the context and the painting of Harriet Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832-4), *Illustrations of Taxation* (1834) and *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* (1834)

Introduction to Part 2: re-interpreting the *Illustrations*

This section of the thesis argues that the interplay between didactic purpose, tropes of fiction, social and cultural context and Martineau's interpretation of personal experience fashion the discourse of the three works which propelled her into literary and political celebrity in the 1830s. Part 1 identified the origin and nature of the heartland concepts around which Martineau shaped her work and life, and Part 2 traces their continued development as key to the conceptual underpinning and structural framework of her numerous tales of political economy, taxation and poor law. The core values account for recurrent themes which shaped the tales: that relentless call of duty; the stimulus afforded by personal affliction; the attacks on what Martineau saw as superstition; and the ways in which she believed that relationships within households should interface with the wider community to their mutual advantage.

This reading reflects a new understanding of the intellectual and cultural context out of which Martineau's subjectivity emerged and with which it engaged. In particular, the influence of Lant Carpenter, Hannah More and Anna Laetitia Barbauld on the purpose, themes, content and emplotment of Martineau's fiction and other writings of the 1830s has not been fully identified in scholarly analysis. Those aspects of the thought and work of Carpenter, More and Barbauld which were most influential were mediated through the

value-systems which were the product of Martineau's own household and community experiences as well as her cultural milieu. Carpenter's influence is seen to be the most potent of the three. His religious, educational and cultural standing coalesced with personal contact to feed the young Martineau's sense of duty in principle and practice. The writing of fiction itself embodied duty, principle and practice, and More and Barbauld offered literary models to which Martineau responded because their focus on family and household was pertinent and, for Martineau, compelling, since it also betokened a practical moral purpose behind their work. The analysis of the writings of More and Barbauld uncovers the trope of household and family, but also recognizes the ways in which Martineau, in making use of similar form and content, nevertheless refashioned them. More's binary opposite households, for example, reappear in several of Martineau's tales, but refracted through a different didactic purpose. Similarly, Barbauld's *Evenings at Home* offered short tales with a family setting and an overt moral purpose underpinned by the contention that the family was the vehicle for national progress. But Martineau's emphasis on household relationships and the way in which those relationships impacted on community and beyond was absent from More and Barbauld.

In giving weight to the ways in which Martineau's heartland concepts shaped her discourse, Part 2 challenges much received scholarly opinion on the *Illustrations* and their immediate precursors - the tales written for the Shropshire publisher Houlston. Scholars have tended to focus on the overt message (in terms of the *IPE*, the summary of principles of political economy appended to each tale) and have extrapolated Martineau's

value-systems accordingly. Lack of attention to household and local context and its resonance with broader cultural context has led some scholars to display a distaste for the tales. Thus, recent critics have claimed variously that the tales represent Martineau's unsuccessful attempt to assuage the guilt of the middle classes faced with working-class distress, her readiness to seize on the most optimistic doctrines of certain economists and simplify them *ad nauseam* and *ad absurdum*, her willingness to compromise feminist principles by adopting a pseudo-masculine authorial persona as part of a supine acceptance of patriarchy, and that the *Illustrations* are poor works of art. As didactic fiction, they allegedly creak and groan under the weight of caricatures rather than characters, tiresome and implausible dialogue and an ill-advised taste for melodrama. Claudia Oražem, for instance, claims that Martineau's adults are never fully-realized characters, since they are either 'good' or 'bad' depending on the use they make of capital in relation to Martineau's doctrines of economy and taxation.¹ Elaine Freedgood argues that Martineau's teaching of political economy in the *IPE* appealed to the middle classes because it offered opiates for those rendered uneasy by the suffering of the labouring class. Using metaphors of thwarted creation and pharmacology, Freedgood claims that the *IPE* represented Martineau's hatching of a hybrid of realism, law and myth, but that her crude plotting and characterization - required to grant bourgeois capitalism the reassuring status of a natural law - resulted in a short-lived chimera. Her art was bad, and the drugs soon wore off.²

¹ Claudia Oražem, *Political Economy and Fiction in the Early Works of Harriet Martineau* (New York, 1999).

² Elaine Freedgood, 'Banishing Panic: Harriet Martineau and the Popularization of Political Economy', *Victorian Studies*, 39 (1995), pp. 33-53.

The assumption that Martineau's *Illustrations* reflected an unalloyed promotion of capitalist economic and political doctrines prompts some to argue that, in so doing, Martineau was complicit in patriarchal structures which, in their formulation, underpinned bourgeois society. Deirdre David takes a phrase from Martineau's self-penned obituary: writing of her *A History of the Thirty Years' Peace* (1849-50), Martineau had referred to its 'auxiliary usefulness' and David concludes that Martineau ultimately accepted an auxiliary status for women *per se*; her *Illustrations*, and, indeed, all her writings, represent 'textual services to the English middle class' as mediated by her service to her own intellectual fathers – James Mill and Adam Smith. And, once more, poor ideology is accompanied by poor art.

The Tales are very heavy going. Characters speak like the embodiment of stiff Principles that they are, the creation of settings is toilsomely mechanical... We detect not an atom of the extensive ambivalence and reservation expressed by other Victorian thinkers (Carlyle and Mill come immediately to mind) about the social and cultural consequences of rampant economic expansion.³

Such negative criticism is generally accompanied by attempts to situate the motivation behind the writing of the *Illustrations* in the personal and intellectual experience and development as outlined in Martineau's *Autobiography*. Freedgood quotes at length a passage from the *Autobiography* where Martineau described how Necessarianism quieted her 'labouring brain and beating heart' at the age of twenty and argues that she sought relief from childhood phobias by sheltering under the protective certainty of 'laws', be

³ Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (London, 1987), pp. 42-3.

they necessarian or economic. However, as we have seen,⁴ the *Autobiography* presented a misleadingly episodic account of Martineau's intellectual progress, understated continuities and refashioned her past in terms of a secularist and anti-metaphysical present. The *Autobiography* therefore presented the *Illustrations* as the offspring of an equally relentless, systematic and un-nuanced analysis, with little regard for the range of influences which underpinned them. Freedgood's comment above on how love for system and laws helped to overcome her childhood phobias (and stimulate the writing of the *Illustrations*) is a partial explanation at best, since it ignores the context in which Martineau wrote of the quelling of her beating heart: namely, her agonies over the doctrine of free will,⁵ and how the doctrine of necessity confirmed her long-held belief in the peremptory call of duty. And even the Martineau of 1855 accepted that her necessarian self did not entirely succeed in overcoming the 'weak moments' of fearfulness – the fear identified in chapter 1 as an after-life of probationary pain. Indeed, we recall that her letters to Helen Bourn Martineau, which continued to emphasize the notion of safety from God's frown, post-date by several years the timing outlined in the *Autobiography* of her supposed freedom from theological anxiety.⁶

The *Illustrations*, then, were shaped by the interaction of particular ideas from political economy with the heartland concepts which underpinned her earliest writings. It will be shown that they were the product of a creative act which was itself the product of Martineau's interpretation of her family life and household relationships inside and

⁴ See pp. 8-14.

⁵ See Maria Weston Chapman (ed.), *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography* (2 vols., Boston, 1877), i, pp. 84-7.

⁶ See pp. 78-83.

beyond the doors of the home in Magdalen Street: an environment which had instilled in her a sense of duty which was all-pervasive and exacting. That sense of duty also impelled Martineau to accede to her mother's request to join her in setting up a new household in London at the very time that her literary endeavours were rewarded with success and doors to the capital's intellectual elite were opened to her. The result was an anti-household in Fludyer St which repeated in a smaller compass the flaws of Magdalen St; according to Martineau, her mother's love of power made her resentful of the distinctions shown to her daughter and yet bitter that she refused to countenance a move to a larger house more befitting her new dignity.⁷ To this struggle, Martineau attributed the illness that consigned her in 1838 to her Tynemouth sick-bed for five years and so echoed her youthful plaint: that a failure to respect her emotional and intellectual needs had brought on her deafness.⁸ Moreover, the household as envisaged by her mother offered nothing to its immediate community, but would simply bask in its acceptance of the Martineaus' status. It would be facile to claim that portraits of corrosive households in the later tales were the product of Fludyer St, but plausible to see the experience as a further confirmation of the centrality of household relationships to Martineau's values and pen. What Fludyer St perhaps did was to shape the antithetical households in Tynemouth and particularly in Ambleside, where Martineau was finally in a position to establish her own home, mould its internal relationships and thus fit it to serve its community.⁹

⁷ See *Autobiography*, i, pp. 187-8.

⁸ See above, p. 91.

⁹ See chapter 9, pp. 304-10.

The chapters in Part 2, in offering a wide-ranging examination of the *Illustrations*, discuss how their literary form - most of the settings and much of the plotting, characterization, tropes and imagery – was also shaped by the heartland concepts. This approach differs from those critics who, as part of a reductive approach to the *Illustrations*, have identified the most didactic passages of political economy as the defining characteristic of the tales, and cite as evidence the laboured Socratic dialogues and the summary of principles which appear at the end of each story. For instance, Valerie Pichanick’s discussion of the *Illustrations* tales focuses almost entirely on their economic message and claims that Martineau presents an almost unswervingly positive picture of the industrial process.¹⁰ However, Part 2 also points to a frequent disjuncture between the generally optimistic economic message and the emotive pictures of individual and family suffering – often of the working classes - which were conveyed with a startling realism. A detailed examination of a significant number of individual tales reveals their thematic and rhetorical range and form and also demonstrates that the *IPE* stories are riddled with the conflict between the economic, social and intellectual progress which supposedly results from the untrammelled operation of market forces and the author’s pictures of utter despair in the households of the poor, for whom the promise of future progress was all too late. Mike Sanders has noted the tension between economic message and portrayal of distress, but does not offer an explanation of that tension.¹¹ It is here argued that Martineau was unable to reconcile the level of distress which sabotaged those relationships with a belief in the ultimately-benign market forces because the

¹⁰ See Valerie Kossew Pichanick, *Harriet Martineau: The Woman and Her Work, 1802-76* (Ann Arbor, 1980), pp. 53-69 in particular.

¹¹ See Mike Sanders, ‘From “Political” to “Human” Economy: The Visions of Harriet Martineau and Frances Wright’, *Women: A Cultural Review*, 12, 2 (2001), pp. 192-203.

household was so fundamental to her vision of the progress of individual, community and nation that its possible destruction needed to be signalled and could not be condoned. Some scholars have indeed recognized the importance to Martineau of household and community links, but within rather narrow parameters. Lana Dalley has argued that, in exploring interconnections between family, household and national economy, domestic life became for Martineau a ‘moral barometer’ of the progress of political economy; thus, Dalley briefly notes the interdependence of domestic economy and political economy in Martineau’s work, but does not explore how household relationships beyond the economic, such as the respect to be afforded to children’s emotional and intellectual needs, and the inclusion of servants as full members of the household, were fundamental to the domestic trope. Nor does Dalley discuss the relationship between duties to the household and duties to the community beyond.¹²

In her decision to teach political economy, the ideas of certain political economists are refracted through a context particular to Martineau. Her family life, Unitarian networking and intellectual milieu had directed her sense of duty towards the search for progress both societal and personal through the free exercise of reason. If one result of that process was the call to teach political economy to the working and middle classes, it also stimulated her intellectual engagement with works which convinced her that fiction was the sympathetic medium *par excellence* for the conveying of truths so desperately needed. After all, as Catherine Gallagher has argued, political economy rested upon sensual materialism: human motivation arose through the senses, and economic activity was at

¹² Lana Dalley, ‘Domesticating Political Economy: language, gender and economics in the *Illustrations of Political Economy*’ in Ella Dzelzainis & Cora Kaplan (eds), *Harriet Martineau: Authorship, society and empire* (Manchester, 2010), p. 113.

once the cause and the product of emotional and sensual feelings. Thus, fiction, in exploring emotions and the senses, was a particularly appropriate tool for political economy, and eminently suitable for a writer so influenced by Necessarianism.¹³ There has also been limited acknowledgement of the importance of Lant Carpenter in encouraging and directing Martineau's interest in fiction by combining a materialist psychology with the religious spirit. This chapter offers a detailed analysis of how Carpenter's potent combination of social piety and advocacy of the power of fiction are crucial to our understanding of Martineau's early journalism.

It will further be argued that her articles for the *Monthly Repository* in the years 1829-32, in evaluating both political economy and fiction as vehicles for progress, did so through the prism of the heartland concepts: similarly, a series of articles on habits, feelings and thinking from an associationist perspective makes a number of sideways leaps into her preoccupations with supersitition, the householder/servant relationship and duty.

¹³ Catherine Gallagher, *The Body Economic: Life, Death and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton, 2006). Gallagher offers an important insight in suggesting that the *Illustrations*, in embodying the key doctrine of Malthusian political economy that deferring gratification was vital to life both moral and economic, did so through household examples; however, the reference is fleeting and lacks exemplification.

Chapter 4

The Context of the *Illustrations*: Lant Carpenter, Hannah More and Anna Laetitia Barbauld

Introduction

Chapter 4 establishes the importance of the Rev. Lant Carpenter in encouraging Martineau to see fictional writing as a medium, not only for teaching vital truths, but as a focus for social piety. She could perform it as a duty which did not deny household but stimulated a deeper regard for it through the discipline of addressing the community of readers in its name. Carpenter offered a heady combination of intellectual demand with social purpose, and identified Hannah More and Anna Laetitia Barbauld as women who had employed fiction as a compelling moral educator.

The chapter identifies the ways in which Martineau responded to the work of More and Barbauld and traces the impact of More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* and Barbauld and Aikin's *Evenings at Home* on Martineau's *Illustrations*. Both More and Barbauld taught through domestic settings, and the *Illustrations* reflected Martineau's reading of her two predecessors in terms of setting, occasional textual mimesis and didactic strategy. Differences, however, are seen to be as significant as borrowings. Martineau explored the reciprocal relationships between individual, household and community, whereas More's focus was on individual sin or piety, with the community being an agent of reward or punishment. Barbauld had little interest in household relationships beyond the tutor/pupil

model, and presented the household itself as a microcosm of nation rather than community.

Lant Carpenter and ‘social piety’

The choice of theme for Martineau’s *Monthly Repository* article on female writers of practical divinity and its focus on More and Barbauld may well reflect the specific influence of Lant Carpenter, minister of Lewin’s Mead Unitarian chapel in Bristol. Carpenter was well-known in Unitarian circles and taught Martineau during her attendance at her aunt Rankin’s school in Bristol in 1816.¹⁴ The evidence for Carpenter’s impact on her is compelling. Martineau’s *Autobiography* may be ultimately dismissive of him, but it attested to her fervent discipleship and to the way in which she returned home in 1819 ‘with his instructions burnt in, as it were, upon my heart and conscience, and with an abominable spiritual rigidity and a truly respectable force of conscience curiously mingled together’.¹⁵ The later Martineau rejected Carpenter’s priestcraft but acknowledged the moral teaching: a somewhat grudging compliment, perhaps, to the persistence of an influence which extended to his Hartleianism and the call (in his *Principles of Education* of 1820) for a female author to follow in the footsteps of Edgeworth, More and Barbauld. Hartley’s Associationism offered to Carpenter and Martineau the theoretical underpinning – a science of human nature rooted in physiology - which emphasized the importance of the correct household environment in stimulating the affections in the service of individual progress.

¹⁴ See p. 179, fn. 118.

¹⁵ *Autobiography*, i, p. 73.

Carpenter himself offered to Martineau a sense of intellectual, moral and spiritual purpose accompanied with specific guidance. His teaching and writings in effect linked principle with practice and proffered the fulfilling of duty as the ultimate end both of intellectual endeavour and of a truly Christian life. His *Sermons on Practical Subjects* represent a convenient summary of his thought, and Martineau commented that ‘Dr. Carpenter’s [sermons] were the best I ever listened to’ in conveying ideas to a youthful audience.¹⁶ Duty pervades these sermons in various forms. Thus, justice itself is described in Sermon V, ‘Think on these things’, as a ‘department of duty’.¹⁷ There were critical moments in one’s moral life where moral character was at stake. Departure from duty which was the sign of its imminent corruption.

Carpenter was careful not to limit duty to one’s own household. In Sermon IV, ‘Family Worship’, he linked usefulness with duty and commented that parental affections might be distorted into foolish, capricious and insular fondness for their children, which in turn would lead to a dereliction of duty through failure to use their God-given talents outside the home. Nevertheless, Carpenter saw the household as the spring-board for wider usefulness, since the

domestic and relative charities form an essential and most important part of our nature... They are some of the most powerful springs of action, and often lead to the most disinterested exertions. They are the root of benevolence... They are, in fact, the basis on which the whole structure of benevolence, and even of piety, is most commonly raised.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Autobiography*, i, p. 26.

¹⁷ Lant Carpenter, *Sermons on Practical Subjects* (Bristol, 1840), p. 77.

¹⁸ Carpenter, *Sermons*, p. 53.

It was therefore incumbent on everyone to ‘make the domestic circle a scene of mutual comfort and improvement’.¹⁹ However, he insisted that service of the community stimulated service to the family, in the same way as family worship was stimulated by public worship and *vice versa*; a reciprocity which was encompassed in his phrase ‘social piety’.²⁰ In Sermon XIII, ‘Jesus Christ the Sole Foundation’, he argued that an enlarged vision of human duty was the means whereby one perceived the centrality of the Gospel to the ways of holiness; adhering to the rules of the Gospel would allow one to avoid the dreadful punishments of the after-life: ‘...we must regulate our conduct and affections, our heart and life, by the rules of the Gospel; we must live as Citizens of Heaven’.²¹ The phrase ‘Citizens of Heaven’ is redolent of ‘social piety’ and belonged to the same discourse of social activism. This linking of personal improvement, social duty and escaping the possible penalties after death perhaps helps to account for the thought-processes which shaped Martineau’s response to her fiancé’s illness, to Tom Martineau’s death and to her relations with Helen Bourn Martineau. Carpenter also made a link between duty and the healthy, if astringent, impact of affliction. The former prepared the heart for duty by ‘tutoring the soul for sympathy’.²²

It might be argued that Carpenter’s concept of social piety was most developed and expansive when applied to men. In his Sermon XVIII, ‘Ornaments and Influence of the Female Sex’, he placed emphasis yet again on duty, but came close to limiting women’s duty to serving the needs of the household rather than projecting it into the community.

¹⁹ Carpenter, *Sermons*, p. 54.

²⁰ Carpenter, *Sermons*, p. 58.

²¹ Carpenter, *Sermons*, p. 198.

²² Carpenter, *Sermons*, p. 107.

The daughter could refresh the weary spirit of fathers and brothers, worried by worldly cares, and help check worldly-mindedness. The female intellect, he argued, is generally shaped by the ‘physical texture’ – a predisposition towards quickness and sensibility, vividness of imagination, but not that ‘persevering energetic research, that long-continued vigour of application, that intense closeness of investigation, by which the mighty processes of human improvement have been carried on’.²³ He admitted to exceptions and wished to applaud them (as in the case of Mrs Somerville), but his applause was conditional on the supposition that ‘her superior powers and attainments are associated with a due attention to the employments of a domestic nature, and adorned with... a meek and modest spirit’. Even so, women could achieve what no man could, even on the national stage, if they had the qualities of Barbauld and More: Barbauld in particular had no equal in ‘the training of the soul to a meetness for the life to come’.²⁴ Approbation indeed, and a testimony to the extent to which More and Barbauld were central to the cultural milieu which included the Martineaus.

What features, then, did Carpenter find so compelling in the work of More and Barbauld? In his view, the two authors represented the use of reason to discipline the imagination, and demonstrated that feelings so produced made fruitful an understanding which might otherwise be barren. In his Sermon ‘On Fear’ he added a Hartleian reference to affections:

It is a great error to leave out of view, in any system of morals or religion or education, the powerful agency of the affections and feelings. They constitute the vitality of the

²³ Carpenter, *Sermons*, p. 263.

²⁴ Carpenter, *Sermons*, p. 264.

mental fabric... Without them the fairest structure of intellect would only be as the sculptured marble, as polished, as beautiful, as graceful, but as lifeless. And they, without the understanding, are as the swollen sails without the rudder.²⁵

Sermon XVIII fittingly ended on the Carpenter categorical imperative, marked by a sudden burst of short sentences: 'Cultivate the sense of duty. Enlarge it'.²⁶

Carpenter's *Principles of Education* unsurprisingly echoed the sermons and therefore reinforced the importunate call of duty. His preface, for instance, stated that this work was aimed at 'intelligent, reflecting Parents, sensible of the momentous nature of their charge, and desirous to fulfil its duties',²⁷ and he stressed the contribution of 'the great Hartley'²⁸ to an understanding of how the principle of association illuminated the workings and pleasures of the imagination. The imaginative faculty clearly included reasoning by analogy and induction as well as stimulating the social, moral and religious affections and thus encouraged 'a much greater progress toward the perfection of our natures'.²⁹ In emphasizing the importance of the parent watching over early associations and manipulating them accordingly, he offered a model of a parent-child relationship in which 'parents must accustom their children to view them as friends, to open their little minds to them with the utmost confidence'.³⁰ This model was clearly endorsed both by the *Autobiography* and by a number of Martineau's tales, which held up its antithesis for

²⁵ Carpenter, *Sermons*, p. 354.

²⁶ Carpenter, *Sermons*, p. 269.

²⁷ Lant Carpenter, *Principles of Education, Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* (London, 1820), p. vi.

²⁸ Carpenter, *Principles*, p. 151.

²⁹ Carpenter, *Principles*, p. 152.

³⁰ Carpenter, *Principles*, p. 125.

opprobrium.³¹ Finally, More and Barbauld were praised once more, and we noted earlier the call to authorship which Martineau was likely to have heeded:

If any female writer should hereafter come forward to the public, possessing the... brilliant yet chaste imagination and “devotional taste” of a Barbauld, and the energy and high-toned moral principle of a More, divested of bigotry, and founded upon genuine Christian theology, in the scale of utility she will probably stand unrivalled among her contemporaries.³²

This was indeed a potent admixture of endorsement, encouragement and programme for the right female author. Given her personal, familial and local influences, and her cultural resources, Martineau was unlikely to resist. But in what way did she respond to the writings of Hannah More and Anna Laetitia Barbauld?

The Context of the *Illustrations*

Hannah More and the characteristics of the *Cheap Repository Tracts*

Scholars have yet to acknowledge evidence of Martineau’s precise engagement with the writings of Hannah More (1745-1833). In the first place, she refused to deny More’s strengths on the grounds of doctrinal difference: ‘I differ nearly as much from the author, with respect to religious belief, as one Protestant can from another; but I find nothing really offensive to my feelings in comparison with those portions which excite my high admiration’.³³ In particular, she quoted at length from passages which demanded that all Christians, of whatever social standing, displayed their faith in deed and word; failure to

³¹ See below, p. 180.

³² Carpenter, *Principles*, p. 42.

³³ HM, ‘Female Writers’, p. 596.

do so was not humility, but indolence. The *Cheap Repository Tracts* bespeak More's attempt to use that medium to promulgate her message of the supreme relevance of Christian morality to everyday life. The format of the *Illustrations* bears striking similarity to the *Tracts*: both were published monthly and offered plots which focused on life of the working and lower middle classes. Indeed, there are instances where the specific content of an *Illustrations* tale is so close to that of a *Cheap Repository Tract* that one can posit, at the very least, a lasting impression made on Martineau. For instance, Martineau's tale 'The Parish' describes how the venal and improvident Bloggs family sends its children to beg from well-to-do passengers at a crossroads;³⁴ and, in More's tale 'Black Giles The Poacher', the venal, improvident *and* criminal Giles sets his 'ragged brats...to lie all day upon a sand bank...At the sound of a carriage, a whole covey of these little scare-crows start up...and all at once thrust out their hats and aprons'.³⁵ Similarly, More stepped outside the everyday settings of the *Tracts* to write what she called 'allegories', some of which addressed spiritual issues in the manner (and diction) of John Bunyan. Martineau penned a number of 'parables' for the *Monthly Repository* which focused on spiritual states and employed such diction.³⁶ A longer-term echo of More appears in Martineau's collection of her earlier short stories, *Sketches from Life* (1856): in particular, her tale 'The Factory Boy' presented a lachrymose account of a nine year-old boy who vowed at his widowed mother's death-bed to keep himself and his even younger siblings out of the workhouse. Through a mixture of hard work and piety he succeeded, and was rewarded by the applause of the community and an early death

³⁴ HM, 'The Parish', *PLPI* (2 vols., London, 1833), i, pp. 51-2.

³⁵ Hannah More, 'Black Giles the Poacher, Part 1', *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, and Other Tales: Tales for the Common People* (Philadelphia, 1866), p. 205.

³⁶ See for example More, *The Shepherd*, pp. 423-79 and Harriet Martineau, 'The Hermit', *Miscellanies* (2 vols., Boston, 1836), i, pp. 311-14.

courtesy of a factory accident. It is not easy to account for this tale, which sits uneasily with the majority of Martineau's lively and realistic portrayals of children. The emphasis on the boy's docility is a particular echo of More's good children, such as James Stock in 'The Two Shoemakers' who 'had begun to learn of Him *who was meek and lowly of heart*'.³⁷ If the tale was indeed derived from life, it may account for the suspension of Martineau's habitual interest in the impact of environment and circumstance on character. As with More, she placed a great emphasis on verisimilitude: hence her title.³⁸ Most significantly, perhaps, in the *Tracts* and the *Illustrations*, both authors made extensive use of the binary opposites of good and bad families as the medium carrying the message, although Martineau's definitions of good and bad reflect their impact on household and community rather than, as in More, their spiritual states and ultimate fates.³⁹

There are also parallels between More and Martineau in the sense that both women espoused a life of active duty. In More's case, she responded to the appeal of William Wilberforce by setting up schools for the poor of the Mendips. Her sympathetic recent biographer Anne Stott catalogues the problems she faced: a near-brutalised labouring class, selfish and suspicious farmers who equated literacy for the poor with revolution, and the absence of a sympathetic resident gentry or clergy. More's pronouncements on her aims have been taken by historians as evidence of an attempt to use education to instil middle-class values and a convenient, anti-revolutionary work ethic in the labouring

³⁷ More, 'The Two Shoemakers', p. 48.

³⁸ HM, 'The Factory Boy', in *Sketches from Life* (London, 1856), pp. 130-8.

³⁹ It may be that limited scholarly interest in Martineau and a dismissive approach to More account for the absence of attempts to link the *Cheap Repository* and the *Illustrations*. Pickering, for instance, sets out to explore the influence of the More tracts on the short story but makes no mention of Martineau (and, for good measure, dismisses the tracts as 'psychologically simplistic... What oft was thought but ne'er so mundanely expressed'). Sam Pickering, 'The Cheap Repository Tracts and the Short Story', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 12, 1 (Winter 1975), p. 18.

poor. Stott acknowledges this view, but comments that More's zeal had different motives. 'They [More and sister] were working themselves almost to death (or so it seemed at times) for the immortal welfare of the Mendip people. This was an agenda that went far beyond the reinforcement of the social order'.⁴⁰ Less sympathetically, Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace accuses More of complicity in patriarchy as evidenced by her life-long search for father figures and an apparent psychological need for restraint and containment, which was duly projected onto the poor.⁴¹

At first sight, the *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795-98) appear to support Kowaleski-Wallace's contentions, as they presented pictures of the poor in terms of binary opposites: the good were self-denying, hard-working, provident and equated their poverty and contentment with God's will: the bad were selfish, discontented, lazy, improvident and easily seduced by atheistic malcontents. The will of God might manifest itself in mysterious ways, but manifest itself it did: the good might not always be rewarded in this life, but the bad generally received their come-uppance both in this life and in the next. More specialized in the death-bed terrors of those unable to repent.

The intended readership of the tales of More and Martineau initially appears to be similar. The *Illustrations* were avowedly written to be read by the middling and working classes,⁴² and, true to her Unitarian background, Martineau exhibited no anxiety about the

⁴⁰ Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford, 2003), p. 119.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity* (Oxford, 1991).

⁴² According to the *Autobiography*, when faced with discouragement on all fronts Martineau persisted with writing the *IPE* on the behalf of 'the multitudes who needed it, - and especially of the poor'. *Autobiography*, i, p. 130.

potential dangers of encouraging a taste for reading among the lower ranks. More's preface-cum-advertisement to the collected edition under the title of *Tales for the Common People* seemingly made explicit the author's intention and ambivalence about such encouragement.

...as an appetite for reading had, from a variety of causes, been increased among the inferior ranks in this country, it was judged expedient, at this critical period, to supply such wholesome aliment as might give a new direction to their taste, and abate their relish for those corrupt and inflammatory publications which the consequences of the French Revolution have been so fatally pouring in upon us.⁴³

This is, however, misleading. More's tales were not so much addressed to the working class as to the middling classes and gentry. Authorial interjections suggest that the working classes were to listen to the tales as read to them. In 'Black Giles the Poacher', More breaks off a description of Giles training his children to tumble for the money from travellers with the comment 'I beg leave, however, to put all ladies and gentlemen in mind, that such tricks are a kind of apprenticeship to the trades of begging and thieving'.⁴⁴ Her messages to the upper classes offered a curious blend of hectoring and reassurance. The reassurance arose from the pictures of pious and contented workers, and the hectoring came from the demands made of the readers to engage in appropriate charity. 'The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain' embodied these aims. More introduces us to a Mr Johnson, 'a very worthy charitable gentleman'⁴⁵ who comes across an equally worthy evangelical shepherd: More never vouchsafes him a name. He is the head of a pious household; for him, the gospel is a guide to everyday life. His cottage is unhealthy and

⁴³ More, *The Shepherd*, p. 6.

⁴⁴ More, 'Black Giles the Poacher', *The Shepherd*, p. 206.

⁴⁵ More, 'The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain', p. 7.

his god-fearing wife correspondingly riddled with rheumatics, but his children are delightful, obedient and clean, and as grateful for, as they are content with, a diet barely sufficient to keep them alive. But he gets his reward, as Mr Johnson and the clergyman make him parish clerk and schoolmaster, with the added bonus of a cottage which is less likely to kill him. More's hectoring took the form of interpolations which also give the sense of immediacy to the tales: 'And here let me remark what encouragement this is for rich people to give away Bibles and good books'.⁴⁶ A comment on how fortunate everyone was to live in a Christian country where the poor, when sick or ill, were taken as much care of as the gentry is to be taken less as an exhortation to the poor to be grateful as an exhortation to the rich to come up to the mark.⁴⁷

More's character Mrs Jones in 'A Cure for Melancholy' was clearly addressed to widowed gentlewomen inclined to indulge their sorrows and whose straitened circumstances led them to doubt their ability to help the poor. Mrs Jones is astute, persuasive and practical and her vicar reminds her that her Saviour expects her to make use of her gifts. There then follows a bucolic odyssey in which she variously persuades the better-off to stop buying up lesser ends of meat for soup (so that prices are no longer inflated and the poor can afford them for roast dinners); directs the poor to eschew shops which entrap them with long credit terms and, not least, encourages informing among the villagers to put a stop to Crib the baker's adulterated bread. Indeed, Mrs Jones would seem to act as her creator's mouthpiece and the fruit of More's own practical experience.

⁴⁶ More, 'The History of Tom White The Post Boy', p. 125.

⁴⁷ More, 'The History of Tom White The Post Boy', p. 123.

Although More's tales often relied on artificial, Socratic dialogue,⁴⁸ in 'The History of Hester Wilmot' conversations between the redoubtable Jones and the obsessive Mrs Wilmot are realistically vitriolic; the latter's deliberately audible call to her daughter to clear up after Mrs Jones ("scrub out the prints of that dirty woman's shoes") smacks of an incident which More may well have faced herself.⁴⁹ Even so, it was unusual for More to mine her own experiences. Martineau did not hesitate to do so.

It is tempting to trace a direct link between More and Martineau on the grounds that both taught domestic economy. Valerie Sanders comments that 'Even Hannah More took her principles from a combination of Christianity and applied economics', but, given her focus on Martineau's affinities with and influence on her contemporaries and successors, Sanders does not further develop the comparison with More.⁵⁰ Oražem usefully, if briefly, discusses More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* and posits a potential influence on Martineau by noting that several stories, in the context of a variety of characters from the middle and labouring classes, stressed the importance of household economic management. Oražem does, however, point out that, for More, such management can be negated by a divine intervention which is never a feature of Martineau's tales. One might also add that there is no disjuncture in More as in Martineau between message and authorial sympathy for distress as evidenced by characterization, plot and tone.⁵¹ When

⁴⁸ See 'The Two Wealthy Farmers', where Bragwell was given one paragraph and Worthy the very next. More, pp. 295-311.

⁴⁹ More, 'The History of Hester Wilmot', p. 171. Martineau's tale 'The Convict' is strikingly reminiscent of 'Hester Wilmot', since it features in the hero's step-mother a virago who browbeats husband and children and uses an obsession with cleanliness as a particularly effective weapon; she could not, for instance, 'bear to see dirty shoes'. See *Sketches from Life*, p. 141.

⁵⁰ Valerie Sanders, *Reason over Passion: Harriet Martineau and the Victorian Novel* (Brighton, 1986), p. 54.

⁵¹ See below, pp. 213-19.

More drew pictures of characters and households in distress, they are curiously impersonal and hackneyed – in large part because her characterization frequently operated through those binary opposites.

The responses of More and Martineau to the work of the theologian and Congregationalist minister Philip Doddridge (1702-51) illuminate further the fundamental points of contact and disagreement between the two writers. Both thought highly of Doddridge as an inspiration towards self-improvement and benevolence but differed on his soteriology, which Martineau found distastefully punitive. A founder of the Dissenting Academy at Northampton, Doddridge wrote *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745) at the request of Isaac Watts, who had hoped for a short work for the poor. Doddridge claimed to have ‘studied the greatest *Plainness of Speech*, that the lowest of my readers may, if possible, be able to understand every word’.⁵² How accessible this undeniably emotive work would have been to the poor is doubtful at best (as Watts recognized), but it apparently had an enormous impact on William Wilberforce, and thus on More. In her ‘Two Wealthy Farmers’, the younger Bragwell daughter, Mrs Ince, underwent a spectacular and much-needed repentance, occasioned in part by *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. She would therefore be saved from the fires of hell. But for Martineau, it was Doddridge’s version of practical piety that appealed. She commented in a letter of 1829 to W.J. Fox that ‘I can never agree with a person who said the other day “We have had too much of Doddridge already”’.⁵³ She reviewed

⁵² Philip Doddridge, *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, illustrated in a course of serious and practical addresses, suited to persons of every character* (Exeter, 1794), p. xi.

⁵³ HM to W.J. Fox, 19 Sept 1829, in Deborah Anna Logan (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Harriet Martineau* (5 vols., London, 2007), i, p. 55.

Humphreys' *The Correspondence and Diary of Philip Doddridge, D.D.* for the *Monthly Repository*, and considered that the most important purpose of the volumes was to demonstrate that 'religion is entertained in its proper character only when it is made conducive to the happiness of this world as the next' and that Doddridge was a 'bright example of the efficacy of religion in stimulating to benevolent exertion'. However, she also confessed herself horrified by his capacity in private life for self-laceration through that fundamentally punitive theology⁵⁴ and lacked More's willingness to invoke a God of punishment and reward as an agent of her plotting.

The emphasis on individual sin, piety and occasional repentance meant that More did not, unlike Martineau, posit a consistent relationship between environment and character. There is no reason, for example, why one of the sons of the appalling Black Giles the poacher should have been good at heart whereas the others were corrupted by his venal criminality. Betty Brown, brought up in ignorance and destitution, was rewarded for her unlikely innocence and goodness with retail success: 'by industry and piety, [she] rose in the world, till at length she came to keep that handsome sausage shop near the Seven Dials'.⁵⁵ Hester Wilmot transcended her fractious household and her ghastly, obsessive mother to blossom at Sunday School and converted her unwholesome family through patience and example.

Where Martineau was interested in relationships within the household and the interactions between household and community, More's interest was in the individual

⁵⁴ HM, 'Doddridge's Correspondence and Diary', *Miscellanies*, ii, pp. 365-7.

⁵⁵ More, 'Betty Brown, the St. Giles's Orange Girl', p. 203.

soul and its conversion, and so relationships within the household and concepts of the right relations between household and the wider community were largely undeveloped. This is not to say that generalizations about correct ordering of the household are entirely absent. More objected where the father had abandoned his rightful authority over the family (usually to a virago), but the issue was not overtly discussed or developed since the resolution was unclear beyond its impact on individuals: we do not get a picture of the Wilmot family after the apparent repentance of the mother, whose obsession with cleanliness had driven her husband to the ale-house. *The Tracts*, then, are illustrations of individual morality, occasioned by a moral theme or issue that More saw as vital, either to individual salvation, or to the stability of the political system.

The Cheap Repository Tracts and the fiction of Martineau: a summary

This chapter has identified how More's influence on Martineau can be exemplified at the textual level. Both authors presented households as binary opposites, but Martineau eschewed More's crude rhetoric of supernatural applause and condemnation. Moreover, a shared regard for some aspects of the work of Doddridge was acknowledged, which in turn reflected a mutual emphasis on practical duty as a *sine qua non* in life and art. Their fiction was didactic because both saw it as an essentially educative medium. Modern scholarship has noted some similarities between the two writers, but analysis has been limited by a narrow view of Martineau's purpose and an absence of the detailed contextualizing of core values which has been a feature of this chapter.⁵⁶ Thus, it has

⁵⁶ Linda Peterson, for example, accepts that the early Houlston tales and the *IPE* owed a debt both visual and rhetorical to More, but, although she has useful comments to make on the visual similarity, does

been possible to identify crucial dissimilarities at the conceptual and ideological level. Martineau's focus on household relationships and their links to community is not a feature of More's work, since the latter concentrated on the conversion of the individual. Her households rarely function or develop dynamically, and she neglected the causal relationship between environment and character which was of considerable moment to the necessarian Martineau.

Both writers sought verisimilitude, but More did so largely through a rhetorical strategy which asserted that her tales were 'true' and recorded from the communications of living persons. Martineau rooted her claims in realistic descriptions of place and person, and sometimes compromised the overt message in so doing. For More, the 'good' poor were always meek, patient and frugal: for Martineau on occasion, their will to be good was inadequate in the face of suffering which impacted disastrously on the household. Meekness and patience were not realistic, and frugality in the face of starvation was an irrelevance.

The Context of the *Illustrations*

Mrs Barbauld and the characteristics of *Evenings at Home*

Chapter 3 discussed the importance of Barbauld in the Norwich and Martineau milieu, and the *Autobiography* described how Martineau children 'learned Mrs. Barbauld's Prose Hymns by heart; and there were parts of them which I dearly loved: but other parts made

not pursue any rhetorical echoes. See Peterson, 'From French Revolution to English Reform: Hannah More, Harriet Martineau, and the "Little Book"', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 60, 4 (March 2006), pp. 409-50.

me shiver with awe'.⁵⁷ Indeed, as the preface made clear, they were written for children to learn in precisely that way, and thus by 'deep, strong, and permanent associations, to lay the best foundation for practical devotion in future life'.⁵⁸ We mark the reference to *practical* devotion as likely to appeal to Martineau, but it is Mrs Barbauld's *Evenings at Home* (1792-96), co-written with her brother Dr John Aikin, which may have encouraged Martineau, not only to write fiction as a key medium for conveying truth, but also to do so using household settings. There are a number of reasons to posit this link between Barbauld's work and Martineau's aims in the *IPE*. Firstly, the aspirations which underpinned *Evenings at Home* were a key element in the Unitarian cultural milieu from which Martineau drank so deeply. Mrs Barbauld represented a cast of mind which permeated the Martineau family's Sunday evening meetings,⁵⁹ and was a crucial reference point from which both Harriet and James Martineau approached the ways whereby truth was to be communicated. Alongside her belief in free expression, Barbauld, in the words of James Martineau, 'reverenced human affections...she saw in them the passion for excellence, and the propensity to believe in its reality'.⁶⁰ For his sister, the medium of fiction for conveying truth was compellingly modelled by a woman whose visits to the Martineau household had left such a lasting impression.⁶¹

Secondly, *Evenings at Home* resonated with a fervent belief in progress, and that progress was to be generated in large part through an education provided in and by the

⁵⁷ *Autobiography*, i, p. 26.

⁵⁸ Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *Hymns in Prose for Children* (London, 1872), p. iv.

⁵⁹ See pp. 93-4.

⁶⁰ Anon. (James Martineau), 'On the Life, Character, and Works of Dr. Priestley', *Monthly Repository*, 7 (January 1833), p. 233.

⁶¹ 'It was a remarkable day for us when the comely elderly lady in her black silk cloak and bonnet came and settled herself for a long morning chat...and well I remember... the stamp of superiority on all she said...I still think her one of the first of writers in our language'. *Autobiography*, i, p. 228.

household (with or without a tutor for the boys). The trope of household which features so strongly in the *Illustrations* may therefore owe something to the Barbauld model, though its mode of delivery was markedly different. Josephine McDonagh comments that ‘The importance of the domestic in Barbauld’s work should not be underestimated’,⁶² but it will be shown that Barbauld and Aikin’s work vouchsafed no interest in relationships within the household as such. Indeed, the households in *Evenings at Home* were places where abstractions rather than living people met and had their being. Although some tales had emotive content, the reverence for human affections identified by James Martineau was neither explicit nor conveyed through empathy between individuals realistically portrayed.

Key conceptual distinctions between Barbauld and Martineau have not received sufficient scholarly attention: nor have the conceptual similarities and specific links. Shelagh Hunter offers as a chapter title ‘Mrs Barbauld’s daughter’ and rightly comments on the importance to Martineau of authentic personal experience and the way in which earlier religious belief persisted through a moral sense which combined thinking with action, but has surprisingly little to say about what Martineau specifically owed to Barbauld.⁶³ Caroline Roberts, despite her avowed intention to situate Martineau’s texts historically, is similarly reticent on her formative intellectual and cultural milieu.⁶⁴ Josephine McDonagh, in her discussion of domestic economy in Barbauld’s writings, posits no connection between Barbauld and Martineau; the latter, she claims, consciously

⁶² Josephine McDonagh, ‘Barbauld’s Domestic Economy’ in Anne Janowitz (ed.), *Essays and Studies 1998 Romanticism and Gender* (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 76.

⁶³ See Shelagh Hunter, *Harriet Martineau: The Poetics of Moralism* (Aldershot, 1995).

⁶⁴ Caroline Roberts, *The Woman and the Hour: Harriet Martineau and Victorian Ideologies* (Toronto, 2002).

followed in the footsteps of Mrs Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy* (1816). McDonagh identifies striking similarities between the Socratic dialogues and episodic structure of Barbauld and Aikin's *Evenings at Home* (1792-6) and Marcet's work, but without making the further link to Martineau.⁶⁵ More recently and more positively, Felicity James, in discussing 'Martineau the Unitarian', comments that *Evenings at Home* not only incorporated themes which may be labelled as political economy, but also encouraged Martineau's 'presentation of political economy as intimately linked with the ideology of home and family'.⁶⁶ However, James does not identify the key distinction between Barbauld and Martineau. Although the *Evenings at Home* tales tackled issues which might indeed be categorized as political economy – such as the correct use of wealth - they did so as part of a discussion of personal morality. Unlike Martineau, they did not illustrate their themes through an exploration of relationships *within* the household; nor did they show how those relationships might interface with the community both local and national.

What, then, are the salient characteristics of *Evenings at Home*? The final volume concluded with a ringing phrase addressed to 'youthful friends', or the 'Hope of the world, the *rising race*'; the authors anticipated a better age, which the young would bring about: 'An age, of light and joy, which we, Alas! in promise only see'.⁶⁷ The second part of the title referred to a 'Juvenile Budget', and the conceit is that children of the

⁶⁵ McDonagh, 'Barbauld's Domestic Economy', pp. 62-77.

⁶⁶ Felicity James, "'Socinian and political-economy formulas': Martineau the Unitarian' in Dzelzainis & Kaplan, p. 82.

⁶⁷ John Aikin & Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *Evenings at Home; or, the Juvenile Budget Opened* (6 vols., London, 1794-8), vi, p. 152. Indeed, as Michelle Levy has argued, Barbauld and Aikin situated the first steps to the progress of the nation in the shaping of young minds within a family. See Levy, 'The Radical Education of *Evenings at Home*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 19, 1 (Autumn 2006), pp. 123-50.

Fairborne family randomly selected tales which had been deposited in a 'budget' or leather pouch; those tales were then read out loud for discussion. *Evenings at Home* proffered a message to parents on how to engage with the vital task of their children's education. Instruction through the tales was sometimes through fable, but often by means of dialogic teaching. There are a number of tales which were fundamentally conversations between a tutor and his charges, George and Harry. Conversation and question-and-answer was the standard format. They tackled natural history, chemistry, physics, geology and geography, and did so usually through the stimulus of observation of nature or common phenomena. 'A Tea Lecture' for instance, used making a cup of tea the medium for teaching about chemistry. The pupil comments, "Why, I understand it all without any difficulty", and the tutor complacently responds, "I intended you should".⁶⁸ In the 'Art of Distinguishing', the father (no Gradgrind he) concludes, "I have not given you a definition to teach you what a horse is, but to teach you to *think*".⁶⁹ However, the stories which featured parent and child (most usually, father and son) tackled moral issues, and the authors saw this as the essential contribution to be made by the family to the progress of society. In a preface to the tale 'The Kidnappers', guidance is explicit.

Mr. B. was accustomed to read in the evening to his young folks some select story, and then to ask them what they thought of it. From the reflections they made on these occasions, he was enabled to form a judgement of their dispositions, and was led to throw in remarks of his own.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ *Evenings at Home*, ii, p. 78.

⁶⁹ *Evenings at Home*, ii, p. 136.

⁷⁰ *Evenings at Home*, ii, p. 79

We note that the children are asked what they think, rather than feel. Indeed, many of the stories (and particularly the fables) lacked explicit morals, and were clearly intended to generate debate. ‘The Goose and the Horse’, for example, ends abruptly and demands comment,⁷¹ and the ‘Farm-Yard Journal’ concludes with the provocative comment by a farmer threatening to destroy all partridge nests on his farm on the grounds that he did not choose to rear birds he was forbidden by law to catch, “but must leave to some qualified sportsman, who would besides break down his fences in the pursuit!”⁷² Some of the father/son dialogues in particular encompassed a radical political agenda and made explicit the link between values taught in the family and those which should guide the nation. ‘The Kidnappers’, for instance, had a partly anti-colonialist message in doubting the supposed justification of empire-building in the name of Christianity, and, as Michelle Levy has pointed out, some tales incurred the wrath of Mrs Trimmer on the grounds of their anti-militarist stance.⁷³ In ‘Price of a Victory’, young Oswald bursts in to his father with the great news of a British victory and thousands of enemies slain, but is chastened when his father points out that wars are rarely to the advantage of any nation, and that thousands of casualties means many more thousands who grieve. The coup de grâce is a lachrymose story of Walter who is tricked into enlisting and returns as a destitute cripple to die in his home village and take with him to the grave his pining sweetheart: ‘Such is the *price of a Victory*’.⁷⁴ A tale in the succeeding volume, ‘True Heroism’, upheld the prison reformer John Howard as its epitome against the savagery of Achilles, the tyranny of Charles of Sweden and (once more) the vain-glory of

⁷¹ *Evenings at Home*, ii, p. 56-8.

⁷² *Evenings at Home*, ii, p. 93.

⁷³ Levy, ‘The Radical Education of *Evenings at Home*’.

⁷⁴ *Evenings at Home*, iv, p. 61.

Alexander.⁷⁵ Volume 1 concludes with a startling and very brief tale: Charles asks his father for a Gothic story of bloody murder and is treated to an account of a battle: “I do not know of any *murders* half so bloody”.⁷⁶ This tale is entitled ‘Things by their Right Names’, and echoes a potent and epistemologically-radical theme raised earlier in the volume – the need to realize how ‘we daily call a great many things by their names, without ever enquiring into their nature and properties so that, in reality, it is only the names, and not the things themselves, with which we are acquainted’.⁷⁷

We should, however, be a little cautious in over-emphasizing the radical nature of the tales. Several offered encouragement to be content with one’s station in life and, indeed, to accept that truly useful education is specific to that station. In ‘Humble Life; or, the Cottagers’, Mr Everard takes his son Charles to see Jacob the weaver whose home represents the ideal working-class household. The family members all serve the needs of his trade and are able to appreciate the virtue of home and the value of neighbourhood. Mr Everard concludes with what appears to matter most to him: “Above all, they seem content with their lot...I view them as truly respectable members of society, acting well the part allotted to them...*man, when fulfilling the duty of his station, be that station what it may, is a worthy object of respect to his fellow-man*”.⁷⁸ Precisely the same message is conveyed by mother to daughter in ‘A Dialogue on Different Stations in Life’. Middle-class Sally Meanwell goes for an afternoon’s playtime with the daughter of a wealthy and titled gentleman and returns to hanker after coach and clothes, but is persuaded by her

⁷⁵ *Evenings at Home*, v, pp. 85-90.

⁷⁶ *Evenings at Home*, i, p. 152.

⁷⁷ *Evenings at Home*, i, p. 31.

⁷⁸ *Evenings at Home*, vi, pp. 133-5

mother to count her blessings and to be happy in her station.⁷⁹ Parents, then, were to provide the education and inculcate the habits to fit their children for their role and class. There was no condemnation of, say, the education of the wealthy lady in accomplishments which are of little social value: Kitty's mamma in 'Things to be Learned' warns her against putting aside her sewing for devoting excessive time to acquirements less useful to her station: unlike her, Lady Wealthy and Mrs Rich employ governesses and housekeepers, and therefore "It is very proper...for them to pay more attention to music, drawing, ornamental work, and any other elegant manner of passing their time".⁸⁰ Nor is there condemnation of inherited wealth *per se*. Josephine McDonagh argues that bourgeois Mrs Meanwell supposedly convinced her daughter of their moral superiority over those who simply inherit wealth, such as her aristocratic friend Harriet Pemberton. However, 'A Dialogue on Different Stations in Life' does not corroborate McDonagh's interpretive emphasis on supposedly pro-bourgeois political economy in *Evenings at Home*.⁸¹ Barbauld made every effort to avoid condemning the Pembertons, commenting through Mrs Meanwell that it is quite acceptable for Harriet to have fine things "if they are suitable to her fortune, and do not consume the money which ought to be employed in more useful things for herself and others".⁸² Perhaps the most striking tale indicative of a certain social conservatism is 'The Little Philosopher'; it stops short of the near-risible 'happy with one's lot' message of More's shepherd on Salisbury Plain, but only just. Mr L. meets a boy of eight who manages to seize the reins of L's runaway horse: such is his contentment with his station that he will accept no

⁷⁹ *Evenings at Home*, i, pp. 49-59.

⁸⁰ *Evenings at Home*, i, p. 88.

⁸¹ McDonagh, 'Barbauld's Domestic Economy'.

⁸² *Evenings at Home*, i, p. 54.

reward, even though his shoes have holes.⁸³ Such attitudes corroborate Kathryn Gleadle's argument that Unitarians were frequently distinguished by a brand of urbane liberalism which did not preclude personal relationships which were often patriarchal, paternalistic and conservative.⁸⁴

***Evenings at Home* and the fiction of Martineau: a summary**

Martineau's acquaintance with the *Evenings at Home* tales was attested to in her correspondence,⁸⁵ and it is likely enough that Barbauld and Aikin's key themes helped to create the climate out of which the Houlston tales and the *Illustrations* sprang. In particular, we shall note Martineau's belief in the transformatory power of rational discourse: debate, fairly conducted and in an atmosphere of mutual respect, was a key mechanism for change. Barbauld and Aikin identified education within the home as a crucial element in reform of home and nation, and, like Martineau, drew no explicit distinction between the capacity of male and female intellect. The development of habits was important to Barbauld/Aikin and Martineau alike, and so was the importance attached to learning by keen observation.⁸⁶ The manufacturing class was often praised,

⁸³ *Evenings at Home*, iii, pp. 144-9.

⁸⁴ Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists. Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement, 1831-51* (Basingstoke, 1995).

⁸⁵ See *Collected Letters*, v, p. 180: "Evenings at Home" is spoken of as Mrs Barbauld's, whereas her brother, Dr Aikin, wrote the whole, except the two short pieces "the Masque of Nature" & "Order & Disorder." Mrs B & the Aikins have always anxiously explained this'. Lucy Aikin, however, while accepting that her father had penned the majority of the tales, wrote that fourteen out of the ninety-nine were hers (including 'On Manufactures'). See Lucy Aikin, *Memoir of John Aikin, M.D.* (2 vols., London, 1823). Carpenter appears to have assumed that Aikin was the author, since he suggests that "he could not render a more useful service to the rising generation, than by some supplementary volumes on other points of natural history and physiology". *Principles*, pp. 120-1.

⁸⁶ Charles Kingsley, it seems, had a particular affection for *Evenings at Home* and its advocacy of observation as a key pedagogical tool. See Valerie Sanders, "What Do You Want to Know about Next?" Charles Kingsley's Model of Educational Fatherhood' in Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers

and the process of manufacture seen as worthy of admiration. There was an interest in the concept of useful education, and a discussion of which professions should be offered places in a new colony⁸⁷ has a significant parallel in the content of Martineau's 'Life in the Wilds'.⁸⁸ There is also a strong echo of the Barbauld tale 'The Ship' in Martineau's 1829 tale *Mary Campbell*; both encourage adult family members to scaffold children's moral awareness rather than expounding a *dictum*.⁸⁹

Evenings at Home were part of the context out of which grew Martineau's core values and her conviction that fiction was the medium *par excellence* for the teaching of truths about individuals, households and communities. The tales were written through a commitment to progress which Martineau clearly endorsed, and some of her *Illustrations* stories employed a dialogue form in the manner of Barbauld and Aikin. But Barbauld's fictional household was an intellectual construct convenient for the encouraging of rational debate; as such, it was a model of progress for the nation. Most crucially, Martineau's households were participants in the local community, whereas Barbauld and Aikin blithely vaulted over neighbourhood in the pursuit of national remedies. Moreover, the *Illustrations*, reflecting Martineau's attachment to and experience of the social and cultural resources of locality, generally had a very strong sense of place⁹⁰ which is almost entirely absent from *Evenings at Home*. This also reflected Martineau's interest in the shaping of character by environment, whereas Barbauld and Aikin's characters are

(eds), *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 55-67.

⁸⁷ *Evenings at Home*, v, pp. 91-100.

⁸⁸ HM, 'Life in the Wilds', *IPE* No. I (London, 1832).

⁸⁹ See p. 180.

⁹⁰ See pp. 215-7 and 219-24 for a discussion on 'A Manchester Strike', 'Ella of Garveloch' and 'The Land's End' where the sense of place is particularly intense.

shaped by intellectual interaction between tutor/parent and pupil. Thus, from the frequent appearance of the brothers Harry, George and their tutor in *Evenings at Home* we learn little or nothing about locality, sibling relationships or household dynamics.

Chapter 5

Precursors to the *Illustrations*: the Houlston tales, Mrs Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy* and Martineau's early periodical writings

Introduction

Chapter 5 explores the context out of which grew Martineau's seminal *Illustrations of Political Economy*. In articles for *The Monthly Repository* and *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, she developed her view that fiction offered an unrivalled medium for moral teaching and that, given the needs of the poorer classes, political economy was to be her subject and means. The chapter therefore considers the influence on Martineau's writings of Mrs Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy*, published in 1816, which itself combined fiction with political economy. Chapter 5 opens, however, with an analysis of the short stories which are often seen as precursors to the *Illustrations*. Between 1825 and 1831, Martineau wrote tales (*The Rioters* of 1827 and *The Turn-Out* of 1829) which were published by Houlston of Wellington, Shropshire – a firm with a London outlet and which specialized in nonconformist tracts and children's books. Janus-like, their didacticism looked back at Martineau's social, cultural, intellectual and family context, and the teaching, whatever the setting of the tale, was consistent: the centrality of right household relations to moral development, the potentially positive impact of affliction in circumstances stopping short of utter destitution and despair, and an economic message which supported free enterprise but which was nevertheless complicated by emotive pictures of working-class distress. Such themes anticipated the *Illustrations* of the 1830s, where they reappeared in a guise which also reflected key influences of the intervening years, and therefore the very development of the heartland concepts themselves.

The Houlston Tales

In the *Autobiography*, Martineau described how, having read Mrs Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy*, she realised that *The Rioters* and *The Turn-Out* were unwittingly works of political economy. How unwitting is perhaps a moot point, given that a combination of family circumstance and intellectual stimulation had propelled her in a direction likely to lead towards a version of political economy. The *Autobiography* testified to the impact of the economic crisis of 1825-6 on Norwich and on her father's bombazine and camlet manufacture, and Martineau admitted that the experience resurfaced in the vivid pictures of distress painted in her *History of the Thirty Years' Peace* (1849-50).

If that chapter is written with some energy, it is no wonder; for our family fortunes were implicated in that desperate struggle, and its issue determined the whole course of life of the younger members of our family, - my own among the rest.⁹¹

Faced with the catastrophic slump in the value of his unsold stock and an inability to meet his credit obligations, her father was obliged to alter his will to reduce his daughters' portions, and the strain coincided with a fatal liver complaint. In this atmosphere came riots among the Norwich weavers in 1826⁹² and Martineau was

⁹¹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 98.

⁹² The lists of bankruptcies in the *Norfolk Chronicle* throughout 1826 reveal the sorry state of the bombazine industry: editions for 10 February, 6 May and 23 September catalogue the collapse of the specialists Thurtell & Giddens, Foulger & Havers, John Harris (the latter two in May) and Purdies respectively. For accounts of the riots, see the *Norfolk Chronicle*, Saturday 4 February, 1826 and John Chambers, *A General History of the County of Norfolk* (2 vols., Norwich, 1829), i, p. xciv.

stimulated by articles on machine-breaking in the *Globe*, the eagerly-discussed family newspaper, to write *The Rioters*. Immediately afterwards, and at the behest of ‘some hosiers and lace-makers of Derby and Nottingham’,⁹³ she wrote about wage demands in *The Turn-Out*. There is a revealing letter from Martineau to Fox, written some four years later, which vividly conveys the atmosphere in the city at the time of the latest unrest:

If you want to see a civil war, come here. We have no bloodshed, to be sure; but the castle is actually garrisoned...The common people ride about with swords by their sides; Henry [her brother] is made a captain!! (of 19 constables in this parish) the soldiers are wearied & harassed; fires burn on all sides; factories are gutted...The worst of it is that the discontent of the labourers gives occasion to riots from the weavers, who are by far the most difficult to manage.⁹⁴

The Rioters, or a Tale of Bad Times (1827) ostensibly attacked machine-breaking, not only as illegal, but also as a catastrophic error displaying a lack of understanding of the identity of interests between employers and labour. The unnamed middle-class narrator, visiting Manchester on business, is given by Martineau the task of persuading a working-class family deeply implicated in the riots that their actions are self-defeating, since their distress will be temporary and duly alleviated once the market has ‘cleared’. Thus far, Freedgood and David’s accounts of Martineau’s complicity with middle-class self-interest might appear to be persuasive.⁹⁵ However, the tale, in tone and content, is ambiguous and therefore far from a supine endorsement of bourgeois economic convenience. The title itself is surprisingly even-handed and at least gestures towards a genuine understanding of the rioters’ predicament – *A Tale of Bad Times*. Nor did

⁹³ *Autobiography*, i, p. 103.

⁹⁴ HM to W.J. Fox, 1 December 1830, *Collected Letters*, i, pp. 79-80.

⁹⁵ See Freedgood, pp. 34-8 in particular, and David, chapter 2.

Martineau shrink in showing how bad those times were. The Brett family of weavers is destitute and desperate, and Martineau stops well short of blaming them; they are guilty of error, but their criminality is the product of extreme want and circumstances outside their control. She cites neighbours as independent witnesses of how respectable and hard-working the family originally was and so corroborates the mother's cry of anguish:

'Fine boys they were, Sir, six months ago: but they are so changed! I thought they had been too old for mischief; but the times have crazed them, I think: and that's my worst trouble'.⁹⁶

Indeed, Martineau taught that reason could not prevail against an empty stomach and total lack of any comfort. Her narrator wishes to persuade Brett (the father) that rioting is wrong, but realizes that the man is too weak to listen; so, he goes to a neighbour, arranges for food, light and a fire to be provided for the family. Only then is he able to impress on Brett his view that distress is a temporary result of market fluctuations, and that smashing power looms will deprive the employers of the means to remain in advance of foreign competition. Instead, workers must wait until their employers' order books recover. But Martineau appears too emotionally attached to the plight of the workers to let it rest at that: in effect, Brett is given the final word. "That will be too late, Sir, to do any good. What use will the revival of trade be, if we all starve in the mean time?"⁹⁷ And Martineau stacked the cards against the market forces argument in other ways. To emphasize her point about the family's past respectability, she presented the picture of a sixteen year-old daughter, Hannah, who was transplanted once the distress started to her

⁹⁶ HM, *The Rioters, or a Tale of Bad Times* (Wellington, 1827), p. 9.

⁹⁷ *The Rioters*, p. 32.

grandfather's tiny and impoverished farm: caring, hard-working and adept with the needle, she reveals that her mother also possessed the skill to knit and sew. This was approbation indeed from Martineau, whose respect for and advocacy of the needle underpinned her life and career.⁹⁸ Significantly, the family's skill with the needle means that the narrator is able to put some business their way, if only through a personal order for stockings. The Brett boys are arrested, and the eldest is in danger of the death penalty. A further dialogue between the father and the narrator takes place on the duty of abiding by the law; and the narrator succeeds in convincing Brett that he cannot refuse to obey laws he considers to be unjust. But this conclusion is emotionally compromised by the narrator's expressed wish at the heart of the riot that the two boys might escape despite their violence, and also by Martineau's vivid pictures which are particularly strong on physical threat – the armed soldiers on horseback, and the heat and noise at Lancaster Assizes where the narrator goes to try to mitigate the sentences.

The narrator's behaviour is at odds with his doctrine. He is personally charitable, and the Bretts are saved, not by the market, but by him – and, indeed, by his wife, their children and servants, who all make their contributions. This tale thus represents one of the first instances of Martineau emphasizing how the moral economy of a household must include servants. The narrator recognizes that preaching patience to the starving is fundamentally inadequate, and it is perhaps a sign of Martineau's own difficulty with this

⁹⁸ Deborah Logan draws attention to Martineau's use of the tropes of needle and pen in validating both aspects of her life. See Deborah Anna Logan, *The Hour and the Woman: Harriet Martineau's "Somewhat Remarkable" Life* (DeKalb, 2002). One might add that, for Martineau, her pen was a means of linking her own household with the community.

point that she could offer her character no more than a belief in the inscrutable ways of Providence:-

‘...these trying events were in better hands than ours, and at the disposal of a wiser Being than ourselves, was the only consolation I could find, the only means of soothing my harassing doubts and fears’.⁹⁹

Such is the price of her focus on household relationships and their links to the community in strife.

The Turn-Out; or, Patience the Best Policy (1829) also proffered what appears to be a simple message, and conceivably one which betokens Martineau’s early acquaintance with, and endorsement of, Adam Smith’s assertion of the fundamental identity of interests between capitalist and workforce - despite the implication in the *Autobiography* that she had no meaningful acquaintance with the works of Smith (or Malthus) at the time.¹⁰⁰ In the words of one of its main characters, the young weaver James Gilbert, “any thing is better than a TURN-OUT”¹⁰¹ The most sympathetic character among the employers is Robert Wallace, a mill owner, who was given by Martineau the task of explaining the correct viewpoint: namely, that the operatives’ demands for an increase in wages cannot be met due to the flatness of trade, and Martineau summed up with the statement that ‘the operatives had not patience to wait for the gradual improvement which

⁹⁹ *The Rioters*, pp. 45-6.

¹⁰⁰ The *Autobiography* is of little help in dating Martineau’s first reading of Adam Smith, which occurred an unspecified time after autumn 1827, when she was lent Mrs Marcet’s *Conversations on Political Economy*. See *Autobiography*, i, p. 105.

¹⁰¹ HM, *The Turn-Out; or, Patience the Best Policy* (Wellington, 1829), p. 135.

circumstances would probably bring about'.¹⁰² The tale follows the decision to withdraw labour after a mass meeting at which the most enthusiastic advocate of a walk-out was the union official, Henry Gilbert. Gilbert persuades his reluctant but impressionable younger brother, James, to join the strike, even though the result would be an indefinite postponement of James's marriage to Maria Field and the loss of the cottage towards which they had been prudently saving. In the end, the strike collapses, having not only caused the kind of suffering portrayed in *The Rioters* but also permanent injury to the manufacturing interest. Given the identity of 'natural interest' between employer and employee, this means that fewer workers can be employed. However, although Martineau appeared to be revelling in crude anti-union propaganda and equally crude flattering of the manufacturing interest, the tale is more even-handed than such a plot summary would suggest. Although Henry Gilbert's arguments are given short shrift, his sincerity is applauded throughout. As the baleful effects of the strike manifest themselves in the suffering of the workers' families, he suffers with them: exhausted, he lives as frugally as any and takes no personal advantage of the rapidly-depleting fighting fund. Martineau summed up:

The struggle between his intense desire to carry a point which he believed to be so important to the interests of the operatives, and his compassion for their sufferings, was painful, was agonizing.¹⁰³

Martineau also stopped short of accusing him of allowing personal ambition to override the workers' interests, even though it is not absent from his motives. Martineau

¹⁰² *The Turn-Out*, p. 7.

¹⁰³ *The Turn-Out*, p. 90.

commented, ‘If he had once been thoroughly convinced that his cause was a bad one, he would have forsaken it, though at the sacrifice of his plans of ambition’.¹⁰⁴ Gilbert also swallows his pride and begs Wallace to take back James and Maria should the turn-out collapse, even though they had refused to apply to the committee for relief on the grounds that they were opposed to the strike. The sight of Maria about to pawn her clothes overcomes any resentment on his part. In his speech to a mass meeting which persuades the operatives to bring the strike to an end, Wallace praises, not only their courage and self-denial, but also Gilbert’s sincerity – and yet, he adds, how tragically they have been misapplied.

Martineau made clear use of the Norwich context in *The Turn-Out* through the contacts Gilbert forges with other clothing centres; indeed, her even-handedness towards Gilbert may well be a product of that context, since she commented, rather tangentially, that the Norwich weavers had to an extent marred the dignity of their cause by riot, but emphasized that their leaders had attempted to ‘substitute fair argument for threats and tumult’.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the element of sympathy for those whose actions had militated against the interests of their fellow-workers, and a recognition of its impact on households, should be seen as an early example of the way in which Martineau mediated art and personal experience through her core values.

The 1827 tale *Principle and Practice; or, The Orphan Family* is a further precursor of the conceptual underpinnings of the *Illustrations*, but its theme placed a different

¹⁰⁴ *The Turn-Out*, p. 64.

¹⁰⁵ *The Turn-Out*, p. 77.

emphasis on Martineau's central preoccupations: in this case, the stimulus afforded by adversity was linked to the centrality of household to moral progress. Once again, the interplay between personal experience, cultural context and art moulded the tale. In particular, Martineau blended what she interpreted as formative incidents from her youth, such as her role as friend and helper of 'E', whose leg had been amputated by Martineau's uncle, with the complex set of emotions surrounding the 1826 collapse of the Martineau business: in other words, fears for the disintegration of her own household with the departure of her sister as governess coalesced with a sense of potential opportunity to escape descent into stultifying provincial penury. The preface to *Principle and Practice* reveals the admixture of Martineau's sense of duty and ambition linked to a discourse which laid claim to realism. Disavowing any romantic adventures, uncommon incidents and sentimentality, Martineau promised to

excite interest in those readers only, who can sympathize with the earnest desires of well-disposed and industrious young persons striving after usefulness, honourable independence, and individual and mutual improvement, amidst real, and not imaginary, discouragements, and substantial, not sentimental, difficulties.¹⁰⁶

The Forsyth family, living near Exeter, is orphaned on the death of their father. Jane, at sixteen, is the eldest. Martineau makes it clear that the loyal servant, Hannah, is an intrinsic part of the household. Initially, then, they have insufficient income to live on, but Charles must seek work outside the family home and Jane must find work as a governess. She is found such a role in the family of a local surgeon, Mr Everett. To fit herself for her duties, she rises at 6am and engages in two hours of study before

¹⁰⁶ HM, *Principle and Practice: or, The Orphan Family* (Wellington, 1827), pp. 1-2.

breakfast: a clear indication that Martineau was in effect combining autobiography with wish-fulfilment.¹⁰⁷ Charles finds employment as a clerk in a London warehouse.

The narrative then leaps forward, having surprisingly eschewed any sense of a bereft and grieving family. Their first year of bereavement is a successful one. Through Charles's good agencies, they have been able to use younger sister Isabella's artistic skills to sell some fancy goods, Everett appears pleased with Jane and they have acquired a wealthy friend in the form of a Mr Rathbone, for whom their father once performed a valued service. Martineau gestures towards the clouds on the horizon which are essential to her message. Mrs Everett's attitude towards Jane fluctuates, and Charles has heard rumours of Mr Rathbone's ill-treatment of servants and employees who are less than fully deferential or grateful.

Charles is very much a paragon on the model of Tom Martineau – avoiding all temptations, frugal, charitable with his time, thoroughly benevolent and a shrewd negotiator and peacemaker. The narrative lurches forward once more, and we discover that he has not seen his sisters and brother in two years. There is a sense here that Martineau was compromising her own insistence on the importance of household education, since he is remote from its benign influences. On his belated return home, his coach overturns: he shows great presence of mind, but there is one fatality and one young man of good conduct (Henry Monteath) with a leg dreadfully crushed. His injuries are

¹⁰⁷ We recall HM letter's to Helen Bourn Martineau, 12 May 1825, in *Collected Letters*, i, p. 31, which contained the following less than welcome advice: 'Do apply your mind to some branches of study...I now rise at 5 and you cannot think how I enjoy the 3½ hours which I have quite to myself before breakfast'. See also p. 66 above.

such that amputation is the only solution, and Martineau exploited once more her childhood memories of ‘E’, but distilled through her sense of the advantages to be derived from adversity.¹⁰⁸ Charles muses accordingly:

‘It has been proved, by a fiery trial, that Monteath has many virtues. I know, beyond a doubt, that he is religious, that he is attached to his family, that he is considerate to others, that he is courageous and patient. This is a great deal to have learned in twenty-four hours. If I were to consider myself alone, I might rejoice in this accident’.¹⁰⁹

After the operation, Monteith ruefully reflects to Charles that his greatest difficulty is a social embarrassment that literature exacerbates rather than ameliorates.

‘In how many books, where the loss of fortune is described, the minutest difficulties which such a loss occasions are detailed at length! but if, as seldom happens, the loss of a limb is mentioned, we never get beyond the first part of the story, and the little daily difficulties and privations, which are of more importance than the lesser evils of poverty, are quite left out of sight’.¹¹⁰

Charles draws the analogy between the literary treatment of blindness – appropriate for a heroine – and deafness, which is not. The *Autobiography* at times treated Martineau’s own deafness with a breeziness occasioned by the supposedly transformatory provision of an ear-trumpet, but its crushing impact on her early years is surely evidenced, not only by Charles’s comment, but also by similar reflections in her later writings.¹¹¹ As for the

¹⁰⁸ See *Autobiography*, i, pp. 35-7 where Martineau testified to the abiding influence of her memories of ‘E’. She contacted ‘E’ after writing *The Crofton Boys* in *The Playfellow* series (1841-3): her hero, Hugh, loses a foot, and Martineau was concerned that the episode would jar E’s feelings. See pp. 285-6 below.

¹⁰⁹ *Principle and Practice*, pp. 77-8.

¹¹⁰ *Principle and Practice*, p. 122.

¹¹¹ See HM, ‘The Deaf Playmate’s Story’ in Charles Dickens (ed.), *A Round of Stories by the Christmas Fire* (London, 1852), pp. 118-32. This is rather a painful tale of a young boy whose increasing deafness jeopardizes his progress at school and his friendships; the handicap itself is less of a problem than the

Autobiography itself, there is a brief passage which, given its importance, is insufficiently acknowledged by biographers. Martineau, at the age of fifteen, apparently responded to her family's mishandling of her deafness by an act of will which helped to shape her attitude towards the severe discipline that is affliction. She commented:

Instead of drifting helplessly as hitherto, I gathered myself up for a gallant breasting of my destiny; and in time I reached the rocks where I could take a firm stand. I felt that here was an enterprise...and I made a vow of patience about this infirmity; - that I would smile in every moment of anguish from it; and that I would never lose temper at any consequences from it...With such a temper as mine was then, an infliction...so isolating as loss of hearing must "kill or cure". In time, it acted with me as a cure.¹¹²

Her use of the nautical metaphor is significant: as we shall see, Martineau was fond of the capsizing vessel as a plot device which revealed a character's reaction to vicissitude, and the instantaneous nature of the revelation is typical of the self-fashioning of the *Autobiography*, where Martineau's own developmental stages were rendered misleadingly as dramatic paradigm shifts.

The conversation between Charles and Henry also provides a further link with Martineau's later fiction and the formative Norwich years. Monteath praises Jane for instilling some discipline in the spoiled Everett children, commenting "...it must be very

boy's increasing disorientation and sullenness: he breaks the neck of his favourite pet dove because he can no longer hear it, and contemplates suicide. A comparison between the Dickens tale and the *Autobiography* is very revealing and demonstrates once more the extent to which Martineau harvested her own experience in her fiction. Martineau claimed that her family aggravated her suffering by initially insisting it was all her own fault, 'and even (while my heart was breaking) they told me that "none are so deaf as those that won't hear"' (*Autobiography*, i, p. 58). Precisely that phrase appears in 'The Deaf Playmate's Story', and is followed by a hurtful episode where the boy's family exhibits horror at the sight of a deaf lady about to visit them, and lament 'What *shall* we do?' (p. 127); as did, and in those very words, the Martineaus when faced with the arrival of a distant relation who had been deaf since infancy.

¹¹² *Autobiography*, i, p. 58.

discouraging work...to do her best for them, for half of every day, and to be obliged to surrender them to be spoiled for the other half”¹¹³. The significance of this comment is twofold. It reappears in Maria Young’s soliloquy in *Deerbrook*¹¹⁴ and is thus a testimony to the extent to which Martineau continued to quarry her formative years in Norwich life; but it also reflects, as suggested above, Martineau strengthening herself in the light of the 1826 crisis for the possible challenges ahead as the Martineau girls contemplated the limited recourses open to women of their class.

At the Forsyth household, a letter arrives from Mrs Rathbone with the offer to have Alfred educated at the East India Company’s military schools for a career in India as a military engineer. Jane’s stance is anti-militarist in the manner of *Evenings at Home*, and brother and sister agree that Alfred’s moral welfare is best served in the bosom of the family. A churlish letter arrives from Rathbone emphatically breaking off a relationship on the grounds that they had proved themselves unworthy by failing to take informed advice.

This loss of a patron and a severe illness for Isabella represent Martineau testing the family through further adversity, and they respond with the strength of family and household solidarity. Bearing in mind her own preface, she eschewed the lachrymose deathbed. Isabella recovers; in the Franklins and Monteaths they gain new and better friends; and the family fortunes are much improved by Jane’s increasing salary; Isabella’s

¹¹³ *Principle and Practice*, p. 126.

¹¹⁴ See below, pp. 252-3.

art work finds a publisher, and, after two years training in London, she and Jane are to open a day-school and Alfred is offered a place in the Monteath warehouse.

The tale then leaps forward to the setting up of the school and offers a paean to education: “Think what it will be, dear Charles, to send our pupils into the world with firm principles, cultivated minds, and amiable manners, fitted to perform their duties, and to do good in their turn”.¹¹⁵ The echoes of Barbauld and Aikin resound; but, of course, this is what household education has achieved for the Forsyths. Its optimistic ending may well have been some encouragement, if not comfort, to Martineau herself in the hope that her own family members were able to respond with similar courage to their own trial. At the very least, the tale serves as a reminder of the way in which fiction, personal experience and developing core values interfaced.

The importance attached by Martineau to the relationship between adversity, duty and opportunity is confirmed by its reappearance as the key theme in the tale *Mary Campbell; or, the Affectionate Granddaughter* (1828). The story has received no critical acknowledgement, but the case for Martineau’s authorship is compelling. It is anonymous, but credited to her on the title page of *The Turn-Out - By the author of Mary Campbell*.¹¹⁶ Its teachings beyond adversity derive from Martineau’s core values and subjectivities, including the sovereign importance of duty, the respect that should be

¹¹⁵ *Principle and Practice*, p. 149.

¹¹⁶ Further corroboration of Martineau’s authorship is provided by references to Dr Franklin in the tale. The *Autobiography* admitted to the influence of Franklin over the young Martineau: ‘I adopted in an immense hurry Dr. Franklin’s youthful and absurd plan of pricking down his day’s virtues and vices under heads’. See *Autobiography*, i, p. 27. *Mary Campbell* is attributed to Martineau in R.H. Horne, *A New Spirit of the Age* (Oxford, 1907), p. 289.

accorded by adults to the questions and views of the young and a reference to the nature of the after-life which is at one with Martineau's soteriology.¹¹⁷ Reflections on the importance of a devotional spirit testify to the influence of Barbauld, and there are echoes of *Evenings at Home* in some of the chosen themes. That stock Martineau plot device makes its first appearance – the capsized vessel.

The story opens after Mary, born in the East Indies and sent to be educated in England, has spent seven years at Mrs Farrant's boarding school.¹¹⁸ During the holidays, she lives near Liverpool with her aged grandfather, Mr Campbell. Martineau stressed the mutual love between grandparent and grandchild: a theme which appeared in *The Rioters*.¹¹⁹ It is tempting to ascribe it to autobiography, but Martineau's paternal grandfather died before she was born, and the lengthy account in the *Autobiography* itself of her family visit to her maternal grandparents in Newcastle barely mentioned them.¹²⁰ Arguably, in outlining the perfect companionship of old and young within a family, Martineau's interpretation of her troubled relationship with her mother meant that she was unable to draw upon personal experience: as a result, a generation was omitted. Crucially, Mary and Mr Campbell are intellectual companions and share the *Life and Correspondence of Dr. Franklin* as their chosen afternoon reading. Mary is startled by Franklin's frank avowal of his sins in earlier life. She accepts that a sense of duty might lead him to make them public, but that "a proper awe of the holiness of that Being against whom he has

¹¹⁷ See pp. 78-83 above.

¹¹⁸ It is likely that the account of the Farrant school mined Martineau's overwhelmingly-positive experiences at her Mrs Rankin's school in Bristol and her residence with her Aunt Kentish. Mrs Farrant's sensitivity and warm-hearted commonsense are reminiscent of the characteristics attributed to her aunt. See *Autobiography*, i, pp. 72-3.

¹¹⁹ See pp. 168-9.

¹²⁰ See *Autobiography*, i, pp. 22-6.

offended, would lead him to express his sorrow in a different manner”¹²¹ This is the grandfather interpreting and putting into words Mary’s objection, and he concurs – having known Franklin personally, he felt that his religion was vague and his wisdom too worldly. This is precisely the kind of intellectual dialogue that Martineau found so compelling and, indeed, absent in her youth. Mary’s grandfather provides the necessary guidance, but listens seriously and encourages her, through conversation, to work out and express her viewpoint. Campbell is worried that she will see Franklin as a good man who did not need religion to be good, and so would overrate mere reason as a pathway to morality. In the manner of Barbauld, he objects to Franklin’s supposed tendency to see Christianity as primarily a moral system, thus depriving himself of light and warmth for mind and heart. But he does not allow this genuine concern to lead him to an authoritative pronouncement, even though Mary would accept it out of love; instead, grandfather and granddaughter agree to award the prison reformer Howard ““a deeper sanctuary in our affections than that of FRANKLIN”¹²² Martineau’s citing of John Howard as a model to be admired echoed Howard’s status as the paragon in Barbauld’s ‘True Heroism’¹²³.

Martineau offers the salutary lesson of vicissitude to both Mary and her conceited school friend and visitor, Jane Cooper. Jane’s mother suddenly dies and leaves her an orphan. Jane is prostrated by grief, but after the funeral agrees to come to stay with the Campbells. ‘Mary was daily more gratified to perceive that affliction had had the effect

¹²¹ *Mary Campbell; or, the Affectionate Granddaughter* (Wellington, 1828), p. 23.

¹²² *Mary Campbell*, p. 57.

¹²³ See p. 159 above.

of softening her character, and humbling her pride'.¹²⁴ Mary herself has her own trial, as the old man is obviously failing. He speaks of a hope that heaven would not be veiled to him – a clear echo of Martineau's soteriology of safety.¹²⁵

After Campbell's death, Jane and Mary return to school, and Martineau has a moral to teach by comparing responses to grief and thereby reflecting on the nature of duty. Mary's sorrow is heavy, 'but she sought to lighten it by entering into the interests and pleasures of others'.¹²⁶ Jane sinks into melancholy and shuns her former schoolmates apart from Mary. Mrs Farrant points out to Jane that her refusal to go on an outing because she could not bear others being merry is fundamentally selfish. "I am sure I have tried to do my duty," replied Jane, blushing... "I have no fault to find with your industry, my dear... But is this the whole of your duty? Is it not also a duty to enter into the interests of others, to watch over their comfort, to promote their advantage?"¹²⁷ Jane responds accordingly, and so vicissitude has for her been a defining moment where her essential decency has been uncovered and honed. On her return to the Indies, Mary herself faces a further defining moment when vicissitude takes the form of melodrama. Her heroism and self-sacrifice amidst the trauma of a sinking ship are contrasted to that of her adult fellow-traveller, Mr Portman, who tries to drink himself to oblivion. Portman drowns, and Mary reflects

'What a revealer of the heart is danger like this! Here is a man who bears a respectable character in the world, and has lived in dignity and honour, degrading

¹²⁴ *Mary Campbell*, p. 82.

¹²⁵ See above, pp. 80-3.

¹²⁶ *Mary Campbell*, p. 98.

¹²⁷ *Mary Campbell*, pp. 102-3.

himself below the rank of humanity when death draws near! This is to have lived to the world, instead of to God!'.¹²⁸

The absence of previous critical scrutiny of *Mary Campbell* has been unfortunate, since the tale has proved to be significant in recapturing the interplay between Martineau's developing core values, personal experience and cultural resources. In particular, its religious underpinnings demonstrate the way in which Martineau used fiction as medium for teaching the secular and spiritual import in this context of Carpenter's concept of social piety. Its concluding words sum up the example Mary is intended to represent.

[a girl] who, at an early age, had learned to moderate her desires, to regulate her affections, to find delight in active usefulness, and to consecrate all to Him whose favour she early sought, and therefore early found.¹²⁹

Mrs Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy* (1816)

It was after writing most of her Houlston tales that Martineau, in 1827, made the acquaintance of Mrs Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy*.¹³⁰ Scholarly consensus is that Martineau at that point formulated the idea of using fiction to teach political economy and thus expanded on Marcet's work.¹³¹ According to the

¹²⁸ *Mary Campbell*, p. 132.

¹²⁹ *Mary Campbell*, p. 137.

¹³⁰ See Bette Polkinghorn and Dorothy Lampen Thomson, *Adam Smith's Daughters. Eight Prominent Women Economists from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Cheltenham, 1998). The authors argue that Marcet's approach echoed the more optimistic stance of Smith, even though she was personally acquainted with both Malthus and Ricardo. However, there are references to the dangers of over-population in *Conversations on Political Economy* (and the importance of emigration) which suggest that the influence of Malthus was considerable.

¹³¹ Pichanick, for example, comments that 'In 1827, she read Jane Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy*, and, influenced by Mrs. Marcet's arguments, derived the idea of teaching the principles of

Autobiography, ‘During that reading, groups of personages rose up from the pages, and a procession of action glided through its arguments’.¹³² However, one could not copy Marcet and arrive at the *IPE*, since the *Conversations* had few of the characteristics of story. Those ‘groups of personages’ were by no means restively waiting to spring forth on the immediate opening of the book; in fact, to encourage them so to do would require a supremely creative act on the part of the reader. Mrs Marcet’s conversations were by no means misnamed. They consisted of an urbane series of numbered questions and answers between Mrs B and her pupil Caroline with scant reference to situation, context or characterization. Mrs B makes honourable but passing mention of ““your prudent gardener Thomas”” as part of an *exordium* on those self-reliant poor who eschew the debilitating effect of parochial relief and private charity,¹³³ and Caroline talks of a visit made by her family to Wales where an innkeeper had set up a fountain which provided a village with water for a small sum per family. The result may have well been a marked improvement in the health of the villagers, but the reader barely cares, since the village is an abstraction. The Welsh excursion does, perhaps, provide some relief from the lists of examples from history, adduced to illustrate such issues as the evil of adulterated coinage (and without, one is constrained to add, exemplary accuracy: Edward III appears as Edward IV). The allusions to historical facts, of course, make sense only if the reader is already familiar with them, and so presuppose the reader’s social class. Gender is also a presupposition:

political economy by narrative illustration’ (p. 50).

¹³² *Autobiography*, i, p. 106.

¹³³ Jane Marcet, *Conversations on Political Economy in which the Elements of that Science are Familiarly Explained* (London, 1819), p. 160.

...an intelligent young person, fluctuating between the impulse of her heart and the progress of her reason, and naturally imbued with all the prejudices and popular feelings of uninformed benevolence.¹³⁴

Clearly, Marcet did not envisage a working-class readership. She stressed the importance of education for the working class, but as a means to offset (along with emigration) the dangers of over-population. Caroline asks a leading question, ““Surely you would not teach political economy to the labouring classes, Mrs B?”” and Mrs B replies ““No; but I would endeavour to give the rising generation such an education as would render them not only moral and religious, but industrious, frugal, and provident!””.¹³⁵ In fact, Marcet changed her mind and attempted to address the worker, but only after the publication of the first of Martineau’s *Illustrations*, which had deliberately made that attempt. In *John Hopkins’s Notions of Political Economy*, she wove allegory and fairy-tale into narratives which explored errors in political economy – including the view that the interests of the rich and the poor do not go hand in hand.¹³⁶

There was a three year gap between the reading of Marcet and the writing of the *IPE*, but, as suggested earlier, such is the pace of the *Autobiography*, and its penchant for the vivid and dramatic, that it is easy to be seduced into ignoring the lapse of time:

I mentioned my notion [of the political economy stories], I remember, when we were sitting at work, one bright afternoon at home. Brother James nodded assent; my mother said “do it;” and we went to tea, unconscious what a great thing we had done since dinner.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Marcet, p. ix.

¹³⁵ Marcet, p. 158.

¹³⁶ Jane Marcet, *John Hopkins’s Notions on Political Economy* (London, 1833).

¹³⁷ *Autobiography*, i, p. 106.

But in the interval between Marcet and brother's nod, Martineau had spent those three formative years becoming (intellectually) to W.J. Fox of the *Monthly Repository* what George Eliot became to John Chapman of the *Westminster Review*. As his chief leader-writer, she was exposed to the bracing climate of his radicalism: 'His editorial correspondence with me was unquestionably the occasion, and in great measure the cause, of the greatest intellectual progress I ever made before the age of thirty'.¹³⁸ And adversity was Martineau's personal opportunity and stimulus: the final collapse of the Martineau business occurred in June 1829. As her deafness precluded her from the sole recourse of the newly-penurious but well-educated middle-class woman – governessing – her needle and her pen were her only opportunities to contribute to the household income. Fox, at her urgent appeal, managed to offer her £15 per year, and a visit to her uncle's house in London led to the prospect of making a living by proof-reading while in the search for literary success. Doubts over the likelihood of success led to a maternal summons back to Norwich and the needle; her resentment (and surprise at her own acquiescence) flavoured yet another vivid account in the *Autobiography*. '...to my disappointment, - I might almost say, horror, - my mother sent me peremptory orders to go home, and to fill the place which my poor young sister was to vacate. I rather wonder that, being seven and twenty years old, I did not assert my independence, and refuse to return'.¹³⁹ In this instance, the account has the effect of exaggerating the extent of the Norwich hiatus, which was only a matter of months until Elizabeth Martineau was persuaded that her daughter should return to London.

¹³⁸ *Autobiography*, i, p. 107.

¹³⁹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 113. Martineau labels the recall an 'injustice'.

Martineau's writings for the *Monthly Repository* from 1827 to 1831 are fundamental to an understanding of the *Illustrations* and their themes. We have noted that the Houlston tales, dismissed in such a cavalier fashion in the *Autobiography*, represented attempts to utilize fiction in the teaching of moral and political truths and, as such, were themselves part of this crucial formative period. It is therefore unfortunate that scholars have placed undue reliance on the judgements made in the *Autobiography*. Among the less wary is Pichanick, who lumps together the short stories and most of the *Monthly Repository* articles of the 1820s with the dismissive comment that they are 'of little interest today'.¹⁴⁰ Martineau's journalism, it will be argued, encouraged her to develop and refine her view of fiction as a moral agent. She did so in the context, not only of her core values, and not only of political economy, but also of her reading of other moral sciences. In particular, the Associationism of David Hartley linked emotions and habits in a way which provided a compelling justification for the resources, subjects and discourse of fiction.

The Monthly Repository (1829-32)

Political Economy

In 1831, Martineau wrote 'On the Duty of Studying Political Economy'. As noted in chapter 1, 'duty' was a potent shibboleth for Martineau; indeed, in the preface to the 1836 American edition of the *Miscellanies*, which is a compilation of her early periodical writings, she claimed that an habitual answering of the call of duty was a characteristic of the third and highest phase of the progress of spiritual sentiment, and that 'On the Duty of

¹⁴⁰ Pichanick, p. 22.

Studying Political Economy’ was the product of this phase. The article opens accordingly.

Viewing this science as we do, - as involving the laws of social duty and social happiness, - we hold it as a positive obligation on every member of society who studies and reflects at all, to inform himself of its leading principles.¹⁴¹

Ostensibly reviewing a work by Thomas Cooper,¹⁴² Martineau applauded the way in which scripture and a consequentialist system of ethics underpinned the right understanding of political economy, which in turn consists of immutable principles and ‘modes of action’; that is, the correct application of those principles to the circumstances which change as society develops. This is why applying the biblical injunction to increase and multiply was appropriate following the Flood, but not in the nineteenth century.

To Martineau, political economy was the integrative moral science *par excellence*, and this partly explains the considerable debt she owed to Adam Smith: a debt emphasized by contemporaries and modern commentators.¹⁴³ Smith’s appeal to Martineau lay in the way in which his political economy was underpinned by the metaphysics and social psychology of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Prudent self-interest was presented as one of the moral virtues, and a sense of duty emerged from an act of sympathetic imagination which focused on the needs of persons.¹⁴⁴ This in turn generated

¹⁴¹ HM, ‘On the Duty of Studying Political Economy’, *Miscellanies*, i, p. 276.

¹⁴² Thomas Cooper was Professor of Chemistry and Political Economy at S. Carolina College and his *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy* were published in London in 1831.

¹⁴³ Anon., ‘Mrs Marcet-Miss Martineau’, *The Edinburgh Review*, 115 (April 1833), p. 2 referred to Martineau having risen to the challenge of rescuing her beloved science – ‘the science of Adam Smith’.

¹⁴⁴ This view of Smith’s thought was echoed in a sermon of 1835 preached by James Martineau. Harriet’s brother argued in favour of political economy which, under ‘one of the profoundest of philosophers,

a sense of conscience, since one imagined how an action might be interpreted by an impartial, all-knowing spectator (who might be taken to be God). Thus, Smith commented:

The man of real constancy and firmness, the wise and just man...has been in the constant practice, and, indeed, under the constant necessity, of modelling, or of endeavouring to model, not only his outward conduct and behaviour, but, as much as he can, even his inward sentiments and feelings, according to those of this awful and respectable judge.¹⁴⁵

And so, prudent self-interest was the invisible hand which led to the stadal progress of society: it should be left as far as possible unfettered and undistorted by the actions of governments and authorities. Polkinghorn and Thomson characterize this Smithian sympathy as ‘empathy’ and claim that it was rejected by Martineau when she adopted Necessarianism, which, as a mechanistic theory of causation, sabotaged any explanation which did not rest on natural laws. However, in arguing that Necessarianism underpinned her teaching of political economy, they effectively telescope her engagement with, and overstate her acceptance of, the full ramifications of the doctrine and attach it to the period before the writing of the *Illustrations*. The *Autobiography* may appear to support this contention in that it discussed in detail her acceptance of Necessarianism around the age of twenty (in 1821/2); Catherine Gallagher, for instance, quotes Martineau’s insistence that, on understanding and applying Necessarianism, ‘My labouring brain and beating heart grew quiet, and something more like peace than I had ever yet known

Adam Smith’, had done much ‘in exciting sympathy for the well-being of the industrious many...for the peace of communities, and the civilisation of the world’. Quoted in James Drummond & C.B. Upton, *The Life and Letters of James Martineau* (2 vols., London, 1902), i, p. 86.

¹⁴⁵ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London, 2009), pp. 168-9.

settled down upon my anxious mind'.¹⁴⁶ Yet, a careful reading reveals that the process of working out its significance for her principles and beliefs was a long and tortuous one. Martineau summed up: 'These are the gradations through which I passed. It took many years to travel through them'.¹⁴⁷ Eleanor Courtemanche adopts a similar position to Polkinghorn and Thompson in that she sees political economy and Martineau's Necessarianism as two sides of the same determinist coin, and claims that her version of political economy was based on a Necessarianism which held that 'the world is determined by universal natural laws that exclude human free will'.¹⁴⁸ This is to oversimplify Martineau's position, since, in her view, human beings remained responsible for their own actions; although the chain of causation might be absolute in creating a set of circumstances, not every individual responded in the same way. Pichanick ably illustrates this point by citing Martineau's refusal to accept that slave-owners were totally conditioned by their circumstances and therefore not morally culpable in owning slaves.¹⁴⁹ In short, Martineau's position was not dissimilar to that presented in Mill's *A System of Logic* (1843) where Mill disassociated himself from Owenism and insisted that humankind had the capacity to choose whether or not to accede to the social laws governing behaviour and thus to participate in the shaping of their own characters.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, in the *Autobiography*, she distanced herself from Robert Owen's crude form of Necessarianism, whilst confusingly proclaiming herself to be in 1833 'as thoroughgoing a

¹⁴⁶ HM, *Autobiography*, quoted in Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form 1832-1867* (Chicago, 1985), p. 51.

¹⁴⁷ *Autobiography*, i, p. 89.

¹⁴⁸ Eleanor Courtemanche, "'Naked truth Is the Best Eloquence": Martineau, Dickens, and the Moral Science of Realism', *English Literary History (ELH)*, 73, 2 (Summer 2006), p. 393.

¹⁴⁹ See Pichanick, pp. 87-8.

¹⁵⁰ See J.S. Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*, Book VI 'On the Logic of the Moral Sciences' (New York, 1882) and Jose Harris, 'Mill, John Stuart (1806-1873)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), accessed 5 August 2013, at <http://exproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2117/view/article/18711>.

Necessarian as he could desire'.¹⁵¹ She dismissed his view that man was merely a creature of circumstance on the grounds that it failed to recognize the impact of the individual constitution and, significantly, reported how she castigated him for ignorance of the bible and the unfairness and inaccuracies of his strictures on religious belief. It is thus difficult to reconcile Courtemanche's interpretation of Martineau's Necessarianism with her persisting religious beliefs and attitude to devotion. Indeed, the *Illustrations* tales themselves, which, whilst allowing for the force of circumstance, frequently gave key characters the power of choice.¹⁵² Gallagher argues that, even if Martineau gives her characters some potential partially to control their own lives, circumstances overpower it. In this reading, the mundane triumphs: "There is no "otherworldliness" in Martineau's stories, no implied heavenly happy endings'.¹⁵³ This is surely an overstatement based on a limited range of tales: 'Briery Creek', for example, has a powerful transcendental element in which the choices and actions of Arthur Sneyd offered him safety in the presence of God.¹⁵⁴

The influence of Thomas Malthus and his *Essay on Population* (1798) on Martineau's thought has been noted by scholars and could, indeed, scarcely be missed, since her acceptance of the Malthusian 'preventive check' on over-population through delaying or eschewing marriage was a controversial feature of several of the *Illustrations* tales (most obviously, 'Weal and Woe in Garveloch') and led to a notorious attack on her by the

¹⁵¹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 176.

¹⁵² See in particular the discussion of 'The Farrers of Budge-Row' below, pp. 225-7.

¹⁵³ Gallagher, *Industrial Reformation*, p. 54.

¹⁵⁴ See p. 208 below.

Quarterly Review in April 1833 which combined the salacious with the prurient.¹⁵⁵

Felicity James argues that what Martineau heartily respected in Malthus was his selfless pursuit of the truth, his interest in stadial theory and the relationship between his writings and moral progress both personal and social.¹⁵⁶ James's contention is supported by the highly-respectful treatment of Malthus in the *Autobiography*, where he was referred to as personally virtuous, full of domestic affections and animated by heart and mind to bring domestic virtue and happiness within the reach of everyone; in short, he 'did more for social ease and virtue than perhaps any other man of his time'.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, Malthus himself commented that 'the science of political economy bears a nearer resemblance to the science of morals and politics than to that of mathematics'.¹⁵⁸ Malthus's advocacy of moral restraint was part of his acceptance of a Christian moral system, but, as Winch has pointed out, his opposition to indiscriminate charity and to the then poor law system, which allegedly encouraged pauperism, made him a target for those who claimed that political economy denied the higher spiritual qualities of humankind.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, his approach informed Martineau's own treatment of the Poor Law in her *Poor Law and Paupers Illustrated*. James Huzel points to the way in which at least seven of twenty-five *Illustrations of Political Economy Tales* deal explicitly with Malthusian themes and how her summary volume *The Moral of Many Fables* includes a virtually *verbatim* quotation from Malthus: 'The increase of population is necessarily limited by the means of

¹⁵⁵ Anon (George Poulett Scrope and others) 'Illustrations of Political Economy. Miss Martineau's Monthly Novels', *Quarterly Review*, 49 (April 1833), pp. 136-152.

¹⁵⁶ James, "'Socinian and political-economy formulas'".

¹⁵⁷ *Autobiography*, i, pp. 159-60.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Malthus, *Principles of Political Economy* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1989), i, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An intellectual history of political economy in Britain, 1750-1834* (Cambridge, 1996).

subsistence'.¹⁶⁰ The rationale behind the *Illustrations* themselves echoed the importance Malthus attached to the education of the poor (particularly in self-restraint). Even so, claims Huzel, her optimism was greater than his (particularly in terms of the positive value of emigration and the inevitability of progress). Indeed, one might add that Malthus viewed sceptically the optimistic outcomes of a supposedly self-adjusting market. But Huzel's interpretation, which might suggest that she owed more to Smith than to Malthus, should be tempered by the recognition that some tales had problematic outcomes or tensions between message and plot which were unresolved: our discussion of 'A Manchester Strike' in particular reveals that forecasts of future prosperity and consequent identity of interests between capitalist and worker sounded hollow in the face of suffering.¹⁶¹ One might argue that Martineau had not resolved to her own satisfaction theoretical tensions in political economy, and that her confused presentation of the fecund Ella household in 'Weal and Woe in Garveloch' is a case in point.¹⁶² In addition, Martineau's focus on household relationships derived from her core values meant that it was not always possible to provide solutions which were intellectually consistent and at the same time emotionally and artistically convincing.¹⁶³

Joseph Priestley and David Hartley

Martineau's own sense of optimism and belief in the progress of society was the product of her Unitarian intellectual orbit and her particular respect for the ideas and character of

¹⁶⁰ HM, quoted in James P. Huzel, *The Popularization of Malthus in Early Nineteenth-Century England. Martineau, Cobbett and the Pauper Press* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 58.

¹⁶¹ See p. 217 below.

¹⁶² See pp. 223-4.

¹⁶³ See pp. 213-9.

Joseph Priestley – a respect which was as much familial as personal, as it was Philip Meadows Martineau who had arranged for funds to be sent from Norwich to Priestley after the destruction of his Birmingham home in July 1791 by a church and state mob.¹⁶⁴ Priestley represented to Martineau, not only a stimulus in the direction of Hartleian Associationism and Necessarianism, but also in his person a heroic advocate of duty in the service of intellectual and moral progress. Felicity James, in rightly reminding us of the importance of Martineau’s Unitarian background to the development of her ideas, stresses the importance of Priestley as a figure who directed her self-fashioning away from quasi-Catholic images of martyrdom towards social duty. Indeed, the *Autobiography* assigned an obsession with martyrdom to the period of her youth, presenting it partly as the product of a metaphysical cast of mind and partly as the result of her mother’s harsh ‘setting-down’ system of discipline imposed on her children. This thesis has already demonstrated how Martineau recast affliction in terms of its stimulus to duty through her early fiction, and several *Illustrations* tales adopted the same approach.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, the figure of Dr Sneyd in the *IPE* tale ‘Briery Creek’ is an imagined Priestley: a man of quiet authority and moral integrity rather than a martyr figure, and marked by a spirit of scientific enquiry and an unassuming but firm commitment to duty. Her writings in the *Monthly Repository* duly explored the relationship between scientific enquiry, morality, truth and duty and object to *de facto* or *de jure* separation of moral and physical science. In a Norwich essay of 1832 on

¹⁶⁴ See Philip Meadows Martineau, letter to Joseph Priestley, 30 July 1792: HMC, MS. Priestley 2/I 13 ‘I am requested by several Gentlemen in this City and Country to remit to you the enclosed...for £232 which we hope you will accept as a mark of our high respect for you, & commiseration for your losses. We desire Sir to regard your cause, as one common to us all, & we trust that the Dissenters will never want unanimity, or resolution to give support to any of their body, who may be the victim of persecution’.

¹⁶⁵ See below, pp. 204-10.

theology, politics and literature, she argued that barriers between religion, politics, literature and science did not serve the truth; indeed, the truth was unattainable without a combination of material and moral science, since the former cannot answer fundamental questions on the purpose for which God made man, and the latter is approached through a process of research which must make use of inductive reasoning and other techniques of physical science. However, Martineau could not resist positing a hierarchy of disciplines and wrote of ‘The natural gradation, the true proportion of all the sciences’¹⁶⁶ in which material (natural) science should be seen as subservient to the science of mind, which itself is underpinned by theology (defined as that which teaches ‘the existence and attributes and providence of Deity’).¹⁶⁷ As if to remind us of the way in which her core values and experiences continued to shape her enquiries in whatever form, she curiously, but typically, brought in vicissitude as a stimulus to all forms of progress.

Her journalism provided Martineau with the opportunity to engage with moral sciences, but her choice of topic, theme, the emphases she placed thereon and the way in which she used an interpretation of personal experience to validate her conclusions have been insufficiently observed by scholars. Martineau, for instance, penned a number of *Monthly Repository* articles on the science of mind prior to the *Illustrations*. All rest on Hartleian Associationism.¹⁶⁸ In her February 1829 article ‘On the Agency of Feelings in the Formation of Habits’,¹⁶⁹ she argued that, although one cannot create feelings as an act of

¹⁶⁶ HM, ‘Theology, Politics, and Literature’, *Miscellanies*, i, p. 195.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Theology, Politics, and Literature’, 198.

¹⁶⁸ Martineau’s enthusiasm for Hartley was such that she applied to him the epithet ‘holy’. See Maria H. Frawley (ed.), *Life in the Sick-Room: Harriet Martineau* (Peterborough, Ont., 2003), p. 56.

¹⁶⁹ HM, ‘On the Agency of Feelings in the Formation of Habits’, *Miscellanies* i, 201-8. Mineka mistakenly attributes this article to March 1829: see Francis E. Mineka, *The Dissidence of Dissent: The Monthly Repository, 1806-1838 Under the Editorship of Robert Aspland, W.J. Fox, R.H. Horne, & Leigh Hunt*

will, they can be controlled by choosing the various associations which link feelings with rightful actions (as defined by principle), rather than choosing those which link with wrongful actions (or no actions at all). Principles, then, attach feelings to actions: the principle of association renders the action in the end habitual (rather than, say, the result of an act of conscience, which is at bottom selfish). Martineau was then faced with, and arguably struggled with, the question – where do principles themselves originate? The tension of the struggle is implicit within her assertion that divine and imperishable principles did exist, and yet they could and should be modified as individuals and society progress: such principles might remain, ‘but renovated, expanded, embellished’.¹⁷⁰ Her preface claimed as her theme the progress of worship and religious sentiment, and the correctness or otherwise of a principle was tested by the presence and extent of progress through action. In ‘On the Agency of Habits in the Regeneration of Feelings’, Martineau presented prayer as an associationist tool, connecting pleasurable feelings with actions and so developing a habit of benevolence which was superior to doing good by means of an act of conscience or remorse.¹⁷¹ Characteristically, Martineau elsewhere proffered repentance as much superior to remorse, since repentance demanded action.¹⁷² Indeed, the emphasis on action was echoed in an essay on the prospective faculty, wherein hope and action operated reciprocally: ‘Thus the energy, the very existence of hope depends on action; and in proportion to the vigour of the hope will be the energy of the action’.¹⁷³ Similarly, in her essay ‘On Moral Independence’, she argued that ‘Man is made for

(Chapel Hill, NC, 1944), p. 238.

¹⁷⁰ HM, ‘Essay on the Proper Use of the Prospective Faculty’, *Miscellanies*, i, p. 228.

¹⁷¹ HM, ‘On the Agency of Habits on the Regeneration of Feelings’, *Miscellanies*, i, pp. 208-15.

¹⁷² HM, ‘On the Proper Use of the Retrospective Faculty’, *Miscellanies*, i, pp. 215-24.

¹⁷³ HM, ‘Prospective Faculty’, pp. 225.

sympathy',¹⁷⁴ and sympathy with God meant a rigorous searching after the truth; the enemies of truth were timidity in the face of authorities and selfish retreat into contemplation rather than action.

A sense of right duty, it seems, was the litmus test for the integration of principle, morality, action, and intellect. In essay VI on the art of thinking, she discussed how an invigorated intellect might advance one's moral sense, and its first service to morality was the power to distinguish between the 'essentials and the non-essentials of duty'.¹⁷⁵ This link between the act of thinking, the search for the truth and duty may not be an obvious one, but is a further example of the interaction between heartland concept, experience and intellectual speculation. The first of this series of essays started with an attack on misdirected thinking and religious superstition and lumped together pre-Reformation religious practices, claims to papal infallibility and the obsession with the irrelevant that had corrupted the brilliant mind of Aquinas; it then leapt to an assault on the absurd perversions of reason caused by the imagination and folly of supposedly-educated women of her own day who would not marry on a Friday, or of workers in a manufacturing town who blamed injuries from machinery on the failure to heed the warning of hearing their own shoes a-dancing on the stairs. There follows an impassioned plea for courage in facing the clash of opinion, but Martineau's conclusion made a further leap to household and duty. The busy lady who instructs her servants to say that she is not at home if anyone calls is betraying her duty to consider the welfare of others, since she is

¹⁷⁴ HM, 'On Moral Independence', *Miscellanies*, i, p. 179.

¹⁷⁵ HM, 'Essays on the Art of Thinking VI', *Miscellanies*, i, p. 117.

effectively perverting their reason and moral sense.¹⁷⁶ Once again, a wide-ranging discussion of philosophical and physiological issues was applied to a key aspect of household and duty – the servant and employer relationship.

A pattern can be identified in Martineau's fashioning and use of personal experience: namely, that it often resulted in a deviation from a line of argument, or, at times, an inconsistency. Her introduction to the essays on the art of thinking, for instance, suddenly veered into a discussion of families where the parents had 'more taste for power than for right reason. Their children are intelligent and conscientious. They are strongly recommended to do something which they do not altogether approve, but they think it will occasion less harm to comply than to resist, or even object'.¹⁷⁷ To interpose what is most probably a comment on her mother's alleged misuse of discipline and her child's view of what was just meant that Martineau was perhaps implicitly positing an innate sense of justice in children, and so compromised her associationist *credo*. The *Autobiography* is replete with examples of the youthful Harriet following her mother's orders (or apparently so) whilst objecting to their unfairness or irrationality: 'One of my chief miseries was being sent with insulting messages to the maids, - e.g., to "bid them not to be so like cart-horses overhead"'.¹⁷⁸ The household was Martineau's court where she chose to present her case on principle and practice, and her evidence was anything but impersonal.

¹⁷⁶ 'Art of Thinking I', i, pp. 57-66.

¹⁷⁷ 'Art of Thinking I', i, p. 65.

¹⁷⁸ *Autobiography*, i, p. 18.

Martineau, the uses of fiction and the Genius of Scott: *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, December 1832-January 1833

In her articles on Sir Walter Scott for *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, Martineau presented fiction as the key means of communicating moral truths, and in so doing linked it to duty and action. She claimed that Scott had 'taught us the power of fiction as an agent of morals and philosophy',¹⁷⁹ and that dramatists and novelists had a practical impact unrivalled by those who present morality and moral science in an abstract form. Indeed, she asserted that there was 'little reason to question that Scott has done more for the morals of society, taking the expression in its largest sense, than all the divines, and other express moral teachers, of a century past'.¹⁸⁰ Only fiction, it seems, can introduce the 'conception of nature, as existing and following out its own growth in an atmosphere of convention'.¹⁸¹ The latter comment is less than clear, but would appear to mean that novelists in particular had a faculty for presenting (wittingly or unwittingly) the experiences of one class to another for their mutual enlightenment, without which moral teaching would lack pupils. Scott, although supposedly born of the people, might have known human life, but not in its humblest form. He therefore did not understand that ambition might consume the working man as it consumed Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester. Some of his portraits of women unwittingly encouraged the call for emancipation by presenting them most frequently as 'passionless, frivolous, uninteresting beings',¹⁸² but the women of spirit and capacity, the Die Vernons and the Rebeccas,

¹⁷⁹ HM, 'Achievements of the Genius of Scott', *Miscellanies*, i, p. 52.

¹⁸⁰ 'Genius of Scott', p. 28.

¹⁸¹ 'Genius of Scott', p. 34.

¹⁸² 'Genius of Scott', p. 48.

offered (also unwittingly) a real inspiration. All in all, he had ‘advocated the rights of woman with a force all the greater for his being unaware of the import and tendency of what he was saying’.¹⁸³ Martineau was not arguing that fiction taught best when it did so inadvertently, since she identified the most potent and emotive of themes left untouched by Scott - the lives of the poor. The opportunity, then, was ripe for what she called a ‘philosophical romance’ of the non-aristocratic classes.

The intention to write a philosophical romance may perhaps betoken the limits of Martineau’s commitment to realism (in the sense of the empiricist’s conscious attempt to depict actuality). Sanders usefully compares Martineau’s views to George Eliot’s *Westminster Review* manifesto of July 1856, ‘The Natural History of German Life’. She concludes that, although both agreed that the extension of sympathy for the labouring classes through a truthful portrayal of the poor was a vital role largely neglected by novelists, ‘George Eliot’s views on artistic realism were more thoroughgoing than Harriet Martineau’s’. Martineau’s presentation of the labourer, for instance, ‘remains more idealised’.¹⁸⁴ We might add, however, that Martineau was more than capable of presenting ‘the peasant in all his coarse apathy, and the artisan in all his suspicious selfishness’:¹⁸⁵ see, for example, the discussion of the *Illustrations* portrayal of corrosive selfishness in ‘Cousin Marshall’¹⁸⁶ or the sick-room of the thuggish Platts in *Deerbrook*.¹⁸⁷ Martineau perhaps regarded the attempt to present actuality as part of the

¹⁸³ ‘Genius of Scott’, p. 51.

¹⁸⁴ Sanders, *Reason over Passion*, pp. 16-8.

¹⁸⁵ Anon. (George Eliot), ‘The Natural History of German Life’ in Thomas Pinney (ed.), *Essays of George Eliot* (London, 1963), p. 271.

¹⁸⁶ See pp. 220-1 below.

¹⁸⁷ See p. 259.

didactic armoury and not, in itself, an agent of improvement. Scott's relative failure rested on an ignorance of humble life; and the labouring classes were therefore 'secluded from the light of his embellishing genius'; as a consequence, he was unable to present patience, self-denial, practical heroism – 'the *true-heartedness* which is to be found in its perfection in humble life'.¹⁸⁸ We note her word 'embellishing', which betokens considerably more than the creative arranging of reportage. Martineau considered that embellishment meant to harness accurate detail derived from experience and observation in the service of moral teaching.

¹⁸⁸ 'Genius of Scott', pp. 41-2.

Chapter 6

Analysing the Illustrations

Introduction

According to the *Autobiography*, the planning of political economy tales took place in Dublin in the summer of 1831 where her brother James was minister at Eustace St Meeting House, but, as ever, this is misleadingly telescoped: Martineau had already – and unsuccessfully – submitted a tale (probably the precursor of *Brooke of Brooke Farm*) and a proposal for a series of political economy stories to the publisher Charles Knight, who acted for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. According to Knight, the Committee turned it down because they were ‘opposed to works of imagination’.¹⁸⁹ It was in Dublin that she was persuaded by her brother to aim for monthly, rather than quarterly, publication. The *Autobiography* claimed that she had been under no illusions as to the enormous strain such a mode of publication would impose, but that her sense of duty overrode commonsense: ‘I thought of the multitudes who needed it, – and especially of the poor, – to assist them in managing their own welfare’.¹⁹⁰ She then recounted her exhausting, dispiriting trail around bored and dismissive London publishers. Peterson sees this as part of the *Autobiography*’s self-fashioning of Martineau as a heroic woman of letters, tramping the streets of London: an echo of Carlyle’s man of letters, battling for success in the literary marketplace.¹⁹¹ The tone, however, is scarcely heroic or

¹⁸⁹ Charles Knight, *Passages of a Working Life During Half a Century* (3 vols., London, 1864), ii, p. 315.

¹⁹⁰ *Autobiography*, i, p. 130. See also p. 147, fn. 42.

¹⁹¹ Linda H. Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market* (Princeton, 2009). See chapter 2 in particular.

celebratory of powers of endurance. Her experience is rendered vivid, less by suffering and resilience than by physical weakness and the minutest of details – the exhausted author, weary to the point of sickness, leaning for support against palings which she noticed were dirty, and so embarrassed that she pretended to be inspecting a cabbage bed.¹⁹²

The Illustrations of Political Economy, in form and intention, represented a creative act which was the product of Martineau's interpretation of her family life and household relationships inside and beyond the doors of the home in Magdalen Street and which instilled in her a particular sense of duty. They were also a product of her family circumstances, which encouraged her to see in adversity an opportunity rather than a misfortune; of her Unitarian networking and intellectual milieu which stimulated her to seek for and to identify progress both societal and personal through the exercise of reason; of her intellectual engagement with works which convinced her that fiction was the medium *par excellence* for the conveying of truths so desperately needed by society through the exercise of sympathy; of her critical scrutiny of the works, not only of theorists such as Smith and Malthus, but of Marcet, More and Barbault and Aikin. A limited awareness of such context means that the fundamental characteristics of the *Illustrations* have been insufficiently appreciated by critics. Those characteristics are to be seen in the centrality of household duty and household relationships projected into neighbourhood and community; in the apparent disjuncture between the generally optimistic economic message and the emotive pictures of individual and family suffering – often of the working classes - which were frequently conveyed with a startling and

¹⁹² *Autobiography*, i, p. 130.

innovative realism; in the way in which adversity honed and stimulated progress; in the attacks on what Martineau sees as superstition; and in the way in which autobiography flavoured the tales.

In the Preface to the *Illustrations of Political Economy*, and in the process of explaining that political economy was to be seen as domestic economy writ large, Martineau justified her self-appointed task in demonstrating ‘...how harmony is preserved within doors by the absence of all causes of jealousy; how good will prevail towards all abroad through the absence of all causes of quarrel’.¹⁹³ She continued by arguing that, although her work was not dedicated to any one class of reader, it hoped to meet the vital need for the masses to be given examples – she used the word ‘pictures’ – from community life in order to teach the principles of political economy. Why she should have chosen jealousy as her example of dissonance is explicable only when one recollects, from the *Autobiography*, her vivid and remorseful memories of her own jealousy towards her elder sister Rachel.¹⁹⁴ Thus, some autobiographical elements in the *IPE* appear to be part of a self-fashioning where Martineau was implicitly validating the usefulness of her own experience as a quarry for her fiction.

¹⁹³ HM, Preface, ‘Life in the Wilds’, p. v.

¹⁹⁴ *Autobiography*, i, pp. 66-7.

Autobiography and Adversity

The harvesting of autobiography was dominated by examples of adversity. Some examples reflect Martineau's reading of the traumas of childhood, the inadequacy of her family's responses to her emotional and intellectual needs and concomitant failures in establishing nurturing relationships in the Norwich household. The character Anna in the *Illustrations of Taxation* tales 'The Jerseymen Meeting' and 'The Jerseymen Parting' is subject to the temptations of suicide as she faces a hearing before an excise court, and links them explicitly to the childhood traumas that again feature so strongly in the *Autobiography*. 'She could now fancy how people might be driven to destroy themselves. The old feeling which had embittered her childhood disgraces now came back upon her'.¹⁹⁵ And, in 'Messrs. Vanderput and Snoek', the boy Christian muses about his heightened emotions in chapel.

'There are curious windows in that chapel, quite high in the roof; and I often thought the day of judgement was come; and there was a light through those windows shining down into the pulpit; and there the angels looked in. I thought they were come for me'.¹⁹⁶

The exact parallel with Martineau's childhood appears in the *Autobiography*, where it is linked to suicidal feelings and a craving for martyrdom.

The Octagon chapel at Norwich has some curious windows in the roof;- not skylights, but letting in light indirectly. I used to sit staring up at those windows, and looking for

¹⁹⁵ Harriet Martineau, 'The Jerseymen Parting', *IoT* No. IV (London, 1834), p. 22. See *Autobiography*, i, p. 14 for a vivid account of the young Martineau's thwarted intentions with a carving knife.

¹⁹⁶ 'Messrs. Vanderput and Snoek', *IPE* No. XVI, p. 10.

angels to come for me.¹⁹⁷

Martineau also made use of a formative episode in her Norwich childhood in the story of the increasingly-blind child who tries to conceal the distress which made her cry through the night by drying her pillow by the rays of a sun she can barely see.¹⁹⁸

If autobiography offered a potentially fertile use of example, it also led at times to an essentially superfluous use of disability in particular which offered nothing to the message or developing narrative. The earliest example is in the third tale, 'Brooke and Brooke Farm'. The economic message was simple and simplistic enough: enclosure is good, and small farms with insufficient capital are bad. But Martineau introduced a gratuitous element: the ex-soldier Sergeant Rayne, who provides a distinctly gruesome account of the loss of his arm.¹⁹⁹

'Berkeley the Banker' represented the fictional reworking of, and reflecting on, the circumstances of the collapse of the Martineau family business and its impact on the household. This is not to say that simplistic parallels should be drawn between each

¹⁹⁷ *Autobiography*, i, p. 17.

¹⁹⁸ The supposed damage to the eyes through excessive crying and the pillow saturated by night-time tears reappeared in the tale 'The Old Governess' where Miss Smith, the governess of the title, finds herself with no recourse but the workhouse. One of her fellow paupers tells a visiting commissioner that "you need but feel her pillow in the morning. It is wet almost through...I have got her pillow and dried it. And I have seen her do it herself, with a smile on her face all the time". *Sketches from Life*, p. 48. The origin of this episode lies in the enormous impression made on the young Martineau by the mother of William Taylor, the Norwich translator and author. 'We revered her with the tenderest veneration, - tho' I was but 5 or 6 when she died. I have always thought one anecdote of her as touching as any thing I ever read or heard. She had more to encounter in becoming blind than any one cd conceive...it dropped from her that she rose at sunrise, - to dry her pillow in the morning sun'. HM to Henry Crabb Robinson, 8 March 1844, *Collected Letters*, ii, p. 261.

¹⁹⁹ 'Brooke and Brooke Farm', *IPE*, No. III. See pp. 72-82 in particular ('Sergeant Rayne's Story'). In his contentment with his lot, Rayne is a figure reminiscent of More's shepherd of Salisbury Plain.

family member and the characters in the tale. Berkeley himself bears few similarities to Martineau's father in terms of personality. The former is at times irascible, unreasonable, insensitive and dominates the household to its detriment;²⁰⁰ the evidence suggests that Thomas Martineau Sr was mild-mannered and unassuming, and that the personality of his wife shaped the household.²⁰¹

The autobiographical element in 'Berkeley the Banker' is a further reminder that Martineau, given her family's experiences, should not be seen as an unquestioning propagandist for unthinkingly-optimistic political economy. Thomas Martineau, like Berkeley, was not a victim of fiscal imprudence or failures to understand the market; like Berkeley, he was distraught at the thought of the loss of his daughters' portions. And, what partially restores the Berkeley fortunes is not an upturn in the markets, but an act of sympathetic generosity on the part of his creditors. In Cooper's view, this resolution 'violates contractual certainty';²⁰² it also can have done little to assuage middle-class anxieties about the effects of free enterprise.²⁰³

'Berkeley the Banker' provides an example of Martineau's preoccupation with the transforming possibilities of adversity and, in this instance, one strongly flavoured with

²⁰⁰ HM, 'Berkeley the Banker Parts I & II', *IPE*, Nos XIV & XV. The picture of Berkeley is, however, a commendably rounded one: witness his insight into personality and temperament, and the way in which he 'adapted himself so well to the peculiar humours of the persons he talked with'. See Part II, p. 111.

²⁰¹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 97, describes the father as 'Humble, simple, upright, self-denying, affectionate to as many people as possible, and kindly to all, he gave no pain, and did all the good he could'. See chapter 2, pp. 90-5 above for comments on Elizabeth Martineau.

²⁰² Brian P. Cooper, "'A Not Unreasonable Panic': Character, Confidence, and Credit in Harriet Martineau's 'Berkeley the Banker'", *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 32, 4 (December 2010), p. 382.

²⁰³ See p. 214 for a discussion of Freedgood's contention that the *IPE* tales acted as short-acting narcotics to soothe the guilt of the middle classes when faced with the impact of market forces on the vulnerable.

autobiography. The banker's son, Horace Berkeley - very much a Tom Martineau Jr figure - struggles to accept the possibility that the daughters would need to seek employment as governesses – the fate, we recall, of Rachel Martineau, and one which her sister Harriet was spared due to deafness. And yet, 'spared' is something of a misnomer, since the fictional Berkeleys and the Martineaus demonstrated their resilience; we recall that Harriet, at least, apparently welcomed the challenge of adversity.²⁰⁴ Melea Berkeley, a Harriet figure without her disability, thus writes to her mother:

My great trouble is that I am afraid Fanny and I know too little at present what will be the extent of such a trial to feel for my father and you as we ought... Your children will feel it no misfortune to be impelled to the new and more responsible kind of exertion... welcome the test!²⁰⁵

Similarly, 'For Each and For All' explicitly linked the shaping power of adversity to a criticism of the failure of 'silver fork' novels (and of Scott) to draw pictures of working men and women in their toil through life: in particular, Martineau's middle-class but ennobled Lady F exclaims to her husband: "“But, Henry, how is it that there is so little made known where it most wants to be known, of what real life is when trained by that best of all educations, vicissitude?””²⁰⁶ In this way, Martineau legitimized her focus on lives of the poor and middling classes and her attempt to convey those lives realistically. Thus, her heartland concept of the stimulus of adversity, her theory of the purposes of

²⁰⁴ Martineau commented that the calamity of the final failure of the manufactory 'was like that of a blister upon a dull, weary pain...I rather enjoyed it, even at the time; for there was scope for action...In a very short time, my two sisters at home and I began to feel the blessing of a wholly new freedom. I, who had been obliged to write before breakfast, or in some private way, had henceforth liberty to do my own work in my own way; for we had lost our gentility'. *Autobiography*, i, p. 108.

²⁰⁵ 'Berkeley the Banker Part I', pp. 144-5.

²⁰⁶ HM, 'For Each and For All', *IPE*, No. XI, p. 128.

fiction as outlined in her Scott articles and her reading of personal experience coalesced in her tale.

Other tales offered a more dramatic version of the transformatory power of the right response to adversity. In ‘Briery Creek’, Temmy Temple is a little boy whose querulous and status-obsessed father has cowed his son’s spirit, ‘thus blunting his intellect’.²⁰⁷ He is, however, saved by the experience of sitting alone with his terminally-ill and feverish uncle; he manages to prevent him from trying to rise by the expedient of telling him a long drawn-out tale about a poorly lamb. The sudden accession of commonsense and self-possession meant that ‘Temmy was a different boy from that hour’.²⁰⁸ Indeed, ‘Briery Creek’ offered a theological application of adversity which complements the views of punishment in the after-life implied by Martineau’s correspondence and discussed in chapter 1.²⁰⁹ In particular, Dr Sneyd offers an *encomium* on his deceased son Arthur: a man who had loved knowledge, lived a life of active benevolence and believed in the gospel values.²¹⁰ It would be a presumption, therefore, to doubt his happiness in heaven. For the less worthy, however, Sneyd suggests a form of preparation for heaven which will not be pleasant. ““All desires whose gratification cannot enter there will be starved out. The process will be painful””.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ HM, ‘Briery Creek’, *IPE*, No, XXII, p. 9.

²⁰⁸ ‘Briery Creek’, 126. In *The Settlers at Home*, her 1841 children’s tale in *The Playfellow* series, Martineau returned to the theme of the timid boy strengthened by adversity. See below, pp. 279-80.

²⁰⁹ See pp. 78-83.

²¹⁰ It is tempting to see in Arthur’s religious feeling, social piety and the nature of his sudden and terminal illness a reworking by Martineau of the John Hugh Worthington tragedy (see pp. 77-80).

²¹¹ ‘Briery Creek’, p. 132.

Adversity, rendered as disability, had other functions in the *IPE*. In particular, responses to the needs of the handicapped were used to define characters as moral agents, often in terms of Martineau's habitual theme of justice. In 'Ella of Garveloch',²¹² Ella's young brother Archie, in nineteenth century terminology an idiot, is presented without sentimentality. His odd appearance, lack of responsiveness to strangers and restlessness are catalogued, and his ill-treatment by the Laird's agent, Callum, is described without indulging in emotion. His presence in the tale is at least in part accounted for by the insights it provides into the moral standing of those with whom he comes into contact. Callum is thereby condemned for unjust behaviour and an obsession with his own authority, which, for him, implies the enjoyable use of power without responsibility for community. Similarly, Cousin Marshall, in the eponymous tale,²¹³ is defined in part by her willingness to take into her relatively poor household a near-blind niece, rather than see her consigned to the workhouse. And, in 'Messrs. Vanderput and Snoek', the afflicted child resurfaces as the moral litmus test in the form of Christian – unable to walk, and suffering from a recurrent agony whose reappearance he understandably dreads. The selfish Fransje will only sit with him if her assiduity is applauded by a spectator, whereas the infinitely more worthy Gertrude, who 'said nothing about the pleasure, had frequently held the boy in her arms for hours during his agony'.²¹⁴ Martineau also linked Christian's sufferings with the economic and political uses of adversity. Christian reflects that his infirmities allowed the wise and the strong to help and comfort him, and offers a partial analogy with war: 'how wars stimulated men to aid as well as destroy one another... were

²¹² 'Ella of Garveloch', *IPE*, No. V.

²¹³ 'Cousin Marshall', *IPE*, No. VIII.

²¹⁴ 'Messrs. Vanderput and Snoek', *IPE*, No. XVI, p. 68.

subjects for much deeper meditation'.²¹⁵ Similarly, the need to cope with their unforgiving land had stimulated the Dutch to innovation and entrepreneurial zeal.

Superstition

Martineau's fear of the baleful effects of superstition resonates through her literary work and life; to oppose superstition was a core value, because superstition had the potential to compromise all progress. In particular, she deplored its irrationality and the way in which it overtly and covertly stood in opposition to education: an attitude which reflected at once her Unitarianism and also the local Norwich context, where those most conspicuous for social piety were also most conspicuous in the service of education.²¹⁶ In 'The Land's End', the Methodist Philip Nelson is presented sympathetically, but also as a man flawed by superstition: thus, he finds coping with affliction doubly difficult, because he interprets it as a divine punishment. Nelson's attempt to tie together suffering with a providential theme means that he is incapable of recognizing that his community's economic and social woes are part of short-term trade crises and counterproductive parish attempts to provide poor relief: or, to put it another way, his irrationality meant that he was incapable of comprehending political economy. His sense of personal sin essentially isolates him from his own household and the community. His child is dangerously ill and his employment under threat from the catastrophic effects of a pauperized parish, and he emerges from a dark night of the soul with a consolation that is at best partial and compromised by the bleak plot, which includes the death of the child. What saves him,

²¹⁵ 'Vanderput and Snoek', p. 37.

²¹⁶ See pp. 85-6.

and redirects his religion from an unhealthy obsession with ‘signs’, is not a sudden enlightenment courtesy of political economy but a developing sense of community and ““more justice at the hands of men! Now that his neighbours make him one of them, he seems to have lost all terror of being despised by God””.²¹⁷ Martineau thus combined her consistent themes of superstition, adversity and household/community relations in the tale. But the darkness of the tone was likely to leave any reader short of comfort.

In ‘The Scholars of Arneside’ – a bitterly ironic title – superstition and its bedfellow ignorance overwhelm and destroy Martineau’s sympathetic character, the good-hearted and community-spirited Mrs Ede. She dies in the face of her daughter’s indifference at the hands of the neighbours she had tried to serve. Ostensibly, the tale is a critique of taxation on printed matter, although the issue is specifically mentioned only belatedly. However, the underpinning message – that freedom of commerce in thought was an unmitigated good – informs the story throughout. The tale is carefully crafted around the core value of household relationships, and the household of Mrs Ede is shaped by her love for her children; her compassion and sense of duty are projected on to the community. She is a valued nurse and the custodian of some herbal knowledge. Her fellow-feeling and generosity of spirit are displayed by contrast with her patient, the wealthy Mrs Arruther, whose sole use for newspapers is to see her name in them through the activities of her MP son, whom she nevertheless is trying to disinherit through his refusal to marry the woman of her choice. Nurse Ede is given a powerful speech of reproof. Children, she says, are not sent by God to amuse us or for us to make them subject to our wills when they are old enough to use their own; our true legacy to them is

²¹⁷ HM, ‘The Land’s End’, *PLPI*, No. IV, p. 178.

not property, but a hold over their hearts, so that, when we die, we have the comfort of knowing that they feel “that the departed wished to be just and kind”²¹⁸. This speech, rather than the apology for freedom of commerce in thought, is arguably the defining moment of the tale, and represents Martineau’s constant focus on household relationships. However, it is firmly linked to the issue of appropriate education, access to ideas and information and the manifold dangers of ignorance. Thus, Nurse Ede’s efforts in household and community are fatally compromised. She is deeply religious, but ignorant, illiterate and superstitious. Her tragedy is that she herself dies without that knowledge of her children’s love and respect, even though she had done everything within her power for them. It is ignorance that brings upon her a terrible charivari; she is tortured to death by her stupid and superstitious neighbours, who, seduced by the dire prognostications of untaxed Almanacs, accuse her of witchcraft. In despair, she calls upon her children, but only Mildred is present, and she is an uncomprehending participant in the rough music. Mildred’s smattering of learning has vanished in the solitariness of her shepherdess life and lack of access to the printed word; the poor can afford only the illegal, unstamped press, which panders to their fears and ignorance. Nurse Ede’s son, Owen, has escaped the village and become a journalist, and he counters the comment of Mrs Arruther’s son, the MP, that “there are too many newspapers already” by retorting:

‘...if you steal into the dark bye-places of a town like this [probably Lancaster]...if you go out upon the sheep-walks, and see the country folks growing into the likeness of stocks and stones, for want of having their human reason exercised; if you will ride down any Saturday into our own village, and see the scramble there is for a single copy of an inferior provincial paper, you will presently lose the fancy that we have too many

²¹⁸ HM, ‘The Scholars of Arneside’, *IoT*, No. V, p. 27.

newspapers already'.²¹⁹

Nurse Ede dies begging her daughter to say that she did not believe what was said of her, but Mildred is the stock and the stone – sitting by her mother's bedside, unthinking and uncomprehending.

Thus, the death of Nurse Ede, however shocking, is the culmination of Martineau's intertwined messages: the centrality of household relationships to community and the way in which superstition can assail and destroy household and community alike. The evil of ill-directed taxation is in this way defined, given shape and exemplified through the core values, with emphasis in this instance on the dangers of superstition.

The Disjuncture of Distress: Martineau's compromised *apologia*?

The harrowing scenes at the end of 'The Scholars of Arneside' are an example of the darkness of tone characteristic of several tales. As this thesis has consistently argued, at the heart of Martineau's subjectivity lies her emotional and intellectual engagement with household and community, and this heartland concept at times overrides the teaching of principles of political economy. The compromising of economic didacticism is marked by pictures of households riven by want. And yet, although a characteristic feature of several tales, the potent scenes of distress have been ignored by those scholars who hope

²¹⁹ 'The Scholars of Arneside', p. 108. Owen, oddly enough, becomes an expert in systems of shorthand. This theme is of limited relevance to the thrust of the tale, but probably reflects yet another autobiographical interpolation on the part of Martineau: her brother James came across and made extensive use of shorthand when studying for the ministry at Manchester College, York.

to label Martineau as a simple apologist for the bourgeoisie. As noted earlier, Elaine Freedgood complains that the *IPE* aimed to buttress capitalism by applying a salve to the tender consciences of the middle classes, wounded by the sight of working-class suffering at the sharper end of market forces. Such suffering was, she argues, presented as a temporary by-product of immutable economic laws. And Freedgood doubts that the tranquillizing effect was itself anything but temporary, since Martineau's prescription was made up of unfortunate bursts of melodrama and implausible, one dimensional characters.²²⁰ But 'The Land's End' is one of several tales to present scenes of distress which are so powerful that the reader's sympathy is likely to overwhelm any such didactic intent. Nelson's superstition has been noted and the message of corrupt rating is duly registered, but what strikes home is the scene where the parish officers come to levy a rate which the Nelsons cannot afford and try to persuade the mother, nursing her dying child, to part with its cradle. In any case, what Martineau emphatically did not do was to blame the poor for their condition. In this tale, for instance, the culprits were mine owners and small employers: hardly the target at which a supposed middle-class apologist might be expected to aim. Indeed, she stressed that men like Nelson, 'tributers' and members of the Cornish labour aristocracy, were often as prudent as any bourgeois – ensuring some income in the event of illness by paying into a Sick Club, and cultivating their own gardens to see them through the bad times. What more could they do? But, as Martineau pointedly commented, the depression of 1818 'proved too long and too disastrous to be withstood by any but those who had previously been remarkably fortunate as well as careful'.²²¹ Sadly, Nelson was not of their number.

²²⁰ Freedgood, 'Banishing Panic'.

²²¹ 'The Land's End', p. 2.

‘A Manchester Strike’ bears distinct similarities to *The Turn-Out*,²²² and its pro-capitalist message is in tension with the author’s evident sympathy for the plight of the workers, communicated through her stock device of the afflicted child: in this case, the increasingly-disabled eight year-old factory girl, Martha Allen. At first sight, the tale appears to be simplistic propaganda for employers. It illustrates the argument that the rate of wages depended on the proportion between employers’ capital and the number seeking wages: legislative interference was therefore irrelevant. The condition of the workers could be improved by inventions which created capital, by workers husbanding their wages by saving rather than spending or wasting resources in supporting strikes, and by adjusting the proportion of population to existing capital. So far, so predictable from the manufacturer’s daughter: but her largely unsympathetic portrayal of the employers is less so. Elliott may pay the highest wages, but he is contemptuous in his personal dealings with the men; Mr Rowe is vacillating and untrustworthy, and his senior partner, Mortimer, is haughty and dismissive. Mr Wallace in *The Turn-Out* reappears as the courteous and reasonable Mr Wentworth. The hero is William Allen: a reluctant representative of the striking workers, he finds it difficult to see relations between men and masters as an inevitable struggle: in Allen’s words, “...where both parties are so necessary to each other, it is a pity they should fall out”.²²³

Martineau’s portrayal of the union is surprisingly nuanced. There is indeed a pantomime villain in the firebrand union leader Clack, but his behaviour is more effrontery and self-

²²² See pp. 170-2.

²²³ HM, ‘A Manchester Strike’, *IPE*, No. VII, p. 10.

seeking than demonic in the manner, say, of Slackbridge in Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854). Nor is Allen a Stephen Blackpool figure, presented by Dickens as a working man whose tragic status is compromised by his haplessness. Allen is something of a hero to Martineau in the sense that he is a man of integrity who argues that "we must surrender ourselves...to our duties, or be disgraced in our own eyes",²²⁴ but this endorsement, underlined by the reference to duty, is balanced by the recognition that he is not courageous and has to overcome feelings akin to cowardice to take up his role. Nor is his household a united one. His wife compromises his integrity by secretly recovering a suit of clothes bought for him from union funds but returned by Allen out of a sense of duty: having recovered them, she sells them. On discovering her action, he lacks the ability to make his sense of personal honour real to her, and there is a powerful scene of household discord, presented feelingly through the uncomprehending eyes of his daughter Martha. Indeed, it is Martha who represents Martineau's most compelling and sympathetic figure. She is increasingly lamed by the hours spent in the factory, and the noise and excessive heat of the workplace render her weakly and shivering in a mild summer breeze. Most affecting of all is the loss of her only consolation, her pet bird, sold to buy food for the striking family.²²⁵ But even here, Martineau offered a balanced picture. The exhausted child falls asleep at her work and is discovered by the overlooker, but Martineau eschewed the temptation to play on our sympathy yet further; Martha is not berated: '...she started and was afraid she was going to be scolded for a long fit of idleness. But

²²⁴ 'A Manchester Strike', pp. 89-90.

²²⁵ There may be an echo of Martha's bird in Elizabeth Gaskell's Manchester-based *Libbie Marsh's Three Eras*, published under a pseudonym in 1847, which makes powerful use of a pet bird as a solace for a handicapped child. See 'Cotton Mather Mills', 'Life in Manchester: Libbie Marsh's Three Eras' in *Howitt's Journal of Literature and Popular Progress* (3 vols., London, 1847), i, pp. 310-13; 334-6; 354-7.

she was not harshly spoken to'.²²⁶ As suggested earlier, this kind of realistic detail operated to serve the message in the sense that it apparently demonstrated knowledge on the part of the author and, indeed, an even-handedness of approach appropriate to the detached observer. Even so, the picture of the child's physical suffering was not required by the plot or the message, and did not stem from household discord. Her lameness is perhaps another echo of Martineau's obsessive reworking of Norwich experiences and an emotional engagement with suffering which did *not* serve the message *per se*. Thus, the apparently simple *apologia* for fundamental identity of class interest and the need for restraint on the part of workers is not served by the way in Martineau engages with individual suffering and its effect on household.

The *Poor Law* tale 'The Town' represented the damage done to household and community by the *de facto* control of the Poor Law residing in self-interested parties; the result is that malefactors among the poor were able to sabotage good feeling, corrupt innocence, distort benevolence and exploit pity. But the pictures of suffering and unmitigated evil do not fully serve the reformist message, because the author cannot stomach the full ramifications of the bleakness of the tale. And bleak it certainly is. The well-meaning beadle and schoolmaster John Waters is hospitalized after a beating meted out by workhouse schoolboys. Pleasance Nudd, a character of plausible horror, uses a well-acted simple-mindedness to conceal a career of maleficence which ends in a ghastly act of infanticide. On the face of it, Martineau's lesson would be best taught by a reformed poor law via district boards and salaried officials, a suitably terminal fate for

²²⁶ 'A Manchester Strike', p. 65. See the *Eclectic Review*, 8 (October 1832), pp. 328-49 for a critique of the *IPE* which cited Martha's predicament as evidence against child labour. More typically, it echoed many periodicals in providing lengthy extracts before objecting to Martineau's political economy.

Pleasance and a recognition of Waters' inadequacy. In fact, the tale ended with a loss of nerve. Pleasance was not likely to face the ultimate penalty; a clamorous open vestry defeated reform; the forward-looking workhouse manager was rewarded with romance but departed for pastures new and Waters, a shoemaker by trade, recovered his occupation – but only because his employer intended to over-charge the parish for supplying shoes to the workhouse. Authorial uncertainty is easier to identify than to account for, but it would seem at least possible that Martineau's investment in making the characters 'real' made them real to her, and it became difficult to leave Waters and his household to a grim fate.

Indeed, it could be argued that even those tales which focused most clearly upon a specific economic message are compromised by uncertainty. 'Berkeley the Banker' offered a lengthy summary of principles on the issues of the processes of exchange, but that summary was dominated by what Martineau labelled the 'Great evils' which, despite its undeniable advantages, could arise from the use of paper money. Admittedly, she asserted – apparently with comforting optimism - that a 'metallic currency' was the best circulating medium provided that it circulated according to the 'natural' laws of supply and demand. But this optimism is short-circuited by her final principle: the means of securing the operation of those natural laws 'remain to be decided upon and tried'.²²⁷ Elaine Freedgood's claim that such tales offered temporarily-comforting narcotics to a troubled bourgeoisie would therefore seem wide of the mark.²²⁸ After all, what the reader is likely to remember is the despair of Hester and the happy marriage of a Berkeley

²²⁷ 'Berkeley the Banker Part II', p. 146.

²²⁸ See p. 214.

daughter, rendered more worthy by courage in the face of adversity. In this way, as if aware of the several messages of these tales, the heartland concepts once more take rhetorical, emotional and substantive precedence over specific doctrines of political economy.

The centrality of household relationships and their projection into the community

Martineau and More shared the use of binary opposites to define characters and households, though, as suggested earlier, More tended to concentrate on characters, with portraits of household relationships being sketchy at best. Martineau's emphasis on household rather than individual, and of relationships within the household, allowed her to explore her themes of duty and the impact of adversity. In 'The Land's End', the 'good' family of the Nelsons is paralleled by the 'bad' Spetch family. Spetch, Nelson's partner in the mine-workings, is profane and insensitive – significantly, he wakes the Nelsons' poorly baby with ill-timed laughter, and his dereliction of duty to his partner compromises their share in the ore-field. The Spetch family emigrates to work in the South American mines and simply abandon their youngest child to the Parish. They return to be unmoved at the funeral of their daughter: Mrs Spetch proffers an unpleasant line of pious humbug when commenting, ““Only think! Our poor baby is dead while we have been away. The Lord will provide better for it than we could have done; but, dear me!””²²⁹ The reader is left to compare that cant to the intense mourning of the Nelsons and their joy when another child is born. We note once again the tension between message and medium: Martineau consistently taught in the ubiquitous 'Summary of

²²⁹ 'The Land's End', p. 139.

Principles illustrated in this Volume' the need to withdraw all encouragement to an increase in population through poor rates or indiscriminate charity, but compromises the principle with her powerful presentation of grief and joy beside death-bed and cradle. The emotional needs of the household (and their author's engagement with them) were allowed to distort the overt didactic intent. In picturing her intra-household relationships, her characters at times seized her imagination and developed beyond the constraints of the message. 'Ella of Garveloch' could plausibly be seen as a love story, and its author did not hesitate to add poignancy to the tale on precisely this level: witness Ella's words to her lover, returned after five years without a message.

'When they half laughed at me and half praised me to my father, as being like a mother to these growing lads, they did not know that it was because I spent on them the love I could not spend as a wife'.²³⁰

'Cousin Marshall' offered the binary opposites of Cousin Marshall herself and Mrs Bell, and their households reflected their different moral standpoints. Cousin Marshall believes that it is morally wrong to seek charity, private or public, unless in the direst need; and her household itself offers charity – as noted, she takes in the most vulnerable of the Bridgeman children after the devastating fire. Equally importantly, she consults the children themselves on who should accompany the near-blind Sally and who should go to the workhouse, as she cannot take all the children herself. In short, the values of the Marshall household are projected into the community; unfortunately, so are those of the Bell household. Mrs Bell is an expert mendicant. She even conceals the death of a son and continues to draw an allowance for him. Her husband is intemperate and as selfish as

²³⁰ 'Ella of Garveloch', p. 80.

his wife. Worst of all, she is an agent of corruption. She encourages people to enter the disorderly workhouse on the grounds that life there is pleasant, attempts to dress one of the Bridgeman children in rags so that they could beg to the greatest effect and is the spy who reveals to the Parish authorities the fact that the repentant Jane Bridgeman, seduced by the evil of the workhouse and one of its inmates, was hiding in sanctuary at the house of the newly-widowed Cousin Marshall. Jane's forced return to the workhouse destroys her, and her sense of misery drives her onto the streets. Mrs Bell, reproached by Cousin Marshall, reveals the extent to which she has distorted household and community relationships by laughing and commenting that, not only should Cousin Marshall be grateful to be relieved of a burden, but also that Jane would get a husband, should the Parish authorities trace her seducer.

Were a similar tale to have been written by Hannah More, then Cousin Marshall would have been rewarded at the end. But Martineau gave her no reward. She was able to maintain her independence to the last, but only just. Nor did she even have the respect of the community which she tried to serve by example and practice: Martineau was keen to reveal that few would honour her memory. Her true worth was largely unrecognized by a community corrupted by the Poor Law, which had replaced individual and household responsibility with the anonymity of the parish rates.

The binary opposites in Martineau are largely accounted for by environmental influences rather than the more individual spiritual duality of good person/bad person beloved of More. Thus, in *Ella of Garveloch* and *Weal and Woe in Garveloch*, the Ella

household was contrasted to the Murdochs, but the author reflected in a carefully-balanced manner that edged towards the tentative that there was nothing intrinsically evil or corrupt about the Murdochs, who were: ‘good-natured people, when nothing happened to make them otherwise’.²³¹ The Murdoch household, however, is compromised by improvidence and by his frequent indolence, both physical and intellectual. His boys demonstrate the characteristics of the peasants in ‘The Scholars of Arneside’; lumpen, painfully incapable of answering the questions of the Laird’s English visitors. It is Rob Murdoch’s stupidity in upsetting a boat which indirectly causes the death of Archie, who attempts to set off in imitation of the launch of a rescue boat. Murdoch *père* is unreasonable, and cultivates jealousy of the returned Angus when the latter, as Murdoch’s employee, rescues his declining farm. Murdoch sells up and secretly purchases a cottage in the hope of ‘ease and domestic peace’.²³² This is a significant conjuncture of terms: it is Murdoch’s laziness that in large part results in his fractured household, where his daughters are little short of riotous and interfere with the work of the very men who are building their new home: Martineau’s irony was rather heavy-handed, but the point was made.

By way of contrast, domestic peace in Ella’s household was in part the product of her hard work: household harmony and prosperity accompany each other. ‘With Ella and her brothers everything prospered; and their external prosperity was not alloyed by troubles from within’.²³³ The boys, thanks to Ella (and to the vicissitudes she has had to overcome after her mother’s death and her father’s decline) are intelligent and informed, and the

²³¹ ‘Ella of Garveloch’, p. 51.

²³² ‘Ella of Garveloch’, p. 123.

²³³ ‘Ella of Garveloch’, p. 117.

laird is driven to ask her ‘what had made her brothers so unlike the boys within, [the Murdochs] and most of the other lads belonging to the islands?’²³⁴ Ella does not reply, but one key reason harks back to the intellectual companionship of Mary Campbell and her grandfather and to the Martineau family Sunday evenings itself:²³⁵ also, and as part of this mutual respect, Ella is happy to surrender her authority increasingly ‘before the change was demanded or even wished for’²³⁶ as the boys mature (a step too far for Mrs Martineau, if the *Autobiography* is to be believed). This vital aspect of household relationships is honoured by its breach in the Le Brocq household in the *IoT* tale ‘The Jerseymen Meeting’; the father is dictatorial, and treats his adult son Aaron as a child. The result is that Aaron is sullen, stubborn and addicted to the ill-mannered and counterproductive phrase “‘What’s it to you?’” as an attempt to assert himself. Only when he runs away from home and, perhaps implausibly, develops into an articulate and quick-witted man (largely through smuggling) does he shed his ubiquitous phrase. In fact, Martineau’s obsession with this theme in household relationships led to the ambiguous ending of ‘The Jerseymen Parting’, where Aaron insists on continuing his smuggling even though he has the opportunity to settle down once more in Jersey after the family’s disastrous time in London and their near-destruction by the system of excise duty and indirect taxation. Martineau came close to condoning smuggling: a sign that the issues of household and its relationships with community predominated over the taxation message.

This is not to say that the political economy message in every tale was equally complicated. After all, the much-abused ‘preventive check’ in ‘Weal and Woe in

²³⁴ ‘Ella of Garveloch’, p. 24.

²³⁵ See pp. 179-80.

²³⁶ ‘Ella of Garveloch’, p. 117.

Garveloch' appears to be unalloyed Malthusianism. The longed-for marriage between Ronald and the widow Katie Cuthbert will not take place, because the recent prosperity of the island, its new fishing company and village, and its harvest, are sabotaged by storms: as a result, the island cannot sustain its rapidly increasing population: those who recognize a duty to society in their personal and household relationships must not marry. Equally crude, it seems, is a speech given to Angus in which he bespeaks a certain optimism over the state of society, given that "Marriage is less general, and takes place at a later age – at least among the middling classes, whose example will, I trust, be soon followed by their poorer neighbours".²³⁷ The author put into the mouth of Katie a protest at the equally sententious comments of Ella: "Ah, Ella! did you consider this before your ten children were born?".²³⁸ Ella has no response beyond a lame statement that she and Angus had thought that they could provide for them all. But readers are perhaps left to ask further questions: why did Martineau write the ten children into this tale, and why give Ella no real answer? By placing her heroine in such an invidious position, Martineau renders an already uncomfortable doctrine even more so, since even Ella and Angus found it intellectually and emotionally impossible to anticipate short-term crises of capitalism and unpredictable disjunctures of supply and demand. Even this tale, it seems, exhibits some tension between messages about political economy and the emotional needs of individuals and household: needs which resonate strongly with the author.

In 'The Farrers of Budge-Row', the tale, supposedly about the justice of direct taxation and the evil of tontine annuities, focused instead on avarice and its destruction of

²³⁷ 'Weal and Woe in Garveloch', p. 135.

²³⁸ 'Weal and Woe in Garveloch', p. 98.

individual and household alike. In particular, it analysed the corrupting of the character of Jane Farrer through the baleful influence of the father. She keeps his house and she keeps his account books; the books come to dominate her, and the house is no true household in the end – even after her father’s death. Indeed, his death-bed scene is astonishingly remote from anything which could have been penned by More, since it features no remorse and no terrors, but grotesque and insensitive comments from Peeks, a truly appalling son-in-law, and the non-appearance of his other daughter, Patience: the latter is emotionally incompetent, and selfishly dawdles on her way to her father’s last moments. The children of the Peeks household are utterly ill-disciplined and a torment to neighbours: the inevitable result of their parents’ failure to establish household relationships based on individual responsibility and duty.

As for Jane, her love for her brother Henry, newly returned from university, turns to rejection as that love proves ‘too feeble a barrier to a devastating passion, against the daily thoughts of food eaten and clothes worn by one who was earning nothing’.²³⁹ The miser’s habits emerge as the tale progresses, and are symbolized by Jane falling asleep in her father’s chair and by a dream that she had killed her brother Michael. This is wish-fulfilment, since she has come to hope for his death before he married the mother of his children (which would reduce the annuity Jane would otherwise receive after his death). In fact, she gets her wish when he is killed in a smuggling brawl. Kneeling before his body, she turns to Henry ‘with kindled eyes, to say, “He is gone; and he is not married”’.²⁴⁰ Her obsession with gold and desire to evade taxes (in particular, an

²³⁹ HM, ‘The Farrers of Budge-Row’, *IPE*, No. XXIV, p. 31.

²⁴⁰ ‘The Farrers of Budge-Row’, p. 89.

unreasoning terror of any form of direct taxation) kill her in the miser's version of Martineau's capsizing vessel: the heavy chest containing her money sinks her escaping boat, but not before she is granted a moment of redemption in setting free the pet bird which had symbolized the better feelings of household life. She had, in fact, stolen away with the bird from Henry's own and ideal household as a testimony to the hold that the past still had on her; it returns to its old home on Budge-Row and is found by the servant, Morgan.

The return of the bird to Morgan is entirely appropriate, since, as a true member of the household, she represents the ideals of loyalty and unselfish service that Jane had come to reject. Henry marries into a French émigré family, and is arrested on sedition charges. The true household would succour its former members, but Henry's wife, Marie, appeals for bail money in vain to the sisters Patience and Jane, whose refusals testify to households which are disordered and diseased. It is Morgan who comes to Marie's rescue by demanding unpaid wages from Jane – wages which had meant little to her for as long as there was hope that Jane would uphold the value-systems that she had originally espoused. She rounds on Jane with the comment, “My dear...you deserve nothing better than gold...If you do not despise your money in comparison with your brother Henry and his lady, it is a pity you are their sister”²⁴¹.

In ‘Berkeley the Banker’, only Melea seems to consider it appropriate to take the servants into the family's confidence once the collapse of the bank jeopardizes the household of which they are an intrinsic part, and even she is reluctant to inform any but

²⁴¹ ‘The Farrers of Budge-Row’, p. 52.

the longest-serving dependant. Martineau makes it clear that she is wrong and, crucially, unjust. It is important to note the autobiographical impetus behind this emphasis on justice in its relation to servants as members of the household. The *Autobiography* identified Martineau's passion for justice as a six year-old, and significantly used relations with servants as the *exemplum* of justice being 'cruelly crossed, from the earliest time I can remember, by the imposition of passive obedience and silence on servants'.²⁴² Martineau regretted not being able to say sorry to the one servant who was truly her mother's friend – Susan Ormsby – after accidentally stabbing her in the arm. The episode is described at length, and it is likely enough that the remorse, allied to the negative and positive examples from the Magdalen St household, helped to shape the model that was her home in Ambleside (The Knoll).²⁴³ Indeed, Martineau's development of her ideas in fiction should also be seen as a formative part of her self-fashioning as a responsible head of household. Thus, in 'For Each and For All'. Lady F's French maid, Thérèse, is referred to as a 'friend' and is set against the captious, status-obsessed and spoilt Philips, maid to Lady F's sister-in-law, Lady Frances. Lady F's attitude to Thérèse is based upon a keen sense of duty: "It is perfectly true that, in engaging servants, we undertake a great task".²⁴⁴ Martineau duly undertook that fundamentally educative task in *The Knoll*, and in so doing attempted to honour her own teachings in fulfilling a duty which was predicated on the sense of justice as mediated through household relations.

Given the criticisms of Martineau as an apologist for patriarchy, it is something of a surprise to note how far her distorted households were fashioned by its baleful influence.

²⁴² *Autobiography*, i, p. 18.

²⁴³ See below, pp. 304-8 and *Autobiography*, i, p. 19.

²⁴⁴ 'For Each and For All', p. 120.

Jane Farrer owes much of her corruption to her father's domineering example; Louisa Temple's unattractive haughtiness towards others and servility towards her insufferably snobbish husband disappear when he deserts her: Dr and Mrs Sneyd 'recognized in her the Louisa Sneyd who had been so long lost to them'.²⁴⁵ In 'Berkeley the Banker', Martineau offered the household of Edgar and Hester Morrison as a parody of the healthy household where genuine partnership exists. Over a well-furnished bourgeois breakfast-table, Edgar leisurely discusses with his wife her shopping destinations for the purpose of disposing of the counterfeit notes he has printed. Martineau entitled chapter V 'The Wife's Obedience', and recognized that Hester's pathetic need for companionship on any terms allows her to be so exploited. There is no solace in his terms of endearment - 'little wife' and 'little goose' - which are as valueless as his notes, but demonstrate Martineau's understanding of the discourse of subjection. The most catastrophic consequence of systemic patriarchy is in the tale 'Ireland', where Dora Sullivan, relatively well-educated, counsels her father against signing a tenancy agreement he did not understand, but is overruled. The result was presented as symptomatic of the many evils befalling Ireland: poor education, an alien church establishment, an iniquitous system of partnership tenancies and over-population. Patriarchy was the trigger which leads to a mockery of household duties and affections. Dora's husband joins the Whiteboys, and, implicated in his nefarious activities and awaiting transportation, she declines into a transient madness; her own baby is abandoned to the mercies of the father whose ignorance had precipitated the cataclysmic series of events.²⁴⁶ The indictment of the feeble wives of slave-owners in 'Demerara' was part of a complex picture in which their physical and mental lassitude

²⁴⁵ 'Briery Creek', p. 148.

²⁴⁶ HM, 'Ireland', *IPE*, No. IX.

mirrored that of the slaves, rendered indolent, sullen, capricious and vain by slavery. The Bruce children, educated in England, found themselves obliged to reform their father's plantation and, as part of that reform, the household itself.²⁴⁷

If Martineau offered parodies of what she deemed to be appropriate household relationships, she also offered her view of true partnerships within households which look outwards as well as inwards: no pictures were painted of households as self-defining refuges. Thus, although Dr Sneyd was every inch the revered thinker and man of integrity, Martineau made the point that it was his wife who husbanded his property in a way which allowed him to continue his studies: ““But for her, my little property would have flown up to the moon long ago””.²⁴⁸ It is his wife who did the round of her neighbours' cottages, feeding the pigs and the fowls, when everyone else was out on a squirrel-hunt. In ‘For Each and For All’, the curious household of aristocrat and middle-class ex-actress was intended to be a genuine partnership, since each brought individual experiences to fulfil the call of social duty which the title itself reflected. Letitia not only acts as a political researcher for her husband, but also as the conscience which impels him to respond to ““the cry of unserved humanity””.²⁴⁹ and, as an actress, she understands the roles the arts can play in arousing that conscience. In ‘The Hill and the Valley’, the

²⁴⁷ HM, ‘Demerara’, *IPE*, No. IV. The indictment of patriarchy in the slave-owning states is developed in Martineau's *Society in America* (1837) - a travelogue underpinned by an analytical framework comparing the rhetoric of American democratic values to the reality of life as observed by Martineau. *Society in America* yoked together Martineau's familiar theme of the sovereignty of duty with her criticism of the way in which southern women were rendered weak and subservient by the baleful equating (by men) of propriety with female ignorance and docility. A sense of duty, indeed, demanded that women claimed the right to exercise their reason in support of self-reliance, self-improvement and moral activism. In a chapter on ‘The Morals of Slavery’, Martineau complained of men's horror at the thought of ‘a woman's having to work, - to exert the faculties which her Maker gave her’. See *Society in America* (3 vols., London, 1837), ii, p. 338.

²⁴⁸ ‘Briery Creek’, p. 75.

²⁴⁹ ‘For Each and For All’, p. 33.

‘good’ household of the Wallaces also represents a partnership, if, at first sight, an unequal one. Martineau portrays Mrs Wallace as young and shy, and Mr Wallace appears to offer a far greater potential force for good in the community through a different kind of partnership – he is junior partner in the new iron works, and Martineau relates household and its links with community to industrial progress. Thus, she presents a distorted household in which the solitary man Armstrong and his housekeeper Margaret rarely communicated or stayed in the same room together. Armstrong predictably hates all that the new works represents, but then is made aware of Mrs Wallace’s contribution to the community. Her concern for others encourages Armstrong to see the potential the ironworks offers to create ““a settlement where art and industry thrive””. Armstrong comments to Mr Wallace, in the context of accepting that his opposition to the works was ill-considered, that ““From the hour that I saw her walking over the heath in the wintry wind...to show a poor neighbour how to manage a new-dropt calf, I pronounced you, sir, a happy man””.²⁵⁰ Mrs Wallace leaves behind her one of her paintings as a gift, and it occasions the first genuine conversation between Armstrong and Margaret. Martineau’s message once again, in good Smithsian vein, is the principle stated in the summary: ‘The interests of the two classes of producers, Labourers and Capitalists, are therefore the same; the prosperity of both depending on the accumulation of CAPITAL’²⁵¹ and the story shows how workers, by opposing new machinery, destroyed their own livelihood as the ironworks fail. But the tale itself ends with Armstrong wiping away a tear, as Martineau leaves us with the sense of sadness at the failure of human relationships and

²⁵⁰ HM, ‘The Hill and the Valley’, *IPE*, No. II, pp. 138-9.

²⁵¹ ‘The Hill and the Valley’, p. 140.

the new community. The symbol of hope had been Mrs Wallace as well as the works themselves, and the works alone had not been enough.

Conclusion to Part 2

This chapter has offered a detailed analysis of the *Illustrations of Political Economy*, *Illustrations of Taxation* and *Poor Law and Paupers Illustrated*. In so doing, it has suggested that scholars (often through imposing their own value-systems on Martineau's work) have failed to appreciate the personal, local, intellectual and cultural contexts which led to the 'heartland concepts' underpinning the tales and shaping their discourse. The chapter has also counteracted the tendency of some scholars (seduced by the rigid schema of Martineau's *Autobiography*) to compartmentalize Martineau's life and thinking and so to underestimate continuities with earlier work: hence, links between the themes of parts 1 and 2 have been acknowledged. After all, Martineau's critique of sensibility as identified in chapter 3 was a threat, through its demand for instant gratification, not only to heartland concepts of duty and social piety, but also to principles of political economy. Martineau commented that, in penning her Houlston tales, she had been writing political economy unawares: the same might be said of *Five Years of Youth*.

It has therefore been suggested that it is ill-advised to treat the *Illustrations* as astringent political economy with fiction as the sugaring of the pill. To do so would be to fail to recognize the importance of Martineau's creative engagement with More, Barbauld and Carpenter: an engagement which built upon the existing influences of her own household

(both positive and negative) and the Unitarian/nonconformist networkings within and beyond her home city. From Carpenter, More and Barbould, she developed her understandings of social piety, of the importance of progress through rational debate and of the potential offered by the medium of fiction. She refined their domestic settings into a focus on relationships within and between household and community. Her discourse in the *Illustrations* is therefore characterized by settings, plot and trope of household and community. From Fox and her work for the *Monthly Repository* and *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, she further developed her associationist psychology in appreciating the crucial importance of the impact of environment and linked it to her conviction that fiction was the appropriate medium for conveying the truths of moral science to those who needed them most – the lower classes. Indeed, one might argue that the trope of household/community was particularly potent for Martineau, since it represented a fusing of personal experience with necessarian ethics. The shaping of human society by immutable laws of cause and effect was, it seems, a principle that she found both liberating and a stimulus to action. We noted that her account in the *Autobiography* may present her conversion to Necessarianism in apocalyptic terms, but also that her comments were not dissimilar to Mill's attempted resolution of the apparently oppressive determinism lying at the heart of the doctrine. One can place oneself under the influence of certain circumstances as opposed to other, baleful circumstances, with the result that 'We are exactly as capable of making our own character, *if we will*, as others are of making it for us'.²⁵²

²⁵² Mill, *A System of Logic*, p. 1023.

The Houlston tales duly represent a preliminary but consistent working through of Martineau's core values and internalizing of her own experiences in the form of fiction: their similarities to the *Illustrations* tales were identified as useful evidence of a continuity in ideas which the *Autobiography* often obscures.

The results of Martineau's melding of principle and practice can be seen in the *Illustrations*. Because the messages of these tales are more complex than has been acknowledged by biographers and others, a detailed discussion of individual tales has been necessary to exemplify the key findings; namely, that Martineau frequently offered a refined version of More's 'binary opposites' portrayal of households and individuals. Unlike More, her characterization was at times balanced and relatively subtle. Her dialogues, where characters voiced opinions in stilted rational debate, were more contextualized than those in Barbauld and Aikin's *Evenings at Home*, but the analysis also revealed that the likely emotional impact of many of the tales was considerable and arguably compromised the more formal didactic elements. Similarly, scholars who see Martineau as a mere mouthpiece for the capitalist middle classes and for patriarchy are supported neither by the nature of the tales themselves nor by the strongly autobiographical element which pervades many of the stories. It is this element which, allied to the broader intellectual and religious context, provided Martineau with the recurring themes of affliction and duty, invariably expressed through relationships within and between households. Scholars who do not recognize the centrality of these themes to Martineau's thought generally struggle to make sense of the tensions within the

Illustrations.²⁵³ These heartland concepts also explain why her characters are frequently more than embodiments of principles and seem surprisingly flesh-and-blood (or at least conceivable as such). Many of her first readers clearly saw them that way, and it may also explain why Martineau felt the need to issue as her concluding volume of the *Illustrations of Political Economy* ‘The Moral of Many Fables’: readers needed to be reminded that specific principles of political economy had been outlined in tales which had at their heart individual, household and community.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Eleanor Courtemanche, for example, claims in “‘Naked Truth’” that the *Illustrations* constitute a ‘weird moment of synthesis between the disciplines of economics and aesthetics’ (p. 384) and that (oddly enough), they represent a ‘subtle [my stress] revolt against the romantic silver-fork novels of the 1820s’ (p. 388).

²⁵⁴ HM, ‘The Moral of Many Fables’, *IPE*, No. XXV. The best example of Martineau’s attempt to reassert principles in the face of the ambiguities and tensions which pepper the tales is her comment on workers’ associations, which supposedly offered plenty of opportunities for ‘meddling and governing, for rioting, for idling, and tipping’ (p. 56). This flies in the face of the balanced and relatively sympathetic treatment in ‘A Manchester Strike’ (see above, pp. 215-7).

Part 3

Principle and Practice: *Deerbrook* to Ambleside

Introduction to Part 3

Part 3 opens with a new reading of Martineau's 1839 novel *Deerbrook*. In so doing, it complements the findings of previous chapters, argues that the key themes of the novel represent an essential continuity with earlier fiction and suggests that critical opinion has undervalued and misunderstood *Deerbrook*. This misapprehension has arisen from a failure to contextualize the novel in terms of Martineau's core values. But the chapter goes further by situating the novel itself as part of the context surrounding Martineau's life in her adopted community in Ambleside, where she lived from 1845 to her death in 1876. By the time she built her home in the Lake District, she had herself produced some of the cultural resources of which her subjectivity was the product: arguably, the most significant was *Deerbrook*. Indeed, *Deerbrook* should be seen as a blueprint for the engaged social activism which characterized her life in that town as long as her health lasted.

There has been very little scholarly interest in Martineau's Ambleside, and therefore a lack of appreciation of her attempt to put principle into practice. For Martineau, her new home, The Knoll, represented her first unalloyed opportunity to set up a household, to shun the defects of the parental home in Magadalen St and the anti-household in London's Fludyer St and to establish therein the personal relationships which, in their links with the community, represented a model encapsulating her core values. The local

history case study of the township, in revealing Martineau's brand of social activism, recaptures its political and social structures and finds that Martineau came into conflict with a High Church elite (Martineau did not attempt any distinction between High Church and Tractarian) which was made up of clergy and landowners and which, in her view, selfishly obstructed her social reforms. This section of the argument, contrary to received opinion,¹ also finds that Martineau's period of confinement to a Tynemouth sick-bed (from 1839 to 1844) was a prelude to Ambleside, where Martineau, despite the severity of her illness, attempted to improve the lives of her poorer neighbours through educational provision and sanitary reform – and faced opposition from a clerical and social elite. Her Tynemouth writings are reinterpreted, and her *Playfellow* tales for children, usually seen as surprisingly and atypically conventional potboilers, are found to be redolent of the agenda dictated by her heartland concepts.

¹ The honourable exception is the brief reference to Martineau's attempts to improve drainage in Tynemouth in Ruth Watts, 'Harriet Martineau and the Unitarian Tradition in Education', *Oxford Review of Education*, 37, 5 (2011), pp. 637-51.

Chapter 7

Individual, household and community: *Deerbrook* and *Household Education*

Introduction: current scholarship.

This chapter will argue that the novel *Deerbrook* (1839) is to be seen as an extended discussion of individual, household and community morality. In keeping with her earlier fiction, Martineau's heartland concepts shape its message. Critical commentary, however, has often treated the novel as something of an aberration: a ham-fisted and derivative attempt at a love story. Most scholars have therefore seen it as divorced from Martineau's habitual concerns. Valerie Pichanick, for instance, argues that the novel is atypically non-didactic and thematically conventional:

It was a romance: love was the chief preoccupation of its characters, and marriage was the chief event of the plot. Hester and Margaret Ibbotson, Edward Hope, and Philip Enderby were the subjects of the romance. Mrs. Grey was the meddling matchmaker and the instrument by whom Hope was compromised into marrying Hester instead of Margaret. Philip Enderby's sister, the malevolent and ambitious Mrs. Rowland, like Bingley's sisters in *Pride and Prejudice*, sought to frustrate the expectations of Margaret Ibbotson [to marry Philip] ...²

Other scholars are similarly uneasy. Deborah Logan calls *Deerbrook* 'Martineau's nod to novel writing of the domestic-romance school' and complains that her women characters are merely conventional.³ Even Valerie Sanders, editor of the Penguin *Deerbrook* and author of a full-length study of Martineau and the Victorian novel,

² Valerie Kossew Pichanick, *Harriet Martineau: The Woman and her Work, 1802-76* (Ann Arbor, 1980), pp. 116-7.

³ Deborah Anna Logan, *The Hour and the Woman: Harriet Martineau's "Somewhat Remarkable" Life* (DeKalb, 2002), p. 295.

comments that ‘Martineau seems to have been *suitably* [my stress] embarrassed by the novel’.⁴ Sanders is herself perhaps embarrassed by Martineau’s supposed failure to transcend the fact that ‘All the women characters are wholly obsessed with their prospects of love and marriage’;⁵ the author fails, in short, to offer them convincing alternatives beyond platitude, domesticity and brisk walks. However, such approaches fail to recognize sufficiently Martineau’s emphasis on the call of duty to household and community stimulated by both shared and individual affliction.

Vineta Colby gestures towards the case for *Deerbrook* as a novel with, in Raymond Williams’s words, a focus on the ‘substance and meaning of community’.⁶ Unfortunately, she chooses to focus instead upon Martineau establishing ‘the domestic love story as a valid literary genre’.⁷ On the other hand, R.K. Webb acknowledges that the novel is not devoid of didactic purpose, and places emphasis on Martineau’s portrayal of her medical hero, Edward Hope, as an embodiment of a man of science whose adherence to principle and duty results in his triumph over the machinations of the odious Mrs Rowland, who comes close to destroying his reputation and livelihood as part of her campaign against his patrons, the Grey family. That triumph is presented as the just fruit of steadfast, necessarian morality. However, Webb’s knowing remark that *Deerbrook* ‘seems to have been a woman’s book’⁸ betokens his ultimate unwillingness to treat it as significant either in biographical terms or as a work of art.

⁴ Valerie Sanders, *Reason over Passion: Harriet Martineau and the Victorian Novel* (Brighton, 1986), p. 60.

⁵ Sanders, p. 67.

⁶ Raymond Williams, quoted in Vineta Colby, *Yesterday’s Woman: Domestic Realism in the English Novel* (Princeton, 1974), p. 231.

⁷ Colby, p. 256.

⁸ R.K. Webb, *Harriet Martineau: A Radical Victorian* (London, 1960), p. 188.

Pichanick clearly concurs. Even in her portrayal of that dominant love theme, Martineau is found wanting. The main characters, it seems, are ‘not flesh and blood creatures but idealized creations’, and Pichanick voices her disappointment as a biographer: ‘*Deerbrook*, a rather dull novel, adds very little to our knowledge of its author’.⁹ Any such claim about the overall relationship between Martineau’s personal experience, ideology and fiction cannot, on the evidence of this thesis, be sustained.

Scholars have rightly drawn attention to Martineau’s regard for the works of Jane Austen.¹⁰ Mrs Rowland of *Deerbrook* is Mrs Norris of *Mansfield Park* (1814) not only writ large, but also with the opportunity to poison an entire community with her relentless selfishness. There are other similarities. *Mansfield Park* is peopled with characters whose behaviour is both positively and negatively affected by environment: the choice of a place-name as a title is therefore appropriate. Similarly, Martineau chooses *Deerbrook* in preference, say, to *Hester and Margaret* or *Self and Selflessness*. Even so, *Deerbrook* is a village and not a country estate, and her characters are resolutely bourgeois in a way that Austen’s are not. And Martineau’s key theme is not so much love between individuals who fall within the orbit of a large house as the correct relationship between the individual and the community as mediated through household. Romantic love is the means by which the heartland concepts are explored.

⁹ Pichanick, p. 119.

¹⁰ Maria Weston Chapman (ed.), *Harriet Martineau’s Autobiography* (2 vols., Boston, 1877). Chapman was entrusted with Martineau’s diary for 1836-c.1838. Of Austen, Martineau commented ‘She *was* a glorious novelist’ and immediately added ‘I *think* I could write a novel’. See ii, p. 317.

Criticism has yet to recognize the way in which Martineau equates untrammelled gossip and rumour-spreading with superstition, and identifies both as characteristics of the corrupt and therefore corrupting household. Granted, scholars have noted the significance of Martineau's treatment of rumour and the woman's voice in *Deerbrook*. As Gillian Beer has pointed out, reputation is a form of credit in a community, and women's discourse can be an agent of change:¹¹ but in the form of discourse as practised in *Deerbrook* gossip, the change it engenders is profoundly dangerous. Jennifer Yates recognizes the impact of gossip on the village, but her comments on Martineau's aims are questionable: 'Although Martineau appears to celebrate the ungovernable momentum of the female voice throughout *Deerbrook*, Mrs Rowland is distinguished from the list of vocal female characters by means of her particularly destructive brand of conversation'.¹² Martineau was not one to celebrate anything ungovernable, and the female voice is no exception. Mrs Rowland's voice may be louder, but it is not distinguished in type. Even the Grey daughters share in their mother's enmity towards Mrs Rowland; her family's spitefulness startles the newly-arrived Ibbotsons. Only the death of the young Matilda Rowland in a cathartic onslaught of pestilence brings the young Greys to the realisation that they had ignored her good qualities. And the aftermath of catharsis is characterized by silence. Mrs Rowland at the end of the novel has nothing to say. 'She persuaded herself that she was very apathetic, – that she had no feelings left for the affairs of life ...Mrs Grey had therefore nothing in particular to tell Sophia when she returned from paying the visit [to Mrs Rowland]'.¹³ It seems that Mrs Grey's enmity has also lost its

¹¹ Gillian Beer, *Arguing with the Past: Essays in Narrative from Woolf to Sidney* (London, 1989).

¹² Jennifer Yates, 'A "Habit of Speculation": women, gossip and publicity in Harriet Martineau's *Deerbrook*', *Women's Writing*, 9, 3 (2002), p. 374.

¹³ HM, *Deerbrook* (3 vols., London, 1839), iii, p. 296.

voice. One of the final chapters of the novel features a lengthy and apparently irrelevant conversation between Margaret and the oldest inhabitant, Jem Bird, who recounts his memories of the founding and naming of the village. Martineau thus contrasts rumour-mongering gossip with truth; as Deerbrook gossip dies down and the fever abates, truth about Deerbrook emerges.

Reading *Deerbrook* as a novel firmly yoked to heartland concepts of household and duty also necessitates a reappraisal of one of its central characters: the governess Maria Young. Deirdre David claims that the portrayal of Maria is consistent with the auxiliary usefulness that Martineau envisages as woman's role;¹⁴ the result is that the 'only way Martineau seems able to introduce an intelligent, ambitious woman into her novel is to have her lame, solitary, alienated, and obsessed with unrequited love'.¹⁵ Similarly, Ann Hobart claims that *Deerbrook* ratifies the bourgeois hierarchical relationship between the work of men and women.¹⁶ Caroline Roberts clearly disagrees, and proffers *Deerbrook* as a 'feminist tract', with Maria Young, albeit impassioned, as the epitome of the philosophical observer immune to the masculine, clinical, reductivist and controlling gaze of Hope, which had supposedly subdued Hester.¹⁷ However, the novel should be interpreted neither as a partial endorsement nor a critique of patriarchy. Maria is an essentially tragic figure because she is deprived of the opportunity to give of herself through empowering relationships within a household which lead to community activism

¹⁴ See pp. 34-5.

¹⁵ Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (London, 1987), p. 86.

¹⁶ Ann Hobart, 'Harriet Martineau's Political Economy of Everyday Life', *Victorian Studies*, 37, 2 (Winter 1994), pp. 223-51.

¹⁷ Caroline Roberts, *The Woman and the Hour: Harriet Martineau and Victorian Ideologies* (Toronto, 2002).

and, indeed, are stimulated by community need. Nor is Hester subdued by Hope's gaze: a genuine, if incomplete, personal reformation comes about through the teachings of adversity, which bring into focus the right household relationships and their link with social activism.

This chapter, in situating *Deerbrook* firmly within Martineau's core values, also examines the novel in relation to her non-fiction work *Household Education* (1848) and *Life in the Sick-Room* (1844). The former, replete with personal experience as evidence, reworks *Deerbrook* as a manual for parents. The latter, which was the product of a severe illness which consigned Martineau to bed and couch in Tynemouth lodgings for five years, has received particularly short shrift from scholars – as it did from Martineau herself. Earlier chapters have noted the propensity of the *Autobiography* to wield the positivist scythe on swathes of Martineau's own past and its continuities in favour of a triumphalist new growth in the present, and *Life in the Sick-Room* was duly condemned as a 'crude' and 'morbid' product of a 'metaphysical state of mind...I was not perfectly emancipated from the *débris* of the theological'.¹⁸ Maria Frawley accepts Martineau's adjectival assault, and adds that *Life in the Sick-Room* conformed to patriarchal assumptions about women's essential submissiveness;¹⁹ Diana Postlethwaite sees the retreat to the sofa as in part an hysterical and ultimately self-defeating defence against the demands both of male society and her own mother's gender expectations.²⁰ Scholarly

¹⁸ *Autobiography*, i, p. 459.

¹⁹ Maria H. Frawley (ed.), 'Introduction', *Life in the Sick-Room: Harriet Martineau* (Peterborough, Ont., 2003). Frawley comments that Martineau's 'rhetoric and posturing' offered up patriarchal stereotypes in the service of a Christian discourse of resignation. See p. 16.

²⁰ Diana Postlethwaite, 'Mothering and Mesmerism in the Life of Harriet Martineau', *Signs*, 14, 3 (Spring 1989), pp. 583-609.

consensus is that *Life in the Sick-Room* represents something of a hiatus in Martineau's life and writings, but this contention will be challenged by arguing that the work displays a continued commitment to Martineau's heartland concepts and an unacknowledged vigour which was also reflected in Martineau's attempt to engage in social activism from her couch. Such an approach also necessitates a reinterpretation of Martineau's children's tales of 1844, *The Playfellow*, which were written at Tynemouth and apparently represent Martineau's attempt (in Pichanick's terms) to eke out her diminishing income by penning conformist adventure stories for boys. The stories, however, prove to be implicitly subversive of unthinking patriarchy, since they redefine the masculine through locating it in the tackling of adversity in the interests of household and community.

***Deerbrook* and Hope: duty and social activism**

The title *Deerbrook* perhaps echoes Psalm 42: 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God'. The Psalm is a message of hope in adversity, and we recall that Edward Hope, as a key character in *Deerbrook*, is on the side of the scientific and moral progress that Martineau saw as complementary and coeval. As a surgeon,²¹ he treats a community which falls victim to a pestilence: as a man of moral standing and sense of duty, he treats a community riven by faction and slander to the example of a devoted household which not only weathers the storm of persecution but acts as an *exemplum* in reaching out, metaphorically and literally, to the village which

²¹ Some scholars (and contemporaries such as Sydney Smith) have identified Hope as an apothecary. However, Hope speaks of his son following in his footsteps as a surgeon; his young rival, Walcot, is referred to by Hope as a "surgeon, last from Cheltenham" (*Deerbrook*, ii, p. 284) and Martineau comments that Maria knew 'that her surgeon [Hope] would not accept money from her' (iii, p. 136).

seeks to reject it. Hope's sense of duty impels him to marry Hester for fear of injuring her: his sister-in-law, Margaret, is the true object of his affections, and lives with the newly-wed pair in a household which has the potential for disaster. That it does not implode is the result of the power of duty wedded to optimism and to the stimulus of affliction.

Martineau's choice of an occupation for Hope is revealing, since the status of the surgeon was contested and provided him with little or no social capital. Hope is emphatically not a physician, which carried genuine prestige. By the 1830s, some 5% of medical practitioners only were physicians; dealing with theory, diagnosis and prescription, the physician was not infrequently drawn from the upper *stratum* of society and might expect to carve out a reputation among men of science and learning. The surgeon, however, pursued anatomical studies and treated disorders. Corfield charts the difficulties faced by surgeons in establishing a Royal College of Surgeons on the model of the Royal College of Physicians and comments that it was 'selective and unpopular'²² into the 1840s. As for the apothecaries, although parliament accepted the right of the Apothecaries' Society to examine and license members in 1815, licensing was not made compulsory. Both surgeons and apothecaries in training followed the unfashionable but traditional apprenticeship model. On the other hand, the General Practitioner might potentially override this tripartite distinction, but, given the range of his duties, could not achieve the status of the physician. Trollope's Dr Thorne, for instance, is presented as an

²² Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London, 1995), p. 154.

uncomfortable hybrid who owns to gentle blood and visits at some of the best houses, but nevertheless grinds his own medicines in the manner of the apothecary.²³

By the mid-nineteenth century, medicine itself had not shared in the prestige awarded to scientific progress. The *Lancet*, founded in 1823, attempted to establish and control professional identity through promoting a rational and objective clinical discourse which sought to privilege the typical over the curious and the case-study as an antidote to emotionalism. Megan Kennedy points to the popularity of Samuel Warren's *Diary of a Late Physician* (1830-7) as symptomatic of the failure of the professionalization initiative.²⁴ Warren effectively subverted the case-study through death-bed moralizing and Gothic sensationalism while claiming factual veracity and clinical expertise. The author had received no more than a smattering of medical training, but his facility with medical terms and his gestures in the direction of the case-study led to criticisms from

²³ Trollope enjoyed his eponymous character's errant behaviour. Dr Thorne's predecessor in the village of Greshamsbury had been a 'humble minded general practitioner, gifted with a due respect for the physicians of the county' and who might be allowed to physic the squire's servants and occasionally his children – but never the squire and his lady. And yet, Thorne, though undeniably a graduated physician, demanded graduated travel expenses, which showed (to scandalised fellow physicians) that he was 'always thinking of his money, like an apothecary...whereas, it would have behoved him, as a physician...to have regarded his own pursuits in a purely philosophical spirit'. Anthony Trollope, *Dr Thorne* (Oxford, 1980), p. 32.

²⁴ Megan Kennedy, 'The Ghost in the Clinic: Gothic Medicine and Curious Fiction in Samuel Warren's *Diary of a Late Physician*', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32, 2 (2004), pp. 327-351. The uncertain status of the medical practitioner is revealed in the behaviour of Thomas M. Greenhow, the surgeon and brother-in-law of Martineau who treated her during her five-year illness in Tynemouth (1839-44). Faced with her claim of a mesmeric cure, he published (to her outrage) intimate details of her condition in pamphlet form to emphasize his unwillingness to countenance the quasi-scientific practices of mesmerism (even though he had himself suggested that she sought help from a mesmerist). In fact, Greenhow seems to have been wedded to the curious and even managed to compromise the *Lancet*'s rigid clinicism with an account therein of a patient who fell thirty feet and landed on her head, but without serious injury. Similarly, his article on Martineau's autopsy, which did not trouble with the flimsiest veil of patient anonymity, is replete with exclamations on its 'remarkable' nature and concluded that her condition 'may serve in some degree to explain some of the peculiarities of character which were apparent during her remarkable career'. T.M. Greenhow, 'Termination of the Case of Miss Harriet Martineau', *The British Medical Journal*, 1 (14 April, 1877), p. 450. Kennedy does not make the link between Greenhow and Martineau.

members of the profession for breach of medical confidentiality. This is perhaps surprising, as Warren presents a relentless series of types – ‘A Man about Town’, ‘The Magdalen’ – and rarely preserves the dispassionate tone that one might expect of a medical journal. He opens a description of ‘The Wife’ with the comments ‘Well! The poor martyr has at last been released from her sufferings...Yes, sweet, abused, forgiving Mrs T-!...The blow that broke your heart was struck by YOUR HUSBAND’.²⁵

Hope, then, represents an anomaly in an anomalous profession: a rationalist who publishes in scientific journals and a surgeon in a superstitious village. Even so, we may agree with Tabitha Sparks that he represents more than a call for the professionalization of medicine, since the novel eschews specifics on medical practice in favour of the picture of Hope as a sanitary reformer. Sparks further argues that the novel represents a tension between ‘medical and romantic epistemologies’²⁶ and, alongside the much-later *Middlemarch* (1872), demonstrates how the ‘historical impact of science knowledge rewrites the marriage plot’.²⁷ Martineau supposedly presents Hope as a representative of the ‘ethical Positivism for which his doctoring stands’.²⁸ However, there is no evidence of Martineau’s engagement with Comte’s thought at the time of writing *Deerbrook*: indeed, the final volume of his *Cours de philosophie positive* was not published until 1842, and Martineau herself commented that she only ‘obtained something like a clear preparatory view, at second-hand...in 1850’.²⁹ Nor does her portrayal of the role of

²⁵ Samuel Warren, *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician* (Edinburgh and London, 1854), pp. 115-7.

²⁶ Tabitha Sparks, *The Doctor in the Victorian Novel: Family Practices* (Farnham, 2009), p. 15.

²⁷ Sparks, p. 16.

²⁸ Sparks, p. 28.

²⁹ *Autobiography*, ii, p. 57.

women conform to the Comtist model, since neither Margaret nor Hester is presented as the inspiration behind Hope's moral engagement with the village community.

Margaret Pelling's discussion of George Eliot's village surgeon, Tertius Lydgate in *Middlemarch*, helps us to clarify the qualities which define Hope. Lydgate's flaws are those of a man who separated scientific enquiry from moral engagement with his community. He is scornful, dismissive of women's intellectual capabilities and refuses to sully his hands with politics. In short, he lacks what Pelling calls the necessary 'interconnectedness between differing spheres in life'³⁰ which is so marked a feature of Hope's personality and practice and symbolized by his habit of sketching on music books or any paper that falls to hand. Indeed, Lydgate's career parallels that of Hope in a manner which encourages us to reflect on the fact that Eliot admired *Deerbrook*.³¹ The fate of both men was shaped by their casting a vote, but with entirely different motives; both publish in scientific journals; neither are natives to the village in which they practise; and both are interested in epidemiology. The difference is that Lydgate's interest is at the level of the microscope, and Hope's is at the level of the bedside.

The reader, then, learns little of Hope's medical skills *per se*, but a great deal about duty and social activism. Indeed, Martineau's most unflinching descriptions of social activism in the face of squalor focus, not on the deeds of Hope, but on those of Margaret Ibbotson. The description of Margaret in the household of the Platts prefigures Martineau's short

³⁰ Margaret Pelling, 'Scenes from Professional Life: Medicine, Moral Life, and Interconnectedness in *Middlemarch*' in Peter Ghosh and Lawrence Goldman (eds), *Politics and Culture in Victorian Britain: Essays in Memory of Colin Matthew* (Oxford, 2006), p. 220.

³¹ See Sanders, *Reason*, p. 59. Eliot commented on her surprise at the 'depths of feeling it [*Deerbrook*] reveals'.

story of 1850 for *Household Words*, ‘The Sickness and Health of the People of Bleaburn’, which gives a very thin veneer of fiction to the experiences of the real-life Mary Lovell Pickard (1798-1849) in coming to the aid of the fever-stricken village of Osmotherly in Yorkshire in 1825: it was in 1835 that Martineau heard the account of her intervention. Martineau not only peoples her village of Bleaburn with superstitious villagers in the manner of *Deerbrook*, but also with characters whose behaviour smacks of the more objectionable members of the elite she encountered in Ambleside in 1845.³² According to Anne Lohri,³³ Martineau heard the story of Mary Pickard in 1835 when visiting the Ware family of Cambridge, Mass., who were her relatives by marriage. Pickard was known as the ‘Good lady’, and Margaret Ibbotson’s services to the victims of pestilence are similarly rewarded: ‘...the people have got to call you “the good lady”’.³⁴ In tackling the plague in *Deerbrook*, Hope’s guiding knowledge is vital, but so too is the ‘good lady’ and what might be called the ‘good household’, since all those living in the Corner House rise to meet the challenge.

***Deerbrook*, superstition and the discourse of rumour**

Martineau’s analysis of the community of *Deerbrook* itself was unremittingly bleak, and situated village rumour within her habitual typology of superstition and its baleful effects.

Deerbrook is clearly a closed village with a squire, the unimaginatively-named Sir

³² See pp. 293-6 below.

³³ See Anne Lohri, ‘Harriet Martineau and the People of Bleaburn’, *Studies in Short Fiction*, 20, 2 (1983), pp. 101-4.

³⁴ *Deerbrook*, iii, p. 261. Martineau concluded her Bleaburn story with ‘There was such a Mary Pickard; and what she did for a Yorkshire village in a season of fever is TRUE’. See ‘The Sickness and Health of the People of Bleaburn’, *Household Words*, 1, 12 (15 June 1850), p. 288.

William Hunter, whose displeasure at Hope's refusal to support his parliamentary candidate is sufficient to lose Hope the good-will of the villagers, who are dependent, deferential, uninformed and superstitious as a consequence. Worse, Hunter's displeasure is exploited by Mrs Rowland as part of her decorous power struggle with the Greys. She spreads the rumour that Hope, as a man of science, is keen to acquire corpses on which to experiment by any means available and that, as a medical man, he was favoured with unusually convenient means. The damage done by Mrs Rowland's voice is enormous. Martineau does not shrink from a portrayal of the fear in which the Hope household must live when faced by the naked violence of the villagers. Deerbrook closes in around Hope's Corner House: poverty strikes as more and more patients fall away. But the price of superstition is a terrible one, and Martineau uses the pestilence which strikes the village as her means to explore its costs. The villagers put their faith in fortune-tellers and resist attempts to respond rationally to the threat. Martineau also uses the pestilence to reveal how Mrs Rowland herself, so keen to manipulate superstition in others, is herself its victim. Hope makes the connection between the villagers' recourse to white magic and Mrs Rowland's repentance on the event of her daughter catching the plague; she believes that an avowal of her misdeeds and Hope's forgiveness would result in the providential *quid pro quo* of her daughter's recovery:

'How alike is the superstition of the ignorant and of the wicked! My poor neighbours stealing to the conjuror's tent... and this wretched lady, hope alike to bribe Heaven in their extremity'.³⁵

³⁵Deerbrook, iii, p. 276.

Nor is Mrs Rowland uniquely to blame. Lady Hunter, adopting her husband's antipathy towards Hope, implies that a burnt stick found in the churchyard is somehow linked to body-snatching and makes sure that her eyebrow-raising hints are peculiarly damaging by dropping them in the gossipy village shop. Worse, she does nothing to countermand them when it is pointed out to her that the sticks are the residue of a child's game, and Martineau makes the link between wrong-doing and poor household relationships by describing how Lady Hunter deliberately kept the truth from her husband.

Martineau pulled together a number of her habitual preoccupations in analysing the moral and social pestilence caused by the discourse of rumour and its bedfellow, superstition. Superstition is a weapon wielded by those whose sense of duty to household and community is perverted and used as a means of imposing their own power on Deerbrook; but those who wield it are also its victims.

Deerbrook and the responsibility of the household towards the community

Responsibility to the community is direct, personal and expressed through a household's engagement with its needs. As plague hits Deerbrook, the Hunters close their park gates. In a conversation with the rector, Hope expresses his disappointment at the villagers' selfishness in adversity, and the rector comments:

'How can you wonder...when they have such an example before their eyes in certain of their neighbours, to whom they are accustomed to look up? Sir William Hunter and his lady are enough to paralyse the morals of the whole parish at a time like this...I tell him that one hour of his presence among us

would do more good than all the gold he can send'.³⁶

A community, then, has the potential to thrive through the example of the individual household. Where that household is out of joint, then the community is potentially under threat. Martineau's *Illustrations* series offered such examples, but did so by means of binary opposites.³⁷ *Deerbrook* offers a more nuanced picture of households. Neither the Grey nor the Rowland family is secure in itself, and that failure casts a baleful eye over the village. Mr Rowland is well-intentioned, but weak. Occasionally, he screws his courage to the sticking place and faces down his wife's corrosive envy and active ill-will towards the Greys and Ibbotsons, but such moments are rare and ineffectual. He bemoans but does not counteract her patronage of a young surgeon, Walcot, whom she invites to the village as a weapon to drive out the Hopes. The Grey family is scarcely less culpable, though their errors are often those of self-centred thoughtlessness rather than intentional ill-doing. Mrs Grey enters into the pleasures of match-making at the very first meeting of the Ibbotsons and Hope and ignores her husband's warning to beware of letting speculations be known, since consequences could be grave. How prescient of Mr Grey, since his wife's wrongheaded assumptions (that Hope had fallen in love with Hester rather than Margaret) lead her to avowals which come close to destroying the happiness of all three.

Given that Mrs Grey and Mrs Rowland do not hesitate to enrol their children as combatants in their un-neighbourly conflicts, Martineau puts into the mouth of her

³⁶ *Deerbrook*, iii, pp. 217-8.

³⁷ See pp. 219-21.

governess character, Maria Young, a lament on how little she could do to repair the damage done by the poor upbringing of children, who are so often subject to bad parental example and temper. “If I had them in a house by myself, to spend their whole time with me, so that I could educate, instead of merely teaching them” .³⁸

We note Young’s reference to the potential of household. Martineau also gives the lame and lonely governess an opportunity to emphasize the importance of a household to women: “a home, an intimate, a perpetual call out of themselves” .³⁹ Jane Wood sees Maria Young (and Hester) as Martineau’s presentation of women unhappy in love, and victims of society’s call for a heroic fortitude in such cases.⁴⁰ But this is to misread Martineau’s purpose and to omit Martineau’s emphasis on the call of duty to household and community stimulated by a shared, as opposed to individual, affliction. Granted, Maria Young presents an unusual case: a Martineau character whose handicap is not in itself a stimulus to nobility of purpose and community spirit, but a catastrophe that is not to be overcome. Her injury and subsequent disability lose her the love of Philip Enderby, and she is physically marooned to teach, not in her own household, but in a summerhouse - an appendage to the partially corrupt household of the Greys. She is reduced to weeping and trembling on a scolding from Mrs Rowland when she had the temerity to defend the truth of Philip Enderby’s engagement to Margaret against his sister’s lying denials. Maria is caught up in the villagers’ attacks on the Corner House, but is physically incapable of helping: indeed, she is herself bundled to the floor by the crowd and breaks her leg. The Hopes have to succour her. Such is the fate of the woman deprived of a household; her

³⁸ *Deerbrook*, i, p. 40.

³⁹ *Deerbrook*, i, p. 67.

⁴⁰ Jane Wood, *Passion and Pathology in Victorian Fiction* (Oxford, 2001).

actions are peripheral at best, and her potential for action thwarted. It is therefore difficult to accept Alexis Easley's argument that Maria represents Martineau's habitual presentation of the detached observer, able to exert moral influence on the behalf of victims of injustice. Indeed, Easley implicitly recognizes the problematic nature of her interpretation, given Maria's powerlessness: '...she remains a redundant yet *somehow* [my stress] vitally necessary observer'.⁴¹

What solace the author provides for Maria is a limited one, but consistent with the doctrine of 'safety' noted in earlier chapters. In the novel's last recorded conversation, Maria speaks of the suffering caused by her solitariness, but a sense that the trial, successfully overcome by many of the greatest and best, cannot and should not be "morally fatal" in the context of "this exceedingly small section of our immortality".⁴² There is consolation in this, but, in the context of the overall themes of the novel, not much.

Good overcoming evil

At the start of volume III, Martineau launches into an uncharacteristically opaque *exordium* on the superiority of belief in purposeful providence over the supine acceptance of a purposeless fate, and expresses the sense of mighty forces at work in the world through the refrain 'On, on it rolls'. The startled reader is then invited to relate such

⁴¹ Alexis Easley, *First Person Anonymous: Women Writers and Victorian Print Media, 1830-70* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 56.

⁴² *Deerbrook*, iii, p. 301.

outpourings to ‘the daily routine of the household’.⁴³ Martineau links the care of the parent for the child to the workings of providence itself. The purpose of such care might not be clear to the child any more than the purposes of providence were clear to the adult, but an optimistic spirit, a sense of how one’s virtuous actions contributed to the progress willed by providence, were sufficient solace for all. Martineau then yokes her Emersonian rhetoric to *Deerbrook* by commenting that it matters not whether the world rolling over the poor in spirit was ‘the world of a solar system, or of a conquering empire, or of a small-souled village’.⁴⁴ The symbiotic relationship between her fiction and personal experience also exists at the level of metaphor, since the *Autobiography* echoes this stellar imagery in reflecting on individual progress. Referring to the pleasures of her household, she comments: ‘Perhaps no one has had a much more vivid enjoyment than myself of London society of a very high order...yet, I may say that there has never been, since I had a home of my own, an evening spent in the most charming intercourse that I would not have exchanged... for one of my ordinary evenings under the lamp within, and the lights of heaven without’.⁴⁵ Indeed, the epigraph to *Deerbrook*, taken from *Paradise Lost*, sets the theme of the interconnectedness of household and world:

.....With good
 Still overcoming evil, and by small
 Accomplishing great things, by things deemed weak
 Subverting worldly strong and worldly wise.

⁴³ *Deerbrook*, iii, p. 3.

⁴⁴ *Deerbrook*, iii, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Autobiography*, ii, p. 91.

Good does indeed overcome evil in Deerbrook, and it is important to note that the potential for evil lies at the heart of the Hope household in the combination of emotional insight and jealousy which defines Hester. She is right to recognize that the intimate companionship she had hoped for in her husband is missing, but wrong to leap to the jealousy that scars her personality: an echo, not only of Martineau's own torment when faced by her mother's supposed preference for the elder sister Rachel,⁴⁶ but also of the corrosive combination of self-centredness and morbid sensibility which scarred Anna of *Five Years of Youth*.⁴⁷ Sparks rightly argues that the marriage is presented as 'serving a communal rather than personal good',⁴⁸ but does not identify the motive force for the transformation of the Hope marriage: it is none other than the familiar Martineau theme of the salutary effect of adversity. But adversity in this instance is a demonstration of the interconnectedness of household and community. The potent combination of threat from the villagers' unreasoning superstition and the pestilence itself brings home in every sense the needs of the afflicted community, and responding to those needs helps the members of the Hope household overcome their own afflictions of temperament and disappointed love. In short, it encourages a self-sacrifice which binds them together in a common purpose and social activism; Martineau did not suggest that adversity and its call to duty stimulate love, but they do stimulate household companionship. The tension within the Hope household is recognized by all its members, but Margaret presciently comments to Hope that, as adversity threatens, Hester "will come out nobly then. I fear

⁴⁶ *Autobiography*, i, pp. 66-7.

⁴⁷ A contemporary reviewer of *Deerbrook* astutely identified Hester as the victim of sensibility. See 'Deerbrook; A Novel', *Edinburgh Review*, 69, 140 (July 1839), pp. 494 -502. The reviewer was less impressed by the 'very disagreeable' portrayal of the fever-laden Platt household (p. 502).

⁴⁸ Sparks, p. 31.

nothing for her but too much prosperity””.⁴⁹ At the nadir of their fortunes, Hester says ““This is life; and to live – to live with the whole soul, and mind, and strength, is enough””.⁵⁰ Martineau’s characterization is not so crude as to present Hester’s Damascene moment as transformatory, since she remains subject to pettiness and unfairness. She also has sufficient self-awareness to recognize that the misery she brought to her husband through her jealous tempers is ““over at least for the time that we are poor and persecuted...Persecution seems to have made us wiser, and poverty happier””.⁵¹ But it is through Hope himself that Martineau most clearly communicated her message of the peremptory call of duty and the purgatorial fires of suffering as the means of overcoming the dangers posed to community and individual alike. Having performed his duty, he rose ‘from self-reproach and mere compassion, to patience, to hope, to interest, to admiration, to love, – love at last worthy of hers, – love which satisfied even Hester’s imperious affections, and set even her over-busy mind and heart at rest’.⁵² This key paragraph in which Martineau identified Hope’s achievement is significantly prefaced by her tribute to the Hope household which is characterized by her repetition of part of the epigraph – how Hope had ‘overcome evil with good’ in both home and community. The Corner House was in part a haven, where right relations strove to curb faults of jealous temper and offered solace for disappointment in love; but those right relations were never merely inward-looking, since social activism was fed by, and itself nourished, hard-won harmony.

⁴⁹ *Deerbrook*, ii, p. 163.

⁵⁰ *Deerbrook*, iii, p. 190.

⁵¹ *Deerbrook*, iii, p. 195.

⁵² *Deerbrook*, iii, p. 299.

This interpretation of the relationships within the Hope household conflicts with the arguments of Caroline Roberts, who sees the eventual tranquillity of the Corner House as the product of Hope's conquest and deindividuation of Hester, facilitated through a 'clinical gaze', which (following Foucault) she takes to represent the transfer of authority from patient to doctor. As evidence, she cites Hope's ability to curb the rampages of the village termagant, Mrs Plumstead, by staring her out of countenance: 'He stood still till he could make himself heard, looking her full in the face; and it was not long before she would listen to his remonstrance'.⁵³ Roberts sees this as transference of power from the scold to Hope, and argues that Hope imposes the same diminution on Hester: in short, his clinical gaze effaces the individuality as defined by her rational self and leaves her 'subject to scrutiny and control'.⁵⁴ However, the Plumstead/Hester parallel is overdrawn, since Hope's gaze suppresses her raging, rather than her reason. Also, Martineau offers examples of Hester's gaze subduing Hope and his clinical, rationalist stance. The ring given to Margaret by Enderby as a sign of his early love, stolen by Platt and returned, is seen by Margaret as a good omen and a token of the imminent restoration of their relationship. Hester comments to Hope, "'...far be it from us to mock at such a superstition!'" As usual, when she was upon this subject, Hester looked up into her husband's face: and as usual, when she spoke on this subject, he made no reply'.⁵⁵ This is not because Hope deplores that residue of superstition, but because he knows how compromised he is in Enderby's eyes, having confessed to him his initial preference for Margaret. Thirdly, we recall that Hester is not controlled by a clinical gaze, but responding to the salutary impact of adversity and community need. Nor is she fully

⁵³ *Deerbrook*, i, p. 169.

⁵⁴ Roberts, p. 67.

⁵⁵ *Deerbrook*, iii, p. 267.

cured or suppressed and not left, as Roberts would have us believe, ‘dependent, flat and dominated’.⁵⁶

***Deerbrook*: a conclusion**

Deerbrook, then, despite the condescension of scholars, is not an anomaly in the *corpus* of Martineau’s writings. It is neither an aberrant wandering into marriage and love plot, nor a heavy-handed pastiche of Jane Austen by an author who should have been advised to restrict herself to drainage and political economy. To an extent, of course, its subject matter is political economy (and, to a lesser extent, and by implication, drains). The themes of *Deerbrook* are consistent with Martineau’s articles for the *Monthly Repository* and with her *Illustrations*. *Deerbrook*, in offering a romance of middle and lower-class life, fulfilled the need identified in her articles on Scott for teaching through pictures of lives and communities recognizable to most readers or listeners. Like so many of her political economy tales, it explores the relationship between household and community in a setting where duty is the best and most potent guide, and affliction and adversity the most salutary teachers. It is less reliant on binary opposites than the *Illustrations*; the ‘good’ household of the Hopes is not uniformly good and has to work at its goodness; the ‘bad’ household of the Rowlands is not uniformly bad and has to work at its badness.

The *Deerbrook* household is more than married couple and sister. As with Morgan in ‘The Farrers of Budge-Row’, the servant, Morris, shares in the trials and the triumphs of the Corner House and acts as a confidante and chorus. Morris is also the only person

⁵⁶ Roberts, p. 75.

beyond Hope himself to recognize the potential for catastrophe in the Corner House, since she has sufficient insight to guess accurately that the early tensions stem in part from his love for Margaret. And she is given the role of summing up the changed village relationships which had resulted from the Hopes' devotion to the community: "After this, however, the people in Deerbrook will be more ready to trust in my master's skill and kindness than in Sir William Hunter's grandeur and money".⁵⁷

Deerbrook is reminiscent of Martineau's earlier fiction in attacking the potent dangers to a community where superstition and ignorance combine. The potentially murderous onslaught on the Corner House reminds us of the charivari which led to the death of Nurse Ede in 'The Scholars of Arneside', and the extended discussion of the invidious influence of the predatory fortune-tellers takes the attack on village superstition to a level of realism at which contemporary critics shuddered. At the Platts' squalid cottage, money and blankets donated and hastily pawned have lined the pockets of the fortune-tellers, and Margaret has to cope with the hatred of the prostrated Platts as she empties the pail of charmed water to carry out the appalling detritus. Her practical care eventually overcomes their antagonism and leads to the restoration of Enderby's ring. The sheer physicality of the scene, and its link to the heartland concept of household and community, demonstrate the epistemological, artistic and, indeed, sociological distance travelled from Hannah More's own attack on village vaticination: 'Tawney Rachel; or, the Fortune Teller'.

I have thought it my duty to print this little history, as a kind of warning to all

⁵⁷ *Deerbrook*, iii, p. 264.

young men and maidens not to have any thing to say to *cheats, imposters, cunning women, fortune tellers, conjurors, and interpreters of dreams.*⁵⁸

***Household Education* (1849): the themes and obsessions revisited**

According to Martineau, household education was a theme which should concern readers ‘as seriously as any in the world’,⁵⁹ and one might therefore expect that it would reflect her core values, but also redraw them as educational theory and practice. This is indeed the case; but not entirely so, since it not only reverberates to overt and concealed autobiography, but also to echoes of *Deerbrook*.

The links with *Deerbrook* are reflected by a startling mimesis at the level of rhetorical flourishes. In a paean to the faculty of imagination in *Household Education*, Martineau saw the imaginative child as one who could visualize ‘by his mind, far far beyond the bounds of human measurement and the human sight;- sees the universe full of rolling suns; worlds for ever moving in their circles, and never clashing’.⁶⁰ We recall the line from *Deerbrook*: ‘On it rolls, - not only the great globe itself’.⁶¹

It is indeed tempting to argue that *Household Education* is *Deerbrook* rewritten as an educational manual. Hope was both a ‘power’ which, subject to training, determined

⁵⁸ Hannah More, ‘Tawney Rachel, or, the Fortune Teller’, *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, and Other Tales: Tales for the Common People* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1866), i, p. 241.

⁵⁹ HM, *Household Education* (London, 1849), p. 1.

⁶⁰ *Household Education*, p. 249.

⁶¹ *Deerbrook*, iii, p. 2.

from childhood onwards the ‘leading features of the character of the man or woman’⁶² and a character in a novel who, through a form of emotional intelligence underpinned by a belief in future progress, saved his household and his community. To Martineau, the exercise of the intellect in the service of progress and the fulfilling of duty to household and community constituted the ideal: the reward was joy.

Any man who is capable of this joy, and at the same time of spreading comfort and pleasure among the few who live round about him, is the noblest human being we can conceive of.⁶³

Indeed, morality and intellect were two sides of the same coin: ‘No intellectual faculty can act independently of the moral; and the higher the faculties, the closer we find their interaction’.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Martineau maintained that the imagination, allied to profound thought, was essential in contemplating the ‘lofty ideal’⁶⁵ which was a necessary inspiration and proceeded through the power of hope (and, indeed, of Hope). Small wonder that she wrote fiction as a means to an end.

Martineau did not restrict the theme of the education of a household to the education of children. Her opening chapter is entitled ‘Old and Young in school’, and she made it clear that servants were to be encompassed in that education: ‘Every member of the household – children, servants, apprentices – every inmate of the dwelling, must have a share in the family plan’.⁶⁶ The echoes of the Morris of *Deerbrook* are manifest.

⁶² *Household Education*, p. 79.

⁶³ *Household Education*, p. 25.

⁶⁴ *Household Education*, p. 259.

⁶⁵ *Household Education*, p. 260.

⁶⁶ *Household Education*, p. 2.

Concealed autobiography is apparent whenever Martineau prefaces a comment with ‘I knew a girl’. We can be tolerably certain that the girl was Martineau herself and that the same passage will appear in the *Autobiography* with the addition of the personal pronoun. She claimed in *Household Education* that

I knew a girl of eleven, thoughtful and timid...[who] opened a theme of perplexity, to get a solution from a grown-up brother...Her brother answered her with kindness in his tone, but injudiciously. He told her that that was a very serious question which she was too young to consider yet...She felt that if she could ask the question, – thus put it in a definite form, - she must be capable of understanding the answer.⁶⁷

The incestuous relationship between her fiction, her autobiography and *Household Education* could scarcely be clearer. The axiom in the last sentence of the *Household Education* paragraph appeared both in Alice’s thoughts in ‘The Tenth Haycock’⁶⁸ and in the *Autobiography*, which, in offering a more concise and vigorous version, emphasized the feeling rather than the intellectual disappointment: ‘I felt that if I could feel the difficulty, I had a right to the solution’.⁶⁹

As for the overt autobiography, perhaps the most heartfelt reminiscence was of her sister Ellen: ‘I well remember that the strongest feelings I ever entertained towards any human

⁶⁷ *Household Education*, pp. 233-4.

⁶⁸ Alice is denied an explanation by her clerical father on the grounds that ‘she must not speak of matters that she did not understand’ – in this case, why he insisted on rights of tithe even though it sabotaged good will. HM, ‘The Tenth Haycock’ *IoT* (London, 1834), p. 63.

⁶⁹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 34.

being were towards a sister born when I was nine years old'.⁷⁰ The reader might well question the relevance of such reminiscences in a book of advice on household education and, perhaps, wonder whether the claim to authenticity was any more than a rhetorical device. Martineau clearly felt the need to account for what might appear to be self-indulgence, and did so by claiming that her experiences validated her arguments. Then came part one of the familiar *cri de coeur*: 'I tell it the more readily because I am certain that my parents had scarcely any idea of the passions and emotions that were working within me'⁷¹ – to be followed by the equally-familiar part two: the child's thirst for justice. 'Too many little hearts are made to swell in silence because they cannot get justice, or to burn under the suspicion that their aspirations are despised'.⁷²

Under the heading 'Care of the Powers', Martineau discussed nine powers, but three predominated in length of treatment – fear, patience/infirmity and truth. The chapter on fear is replete with her own childhood terrors, and she then made a series of rather oblique connections which were meaningful to her as they fed on personal experience and on *Deerbrook*. She linked the overcoming of fear with the enduring of adversity, and then attached a sense of duty which she claimed was dependent on a feeling of awe in the face of some power or principle greater than oneself. The most effective method of overcoming fear through adversity, duty and awe was where the household itself focused on one fear: 'And if the one dreaded thing be sin, it is well'.⁷³ In this way is the Hope

⁷⁰ *Household Education*, p. 56.

⁷¹ *Household Education*, p. 59.

⁷² *Household Education*, p. 82.

⁷³ *Household Education*, p. 95.

household recast as theory and the Martineau household in Norwich found wanting in practice.

Chapter 8

Individual, household and community in practice and principle: Tynemouth and *The Playfellow*

Introduction

In 1839, Martineau sought relief from domestic and work pressures in travel, but her journey to Italy ended in pain and prostration. Suffering from a tumour which caused an enlarged and retroverted uterus, she was escorted to the Newcastle house of her sister Elizabeth and her brother-in-law, the surgeon Thomas Greenhow. She attributed the tumour to ‘the result of excessive anxiety of mind, - of the extreme tension of nerves under which I had been living for some years, while the three anxious members of my family were, I may say, on my hands’.⁷⁴ Her beloved Aunt Lee was now extremely old and, by Martineau’s account, in need of protection from Martineau’s increasingly bibulous and progressively wayward brother Henry and from the increasingly blind and progressively irascible Elizabeth Martineau. After six months’ care in Newcastle, Martineau decided to move to lodgings and a sofa in Tynemouth where, as she put it, ‘I lay for nearly five years, till obedience to a newly-discovered law of nature [mesmerism] raised me up, and sent me forth into the world again’.⁷⁵

Despite her near-complete incapacity, Martineau did not lay down her pen. Some critics clearly wish that she had done so. Pichanick takes particular exception to the prostration

⁷⁴ *Autobiography*, i, p. 441.

⁷⁵ *Autobiography*, i, p. 443. Her landlady was a Mrs Haliday, and the lodgings were in 57 Front St, Tynemouth. The 1841 census records HM as ‘author’. Four other women (classed by the enumerator as ‘Independent’) also lodged with Mrs Haliday, together with the latter’s 16 year old niece (Jane Arrowsmith, who was Martineau’s maid). See Enumerator’s book for Tynemouth: PRO, HO107/826/7.

monologue that was *Life in the Sick-Room* (1844) and the four stories for children in the *Playfellow* series (1841-3). She labels Martineau's account of her sufferings as a 'self-righteous little volume', and claims that her children's tales were over-stuffed with small heroes and heroines who 'bore premature responsibilities, were expected to act with the propriety of their elders, and were made to mouth proper and pious cant'.⁷⁶ Admittedly, the *Autobiography* provides plenty of ammunition for those who wish to dismiss *Life in the Sick-Room* as egocentric, morbid and unworthy – largely because Martineau described it as such, and came close to agreeing with most of her later critics that the *Playfellow* stories were tarred with the same brush.⁷⁷

Critics are uncomfortable with what they see as an implicit acceptance by Martineau of patriarchal stereotypes of female physical and intellectual weakness which cloaked, in the discourse of Christian resignation and fortitude, the demand for submissiveness. Maria Frawley, for instance, sees Martineau's 'rhetoric and posturing'⁷⁸ in *Life in the Sick-Room* as the unfortunate illustration of such regrettable complicity. Ann Hobart portrays Martineau in retreat to an 'arguably hypochondriac invalidism'.⁷⁹ Diana Postlethwaite proffers, in addition, a psychoanalytical reading which interprets the Tynemouth sick-bed as a 'solution to her dilemma',⁸⁰ namely, her fraught relationship with her mother and her

⁷⁶ Pichanick, pp. 127-8.

⁷⁷ The *Autobiography* averred that the Martineau of 1855 was 'ashamed...that my state of mind was so crude, if not morbid, as I now see it to have been...the magnifying of my own experience, the desperate concern as to my own ease and happiness, the moaning undertone...make me, to say the truth, heartily despise a considerable part of the book' (i, pp. 458-9). Of the last of her *Playfellow* tales, *The Crofton Boys*, she commented that it was written with the belief that it would be her final published work before death: 'There are some things in it which I could not have written except under that persuasion' (i, p. 456).

⁷⁸ Frawley, 'Introduction', p. 16.

⁷⁹ Hobart, p. 248.

⁸⁰ Postlethwaite, p. 595.

rejection of the gender traits demanded by Elizabeth Martineau. The Tynemouth illness, then, had a hysterical dimension where hysteria was a subversive, if self-defeating, attack on the role expected of women, and Postlethwaite claims that Martineau's long-term lack of taste, sense of smell and partial deafness were themselves in some degree hysterical. This perverse reading, which flies in the face of the evidence both biographical and medical, extends itself to *The Playfellow*, where, in *The Crofton Boys*, the boy hero, Hugh Proctor, is Martineau's 'idealized childhood self, freed from the constraints of gender to pursue education and travel'.⁸¹ An injury, which leads to the amputation of a foot, is a 'symbolic castration'.⁸²

Sanders is more inclined to accept the genuineness of Martineau's illness, though it was, she argues, socially and psychologically convenient, in that Martineau escaped from the London social round and was able to gratify her 'religious aspirations to martyrdom and purity of soul' at one and the same time.⁸³ The *Playfellow* tales thus projected the spiritual and visionary experience which featured strongly in *Life in the Sick-Room* onto children who not only coped with adversity, but also gained from it. This is a useful insight, but one which needs to be integrated into Martineau's earlier writings and life. The following sections seek to explore, not only the relationship between *Life in the Sick-Room*, *The Playfellow* series, *Deerbrook* and *Household Education*, but also the manner in which the Tynemouth writings represent a restatement and refining of habitual Martineau preoccupations and experiences through the prism of severe illness. A close interrogation of *Life in the Sick-Room* and the *Playfellow* stories will lead us to reject the

⁸¹ Postlethwaite, p. 598.

⁸² Postlethwaite, p. 599.

⁸³ Sanders, *Reason*, p. 97.

Postlethwaite and Pichanick readings in favour of an interpretation which questions the apparently dismissive *Autobiography* comments and reasserts the importance of the genuinely autobiographical elements which predated the Tynemouth period. Furthermore, an investigation into Martineau's time in Tynemouth reveals that she was never reclusive, and that she sought, despite her physical limitations, to engage with, and contribute to, the community which she could see only through a telescope. In familiar Martineau terms, she responded to the call of duty: 'Happy they, who have been brought up in allegiance to Duty, more or less strict; and happiest they whose loyalty has been the strictest!'⁸⁴

Tynemouth: sick-bed and *Life in the Sick-Room* (1844)

Our starting point is Martineau's title: not *In the Sick-Room* but *Life in the Sick-Room*. In this case, that ever-welcome peremptoriness of duty meant offering to others the peculiar insights of those prisoners of sickness whose remoteness from the mundane gave them the possibility of perceiving the providential patterns shaping human society and progress. This has been termed 'sage writing',⁸⁵ and Martineau reaches out to fellow-sufferers with the importunate call to be receptive to the great ideas which God offers them in consolation. Linda Peterson suggests that Martineau's status as a sage rested on her use of masculine rhetorical strategies and, following her enthusiastic reception of the ideas of Comte, on a version of scientific prophecy; unfortunately, Peterson neglects to discuss *Life in the Sick-Room*, offering as it does an alternative model of sage writing

⁸⁴ HM, *Life in the Sick-Room. Essays. By an Invalid*, 2nd edn (London, 1844), pp. 170-1.

⁸⁵ See Linda H. Peterson, 'Sage Writing', in Herbert F. Tucker (ed.), *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 373-87.

which veers at times towards the splenetic Carlyean prophetic style. For instance, in a passage on the power of ideas and their value to the sufferer, Martineau exploded:

Every man, and every woman, however wise and tender appearing and designing to be, who for an hour helps to keep closed the entrance to the region of ideas, - who stands between sufferers and great thoughts, (which are the angels of consolation sent by God to all to whom he has given souls,) are, in so far, ministers of hell.⁸⁶

Some of the great ideas which occurred to Martineau on her couch are equally familiar, and the more so because they were rooted in her early life. There is an opaque passage on the allowances made for the frailties of loved ones, even when their actions interfered with duty.

While working in the world, side by side with those whose doings we now contemplate, we were willing to be deceived in each particular instance; willing to expect that the judgment and action of those we loved and clung to would, in each case, be accordant with their best gifts and graces; and, however often disappointed, we made allowance for the known frailty, and inconsistently hoped it would be better next time. We now see too clearly to be deceived.⁸⁷

The loved one in this case is surely Elizabeth Martineau.

Tynemouth and social activism

Although Martineau emphasized the importance of periods of solitude for the invalid, she never extolled remoteness from community or claimed spiritual benefits from

⁸⁶ *Life in the Sick-Room*, p. 165.

⁸⁷ *Life in the Sick-Room*, pp. 184-5.

seclusion as such. In this, she is consistent with the doubts over the morality of the eremitical life expressed in earlier works such as ‘A Hermit’s Cave’ (1827) where she rejected the world-denying selfishness of the hermit in favour of ‘the devotion of those who are this day passing their irrevocable vow to serve God in their household with a perfect heart’.⁸⁸

Nor was her life in Tynemouth hermit-like. She welcomed within limits a stream of visitors, and made every effort within her power to engage with the neighbourhood. Typically, she paid for an improved water supply to her immediate neighbours by having a well dug in the garden and so saved a servant from the fatigue of carrying, on her head, the water from several streets away. In a prefiguring of problems later faced in Ambleside, she encountered indifference from the social and political hierarchy (mainly in the form of Hugh Percy, 3rd Duke of Northumberland) when attempting to relieve flooding into the church by provision of a central drain. She eventually cajoled the town elite to provide one which carried water straight into the harbour. She also faced resistance from the ignorance of her landlady, who objected to the installing of house drains (even though Martineau was able to pay for them). As she wrote in a letter to the sanitary reformer Edwin Chadwick, Mrs Haliday, objecting to a sink, preferred the time-dishonoured method of throwing her waste into the garden, ‘wh slopes regularly to a cottage, in wh from 9 to 14 persons live!’⁸⁹

⁸⁸ HM, ‘Sabbath Musings VI A Hermit’s Cave’, *Miscellanies* (2 vols, Boston, 1836), i, p. 176.

⁸⁹ HM to Edwin Chadwick, 27 November 1842, in Deborah Anna Logan (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Harriet Martineau* (5 vols., London, 2007), ii, p. 142.

Martineau's problematic relations with the Tynemouth clergy had everything to do with the importance she attached to education. Her telescope gave her a view of the soldiers in the castle yard, and she appears to have made the acquaintance of the widow of an officer who had been attempting to set up a barracks library. Martineau had been able, through the sale of some of her 'fancy-work', to buy them *Chambers's Journal* (a weekly periodical which included short stories). She clearly exploited her Unitarian and London networking to secure donations, and made sure that some of the books were suitable for the soldiers' children.⁹⁰ According to a letter to Mrs Marcet, Martineau had become involved once the project was in danger of failure due to the interference of the local clergy: 'The very narrow spirit of the clergy here is however the bane of the place. Out of fear of them, no books were given at first but the very dullest, most unreadable Sermon books'.⁹¹ She seems to have felt that the clergy and the Duke were united in their obstructiveness. Northumberland had donated the site and provided £200 towards the cost of the new parish church (Church of the Holy Saviour), which was consecrated in August 1841. The living was in his gift. It was a chapel-of-ease for the mother church of Christ Church, North Shields, and services were provided by the vicar of Christ Church, the Rev. Christopher Reed, whose patron was also the Duke of Northumberland.⁹² Reed may

⁹⁰ HM to Jane Welsh Carlyle, 20 March 1844. Martineau reported the arrival of Marcet's works for children – 'said soldiers having many children'. See *Collected Letters*, ii, p. 267.

⁹¹ HM to Jane Marcet, 20 March 1844, *Collected Letters*, ii, p. 264.

⁹² The Rev. Christopher Reed graduated BA from Exeter College, Oxford in 1820 and MA in 1829. Reed was ordained by the Bishop of Durham in 1829 and was appointed to the living of Tynemouth in 1830. See *Crockford's Clerical Directory* for 1865, p. 526. The 1851 census gives as his place of residence Chirton House (in the borough of Tynemouth). See Enumerator's book for Tynemouth: PRO, HO 107/2409. Reed's wife, Anne, was related to the Collingwood family whose numbers included admirals and High Sheriffs of Northumberland. Clearly, Christopher Reed's links with the Duke of Northumberland were bolstered at the family and political level. As for Hugh Percy, the *DNB* offers some support for Martineau's complaints of his lack of concern for Tynemouth. The Duke 'was not popular in Northumberland, where he was regarded as unfriendly, reactionary, and self-important, with some justification'. See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 10 December 2012, at www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21945.

have had the assistance of a Rev. George Latimer (who, as curate, had charge of Holy Saviour from 1846). Recapturing the opinions of the Tynemouth clergy is not easy, but there may be a useful indication in a publication by Latimer of a co-authored work entitled *Pastoral Advice of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.* This might imply an adherence to the evangelical wing of the Church of England, and therefore perhaps a certain fellow-feeling towards a well known dissenter (even if a Unitarian) such as Martineau. However, the title is profoundly misleading, and the pamphlet proves to be a series of carefully-selected extracts from Wesley with a single theme – the evils of separation from the Anglican church. An ‘analysis’ then attempted to prove Wesley’s antipathy towards dissent and his requirement that Methodists should not leave the Church of England: in short, Wesley supposedly ‘Traced the failure of Methodism in some places to disloyalty to the Church...and its success in other places to the adherence of members to it’.⁹³ In 1848, Latimer moved to St Paul’s, Birmingham, a church unscathed by contemporary movements in ecclesiology. It is therefore conceivable that he, and perhaps Reed, were traditionalist clergy of the same High Tory bent as their patron, and as equally disengaged with the concerns of the parish beyond their own legal rights. Reed was Vicar of Tynemouth from 1830 to 1868 (responsible for Christ Church, North Shields and Holy Saviour), but for the last twelve years was ‘almost entirely non-resident’.⁹⁴ His absences were bitterly resented. *The Northern Daily Express* in 1859 commented that ‘...the Churchmen in the parish feel deeply the want of respect shown to them by the continued absence of the vicar, who has now been from his flock a long, long time’.⁹⁵ The parish

⁹³ George B.P. Latimer & James S. Pollock, *Pastoral Advice of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.* (Birmingham, 1863), p. 11.

⁹⁴ WHRO, *Gleanings*, comment made by the Honorary Vestry Clerk, 118.

⁹⁵ WHRO, *Gleanings*, cutting from the *Northern Daily Express*, 25 April 1859, 350.

would itself appear to have had no Tractarian or evangelical leanings. A curate, the Rev. John Henry Blunt, preached a sermon in North Shields on Real Presence in 1853 which led to the accusation that he accepted the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and a parishioners' petition to the bishop urging him not to ordain Mr Blunt.⁹⁶ The Rev. John Reed, brother of the vicar, was called upon frequently to assist with the parish. He appears to have been as combative as Christopher Reed was absent: as for church bazaars, he stated unequivocally, and with surprising knowledge of his creator's views, that "God abhorred them".⁹⁷ Christopher Reed's only apparent involvement in the administrative life of the parish was to insist that his interpretation of legal rights over pew rents should prevail. Martineau's criticisms of such clergy had shaped 'The Tenth Haycock'.⁹⁸ Problems with an allegedly obstructive and selfish clergy and landowner alliance set the tone for Martineau's frustrations in Ambleside.⁹⁹

A letter to Richard Monckton Milnes placed her Tynemouth sick-bed firmly in the context of her other vicissitudes and the stimulus they gave to word and deed. She linked the impetus behind *Life in the Sick-Room* to the same call of duty that led her to declare her deafness and write 'Letter to the Deaf'; in such terms, illness was a 'privilege'. However, she claimed that to have written the book under that conviction would have been morally wrong: 'the integrity of the experience & action wd have been spoiled'. In

⁹⁶ WHRO, *Gleanings*, cutting from the *Northern Daily Express*, 23 April 1853, 86.

⁹⁷ WHRO, *Gleanings*, report of sermon in ?1859, 98. Some Tractarians also objected to bazaars. In a Tractarian novel of 1841, the mild-mannered rector, Mr Sanderson, launches an excoriating attack of bazaars as secularism of the worst kind and wholly inappropriate to any sacred cause. See Francis Paget, *St Antholin's; or Old Churches and New. A Tale for the Times*, pp. 70-2 and Simon Skinner's commentary in *Tractarians and the 'Condition of England'. The Social and Political Thought of the Oxford Movement* (Oxford, 2004), p. 154.

⁹⁸ See pp. 262-3.

⁹⁹ See pp. 293-6.

other words, the sense of duty – the belief that there was a genuine need for the book – was the right motive, and the purely personal sense of a privileged position would have been the wrong motive. This is not to deny the importance of the lessons of vicissitude, but to claim that the morally superior stance was to invoke duty rather than rely upon vicissitude as the teacher. The relationship between autobiography and personal ethics is stated with clarity.

It is strange that I did not foresee it, for my whole life has been a series of such lessons, - that I was to live for others. I loved & relied upon my eldest brother above every body, & he died. I shd have lived by & on Music, & I became deaf. I was about to marry, & my friend died. I had fixed my plan of life & work, 5 years since, after many vicissitudes, & I was laid low, - & so on, through life; - meantime, the conditions once appointed for me, all my efforts within them have succeeded.¹⁰⁰

An earlier letter to Milnes located what she thought of as her final illness in the same context of duty, and reveals how difficult she had initially found the utter prostration because it encouraged self-consciousness and an unhealthy dwelling on the bubble of reputation; but purpose was found with the realization that the illness had to be seen as the ultimate test of her worth. One can and should trace the continuity here with her reaction to the death of her brother and Worthington; the sense of their ‘safety’ through living their lives for the sake of others.¹⁰¹ In fact, she claimed to see the illness as a unique opportunity, since it stripped away all encumbrances and allowed one to focus on precisely those essentials.

The better side of th matter is that I find this to be the trial appointed...of the

¹⁰⁰ HM to Richard Monckton Milnes, 22 December ?1843, *Collected Letters*, ii, pp. 208-9.

¹⁰¹ See pp. 80-1.

thorough reduction to essentials wh I suspect few situations but that of sick solitude can yield the experience of.¹⁰²

Life in the Sick-Room, then, does not represent a break or dramatic shift in emphasis in Martineau's thought or experiences. A sudden, joyous outburst on the prospect of the Penny Post is not the cry of an invalid desperate for human contact by letter, but the excitement of a writer reflecting on how Rowland Hill had given households the most precious of gifts: the opportunity for frequent contact and the reforging of the links between household, community and the wider world.

It is, perhaps, scarcely possible to exaggerate the force and extent of its civilising and humanising influences, especially in regard to its spreading the spirit of Home over all the occupations and interests of life, in defiance of the separating powers of distance and poverty.¹⁰³

A. Laura Stef-Praun has traced correspondences between Martineau's early essays on the Genius of Scott and *Life in the Sick-Room* and discusses Martineau's re-fashioning of the concept of genius to root it in the stimulus of pain and disability.¹⁰⁴ We must, however, add the concept of adversity to the list of stimuli, since Martineau did so herself in the Scott essay by using the example of orphanhood:

Whether the infliction be orphanhood, leading to self-reliance; whether it be the blindness which has exalted the passion of many bards, or the deafness which deepened the genius of Beethoven...its efficacy depends upon the degree in which

¹⁰² HM to Richard Monckton Milnes, 4 Dec 1841, *Collected Letters*, ii, pp. 102-3.

¹⁰³ *Life in the Sick-Room*, p. 81.

¹⁰⁴ A. Laura Stef-Praun, 'Harriet Martineau's "intellectual nobility": gender, genius and disability', in Ella Dzelzainis and Cora Kaplan (eds), *Harriet Martineau: Authorship, society and empire* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 38-51.

it is felt; that is, on the degree of knowledge of reality which it confers.¹⁰⁵

Martineau's later objections to *Life in the Sick-Room* on the grounds of its supposed morbidity reflect her distaste for its forays into spirituality and its acceptance of providential administration. Most contemporary reviewers were loud in their praise. The contemporary review in *The Christian Examiner* claimed it to be 'exhilarating', identified its appeal to duty and explicitly denied its morbidity: 'Nothing morbid occurs in the whole book'.¹⁰⁶ The *Westminster Review* was equally enthusiastic, if from a quite different and secular perspective: Martineau's continued engagement with her world (and comments on Rowland Hill) were held up for approval.¹⁰⁷ The *Dublin University Magazine* noted but disliked the optimistic belief in the growing political power of the lower classes, but applauded the work as a whole: 'We reluctantly close this beautiful volume'.¹⁰⁸ *The British and Foreign Medical Review* dissented, but its allegations of 'morbid states of mind'¹⁰⁹ reflect the writer's defence of the professionalization of medicine and a patriarchal mind-set against Martineau's claims to the invalid's right to authority over her own illness: as Alison Winter puts it, the relationship between body and mind was 'a site of intense contests over cultural authority during this period'.¹¹⁰ So was the sick-room.

¹⁰⁵ HM, 'Characteristics of the Genius of Scott', *Miscellanies*, i, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ 'E.Q.S'. Art. II. '*Life in the Sick-Room*', *The Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany*, 38 (March 1845), p. 159.

¹⁰⁷ Anon., 'Miscellaneous Notices', *Westminster Review*, 41, 2 (June 1844), pp. 608-11.

¹⁰⁸ Anon., 'Essays. By an invalid', *Dublin University Magazine*, 23, 137 (May 1844), p. 582.

¹⁰⁹ Anon., 'Life in a sick-room', *British and Foreign Medical Review*, 18 (1844), p. 472.

¹¹⁰ Alison Winter, 'Harriet Martineau and the Reform of the Invalid in Victorian England', *The Historical Journal*, 38, 3 (September 1995), p. 615. Similarly, Anka Ryall argues that Martineau's mesmeric 'cure' was interpreted by the medical profession as an attack on the medical hegemony which was both male and epistemological: her alleged peculiarities and opinions were presented as the product of diseased reproductive organs. Ryall claims that Martineau's masculine *persona* adopted in her *Once a Week*

Tynemouth: sick-bed and *The Playfellow* (1841)

The Playfellow stories may or may not be an aberration, but their characteristics are at first sight surprising. They are adventure stories, and one is tempted to add ‘for boys’: *The Crofton Boys* is a school adventure; *The Settlers at Home* is a disaster adventure set in the seventeenth-century Isle of Axholme; *The Peasant and the Prince* is an adventure-cum-historical biography set in pre-Revolutionary France and *Feats on the Fiord* is a pirate adventure set in eighteenth-century Norway. They are replete with derring-do, fisticuffs, and, at times, a non-denominational piety which advocates the kind of prayers whose petitions for supernatural intervention the necessarian Martineau would have habitually dismissed as fatuous. It would therefore seem that Pichanick’s claim that they represented Martineau’s attempt to tap a market to eke out her income is a just one. Such judgements are, however, misleading. Ainslie Robinson rightly reminds us that the readership for children’s books ‘commonly comprised entire families at once’;¹¹¹ and, one might add, adult households: she cites the positive reactions of both George Eliot and R.H. Horne¹¹² to *The Crofton Boys*. Indeed, the *Playfellow* tales represent a recasting of Martineau’s heartland concepts in a genre which may be unexpected but is not entirely

journalism represented ‘a desire to avoid being trapped in the gendered experience associated with her illness and with the practices of gynaecology’. See ‘Medical Body and Lived Experience: The Case of Harriet Martineau’, *Mosaic*, 33, 4 (December 2000), p. 51. Perhaps so: but Martineau had adopted the masculine *nom de plume* and ventured into supposed masculine discourse long before the onset of her illness (see above, p. 36).

¹¹¹ Ainslie Robinson, ‘Playfellows and Propaganda: Harriet Martineau’s children’s writing’, *Women’s Writing*, 9, 3 (2002), p. 402.

¹¹² Horne described *The Playfellow* stories as ‘constructed simply, to suit the minds for which they are intended, and founded on the emotions and actions of children, [they] breathe a spirit of noble fortitude, endurance, energy, and self-control, which make them healthy reading for old and young’. See R.H. Horne, *A New Spirit of the Age* (Oxford, 1907), p. 298.

new, given the earlier tales aimed at children, including *Five Years of Youth* and *Christmas-Day: a Tale*. It could also be argued that they represented a reworking for children of some of the plots of the *Illustrations* where characters respond to extreme circumstances which are foreign to their experience. In ‘The Charmed Sea’, for instance, Polish exiles found themselves forced to set up communities in the Siberian wastes,¹¹³ and Martineau’s very first tale, ‘Life in the Wilds’, presented the picture of a community in southern Africa devastated after a raid by bushmen.¹¹⁴ Sanders describes the children in *Feats on the Fiord* and *The Settlers at Home* as ‘child-sized *Robinson Crusoes*’,¹¹⁵ but, although one appreciates that Martineau shares Defoe’s absorption in material details of survival, the point is that the survivors operated in households and not as solitary individuals. Thus, the *Playfellow* tales revisit Martineau’s habitual concerns: the potentially beneficial impact of adversity, the call of duty, right and wrong household relationships (including servants), a milking of personal experience and attacks on superstition.

In *The Settlers at Home*, Martineau made use of the binary opposite households familiar from the *Illustrations*. It contrasts the hard-working, trusting and mutually-supportive household of Huguenot settlers, the Linacres (Martineau cannot make up her mind whether they are French or Dutch), with the native Redfurns, whose lifestyle is characterized by malice towards foreigners, distrust, vagabondage and mutual loathing. Unfortunately for the Linacres, the Isle of Axholme in the Civil War period is Parliamentarian in sympathy and, oddly enough, sees the French and Dutch settlers, and

¹¹³ HM, ‘The Charmed Sea’, *IPE* No. XIII (London, 1833).

¹¹⁴ HM, ‘Life in the Wilds’, *IPE* No. I (London, 1833).

¹¹⁵ Sanders, *Reason*, p. 89.

the many improvements made in drainage through the efforts of Vermuyden, as agents of the king. In short, there is no protection for them from the depredations of the Redfurns, whose maleficence extends to damage for damage's sake. In the absence of Mr Linacre, who is a miller, and his wife, who looks after a mineral spa, the Redfurns (Stephen the husband, Nan his wife and their nephew Roger) strangle hens, unravel knitting, ruin precious bulbs and try to destroy the miller's gypsum. Martineau therefore offers an unsubtle comparison of the entirely productive household of the Linacres – even the eleven year-old Oliver works hard to perfect designs in alabaster – with those who live like birds of prey.

Having set the scene, Martineau then introduced the disaster. Parliamentarians pull up a sluice, and the Isle is catastrophically flooded. The mill is cut off; the miller is swept out to sea, the fate of the mother unknown, and the children are left in a collapsing mill with the well-meaning but ignorant and superstitious servant. The Redfurns are presumed dead with the exception of the teenage boy Roger, who briefly makes common cause with Oliver, the eight year-old Mildred and the toddler George.

The impact of the flood is presented in unswerving detail. The baby falls desperately ill, and the children are forced to abandon the mill. But affliction has, as ever, its very real positives. Oliver, struggling to act as head of the household, is turned from a rather ineffectual boy into a resourceful and brave young man.

He was no taller, and no stronger;- indeed he seemed to-day to be growing weaker with fatigue: but he was not the timid boy he had always appeared before. He spoke

like a man; and there was the spirit of a man in his eyes. It was not a singular instance. There have been other cases in which a timid boy has been made a man of, on a sudden, by having to protect, from danger or in sorrow, some weaker than himself.¹¹⁶

With this recognition of a physical frailty, Martineau stopped short of a simplistic and complete transformation, and the reform of Roger is not dissimilar. Roger begins to perceive what his own household had been and how, despite its many failings, there were moments of shared care which were better than the life of the solitary; how the few imposed and resentfully-performed duties were meaningful; how the signs of affection which the dying baby George gave him were the awakening of his self-respect; and how the death of that baby left him full of grief but redeemed. The chapter 'Roger his own Master' had offered an unflinching description of the boy's initial delight at what he first sees as the chance to please himself without any of the duties imposed on him even in his disorderly household, of his cruelty to his dog, and of his resolute refusal to think of the needs of the Linacres as he piles up more meat than he can eat. But then, other thoughts enter his head unbidden. He dreams of his uncle's face and half regrets that they parted in anger; he looks up wistfully at the mill in the hope that the Linacres might be looking in his direction, if only to fear him; and then he tries to compose himself for sleep, wrapping his head in a blanket 'as if he was afraid lest even his dog should see that he was crying'.¹¹⁷ Chapters such as this address the criticisms Martineau made of Scott - his lack of interest and facility in portraying the reality of the lives of the lower classes and a failure to accept that moral lessons are drawn most effectively when rooted in recognizable experience. The plot may not be advanced by descriptions of Roger, on his

¹¹⁶ HM, *The Settlers at Home* (London, 1841), p. 248.

¹¹⁷ *The Settlers at Home*, p. 174.

island in the flood, wasting his time destroying birds' nests; nor need Martineau dwell on the *minutiae* of the children's search for food and the specifics of cooking. But she did so because, in the same way that the affliction was real, the response was also real. Growth in moral stature was defined, not by moments of sudden illumination, but by the painstaking accepting of duties and responsibilities and the ultimately unsuccessful attempt to keep a baby alive.

The story ends with the reuniting of the children with their mother and the probable survival of their father, but the pill of the baby's lingering death is not otherwise sugared. The descriptions of his pathetic demise, his burial and the fear of his body being disturbed by beasts, and such scenes as the horrible sight of the carrion eating rotting carcasses, make this very much a challenging book for the youthful reader. Indeed, Martineau, unlike her predecessors Maria Edgeworth and Mrs Sherwood,¹¹⁸ does not give her young heroes and heroines and their readers the solace of the guidance of adults. There is, after all, a strong and healthy adult on the scene – Ailwin, the maid. She is good-hearted and hard-working and would, in other Martineau novels, be a stalwart member of the household and perhaps even its saviour. But she is incapacitated by that familiar Martineau theme – superstition. There are echoes of 'The Scholars of Arneside'¹¹⁹ in her ready belief in witchcraft and in her conviction that Roger Redfurn was in league with malevolent spirits. She interprets the fleeing of animals from the flood waters as "“a plague of Egypt that that boy has brought upon us”".¹²⁰ Such convictions

¹¹⁸ Sanders (*Reason*, p. 90) characterizes the fictional parents in the tales of Edgeworth and Sherwood as 'often priggish and solemn'.

¹¹⁹ See pp. 211-13.

¹²⁰ *The Settlers at Home*, p. 127.

render her paralysed by fear at times when only the growing maturity of Oliver stands between the family and a torpor which would have led to their deaths.

Feats on the Fiord is a sustained attack on superstition, and once again a superstitious servant exacerbates a series of crises and adventures. In this instance, the honest Lutheran family of the Erlingsens has a maid, Erica, who, despite her strong Christian faith, was brought up to believe in the vengefulness of nature spirits if they were insufficiently honoured. Her particular fear is of Nipen, whose proneness to offence made him dangerous in wind and rain. Her engagement feast is overshadowed by her fears as her fiancé, Rolf, dismisses her beliefs in the spirits, and the clergyman, outraged at the custom of leaving gifts for Nipen, refuses to remain to the end of the feast; and then, a servant boy, Oddo, eats the cake intended for the spirit. Martineau does not countenance the clergyman's anger, which lacks understanding and a respect of traditional beliefs, however erroneous.¹²¹ Her tale of pirates and the treachery of the servant Hund – a rival for Erica's hand – is also a tale of the exposing and defeat of superstition, in large part through the bravery and quick-wittedness of Oddo himself. In the manner of the pastor in *The Settlers at Home*, the summary is left with the bishop, who distributes plaudits, rational explanations, belief in progress but a refusal to condemn those who remain prisoners of superstition.

The Crofton Boys, a boarding school story, is at first sight an odd setting for the application of Martineau's standard themes and didacticism. There are accounts of the

¹²¹ See pp. 320-1 for a discussion of Martineau's attitude towards ritual. She appears to have felt that, where tradition countenanced a set of beliefs which were not morally or intellectually harmful, they should be afforded respect.

centrality of the playground to the boys' experience, schoolboy slang, bullying and the bully's comeuppance, the depredations of the evil usher, the value placed on physical courage. It is therefore understandable that objections should be raised to Martineau's apparently indiscriminating endorsement of a patriarchal mind-set and to the undeniably subsidiary role allotted to the sisters of the hero, Hugh Proctor: in fact, the story seemingly offers evidence to support the stance of David and Freedgood, given their emphasis on the manner in which Martineau supposedly flattered the bourgeoisie – the Proctors are resolutely bourgeois - and was complicit with patriarchy.¹²² Such views, however, fail both to place *The Crofton Boys* in the context of Martineau's autobiographical frames of reference and, crucially, to recognize the centrality of Hugh's mother to the Proctor household and its value-systems; those are the values which are the agents for Hugh's transformation through adversity.

Hugh Proctor's adversity comes in the form of the amputation of a foot. The amputation is thematically appropriate as Hugh's obsessions with masculine values of adventure and physicality had essentially compromised his pre-Crofton years, and the handicap was therefore devastating to his self-image. Hugh is eight years old as the story starts, and his ambition is to be a soldier or sailor. Hugh finds himself unable to learn his lessons from the daily governess, so distracted is he by dreams of adventures to come.

It is Mrs Proctor who recognizes Hugh's moral weakness: his failure of self-discipline in accepting and tackling his lack of application to learning itself. She accuses him of

¹²² See p. 15.

wanting “courage to mend the weakness of your mind”,¹²³ and the decision to send him to Crofton is made in the hope of his reformation. Similarly, it is Mrs Proctor, and not her husband, who arrives to be with Hugh as his foot is amputated, and her wisdom guides him through the aftermath. Martineau’s presentation of Mr Proctor is ambivalent. His hard work and care for his family are noted, but his behaviour is fundamentally selfish and sows the seeds for the failings of his son. His noisiness and thoughtlessness compromise the authority of the governess and encourage Hugh in his lack of regard for lessons. And Mr Proctor has so little self-restraint that he sabotages right relations in his own household, which Martineau presents in the style of *Deerbrook* as rightfully inclusive of servants and the day-governess. It takes him no more than a few hours to damage the new mat the cook had laid out by rolling Harry up in it, encourage Hugh’s rudeness to his despairing governess, and make Agnes cry by revealing the secret that his daughters had sworn to keep – that Hugh was to become a Crofton boy within a month.

Men and boys in *The Crofton Boys* use high places as a test of their physical courage, but it is also men and boys whose thoughtlessness turns adventure into disaster, and women and girls who try to restrain them without compromising their safety. Hugh is pulled from a wall by the foot, and it is the resulting injury that leads to the amputation; earlier in the book, his sister Agnes catches him by the foot to restrain him for his own good, and he comes to no harm. It is Mrs Proctor who seizes her husband’s coat-tails as he clambers on to the coach taking Hugh to Crofton, but his facetious remark about

¹²³ HM, ‘The Crofton Boys’ in *The Playfellow* (Manchester and New York, 1895), p. 30.

Hugh's failings in mental arithmetic is overheard by the school usher and duly contributes to Hugh's early unhappiness at the school.¹²⁴

We noted earlier Postlethwaite's contention that Hugh represented Martineau's fantasies of gender-free adventure, and that his injury represented a symbolic castration. There is no evidence of Martineau's identification with Hugh, as she continues to record examples of his post-operation selfishness, including ignoring his sister in favour of chattering with a fellow Crofton boy: ironically, the very one who had pulled him from the wall and changed his life immeasurably. Martineau comments that Hugh 'did not know indeed that his sister had been in the cold and in the dark; but he might have felt that he had used her with a roughness which is more painful to a loving heart than cold and darkness are to the body'.¹²⁵ The Norwich Martineau loved her brothers, but the *Autobiography* testifies to the hurt as well as the affection. So does *The Crofton Boys*.

Indeed, *The Crofton Boys* resonates with autobiography. Hugh's amputation, and the harrowing scenes of the surgeon's arrival, derive from that operation performed by Philip Meadows Martineau on 'E', her childhood friend Emily Cooper.¹²⁶ Mrs Proctor's advice to Hugh is a startlingly-honest statement of the trials he will face, including the danger of false pride through managing his handicap, and the possibility of being a figure of fun.

The mother's words represent Martineau's mature appreciation of the damage done by

¹²⁴ The so-called 'separation of spheres' doctrine meant that there was potentially a tension between men's exclusion from participation in domestic management and their patriarchal status, which placed them at the head of the household and made them jealous of their authority. Mr Proctor's physically aggressive interference might betoken such conflict. See John Tosh's chapter 'Domesticity and Manliness' in Michael Roper and John Tosh (eds), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London, 1991), pp. 44-73.

¹²⁵ 'The Crofton Boys', p. 137.

¹²⁶ See p. 96.

E's parents in refusing to recognize the disability, and the relative serenity gained by Emily in later life as she refused to deny its impact on her life. Martineau's deafness followed a similar pattern of parental denial and personal acceptance, and her 1852 tale 'The Deaf Playmate's Story' (written for Dickens's *Household Words*) is *The Crofton Boys* with personal experience rendered even more transparent.¹²⁷ She also imported her own experiences as an eleven year old at Mr Perry's school, where she composed themes with the unavailing precociousness and later enjoyment that she grants to Hugh Proctor, and the Crofton schoolroom hiss that greets the naïf tale-teller greeted her at Mr Perry's.¹²⁸

The Crofton Boys perhaps represents Martineau's valedictory statement on affliction and duty, addressed in part to herself as a reminder that it did not do to be too proud of fortitude, and in part as a token of fundamental continuities in her world-view. In the Preface to the first edition, she restated the regard for Scott and her view of the significance of personal affliction for his life and work which had featured so strongly in her *Tait's* essays on Scott's genius.

My young readers may perhaps be pleased, when they grow up to read Scott's Life (by Lockhart), to find that there really was a boy who did and bore what is here told. They may also discover hereafter that the same circumstances and conduct have occurred more than once in real life.¹²⁹

As for Hugh Proctor, he receives his reward for hearkening to his mother's advice.

Within a year, he is offered the prospect of a place at the India College as token of his

¹²⁷ See pp. 175-6, fn. 111.

¹²⁸ See *Autobiography*, i, p. 51 and 'The Crofton Boys', p. 70.

¹²⁹ *The Crofton Boys*, 1st edn (London, 1841), p. v.

worth and capacity for friendship. His earlier dreams of adventure are therefore honed through adversity into reality, and he is able to assure Tooke, the boy responsible for the incident, that “‘I never should have gone to India if I had not lost my foot; and I think it well worth while losing my foot to go to India’”. Martineau did not choose, however, to end with a boyish summing up; instead, her very last word is, perhaps, the inevitable one: ‘he could not but be conscious that he went out well prepared for honourable duty’.¹³⁰

Indeed, Hugh embodies a development in what might be termed Martineau’s martyrdom discourse. He initially equates courage with the ability to bear pain, and sickens his uncle with stories of physical torture; in the end, however, he is able to demonstrate precisely that courage which his mother had told him that he lacked: the acceptance that he must overcome the weaknesses in his mind before he can grow intellectually and morally. The discourse of martyrdom can also be traced across Martineau’s life. We recall the little girl hoping for a visible reward for suffering in her dream of angels coming for her in the middle of a service at the Octagon; we recall the young adult obsessed with a sense of duty and a recognition that the dutiful were martyrs who were ‘safe’ in Heaven with the knowledge that their lives had prepared them for the presence of God. Stories of Christian martyrdom continued to pepper the pages of her tales right down to the *Playfellow* series, but martyrdom was also equated to the intellectual and moral growth that may arise from affliction – hence her references to Milton, to Beethoven and, of course, to Scott. The belief that an incapacitating illness may fit one for insights beyond those achievable in ordinary life is also part of the martyrdom discourse, and *Life in the Sick-Room* came closest to making such a claim. The *Autobiography* inevitably hastened

¹³⁰ ‘The Crofton Boys’, p. 173.

to debunk any such notion and complained of ‘the magnifying of my own experience’.¹³¹ But one might at least speculate that the tension between the potential for self-growth and the potential for self-pride in envisaging the value of affliction was not fully resolved in the *Autobiography*, given Martineau’s apparent eagerness in anticipating the likely Christian outcry to be occasioned by publishing the *Letters on the Laws of Man’s Nature and Development*. She was perhaps too ready to welcome martyrdom for a new faith.

¹³¹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 458.

Chapter 9

Ambleside: principle into practice

Introduction

So far, it has been argued that Martineau's fiction, a creative response to her subjectivity and self-fashioning, consistently taught its readers about household and community relations and presented social activism as part of the duty to household which was fundamental to progress of individual and community. Was she as consistent in deed as in thought? This is a home question, since this thesis has found that her writings, correspondence and early life appeared to demand social action based on rational principles and that overarching sense of duty. It is therefore essential to examine the local impact of her decision to settle in Ambleside, Cumbria from 1845, which gave her the *tabula rasa* on which to inscribe her formulation of relationships within a household and projected into a community. Such an examination confirms the centrality of the heartland concepts to Martineau's life as well as to her art. Martineau designed the spatial arrangements of her newly-built house, The Knoll, to include her servants as full members of a new household rather than consigning them to back-stairs and attic rooms. Her drainage systems were intended to be a model to a township much in need of effective sanitation, and she reacted intemperately to criticism of their design. She built a cottage for the Fulchers – the man and wife team who were to service the needs of her tiny farm. She published their successes under the title of 'Our Farm of Two Acres' and initially celebrated the way in which Fulcher himself was transformed by individual

responsibility, by a shared sense of duty and by his own cottage. This model was applied to Ambleside as a whole by the setting up a building society, and the education she offered her maids resurfaced as lectures delivered to the lower classes. In offering a detailed analysis of the nature both of her community and her engagement with it, chapter 9 finds echoes of the Corner House and the village of Deerbrook. Her own fiction thus was part of the self-fashioning which led her to adopt the reformer's role in a community in which she had no roots. Her sense of belonging was essentially an act of will based on duty and responsibility: or, to put it another way, on her heartland concepts.

Martineau, Ambleside and current scholarship

Unfortunately, Martineau scholars have failed to recognize the importance of her engagement in Ambleside in understanding her core principles. Hill and Hoecker-Drysdale's recent attempt to establish Martineau's credentials as a pioneer sociologist and an exponent of engaged social practice barely mentions her engaged social practice in the town itself, let alone how the theoretical and methodological perspectives might be illuminated by considering the vital local perspective. Instead, we are treated variously to a vignette of her cigar-smoking on her porch and a frankly inaccurate account of Martineau's praise of the Ambleside Bobbin Mill in her 1851 article for *Household Words*. Hoecker-Drysdale assures us that Martineau was keen to add to her plaudits the comment that 'Ambleside suffers rather little from workers' intemperance': a startling judgement, given that her correspondence and attempts at reform betoken a habitual

criticism of equally habitual drunkenness.¹³² In fact, Martineau's article said nothing of the kind. She commented:

The one great pain to the inhabitants of the exquisite valley in which Ambleside lies, is the intemperance of the people. It is not quite so bad as it was; but still, the early walker...is but too likely to meet the labourer staggering tipsy to his work.¹³³

Martineau's point was that Charles Horrox, the mill-owner, took an effective stand against drunkenness among his own workers: neither his principle nor his practice were typical.

Hoecker-Drysdale elsewhere assures us, despite compelling evidence to the contrary, that Martineau's life in Ambleside offered 'a balanced existence of the soothing pleasures of rural life and the active life of the mind'.¹³⁴ Pichanick's biography skates over Ambleside in four pages, briefly mentioning her 'civic conscientiousness' alongside 'her domestic occupations, and her rigorous walks';¹³⁵ Webb's measurably superior account makes good use of the Martineau correspondence to describe some of her activities (including the setting up of a building society) but lacks an awareness of the way in which her wider thought fed her concept of household and community; nor does he explore in detail the Ambleside context and the specifics of her relationships with the elite.¹³⁶ Peterson's discussion of the *Autobiography* struggles to reconcile Martineau's

¹³² Susan Hoecker-Drysdale, 'Words on Work – Part II' in Michael R. Hill & Susan Hoecker-Drysdale (eds), *Harriet Martineau: Theoretical & Methodological Perspectives* (London, 2001), p. 130.

¹³³ HM, 'The Bobbin-Mill at Ambleside', *Household Words*, 4 (1851), p. 227.

¹³⁴ Susan Hoecker-Drysdale, *Harriet Martineau: First Woman Sociologist* (New York, 1992), p. 94.

¹³⁵ Pichanick, p. 139.

¹³⁶ See Webb, pp. 256-65 in particular.

radicalism with her domesticity, and offers judgments which a firmer understanding of the local context, and of the fundamental consistency between Martineau's ideology and practice, would reveal to be questionable. Describing Martineau's life at Ambleside as 'midlife retirement',¹³⁷ or arguing that Martineau's decision to settle in the township reflected the physical and emotional strains of her deafness rather than any belief in the 'moral virtues of domestic life',¹³⁸ is testimony to the value-systems of Peterson rather than those of Martineau. The following sections will offer a much-needed re-evaluation of Martineau's contributions to Ambleside. Her core values, so critical an underpinning of her writing, prove to be equally critical as an underpinning of her practice. Thus, through her sense of duty and social activism, through the establishing of her own household and its relationships as a model for Ambleside and through her continued antipathy to superstition and its baleful effect on community, she attempted to live out the values of Deerbrook's Corner House from her own household. Compromises were made, and lapses in her own high standards make uncomfortable reading. But those very lapses arguably reveal the frustrations of trying to adhere to those principles in an often unsympathetic environment. This is why it will also be important to identify the power-structures of Ambleside, since it is those power-structures with which Martineau came into conflict: in particular, and in partial echo of Tynemouth, she clashed with a social and religious elite. In this case, it was characterized by High Church/Tractarian associations.

¹³⁷ Linda H. Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing* (Charlottesville and London, 1999), p. 72.

¹³⁸ Peterson, *Traditions*, p. 76.

Martineau and the building of her household

On her spectacular recovery in 1844, and after accepting visiting the Windermere home of the Manchester manufacturer W.R. Greg, Martineau resolved to settle in the area. She chose a plot in Ambleside on which she built the house called 'The Knoll'.

The account of settling in Ambleside is primarily given in her *Autobiography* and in her article 'A Year at Ambleside' (written for *Sartain's Union Magazine of Literature and Art* in 1850). The former would appear to offer the most detailed insight on this early period in the town, but it would be unwise to accept its account unreservedly. Its often-critical picture of the Ambleside community is perhaps distorted through the hindsight provided by later experience. 'A Year at Ambleside' and her correspondence are key sources in evaluating the *Autobiography* for this period, but it will also be necessary to place her analyses of Ambleside in the context of the broader picture provided by directories, tithe map and apportionments, newspapers and early histories. Her interactions with the community can thereby be assessed rather than described from her own perspective, and thus advance our evaluation of how far she put into practice the principles derived from her heartland concepts and taught in her fiction.

The picture presented in the autobiography of the land-purchase itself reflects an unconcealed aversion towards the social and religious elite and its practices of social control.

A dissenting minister, an opulent man who had built a chapel and school, and bought a field for cottage-building, found life too hard for a dissenter among the orthodox at Ambleside, and especially after he had proposed to supply the want of cottages which is there the screw which the rich put upon the labouring classes; and, after his health had sunk under the treatment he encountered, he was obliged to leave the place to save his life.¹³⁹

It is tempting to see in this account the distortions resulting from a later antipathy which may have developed when Martineau herself conceived of the plan to build cottages for the working classes and faced such opposition. However, there is some circumstantial evidence to support her interpretation of the un-named minister's motives. He was the Rev. John Addison Coombs, who had ministered in Ambleside to an Independent congregation, initially in his own substantial house (Belle Vue), but subsequently in a chapel he built in 1841.¹⁴⁰ His ministry in Ambleside ended in 1847, when he sold the chapel to a group of lay Methodists led by William Creighton, who named himself 'manager' in the 1851 Ecclesiastical Census.¹⁴¹ It is difficult to see why Coombs should abandon his recently-built chapel unless he felt that Ambleside was injurious to him. Barbara Crossley offers some support to the notion of antagonism towards Coombs in citing opposition to his ministry from neighbouring gentry.¹⁴² Some of the opprobrium was no doubt theological: it appears that there was gentry opposition to the purchase of land for the chapel itself, but the then incumbent, John Dawes, refused to intervene.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ *Autobiography*, i, p. 498.

¹⁴⁰ See Alan Snell, *Church Planting: A Study of Westmorland Nonconformity* (Worthing, 1986), pp. 71-2.

¹⁴¹ 1851 Ecclesiastical Census for Ambleside: PRO, HO129/575.

¹⁴² Barbara Crossley, *The Other Ambleside* (Kendal, 2000).

¹⁴³ Robert White, *A brief History of Methodism in Ambleside, 1842-1992* (Kendal, 1995).

Her unwillingness to accept local practices without question is revealed in the arrangements for building her house. She refused to condone what she regarded as the pernicious custom of paying builders' fees and workmen's wages on long-term credit, and so insisted that workmen should duly be paid weekly and in cash. Martineau came to identify her near-neighbour Benson Harrison JP as the reactionary upholder of the invidious system which, she felt, discouraged a sense of personal responsibility and encouraged intemperance.¹⁴⁴ She was adamant that, despite initial grumbling, her builder was ever-hopeful of securing further work from her on such terms. There is a certain defensiveness in the rider she attached to her business relationship with the builder, and one which may betoken the anxiety caused by her wish to uphold her reputation in the face of local opposition.

When I afterwards designed to build a cottage and cow-stable, he came to beg the servants to help to get the job for him, - complimenting my mode of payment. I mention this because the poor man, whom I greatly esteemed, got his head turned with subsequent building speculations, fell into drinking habits, and died of a fever thus brought on, - leaving debts to the amount of £1,000: and I wish it to be clearly understood that I was in no degree connected with his misfortunes.¹⁴⁵

In the first few pages treating of Ambleside in the *Autobiography*, Martineau offered her reasons for circumscribed visiting, and suggested that reactionary elements associated reform with dissent.

¹⁴⁴ Martineau referred to a public meeting (attended by the sympathetic new incumbent, Charles Bell) called to tackle the 'base custom of long credit...it is the greatest step taken toward the moral reform of the place since I came to it' – and a step possible only after the death of Harrison. See HM letter to R.P. Graves, 8 September 1864: BUL, *HMP/HML*Add.24.

¹⁴⁵ *Autobiography*, i, pp. 502-3.

I was aware how nearly impossible it is to keep out of the gossip and the quarrels which prevail in such places...I foresaw that among a High-church squirearchy, and Low-church evangelicals, and the moderate-church few, who were timid in proportion to their small numbers, I might be tolerated, and even courted at first, on account of my reputation, but must sooner or later give deadly offence by some outbreak of heresy or reforming tendency.¹⁴⁶

It would therefore seem that Martineau's first two years in Ambleside led her to two main, and linked, conclusions. In the first place, she identified a powerful and largely Puseyite squirearchy which could control public opinion. Secondly, that squirearchy was prepared to use its control of land and property to manipulate the working class through a deliberate policy of restricting housing. To what extent can this analysis be corroborated?

There is certainly nothing inherently implausible in this form of social control. The generally-accepted typology of 'closed village' predicates a dominant squire/landowner whose control over the villagers might well be exercised through choice of tenant and limiting cottage-building. What is less clear is that Ambleside possessed a dominant squire. Whellan's 1860 *The History and Topography of the Counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland* comments that 'The township of Ambleside is included in the Earl of Lonsdale's manor of Windermere'.¹⁴⁷ This is clarified by the 1849 *Mannex Directory*:

It is held under the Earl of Lonsdale by customary tenants, who pay three pence fine on the change of lord or tenant, and heriots when widows come into possession.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ *Autobiography*, i, p. 495.

¹⁴⁷ William Whellan, *The History and Topography of the Counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland* (Pontefract, 1860), p. 877.

¹⁴⁸ Mannex, P.J., *The History, Topography, and Directory, of Westmorland* (London, 1849), pp. 257-8.

Martineau herself referred to the ninepence a year paid to Lord Lonsdale for her field:

The tenure is called Customary Freehold, and the nominal lord has no power when I have once acknowledged his old feudal claim by...paying my ninepence.¹⁴⁹

It would seem, therefore, that the Lord of the Manor wielded no other power in Ambleside. The Tithe Apportionment of 7th December 1838 and accompanying map¹⁵⁰ reveal no obviously dominant landowner or family. One might, however, consider the Le Fleming family of Rydal Hall, two miles from Ambleside, as potential candidates for that role. The living of Ambleside (a perpetual curacy until 1854, and subsequently a parish following the building of St Mary's church) was in the gift of the family, and the great and small tithes were commuted in favour of the rector of Grasmere, Rev. Sir Richard le Fleming. However, the Flemings were not landowners within the township and do not feature in any of the extant Martineau writings beyond a reference to the blemish on the landscape that was 'Lady Le Fleming's large, staring, yellow mansion',¹⁵¹ a dismissive comment about the 'feudal Flemings, buried in the old park'¹⁵² and her gleeful reporting of the postmistress's comments about 'Sir Richard and his drink'.¹⁵³ It is conceivable that their influence might have been communicated *via* their land agent, Thomas Jackson, a minor landowner and substantial tenant farmer resident in Waterhead (part of the township). However, as Jackson was given the right of presentment to the Ambleside

¹⁴⁹ Michael R. Hill (ed.), *An Independent Woman's Lake District Writings: Harriet Martineau* (Amherst, N.Y., 2004), p. 66.

¹⁵⁰ Tithe Apportionment and Map, Ambleside: KRO, WDRC/8/285, 286.

¹⁵¹ *Independent Woman*, p. 73.

¹⁵² HM to Henry Reeve, 18 October 1866, *Collected Letters*, v, p. 146.

¹⁵³ *Independent Woman*, p. 116.

living in 1819, his position is perhaps unlikely to be that of a supine mouthpiece for his employer. In any case, the attention of Lady le Fleming (the ‘charitable relict of Sir Michael’¹⁵⁴) was clearly focused on Rydal itself, where she built a chapel in 1824. The relict’s younger brother, the Rev. Fletcher Fleming, resident partly at Rydal Hall and partly with his wife’s nephew at the desirable address of Upper Woburn Place,¹⁵⁵ was the incumbent. He was, unsurprisingly, translated to Grasmere as Rector by 1861.

Any conclusions about the relative practical influence of Jackson and the Flemings must be tentative in the extreme. After the death of John Dawes in 1845, the *Westmorland Gazette* commented:

The incumbency of the parochial chapel of Ambleside, in the gift of Thomas Jackson, Esq, of Waterhead, has been by that gentleman presented to the Rev. Irton Fell, MA.¹⁵⁶

However, the same newspaper, which had pronounced Tory political views and High Church leanings, subsequently commented that, in announcing Fell’s appointment,

...we should do great injustice to the Rev. Thomas Troughton, as well as the feelings of the congregation, were we to omit to declare publicly the unfeigned regret at his removal under very trying circumstances, and constant delicate health, he has been unwearied in the discharge of his arduous duties.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ *Parsons & White’s History, Directory and Gazetteer for the Counties of Cumberland & Westmorland, W. Furness & Cartmel* (Leeds, 1829), p. 25.

¹⁵⁵ 1851 Ecclesiastical Census for Rydal, Ambleside: PRO, HO107/Piece 1494/Folio 756(35).

¹⁵⁶ *WG*, 10 January 1846, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ *WG*, 28 February 1846, p. 3.

Troughton had apparently assisted the elderly and disengaged Dawes without stipend,¹⁵⁸ and was the subject of a petition addressed to Lady le Fleming and signed by 181 inhabitants. The petition, headed by landowner Benson Harrison, requested that Troughton be appointed as Dawes' successor. It would seem that the petition was successful, but that Troughton was unable to sustain the role.¹⁵⁹ The *Westmorland Gazette*'s phrase 'under very trying circumstances' is intriguing, and may reflect parochial disagreements of the kind mentioned by Martineau. Two other points should be made. Given that the petition was not addressed to Jackson, one should assume that Lady le Fleming retained *de facto* right of preferment. Secondly, we note the role of Harrison – perhaps as leader of a High Church faction.

Indeed, Troughton himself is likely to have been influenced by early Tractarianism. A future convert to Catholicism, Rev. Owen Lloyd, who had assisted Dawes alongside Troughton, had introduced a rush-bearing procession which Martineau identified as 'Puseyite'.¹⁶⁰ Children attending the post-ceremonial tea were entertained in Harrison's garden, and his support for Tractarianism is further confirmed by his choice of tutor for his son: the Tractarian and future founder of the London Oratory, Frederick William Faber (from 1843-6). Indeed, Melissa Wilkinson states unequivocally: 'After ordination

¹⁵⁸ One anonymous visitor to Ambleside testifies to the respective burdens of Troughton and Dawes: the former, it seems, "was *assisted* (my stress)...by an elderly man who also preached a very good sermon." See J.D. Marshall, 'A Visit to Lakeland in 1844', *TC&WAAS*, NS 71 (1971), p. 271.

¹⁵⁹ Mary L. Armitr rather dismissively comments: 'It is disappointing to find that Mr. Troughton deserted his ardent admirers next year, when he was succeeded by the Rev. Samuel Irton Fell.' 'Ambleside Town and Chapel: Some Contributions towards their history', *TC&WAAS*, NS 6 (1906), p. 60.

¹⁶⁰ *Independent Woman*, p. 134.

¹⁶¹ Melissa Wilkinson, *Frederick William Faber: A Great Servant of God* (Leominster, 2007), p. 40.

[26th May 1839], Faber became curate at St Anne's Chapel, Ambleside'.¹⁶¹ Similarly, Sheridan Gilley asserts: 'Between 1837 and 1842 Faber kept a cottage in the Lake District and served as a curate in Ambleside'.¹⁶² These claims would have surprised John Dawes and are not confirmed by the *Clergy List*;¹⁶³ but one may argue that Faber played a role similar to that of Lloyd. Wilkinson does not consider the importance of Faber's friendship with Wordsworth, but it would certainly have tied him further into the Benson Harrison household, since Harrison was married to Dorothy Wordsworth, the daughter of the poet's cousin. Faber undoubtedly preached regularly in Ambleside to congregations containing large numbers of university men on reading parties. Significantly, Faber's correspondence reveals that he was also preaching to thirty or so educated gentry, and one might speculate that the High Church party identified by Martineau owed its origin to Faber.¹⁶⁴ Wordsworth's letters duly offer corroboration, and conveniently linked Lloyd's rush-bearing, Faber and Benson Harrison. He commented on 'the Rush-bearing carried on under Mr Faber's zeal for the Old Church, and Mr Harrison's generosity in supporting it in a grand scale'.¹⁶⁵

There is further evidence placing Benson Harrison in the role of gentry leader. A comparison of 1838 Tithe Maps and Commutation Award with the lists of gentry in the

¹⁶¹ Melissa Wilkinson, *Frederick William Faber: A Great Servant of God* (Leominster, 2007), p. 40.

¹⁶² Sheridan Gilley, 'Frederick William Faber, Church of England clergyman and Roman Catholic priest' in H.C.G. Matthew & Brian Harrison (eds), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (60 vols., Oxford, 2004), 18, p. 872.

¹⁶³ The *Clergy List* for 1841 (London, 1841), has an entry for Faber as a Fellow of University College, Oxford (p. 68). The same applies to the lists for 1842 and 1843; 1844 places him as Rector of Elton, Huntingdonshire. Troughton was Lecturer of Trinity Chapel, Conduit Street, London from 1841-3.

¹⁶⁴ Wilkinson, *Faber*, see pp. 40-2. Wilkinson comments: 'It may be significant that Faber was having problems at Ambleside because he was preaching Tractarian doctrines'. She is attempting to account for Faber's failure to complete a promised contribution to Newman's *Library of the Fathers*. Although one must regard her comment as supposition, it may not be an unlikely one.

¹⁶⁵ Alan G. Hill (ed.), *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth* (8 vols., Oxford, 1988), vii, p. 359.

various directories over the period 1829 to 1859 (including Martineau's own directory of the Lake District¹⁶⁶) suggests that the township was characterized by multiple ownership, but with few family names remaining constant across the period. One of those exceptions was Harrison. Others, such as the Luther Watsons, were based in Troutbeck (a distance of some twenty miles) and rented out their Ambleside land. The 1849 *Mannex Directory* mentioned 'Thomas Jackson...Mrs Newton and some others have neat and pleasant dwellings there (Waterhead)', but it is Benson Harrison who was highlighted: 'the only magistrate in this township is Benson Harrison, Esq., of *Green Bank*, a beautiful mansion, on the side of a gentle acclivity'.¹⁶⁷ It is at least plausible, then, to identify the leader of Martineau's 'High-church squirearchy' as Harrison.

It could also be argued that Harrison's position was enhanced by the relative fluidity of the Ambleside elite. Newcomers might be expected to challenge existing interests, but only if their residence were long-term. Martineau suggests:

There is a perpetual change going on in such neighbourhoods in the Lake District as that of Ambleside. Retired merchants and professional men fall in love with the region, buy or build a house, are in a transport with what they have done, and, after a time, go away. In five or six years, six houses of friends or acquaintances of mine became inhabited by strangers.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ HM, *A Complete Guide to the English Lakes*, (Windermere, 1855) pp. 207-33.

¹⁶⁷ *Mannex*, p. 258. If one compares that 'gentle acclivity' with the 6 inch OS Map of 1862, it is clear that it is potentially excellent building land for cottages. Harrison's own house, Green Bank - together with Belle Vue, which was bought for his son Matthew - lies just below the cottages which were built by Martineau's Windermere Benefit Building Society.

¹⁶⁸ *Autobiography*, i, p. 495.

The raw figures in Appendix 1, taken from the enumerators' books for 1851 and 1871, offer some support for Martineau's analysis. Given the overall increase in the population of Ambleside between these years (1592 in 1851; 1988 in 1871), then the stability of the figures for the tenant farmers is noteworthy. Martineau commented that this yeoman (locally, 'statesmen') class was under threat from modernity¹⁶⁹ and the figures may indeed suggest stagnation at best. An analysis of the parishes of origin reveals that, for 1871, 42 out of the 44 persons of landed property or other independent means were born in Ambleside or within a four mile radius thereof; for farmers, 11 out of 17 were born within four miles of the township, but 3 of the remainder were born within 5–9 miles. The figure is significantly different for the professions: only 17 out of 28 were Ambleside-born; 3 were within 5–9 miles, 2 within 10–19 miles, 2 within 90 to 99 miles and the parishes of origin of 4 were 100 miles+ from Ambleside. So far, then, Martineau's comment on movement in and out of Ambleside for men of the professional class appears plausible. Further support may be attained by an examination of the continuity of specific families by comparing enumerators' books. This method is, of course, handicapped by the dying-out of families: absence cannot be taken to betoken movement out of the area. Even so, the pattern is reasonably clear. The seven farmers whose families maintain a presence throughout are those with greater acreage. Of the professional men and their families, only two remained throughout. Rather surprisingly, but in keeping with our earlier analysis of directories, the independent means/landed property category is characterized by discontinuity: only ten are present throughout the period. However, this may reflect problems with the category itself, since the enumerators' designation of 'independent means' might well include retired professional

¹⁶⁹ *Independent Woman*, p. 67.

men with income from investments. One family is unaccountably missing from the 1871 census: the Partridges, whose continued presence is revealed in their role as trustees to the young son of the late Matthew Benson Harrison.¹⁷⁰ The other trustees are the Luther Watsons and Wilsons: the latter also appear in all three censuses. Thus, one may posit a quartet of long-standing, substantial landowners, some or all of whom may represent the core of High Church gentry whose influence Martineau so resented. The most likely High Church landowner alongside Harrison is James Christopher Wilson: in her correspondence, Martineau refers to her ‘Puseyite neighbours’, and Wilson’s property at Low Wood was indeed in the neighbourhood of The Knoll.¹⁷¹

Of course, neither continuity nor acreage alone necessarily equates to social and political influence. This chapter will allow us to develop our picture of the power-structure of Ambleside and the impact of Martineau thereupon. However, we note that Martineau’s focus was relatively narrow: her concerns were with the township elite and working classes. But her writings sidestep the lower middle classes and craftsmen who serviced the needs of the armies of tourists and whose numerical expansion is a marked feature of the town over our period.¹⁷² One can account for Martineau’s lack of interest in part by arguing that she did not see them as the victims of social and economic injustice or distress.

¹⁷⁰ *The Post Office Directory of the Principal Towns and Adjacent Places in Cumberland and Westmoreland* (London, 1873).

¹⁷¹ HM to W.J. Fox, 26 February 1851, *Collected Letters*, iii, p. 189. ‘My Puseyite neighbours are civil, & they don’t meddle with me, nor I with them. Except indeed that I am making an onslaught on their rents’.

¹⁷² A comparison of figures for the 1851 and 1871 censuses clearly demonstrates the extent of growth in the trades and retail industry. In 1851, there were 106 tradesmen and shopkeepers in the township: by 1871, the figure had swollen by 113% to 226 (ten of whom had migrated from distances of greater than 100 miles). The population growth in the same period is 24.8%.

Developing the model household

What, then, was Martineau's view of her role within Ambleside, and the place of The Knoll therein? Alexis Easley argues that The Knoll itself represented Martineau's self-fashioning as a literary icon. Her publicizing of her Lake District home allowed her to capitalize on burgeoning literary tourism, to harmonize her arguably non-feminine career as a journalist with the stereotypes of female domesticity and to demonstrate that woman's independence and agency were achievable in a non-threatening way by 'engagement with the natural world'.¹⁷³ This supposedly explains her focus on gardening and home improvements. Easley notes that her domesticity included helping poor, improvable neighbours: 'Yet on some level Martineau's decision [to move to Ambleside] may have been motivated in part by her desire to put herself on the literary map of England'.¹⁷⁴

However, the evidence from linking correspondence, fiction, Martineau's *Autobiography* and archival sources reveals that any such interpretation is unduly dismissive. Indeed, it might plausibly be argued that Martineau's household was taking on the role of the Corner House in *Deerbrook*: being convinced of the correlation between morality and progress, Martineau took a stand on that basis against entrenched interest. On the simplest level, her housebuilding and the manner thereof were presented to the community as a model. The sanitary arrangements of The Knoll, which much

¹⁷³ Alexis Easley, 'The Woman of Letters at Home: Harriet Martineau and the Lake District', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 34, 1 (2006), p. 291.

¹⁷⁴ Easley, 'The Woman of Letters at Home', p. 293.

exercised her, were to be models for her cottage-building. Similarly, the relations established with her own servants, and the nature of their employment, were part of a conceptualization of the role an individual might play in social change. It is significant that Martineau should take in, and employ as a maid, Jane Arrowsmith, the niece of her Tynemouth landlady. Arrowsmith, who was an orphan and afflicted by an eye disorder, was apparently much improved after Martineau mesmerized her. She relapsed after Martineau's departure, and was taken in at The Knoll in a pitiable state. Martineau claimed that her eyes were better after ten days' mesmeric treatment, and Jane stayed with her for nine years before emigrating. The intimacy of her relationship with Jane and her other maid is illustrated by Martineau's memories of the early days in Ambleside:

The zeal with which she [Jane] assisted in furnishing and preparing my new house may be imagined... The first night (April 7th, 1846) when we made our beds, stirred up the fires, and locked the doors, and had some serious talk, as members of a new household, will never be forgotten, for its sweetness and solemnity, by my maids or myself.¹⁷⁵

The rhetoric of the whole paragraph presents The Knoll as a micro-community, and Martineau's reference to her maid assisting in furnishing the house is testimony to a shared investment in 'the emotional meaning of household things'.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ *Autobiography*, i, p. 520.

¹⁷⁶ Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-Class Families in England, 1850-1910* (Manchester, 2010), p. 13. The significance of nineteenth-century household items as totemic vessels carrying value-systems and possessing emotional weight is of increasing interest to scholars. See in particular Margaret Ponsonby, *Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors, 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2007).

Jane was an example to the community of the right relationship between employer and servant. The reciprocal relationship between Martineau's ideas and her Ambleside experience is reflected in her 1862 article for the *Edinburgh Review*: 'Modern Domestic Service'. In the first place, she chose to focus on domestic service in a country, rather than urban, environment; explicitly referred to Westmorland; and singled out the challenges and opportunities afforded by the middle-class home. Martineau stressed the necessity for friendship between parlour and below stairs.

In such a household there are sure to be subjects of interest in common between employers and employed. Books are lent from the library; the news of the day is spoken of; the progress of any war is explained, by map as well as newspaper.¹⁷⁷

The reference to 'progress of any war' might seem odd, but Martineau was referring to specific instances within her own household: the autobiography relates an example from the Crimean War period.

After tea, if there was news from the seat of war, I called in my maids, who brought down the great atlas, and studied the chances of the campaign with me.¹⁷⁸

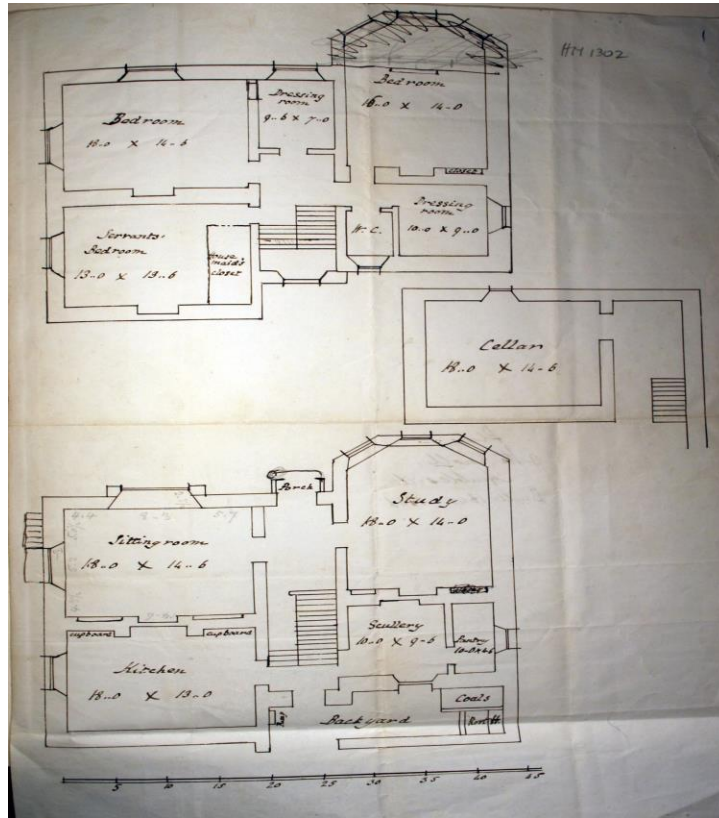
Once more, Martineau derived an example of the way in which household should operate from her own experience, which then served as a model for the relationships which should underpin a society in progress. Her view of the correct relationship between head of household and servant is, indeed, reflected in Martineau's plans for The Knoll (see figure 1 below).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ HM, 'Modern Domestic Service', *Edinburgh Review*, 115, 234 (April 1862), p. 429.

¹⁷⁸ *Autobiography*, ii, p. 89.

¹⁷⁹ Layout of The Knoll: BUL, *HMP/HM1302*.

Figure 1



Author's original image of the plan of 'The Knoll', used with the kind permission of the Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham University.

The servants' bedroom was not remote from the master bedrooms, was not accessed by separate stairs and was provided with a closet. The size of the bedroom itself, although smaller than other bedrooms, compares favourably with those in the model cottages for labourers whose plans Martineau consulted.¹⁸⁰ In other words, the layout of The Knoll did not eschew hierarchy but was nonetheless inclusive. Elizabeth Langland comments on how contemporary house design had much to say on women's spaces, but ignored the needs of servants: back stairs, hidden doorways and passages reflected the bourgeois

¹⁸⁰ Documents relating to Ambleside property: BUL, HMP/HM1304.

view that the ‘best servant was an invisible one’.¹⁸¹ Similarly, John Tosh emphasizes that, accommodated as they habitually were in attic or basement, ‘servants were explicitly not “one of the family”’.¹⁸² That was clearly not the case in The Knoll.¹⁸³

Part of Martineau’s household was the Fulcher family, imported from Norfolk.¹⁸⁴ For Robert Fulcher, Martineau built a farm cottage, and his efforts on an apparently unpromising two-acre field had allowed Martineau to offer to a grateful community and wider public the fruits of her husbandry in the form of *Our Farm of Two Acres* (originally published in *Once a Week*, July 1859). Her model farm provided The Knoll and neighbours with a supply of milk through the tourist season (a real boon)¹⁸⁵ and her observations on animal feeding were well-received.¹⁸⁶ She clearly prided herself on Fulcher’s increasing intelligence, sense of independence and self-reliance, and wrote ‘The good man is so changed that my friends all remark it. His clownish, dead, Norfolk look is gone, & he is bright, intelligent & gentlemanly’.¹⁸⁷ She was later discomfited by a

¹⁸¹ Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody’s Angels: Middle-class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture* (London, 1995), p. 43.

¹⁸² John Tosh, *A Man’s Place. Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London, 1999), p. 20. See also Moira Donald, ‘Tranquil havens? Critiquing the idea of home as the middle-class sanctuary’ in Inga Bryden & Janet Floyd (eds), *Domestic Space: Reading the nineteenth-century interior* (Manchester, 1999), p. 108. Donald’s plan of 41, Old Tiverton Road, Exeter makes for a useful comparison with The Knoll and clearly supports Tosh’s argument, since the servants are consigned to the roof space.

¹⁸³ The Knoll was unusual in other ways. An all-female environment, it nevertheless included a study – habitually seen as the male preserve, but a reminder that The Knoll was a place of work as well as a home. Indeed, the study may be seen as the vindication in bricks and mortar of Martineau’s demand of her mother that she be granted, however putatively, the status of professional son. See *Autobiography*, ii, p. 218.

¹⁸⁴ That she regarded the Fulchers as part of her household is evident from a letter to the wife of her brother James. Having described the Fulcher cottage, she commented: ‘We are the happiest little household that can be’. HM letter to Helen Martineau, 15 October 1848: HMC, *HMMSS*/folio 24.

¹⁸⁵ Pamela Horn, in her *Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside* (Dublin, 1976), comments: ‘Milk was in surprisingly short supply in many counties, even at the end of the [nineteenth] century’ (p. 27).

¹⁸⁶ HM, ‘Our Farm of Two Acres’. See *Independent Woman*, pp. 217-61.

¹⁸⁷ HM letter to Philip Carpenter, 27 January 1849: HMC, *HMMSS*/fols. 26-7.

parallel increase in his truculence,¹⁸⁸ and even more discomfited by his decision to leave her employ to work for Dr John Davy JP of Lesketh Howe.

Martineau's relations with Davy provide further insight into the links Martineau makes between household relationships and other heartland concepts. Assuming that a sense of duty and resultant social activism were intimately linked to a sound household, she castigated Davy for an arrogation of social responsibility in his opposition to sanitary reform,¹⁸⁹ a lack of personal charity,¹⁹⁰ siding with Martineau's clerical opponents in an attempt to force her to pay church rates¹⁹¹ and a particularly upsetting criticism of her model watercourse at The Knoll.¹⁹² To question the efficacy of Martineau's own drainage

¹⁸⁸ HM letter to Graves, 26 May 1859: BUL, *HMP/HML*Add.24. Comparing the greater independence of spirit of Westmorland farm labourers to their more servile Norfolk brethren, she nevertheless commented: 'Fulcher himself is not, to my mind, at all serf-like. I don't think serfs bully their employers, take their own way about doing their business, & dispute all directions'.

¹⁸⁹ Davy and another landowner (identifiable as James Christopher Wilson of Low Nook) refused to take any action over a dangerous occupation road serving their properties where two children had tragically lost their lives in a flooding. 'Mrs Arnold and I have done it', commented Martineau: '...How c^d those men have felt if any body had been drowned?' HM letter to P.P. Carpenter, ?January 1853: HMC, *HMMSS*/fols. 39-42.

¹⁹⁰ Davy's lack of concern is revealed in his parsimonious response to the distress of the Cotton Famine. Martineau wrote that the poorest of the cottagers (in what appears to be the Edinburgh district of Ambleside) engaged to donate 22s per month, whilst 'their very wealthy neighbour, D^r Davy, ...gives, in all, £5!... So much for the charity of the poor and the rich!' HM letter to Sarah Martineau, 27 Nov 1862: KRO, WDX482/25.

¹⁹¹ Martineau wrote an account of the Ambleside case as one of the instances drawn upon in her 1858 *Westminster Review* article on the iniquities of imposing church-rates on non-Anglicans. She chose to present Ambleside as a case of magistrate and clergy in unholy alliance, where principled refusal to pay was treated as 'grudging money, or refusing to pay butcher and baker'. HM (Anon.), 'The Last Days of Church-rates', *Westminster Review*, NS 14, 1 (July 1858), p. 48.

¹⁹² 'Dr Davy's stupid persecution has been a serious annoyance...he hovers about, on the watch, threatening everybody, and taking up all manner of fancies. Now that my watercourse is found sufficient, & duly measured at both ends, some people have got up a notion that it is smaller somewhere in the middle!' HM letter to Sarah Martineau, 23 March 1859: KRO, WDX482/10. It is tempting to see Martineau's reaction as excessive, but the flooding to which Ambleside was subject made her particularly sensitive on what could be an issue of life and death. There is an acerbic letter to the Kendal borough surveyor, accusing him of misrepresenting her intentions and claiming that she would 'spend all I have rather than make any alteration (to her watercourse)... You are now perfectly aware that there has been nothing to alter. My watercourse has been right from first to last'. See HM letter to C. Webster, 31 March 1859, in Deborah A. Logan (ed.), *Harriet Martineau: Further Letters* (Bethlehem, PA, 2012), p. 245. Five years later, her niece, Jane, expressed Martineau's relief that drowning of a young son of a neighbour could not be attributed to any failings of her

and sanitation at The Knoll was a violation of all that she held most dear: an invasion of her own household and an attack upon The Knoll as a model of good practice; an assault, in short, upon her distinctive contribution to the community. But key to her accusations was the allegation that he was a domestic tyrant who thus compromised his own household. In a letter to Crabb Robinson, she commented: ‘Dr Davy is gone today to Galway, to fish... – But we shall be so happy without him! I dare say his wife and daughters are dancing’.¹⁹³ She did provide some specifics in a letter to Fanny Wedgwood: ‘The D^r – as usual. What can one say more? He will *ruin* that younger girl with his rating and lecturing’.¹⁹⁴ The household/community link is particularly stark in the watercourse letter, as she suddenly and with seeming irrelevance announced that, at home, Davy causes ‘real misery’.¹⁹⁵ Thus, in Martineau’s terms, Davy’s alleged failings in his household - which apparently reflected an unbridled egotism - would be, and were, mirrored in his relations with the wider community.

Social activism and the household: the Building Society

Martineau quickly conceived of the shortage of affordable housing for the working class as a key factor in accounting for a community rife with intemperance and profligacy. The unholy trinity was poor sanitation, inappropriate housing and immorality, and she was adamant that poverty *per se* did not underpin it. The Ambleside working class, she

watercourse. See Jane Martineau letter to Graves, 9 December 1864: BUL, *HMP/HMLAdd.26*.

¹⁹³ HM letter to H.C. Robinson, 2 May 1854: BUL, *HMP/HM497*.

¹⁹⁴ ?November 1850, in Elisabeth Sanders Arbuckle, (ed.), *Harriet Martineau’s Letters to Fanny Wedgwood* (Stanford, 1983), p. 112. Martineau was referring to Davy’s daughter, Grace, who may have been suffering from depression.

¹⁹⁵ HM letter to Sarah Martineau, 23 March 1859: KRO, WDX482/10.

claimed, was relatively highly paid, but money was squandered on alcohol to escape from a noxious environment. Her rhetoric is remarkably consistent in letter, autobiography, article and fiction.¹⁹⁶ If she stressed sanitation issues to the sanitary reformer Lord Morpeth, then she made the immediate link with immoral behaviour:

The people live in stinking holes; scrofula & consumption abound; whole families are huddled together in single rooms. In consequence, the profligacy of the place is awful. There is scarcely a girl who is not a mother before she is a wife; & the young men, finding their homes disgusting, go to the public house. Yet everybody earns good wages...The people are willing & eager to pay good rents: but no new dwellings for labourers are built... We are cursed with the worse set of landed proprietors I know anywhere. They use this paucity of dwellings as a means of civil & religious oppression.¹⁹⁷

Equally significant is Martineau's chosen *modus operandi*. Her rhetoric might be aggressive, but her strategies were based upon her household as the hub. Her tuition aimed at her maids was extrapolated into lectures for the workers which rapidly tackled sanitation and temperance.¹⁹⁸ The incumbent, Samuel Irton Fell, opposed her use of the National Society school room, and her subsequent adult lectures took place in the Methodist school room and chapel. The Methodists apparently welcomed Martineau's lectures warmly.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Her short story for *Household Words* (1851), 'The Highest House in Wathendale', is a truly dismal tale of parental intemperance, regressive farming practices and falling from cliffs. See *Independent Woman*, pp. 397-422.

¹⁹⁷ HM letter to Lord Morpeth, 17 June 1848: Armitt, 367.1. A letter to her sister-in-law, Helen Martineau (15 October 1848), is couched in virtually identical terms and refers to her 'Sanitary conspiracy' (HMC, *HMMSS*/folio 24).

¹⁹⁸ Although less obviously in her correspondence than in other writings, Martineau made explicit links between the demands for increasingly skilled agricultural labour, the need for better education and for training in the habits 'by which men's health and life are put, as it were, into their own hands'. See her *Health, Husbandry, and Handicraft* (London, 1861), p. 149. Lectures and decent housing provided by a building society were a start.

¹⁹⁹ Methodism, we recall, was first established in Ambleside in 1847 by William Creighton (see p. 294 above).

Although she could not afford to buy up land herself and build rows of cottages, the Fulcher house was, in effect, a model cottage. Her correspondence makes it clear that she made the link between her reforming teaching and personal example:

I c^d. not bring a stranger without provid^g a cottage, - complaining, as I do, of the crowd^g of the people: so I have appropriated dear Aunt Mary's little legacy in build^g a very pretty cottage...a pattern cottage for my neighbours to see what I contemplate for them.²⁰⁰

Martineau saw the sanitary lectures as a way of preparing the 'workies' (in her terminology) for her scheme of instituting a building society, which then dominates her correspondence from the autumn of 1848: by December, she was distributing a prospectus to likely interested parties.²⁰¹ It is clearly important to establish why Martineau saw a building society as key to the improving of her community. First, the process of saving with a building society was itself a discouragement to intemperance and, as S.J. Price put it, regarded as a 'potent moral educator'.²⁰² Secondly, a building society would relieve the causes of intemperance and profligacy by providing an environment which would encourage moral and intellectual progress through instilling

The 1851 Ecclesiastical Census gave the morning congregation as 43 (33 Sunday scholars) and 74 in the evening - some of whom, of course, might have attended the Anglican morning service (PRO, HO129/575). However, Creighton's departure (in the early 1850s) was accompanied by a neglect of the Sunday School and a chapel burdened by debt. Snell, in his *Church Planting*, paints the picture of Wesleyanism struggling to establish itself in the area due to strong Anglican opposition. J.D. Marshall and John K. Walton comment that Methodism tended to flourish where lead-mining proprietors encouraged it and where there was a 'vacuum left by the Anglicana church': see *The Lake Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century: A Study in Regional Change* (Manchester, 1981), p. 149.

²⁰⁰ HM letter to Helen Martineau, 25 October 1848, *Collected Letters*, iii, p. 130.

²⁰¹ HM letter to Graves, 15 December 1848: BUL, HMP/HMLAdd.9.

²⁰² S.J. Price, *Building Societies: Their Origin and History* (London, 1958), p. 132.

love of home and the relationships which underpinned it. Thirdly, it was potentially a method of circumventing gentry opposition to building cottages without stimulating conflict;²⁰³ ideally, it would encourage the gentry to acknowledge its benefits in terms of improved manners and morals and thus engage their active cooperation. She explicitly encouraged the vision of the building society as an agent promoting the beneficent effects of capitalism.²⁰⁴ Alternatively, a sudden shortage of tenants might persuade property owners that enlightened self-interest demanded the provision of decent housing.

It is essential to look in detail at the formation and progress of the Windermere Benefit Building Society (WBBS hereafter). That Martineau was the prime instigator does not permit of any doubt. As we have seen, her sanitary lectures were less exhortation than a sales-pitch for a building society. Her autobiography made the link:

My recourse was to the ‘workies’ themselves, in that set of lectures; in which I endeavoured to show them that all the means of healthy and virtuous living were around them...I explained to them the principle of such a Building Society as we might have...They saw at once that if twenty men lay by together, instead of separately, a shilling a week each, they need not wait twenty weeks for any one to have the use of a pound...Hence arose our Building Society...²⁰⁵

²⁰³ In a letter to Mary Rathbone, she commented, ‘...the people, - though far removed from poverty, - are so crowded into stinking cabins as that no school, clergyman, or teaching of any kind can save them from disease & vice’. The letter significantly continues: ‘Without saying one word against the gentry who condemn the workies to such dwellings, I have shown them that their lot is in their own hands’. *Collected Letters*, iii, p. 140.

²⁰⁴ HM, *Prospectus of the Windermere Permanent Land, Building and Investment Association*: BUL, HMP/HM1280. In fact, the employing of the word ‘permanent’ is misleading since the building society, once launched, was a terminating one: see below. Martineau’s use of the term here perhaps reflects her hope that the society might continue to be of service in encouraging thrift.

²⁰⁵ *Autobiography*, ii, pp. 8-9.

The basic principle is simple enough (despite the complexities of the 1836 Act regulating building societies). A building society raised money through monthly subscriptions required of all members, which was then invested at interest. To obtain sufficient finance to build a home through the society, it was necessary to acquire a share (or half share): the WBBS set out to provide 22 and a half shares *in toto*. A member might, of course, choose to build more than one dwelling on the plot after taking up the share, and so acquire income from tenants. A subscribing worker, then, would need to obtain the share ‘in advance’: in other words, by taking out a loan from the society. Clearly, given their initially limited funds, a new society was unlikely to be able to accommodate large numbers of requests for advance shares, and generally adopted a ballot system to identify the lucky party. Alternatively, the wealthy might buy a share outright as an investment, since one’s money was, after all, put out at interest; but it was not necessarily in keeping with the fundamental purpose of building houses. However, the money made available by such purchase could be used by the society to offer an advance, and so the motive for buying a share might be essentially philanthropic – to instigate a new society by providing immediate funds.

Martineau’s correspondence reveals that she was soliciting comments, promises of help and meeting objections even before a launch committee was formed. She sought, for example, to alleviate Graves’s concerns over the failure of a similar society in Kendal, emphasized the workers’ keenness to take up shares and mentioned her own friends, some at a distance, who were ready to advance the money for work to start on the first

dwelling.²⁰⁶ Indeed, Martineau took on the responsibility for making and maintaining arrangements for the purchase of shares by her wealthier associates.²⁰⁷ Her importance to the WBBS is most eloquently revealed in the actual timing of its termination, which was initiated by Martineau herself in anticipation of her imminent death. The exchange of letters in 1856 with William Barton, the Society's secretary, not only reveals the committee's ready agreement to terminate, but also their reluctance to broach the subject without having first ascertained Martineau's views.²⁰⁸

It is clearly important to evaluate the success or otherwise of the WBBS, since it sheds light on the credibility of Martineau's diagnosis of the problems facing Ambleside, helps us to evaluate her own solutions, and thus illuminates the relationship between her practice and principle. The latter, we recall, was to provide the opportunity for the poor to experience the transformatory effect of a morally and physically healthy household. The termination of the building society itself need not imply lack of success. Most northern building societies were non-permanent and designed to terminate after every member had been provided with a house: the WBBS was one such. However, one may doubt its success in providing the required housing. At the time of writing her autobiography, only

²⁰⁶ HM letter to Graves, 23 December 1848: BUL, *HMP/HMLAdd.10*. In fact, Graves was correct: the Kendal Building Society had failed (ominously, due to landowners' reluctance to sell). See Watterson, p. 201. George Holt, a fellow investor, commented that, as she had drawn up the rules and set the Society going, she should have withdrawn from its day-to-day running: letter to Martineau, 16 February 1856 (BUL, *HMP/HM1292*). It was Martineau, for instance, who was responsible for the detailed plans for the first cottages to be built (Agreement with the builders Jackson and Cousins, 7 June 1851: BUL, *HMP/HM1306*).

²⁰⁷ Martineau dealt with the purchase of land by Elizabeth Reid, a founder of Bedford College for women. Similarly, her co-author Henry Atkinson purchased a share. Few opportunities were missed. Writing to her friend Mrs Ogden, she commented, by way of aside, 'Won't Mr. Ogden do a very good deed by taking a share or two in our society?' (Armitt, 376.24).

²⁰⁸ Letter to HM from Barton, 12 February 1856: 'Our President and other members have seen your very kind letter, and, as regards the society are quite of the same opinion as yourself': BUL, *HMP/HM1291*.

thirteen cottages had been built:²⁰⁹ and this despite Martineau's initial pronouncement that she intended to see that 'our workforce are decently and wholesomely housed'.²¹⁰ And Martineau, as we have seen, had to call upon the willingness of her friends to purchase shares, even though few had links with the area. This in itself was not unexpected, since Martineau did not anticipate the participation of the local gentry. However, there remained the difficulty over obtaining land in the first place: reluctance to sell for such purposes had, after all, led to the housing shortage itself. Martineau admitted the problem at the very moment of inception, but was optimistic of its resolution:

The difficulty about land is the main thing. But I never knew a case yet where people were absolutely in want of decent dwellings, & had means of paying the rent, where they could not get them.²¹¹

The extent of the difficulty is reflected in an outraged letter in which Martineau attacked the incumbent (Samuel Irton Fell).

I was a good deal shocked yesterday by an incident which shows how clergyman & people regard each other here. I am just concluding the purchase of the land for the Building Society. I could not conceive why my own party in the bargain w^d. not get the land remeasured...Yesterday came out, in a mysterious whisper, the real reason: - that if th^r. clergyman got the slightest hint of what we are about, he w^d. buy up the land at any price, to prevent any cottages being built out his way.²¹²

²⁰⁹ *Autobiography*, ii, p. 9. HM letter to Henry Reeve, 6 May 1864, gives the figure as 'fifteen cottages (or more)': *Collected Letters*, v, p. 62.

²¹⁰ HM to Graves, 23 December 1848: BUL, *HMP/HMLAdd*.10.

²¹¹ HM letter to Graves, ?December 1848: BUL, *HMP/HMLAdd*.10.

²¹² HM to ?Charles Kingsley, 16 November c.1850, *Collected Letters*, iii, p. 176.

The difficulty of obtaining land is indeed the subject of several letters: John Crosfield, a trustee of the WBBS, wrote of a field near the bobbin mill which the owner ‘might be induced to part with’;²¹³ there are also references to exorbitant prices.²¹⁴ However, an even more fundamental problem was implied by Crosfield: lack of demand. Some of the savers had, in the first meeting, declined to have their names submitted to the ballot selecting the first recipient of a cottage. Nor did the meeting take up a generous offer from Martineau’s friend, Mrs Reid, to stimulate demand by purchasing building land: Martineau had to persuade members to respond positively to the initiative. Significantly, Martineau, in the absence of other interested parties, herself borrowed money from the Society in order to purchase land and build cottages.²¹⁵ This would doubtless result in good-quality accommodation, but the fortunate workers were tenants and not house-owners and so forewent the moral uplift of house ownership. Most revealing, however, is the stark statistic: in over seven years, only six and a half shares out of twenty-two and a half had been taken up. Small wonder that Barton felt obliged to admit to Martineau that

Up to the present time the society has not worked very badly, but the very poor demand for shares causes us to have too much cash in the Bank...and there is not any prospect of a more lively demand for advances.²¹⁶

How, then, to account for what Martineau and the WBBS wished to present as a limited success, but which nevertheless failed to meet her aspirations for it as a key to transformation? Difficulty in obtaining land may have been a factor, but the lack of

²¹³ Crosfield letter to HM, 13 November 1849: BUL, *HMP/HM1281*.

²¹⁴ Crosfield letter to HM, 20 November 1849: BUL, *HMP/HM1282*.

²¹⁵ HM letter to Building Society solicitor, Cleminson, 18 November 1851: BUL, *HMP/HM1285*.

²¹⁶ Barton letter to HM, 5 February 1856: BUL, *HMP/HM1289*.

demand is surely fundamental. Martineau offered no explanation, and any conclusion must be tentative. It might be argued that some of the demand was removed by the practice of indoor farm service: Marshall, for instance, opines that ‘Cumberland and Westmorland...were the only ones [counties] to show a clear majority of indoor farm servants over other agricultural labourers’.²¹⁷ However, of the thirty-nine agricultural/farm labourers identifiable from the 1851 Ambleside Census, only twelve can be considered as ‘living in’. Of the others, nine were living in hotels (particularly the Low Wood Inn) and one in a lodging house for tramps.²¹⁸ Also, Ambleside’s status as a tourist destination gave it an unusual flexibility of accommodation. One must also consider the terms upon which subscribers were offered the loan/share advance. The subscription was 2/6d a week, plus, when the share was obtained, a further 2/6d – hence, 5/- per week. The shares themselves cost £120. Even though Ambleside was a high-wage area, such financial demands were very considerable. Price judges that national share prices ‘usually varied from £60 to £120 each, the monthly subscription being from 5s to 10s.’²¹⁹ The WBBS, therefore, required a level of fiscal prudence and commitment that might alone belong to the temperate and optimistic.

²¹⁷ J.D. Marshall, ‘Some aspects of the social history of 19th-century Cumbria; (II) crime, police, morals and the countryman’, *TC&WAAS*, NS 70 (1970), p. 237.

²¹⁸ 1851 Census Enumerator’s book, Ambleside: PRO, HO107/Folios 51-70, 75-94. One recognizes the possible inaccuracy of the enumerators’ recording of occupational title. However, the Ambleside enumerators – parish clerk and police constable - were likely to know most of the residents.

²¹⁹ Price, *Building Societies*, p. 102.

The respectable household: Martineau's principle compromised?

One further factor should be considered, and one which might be seen to compromise the principle of household transformation which underpinned the rationale for the building society. As a number of the shares were bought by those intending to rent out property, they naturally had a vested interest in ensuring that the tenants were the respectable working class: in other words, not those who stood to gain the most from the WBBS. Singularly revealing is Martineau's 1860 article 'The Cost of Cottages'. Describing the four cottages she had built for the 'workies', she asserted: 'These dwellings are in great request, and therefore inhabited by a superior set of tenants'. She went on to assure the reader of the 'eagerness of respectable labourers for respectable homes'.²²⁰ Of course, one could argue that Martineau was emphasizing an aspect of cottage building which would appeal most to the builders and sidelining for that purpose the moral improvement that home ownership itself might bring to the workers. But Martineau's correspondence offers some unwitting testimony which suggests that she was herself seduced by the clarion call of respectability. In the letter attacking the incumbent, she commented: 'How glad he ought to be to have some of the most respectable of the labouring people near his home'.²²¹

Similarly, she revealingly informed Henry Reeve (her cousin and editor of the *Edinburgh Review*) that she had sold off her own cottages to a 'humane & honourable

²²⁰ Martineau, 'The Cost of Cottages', *Independent Woman*, p. 266; 270.

²²¹ HM to Kingsley, 16 November ?1850, *Collected Letters*, iii, p. 176.

man, - proud of the group of cottages & their *choice* [my stress] tenants'.²²² Where there was doubt about respectability, then Martineau erred on the side of caution. In one letter, she was unusually incoherent as she attempted to balance the needs of the individual and the needs of the other tenants – although one suspects she was thinking of the needs of the owner:

You see, it is all important to the welfare of Ellerigg [the cottages built by Martineau herself] that only unexceptionable tenants sh^d. go...I don't wish to begin with tenants so doubtful that they have to pay their rent weekly...I fear I must say, 'No' unless the poor man can offer some security for his rent, & some good testimony to the respectability of himself and family.²²³

It would therefore seem that Martineau had lost sight of her principle that the provision of clean cottages was transformatory, and that home ownership itself was a moral educator. Respectability, it seems, was the price, and not the reward. This is a compromise which perhaps might not have been made by the Corner House.

Superstition and High Church 'persecution'

Martineau did not include a propensity towards superstition in her list of woes affecting the Ambleside working classes, but her fear of its impact – so conspicuous a feature of her fiction – helped to shape her attitude towards the High Church coterie. This explains her condemnation of the rush-bearing ceremony introduced by the Rev. Lloyd, and she made explicit her objection that ritual unhallowed by tradition was morally dangerous.

²²² HM to Reeve, 6 May 1864, *Collected Letters*, v, p. 62.

²²³ HM to Jane Claude, 21 August 1852, quoted in Webb, p. 262.

A lady, who has a terrible fear of heresy, asks me what I think of the show. I tell her it seems to me curiously popish for our country and time, and inquire if it is true that the symbols I point out to her are of recent introduction. They are. I could, as I tell her, look on with veneration, if they were a mere perpetuation of an ancient observance; but that I dread the effect of introducing a more ritual piety among children growing up in a society where the gross vices of rural life are very prevalent.²²⁴

We are familiar with Martineau's insistence that superstition was the bedfellow of dangerous ignorance, and recall the fate of Nurse Ede.²²⁵ But Martineau added a further objection which is present but not so conspicuous in 'The Scholars of Arneside': that superstition was inevitably divisive, potentially persecutory and therefore destructive of community. And it was doubly so when used by landed proprietors as a mark of party and status. Deference to their social power was, in short, to be marked by deference to their ritualism. Martineau presented the leader of the Puseyite elite, Benson Harrison, as a man obsessed with his status as gentleman, which in turn was translated into a power-fetishness which ritualistic religion condoned and stimulated. Here is Ambleside's Puseyite version of the Sir William Hunter of *Deerbrook*: a representative of a class who, in their personal lives, demanded deference but provided a poor model for others. Indeed, the extent of Martineau's antipathy is revealed in a letter which makes uncomfortable reading. Just before Harrison's death, she received a request from Edward Walford for information on the Harrison family for inclusion in his 1864 edition of *The County Families of the United Kingdom*. Her lengthy response is worth examining.

²²⁴ *Independent Woman*, p. 134.

²²⁵ See pp. 211-13 above.

²²⁵ See pp. 211-13 above.

Benson Harrison Esquire, of Green Bank, (now very old) is said to bear within him three heavy griefs:- 1. his origin. 2d the profligacy of his heir; 3d the death of his good son Richard...As for the origin, - I can only tell you what is said in the neighbourhood, for I have no knowledge of the facts otherwise...I believe there is no doubt that his father was first a footboy, rising to be butler to a gentleman of large property, somewhere in this county...When the master died there was a great deal of mystery about his affairs; & this butler founded the wealthy Greenbank family. Mr Harrison is certainly very wealthy; & whence the wealth came is, they say, what he is always supposing every body is thinking of.²²⁶

Martineau appears here to be peddling gossip in a manner which is all too redolent of Mrs Rowland. The ‘footboy’ and ‘butler’ jibe may be a distortion of the role of Benson Harrison’s father, Matthew, who was steward to Henry Ainslie of the Newland Iron Company; Harrison rapidly advanced the fortunes of the company, which became Harrison, Ainslie & Co. in 1812²²⁷. In fact, Martineau’s aspersions cast on Harrison’s gentility are challenged in genealogies. According to Boumphrey’s *Armorial*, the family was descended from an earlier Matthew Harrison who had married a Braithwaite (a long-standing but defunct family, owners of what had been Ambleside Hall) and so could claim gentle descent from the female side at least.²²⁸

²²⁶ HM to Edward Walford, 6 November 1862, *Collected Letters*, iv, p. 365.

²²⁷ See T.W. Thompson, *Wordsworth’s Hawkshead* (London, 1970). J.D. Marshall, in his *Furness and the Industrial Revolution* (Barrow-in-Furness Library and Museum Committee, 1958), presented a positive picture of the company under Harrison’s management. Nor was Ainslie alone in appreciating his abilities. The will of one of the company founders, George Knott, had granted to Harrison sole management and direction of the concern. For a description of Knott’s role and will, see Alfred Fell, *The Early Iron Industry of Furness and District* (Ulverston, 1908), pp. 273-4.

²²⁸ R.S. Boumphrey *et al*, *An Armorial for Westmorland and Lonsdale* (Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, 1975), p. 150. Benson Harrison obtained a new grant of arms in 1860. Also, some independent verification of the contemporary acceptance of Matthew Harrison’s status as a gentleman is provided by an 1815 letter addressed, by the steward of the Lowther family estates, to ‘Matthew Harrison, Esq’. See KRO, *Benson Harrison Papers*, WD/BH 7/4.

Martineau maintained good relations with non-High Church Anglican clergy where she saw them as allies in social activism. Martineau shared intellectual interests and a commitment to Abolitionism with the Rev. R.P. Graves of Bowness - a well-respected and influential local figure (with the regard of Wordsworth and a national reputation as the biographer of Sir William Hamilton). Indeed, Martineau was prepared to court him assiduously. However, when he felt impelled to write of his disappointment at the distance between them 'on the highest subjects', she responded: 'I think that nobody has any concern with any body else's creed; & that those are not made to be friends who, having a mutual esteem, can be separated by that kind of difference...I know that you prize your faith and think ill of mine. And I prize my faith, & think ill of yours'. She argued that they at least agreed on the process of attaining, through a humble spirit, 'the true consummation of our nature', and that if one drew off from all those from whom one differed, 'our country would cease to be even civilised'.²²⁹ This letter to Graves, and her aggressive tone, signal one of Martineau's most deeply-felt objections: namely, to any claim to sole authority and custodianship of the truth, since this might lead to the persecution of those who differed. It was a propensity she particularly associated with High Churchmen. She found that Rev. John Tatham, the High Church curate of Rydal,²³⁰ explicitly opposed her on the grounds of her secularist publications and involved Harrison and others in his campaign. Tatham was probably responsible for the attempt to make Martineau and other non-Anglicans pay Church rates. In her *Westminster Review* article, he appears as the 'incumbent of a neighbouring living' who was remarkably rude

²²⁹ See BUL, *HMP/HMLAdd.12,13*.

²³⁰ The present writer discovered in a Shropshire bookshop a copy of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* which had been given by Rev. Fletcher Fleming to Rev. John Tatham in 1857. It is tempting to conclude that the Rector of Grasmere found it necessary to remind the High Church curate of his Protestant roots.

to a ‘Quaker gentleman’ [John Crosfield]. ‘Such is the Christian love and courtesy bred of church-rates!’²³¹ Martineau also felt that Tatham would cause embarrassment to her executor, her nephew Thomas Martineau, if she were buried in the new Ambleside churchyard.

The incumbent here w^d. make no difficulty, I believe...but some of his rich High Church parishioners might: & there is a curate at Rydal who preaches openly against people who visit and walk with me.²³²

Conclusion to Part 3

Our discussion has uncovered a Martineau whose engagement with her community was less consistent, less restrained, less distanced from personalities, than the evidence of her fiction, non-fiction and correspondence would suggest that it should have been. Edward Hope, one suspects, would have tut-tutted at the pettiness and snobbery of the Walford letter. Martineau’s expressed intention to work for reform without direct challenge to the elite – indeed, in a circumspect manner – sits somewhat uncomfortably with the buckets of vitriol emptied on the head of Davy and the distasteful remarks made on Harrison’s claims to gentility. And yet, the picture emerging from this chapter complements, rather than contradicts, our hypothesis on Martineau’s ideal of the relationship between household and community and the way in which her heartland concepts themselves shaped fiction and practice. If her energetic social activism at times shaded into epistolary

²³¹ ‘The Last days of Church-rates’, p. 49.

²³² HM letter to Philip Carpenter, 11 February 1855: HMC, *HMMSS*/folio 55. Martineau asked Carpenter if he would be prepared to conduct a burial service for her in a Unitarian churchyard. According to Carpenter’s biographer, he assented. See R.L. Carpenter, *Memoirs of the Life and Work of Philip Pearsall Carpenter* (London, 1880).

stridency, this might be taken to betoken the way in which determination shaded into frustration. Martineau's building society might have been a force for good, but it had not transformed a township which still lay under the hegemony of a High Church squirearchy; her own model household, also intended as a catalyst for change, was subject to criticism from a man whose family and community relationships were seen by Martineau as little less than shameful. This was galling, and the bitterness of her response illuminates her commitment and demonstrates a consistency in purpose through revealing an inconsistency in practice which is human - and perhaps reassuringly so.

Martineau articulated a vision of the interaction between individual and community which was remarkably consistent through her fictional and non-fiction writings and which was embedded in her correspondence. Scholars have not identified this consistency due, in part, to a failure to identify the manner in which community and household also lie at the heart of Martineau's seminal novel, *Deerbrook*. We recall that Martineau's theory of interaction rested upon her concept of household, which was in turn underpinned by the peremptory call of duty. Of course, The Knoll household was never a family in the nucleated, patriarchal sense and the relationships cultivated within it encompassed servants as well as niece-companions in a manner which never eschewed hierarchy but which recognized the fundamental equality of all its members. Martineau saw the household as a vital engine of change in her community: on the macro level were her writings and her national reputation, but on the micro level were household and community where she not only had the self-imposed obligation to put theory into practice, but also the opportunity to put into effect her conviction that change, of

necessity, started small and only then became great: her epigraph from *Deerbrook*, her writings on the cost of cottages and her tiny farm are abundant testimony to her view of the mechanism and practicality of change. Indeed, the use of fiction to present her ideas rests upon the assumption that it is through engaging the emotions of the individual that ideas take root and subsequently impel change.

There is a sad postscript to *The Knoll* which is compelling as a metaphor but would have been far more compelling as an embodiment of Martineau's core values. In short, a would-be resident of *The Knoll* never arrived. On her American tour of 1834-6, Martineau met an eight year-old slave called Ailsie whose beauty and intelligence captivated as much as the girl's likely fate appalled her. Martineau intended to educate her as a maid in her then household, but Ailsie was sold before arrangements could be finalized for her journey to Britain. Martineau did not forget her, and as late as 1860 was referring to her as 'my poor little Ailsie'.²³³ One of the cows on Martineau's farm was named after her,²³⁴ but that apparent bathos should not obscure what she might well have represented to household and community: an individual treated with respect in the name of justice at home and social justice abroad.

²³³ HM to P.P. Carpenter, October 1860, *Collected Letters*, iv, p. 242.

²³⁴ See 'Dairy and Bacon' in 'Our Farm of Two Acres', *Independent Woman*, pp. 232-3.

Conclusion

Harriet Martineau wrote her early fiction because it was a duty to do so, and duties were not to be shirked. The duty might be personal, but it was not to be expressed in any eremitical or atomistic manner or with self-gratification in mind: instead, it was a duty to household and to community and was to be evidenced in practice. This adamant conviction and its focus on household and community were the product of her upbringing, her family life, her interactions with Unitarian and other dissenting networks in her home town of Norwich, her reading and, for as long as she retained her Unitarian religious convictions, her belief in a life after the death of the body. Scholars have recognized her sense of duty, but have not fully grasped its nature, its origins or its impact on her fiction.

This thesis has radically reinterpreted Martineau's fiction by uncovering, through the interconnectedness of personal experience, local context and her writings, the 'heartland concepts' which gave shape to her sense of duty and therefore to her themes, tropes and teaching. The contextualizing derived from such methodology has revealed, in exploring the relationship between local history, cultural history and fiction, previously-unacknowledged but vital elements in Martineau's religious beliefs. The soteriology of 'safety' permeated personal relationships – including her much-misunderstood engagement to John Hugh Worthington – as well as the social piety which was stimulated by witnessing the activism of Withers Dowson and others in Norwich and cemented by the example and writings of Lant Carpenter. 'Safety' thus coalesced with Martineau's

sense of duty and the need for self-improvement, and gained expression through relationships within a household which in turn gave impetus and direction to engagement with the community. Such a reading meant a radical reappraisal of Martineau's early fiction. It was argued that her novella *Five Years of Youth* – generally dismissed as tediously derivative of Austen – was the product of specific personal relationships and taught the importance of correct household relationships as a stimulus to social action. The novella attacks the self-indulgence of sentimentalism as a barrier both to self-improvement and to household and community engagement. In addition, one by-product of the approach of this thesis has been to add to our biographical knowledge of the Martineau family: for example, the Martineaus' intimate friendship with the refugee Evasio Radice was revealed in uncovering him as the original of the *Five Years of Youth* character Casimiro Elvi, duly refracted through Martineau's subjectivity and didactic intent. It has also provided the first critical discussion of a largely-unacknowledged Martineau novella, *Mary Campbell; or, the Affectionate Granddaughter*.

The focus on heartland concepts has not led to a denial that Martineau's *Illustrations* have as their subject-matter political economy, taxation and the poor law; that *Five Years of Youth* has sensibility as its theme; or that romantic love permeates *Deerbrook*. But Martineau imposed upon such subjects her own template made up of her core values, and, indeed, selected those elements which most closely fitted that template. Thus, it has been argued that she drew attention to those elements in Sir Walter Scott which stimulated her to write a realist fiction about and for the middling and lower classes because she had identified their need; and that she wrote a series of articles wedded to Hartleian

Associationism because it defined moral sense as the means to identify the essentials of duty in action.

To establish literary context, a detailed analysis was made of the work of Hannah More, Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Jane Marcet to identify the extent of any influence on Martineau's *Illustrations*. The resulting close textual comparison with More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* revealed instances of direct borrowing of specific incidents and the use of binary opposite households; from Barbauld and Marcet, Martineau made some use of the Socratic dialogue form and accepted wholeheartedly the educative and transformatory power of rational discourse within the household. However, the dissimilarities were perhaps more significant, since they confirmed the extent to which Martineau's heartland concepts focused on household and community relationships and explored the interface between the two: neither More nor Barbauld, let alone Marcet, offered such a model.

Although some scholars claim that Martineau's work is supportive of patriarchy, this thesis offered a more nuanced interpretation through its focus on household and community. Martineau's presentation of household relationships may not have directly challenged patriarchy, but where the exertion of male authority was unreasonable but accepted by a woman who knew better, disaster frequently ensued. Her fiction also offered portraits of the household dominated by women for good and for evil, but the ideal was one of companionship and partnership. Servants were considered to be part of the household, and acted as conscience or chorus. Heads of the household had a duty to educate servants. Good households had good servants, and the failings of some servants

were presented as a reflection of the failings of the household. It is characteristic of Martineau to use personal experience as evidence in support of a philosophical tenet, and we noted that *Monthly Repository* essays on the art of thinking linked associationist underpinnings with household, duty and the need to model truth-telling to servants: instructing them to claim to visitors that the mistress was not at home when she was merely occupied was presented as essentially an act of corruption. As with servants, so with children: the baleful effect on the latter of a corrupted household permeates Martineau's fiction. Martineau placed a particular emphasis on the moral obligation to tell children the truth; their questions were to be answered without dismissing their capacity to understand. This, indeed, was an example of the way in which autobiography permeates Martineau's fiction, and reflected her resentment as a young girl at being denied an explanation of the issue of free will.

Other key heartland concepts are similarly a reflection of and on personal experience. Martineau's encroaching deafness and her positive response to the traumatic collapse of the family business resurface time and again in her fiction. Vicissitude may stimulate moral and intellectual improvement - a message which flavoured several *Illustrations* tales, the *Playfellow* and *Deerbrook* and, indeed, her articles on Scott. For some, it was a saviour. In other cases, it was a litmus test of moral status – as in the differing responses of the sisters in *Five Years of Youth* to the crisis of their father's imprisonment, or in the range of attitudes towards the needs of the mentally-handicapped Archie in 'Ella of Garveloch'.

Less obviously autobiographical among the heartland concepts is the attack on superstition, but this should be seen as part of Martineau's insistent advocacy of the moral benefits of intellectual advance stemming from access to the world of ideas. We noted that her correspondence with Helen Bourn Martineau, and the whole emphasis of the *Autobiography*, resonated with that conviction, which was born of her upbringing and experience of school. Superstition was also presented as doubly dangerous because, in her view, it was frequently used alongside ignorance - its inseparable companion - as an agent of social control.

This aspect of the attack on superstition resurfaced in her criticisms of false traditions in Ambleside, and, indeed, is an example of a key finding: the consistency of Martineau's theory and practice. This thesis has argued that the heartland concepts not only shaped Martineau's early fiction, but also her engagement with her adopted community of Ambleside. Indeed, it was further argued that her earlier period of prostration in Tynemouth was no hiatus, but one of consistency in word and deed since, despite her prostration, she practised a social activism which was a precursor to her two decades in Ambleside. Thus, Ambleside was not, as most scholars would have us believe, a period of bucolic retirement or a pastoral backdrop to her journalism, but was instead a deliberate attempt to build a household which would provide a model and inspiration for a parish in sore need of social and moral reform. This contention may be new, but it is evidenced through an analysis of the power-structures of Ambleside society, where Martineau came into conflict with a High Church elite which allegedly made use of the methods of social control so strongly deprecated in her fiction. Through her household at

The Knoll, her model farm, her sanitary improvements, her lectures, and the building society, she sought to teach by example and deed. At times, she compromised: the tenants she sought for the cottages needed to be respectable, whereas the opportunity afforded by a decent cottage was supposed to transform its occupants into respectability.

This thesis has demonstrated that local history has proved essential to the uncovering of the interplay between Martineau's subjectivity, art and life. It has contributed to debates over the contemporary meaning of community by situating Martineau's own concept of community in a sense of belonging which changed as her experience of household changed. Her earliest sense of belonging reposed in a largely Unitarian networking based in but not limited to Norwich, and the wider cultural and religious influences gave her the sense of being part of a further community with shared value systems. Ultimately, her sense of belonging was an act of will rooted in duty; she adopted the community of Ambleside, and applied to it the teachings which were intrinsic to her heartland concepts and so to her self-fashioning.

Appendix 1

Figures derived from census enumerators' books for the parish of Ambleside.

	1851	1871
FARMERS (TENANTS)	16	17
INDEPENDENT MEANS/PROPERTY	34	44
PROFESSIONS	21	28
INDUSTRIALISTS	1	2

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