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The Redemption of a Heretic: Harriet Martineau and Anglo- American Abolitionism in Pre-Civil War America

Deborah A. Logan

Harriet Martineau's long and prolific career was intimately implicated in what she termed America's "reign of terror" and "martyr age," its "Second Revolution" -- in other words, the abolition of slavery. The early decades of nineteenth-century America were marked by accelerating tension as pro-slavers aimed to protect their economic interests while anti-slavers sought emancipation on humanitarian grounds. The distinction between economic and human concerns is essential for understanding Martineau's writing on slavery: as a political economist who was also a positivist, she was less motivated by numbers or theories or by political ideologies than by the progressive social evolution of humanity, the necessary prerequisite for which was immediate, universal emancipation.

My discussion outlines the three factors resulting in Harriet Martineau's life-long commitment to American abolitionism: first, her alliance with Maria Weston Chapman, the Boston abolitionist popularly known as "Garrison's lieutenant"; second, her veneration of William Lloyd Garrison, the "mastermind of this great revolution, [...] one of God's nobility" (*Martyr Age* 7); and third, her formal declaration of support for the abolitionists at a Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS) meeting during the height of the violence in Boston. These influences serve as a background for exploring the feminist aspects of Garrisonian

abolitionism that dovetailed with Martineau's social ideology. So attuned was she with the American “experiment” that she later observed it was these experiences that “account for the strange story I have had to tell about myself” (AB 2:61). Indeed, the remainder of her life and career illustrate how her passion for “my dearly-beloved Americans”¹ was shaped by the events unfolding in Boston in the Autumn of 1835.

Foregoing the conventional European Grand Tour, Martineau chose instead the far more rigorous and demanding journey to America, which she visited from 1834-36. What made America a dangerous choice at that time had little to do with the long (forty-two days) ocean journey, or with the hazards and inconveniences of travel through the countryside by river-boat, stagecoach, and horseback, or even with the threat of native attacks along the Western frontier. The real danger America posed to Martineau was that her arrival in the United States coincided with the vigorous rise of the abolition movement that had been gathering momentum for decades, sparking a violent pro-slavery backlash. Martineau’s reputation as an abolitionist sympathizer preceded her arrival, a reputation based primarily on her compassionate treatment of the plight of West Indian slaves in “Demerara” (*Illustrations of Political Economy* 1832). Given the national mood in 1834, the tale opened many doors for her throughout the country, though others remained emphatically closed.

During her visit, Martineau met virtually all people of note in mid-1830s America, from those who had made history in the Revolutionary era to those who would make history in the Civil War era. Chapman noted that “What the old over-civilised world would think of it all” -- “it” meaning the American experiment in general and the South’s “peculiar institution” in particular -- “was the natural anxiety on both sides” (127). From shipboard gossip about her probable fate upon landing (fearing she might be lynched, the captain tried to dissuade her from going ashore in New York) to the hate-mail sent her from America after her return to England two years later, Martineau's insistence on race, gender, and class equality set the tone for a lifetime of controversy.² It is typical of Harriet Martineau to regard the timing of her arrival in America as particularly fortuitous, and not, as the circumstances suggest, especially dangerous.

Maria Weston Chapman, whose abolitionist fervor prompted her to depict Martineau's arrival more optimistically, noted that prior to this visit, "No English traveller had before visited the country with so brilliant a prestige" (98). There was not a person of note, she asserts, "who did not [...] pay homage to the extraordinary compass of hers" (105).³ But many were angered by their failure to convert Martineau to their way of thinking on the slavery issue, whether by persuasion, censorship, or threats. Anticipating the likelihood that her American tour would be marred by attempts to screen or monitor her experiences, Ellis Gray Loring warned, "Miss Martineau is the world's property, and as she cannot be crushed, she must, if possible, be blinded" (Chapman 129).⁴ But as her American travel books demonstrate, she made a point of visiting the fullest range of the country's institutions, from the master's mansion to the slave's hut, and from a Harvard University commencement to a Charleston, South Carolina slave auction.

Martineau's itinerary, which began in New York and the mid-Atlantic states, and continued throughout the southern states and up the western frontier (then, the Mississippi River) through the northern states to New England, had earlier allowed for a return visit to the South. Throughout, Martineau stayed out of American politics, preferring to record, as objectively as possible, her empirical observations of American society. "I am heartily glad I came, and quite happy in the conviction that I shall find [...] much that may avail to higher and remoter purposes," Martineau wrote to Ezra Stiles Gannett.⁵ Despite her unequivocal abolitionism in "Demerara," she was determined to give all sides of the slavery debates a fair hearing. She interviewed slave-holders and slaves, colonizationists and Free Blacks, politicians and clergy, humanists and philanthropists, feminists and abolitionists--all having distinct opinions on the institution of slavery. But events conspired to prevent her anticipated return visit to the South, in the process sealing Martineau's fate as an abolitionist writer and activist and transforming her initial caution into a political radicalism that increased with age.

While in Lexington, Kentucky as the guest of Congressman Henry Clay, who strove with all his political vigor to convince Martineau "in favour of slavery" (*AB* 2:22), she received a

letter from Maria Weston Chapman--as the first contact between the two women, a remarkable instance of timing. Martineau initially rejected her future biographer as "rather intrusive, and not a little fanatical," an opinion probably fueled by her charismatic host, who dismissed Chapman as "one of the 'fanatics'." Chapman wrote that she feared Martineau was becoming "blinded and beguiled by the slave-holders" (as Loring had cautioned), arguing it was time for the British writer to give the abolitionists "a candid hearing." Stung by Chapman's implication, Martineau claims not to remember her reply, although "I am sure it was repulsive, cold and hard" -- a response based, she later wrote, on her ignorance of the true state of American affairs: "I knew nothing of what was before her eyes,--the beginning of the reign of terror in New England on the slave question [...] I was, [...] though an English abolitionist, quite unaware of the conditions of abolitionism in America" (*AB* 2:22-3). But despite this inauspicious beginning, Chapman proved to be "one in a thousand" for her patience and persistence in winning Martineau as a political ally and a lifelong friend, a relationship cemented by Martineau's formal alliance with the abolitionist movement soon after her arrival in Boston. Martineau's contributions to Chapman's abolitionism were aptly complemented by Chapman's vigorous defense of her controversial friend, throughout her life and long after her death.

Martineau and Chapman also collaborated on a variety of abolitionist projects: *The Martyr Age of the United States* (1839), written by Martineau and based on Chapman's compilation of Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society annual reports; Chapman's *Memorials* (1877), a biographical memoir based on Martineau's private letters and journals; Martineau's literary contributions to Chapman's annual, *The Liberty Bell* (1838-58); and her needlework, donated for Chapman's anti-slavery fund-raising bazaars. But the most important collaboration was the unofficial one: Chapman's regular letters and newspapers proved to be essential to Martineau's later success as an American affairs expert in Britain's periodical press. Chapman's packets "send a stream of fire thro' my whole soul" -- particularly the news that women abolitionists, including Martineau, were being vigorously denounced by the American clergy. Reveling in the notoriety, she defiantly added, "It is already clear that the women will carry the

day" in terms of the "philosophy and practice of priesthood and womanhood" (Arbuckle 9).

Chapman's abrasive letter sparked the chain of events culminating in Martineau's public avowal of her abolitionist sympathies in Boston. Contrary to popular expectations, "It was not in the south that I saw or heard any thing to remind me of personal danger: nor yet in the west" (*AB* 2:20), she asserted; rather, it was in the streets of the oldest and most venerated, intellectually cultivated city in America where she first witnessed lynch-law in action. Like the summer before when she first landed in America, the summer of 1835 was also marked by scenes of violent anti-abolitionist protests throughout the country. In October, a Boston mob protested a speech by British abolitionist George Thompson, with whom Martineau's name was soon linked as a foreign "incendiary." But the turning point for her was when William Lloyd Garrison (whom she as yet knew only by reputation) was dragged through the streets with a noose around his neck, a boiling tar kettle awaiting him--acts perpetrated not by low-class thugs, she noted with surprise, but by well-dressed "gentlemen."¹ She actually saw the crowd from her coach and was told, ludicrously, that these were gentlemen rushing to collect their mail on foreign-post day; she soon after learned that what she had witnessed was the mob bent on lynching Garrison. For Martineau, it was this event--the abuse of Garrison with impunity --that enabled her to understand Chapman's urgency in soliciting her alliance with the cause. On October 21, the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society met despite these recent events, "well knowing that it might cost them their lives" (*AB* 2:23).² Shocked by the general "subservience to opinion [...which] seemed a sort of mania" when measured against "the negro mother weeping for her children, [...or] the crushed manhood of hundreds of thousands of their countrymen" (*AB* 2:39), Martineau found the Boston abolitionists' bravery and defiance infectious and, when invited to attend the Society's November 18 meeting (listed in the November 21, 1835 *Liberator* as November 19), she was quick to accept.

Martineau's party arrived amidst threatening crowds gathered to harass the abolitionists; that her hosts assured her that an escape route had been arranged should the crowds grow more aggressive indicates the real danger posed by this threat.³ During the meeting, asked to offer

words of encouragement to those whose recent bravery had so impressed her, Martineau struggled with her conscience, fearing that if she spoke truthfully the many doors open to her in America would be reduced to those of the abolitionists only, a serious limitation to this social observer most anxious to obtain a comprehensive, objective view of American society. Her assessment proved to be accurate, since compatriot George Thompson barely escaped to England with his life; at present, "the fury against 'foreign incendiaries' ran high [...] and there was no safety for any one, native or foreign, who did what I was now compelled to do" (AB 2:30). When the moment arrived--"I felt that I could never be happy again if I refused what was asked of me"--, Martineau took a definitive stand and, her words dramatically accompanied by the protesters' shouts as they pelted the windows with dirt and mud, she observed:

I will say what I have said through the whole South, in every family where I have been; that I consider Slavery as inconsistent with the law of God, and as incompatible with the course of his Providence. I should certainly say no less at the North than at the South concerning this utter abomination--and I now declare that in your *principles* I fully agree. (AB 2:31)

Despite these carefully chosen words, she had already made clear her position simply by attending this meeting, a conclusion likely to be reached by interested observers from all sides of the question. Now, there was no turning back for Martineau: "The mission of her life to the United States of America had begun," Chapman observed, "and with her, words are nothing distinct from life. The symphony predicts the coming strain" (164). Every conversation, every event, and every experience of Martineau's American tour after--or even before--landing in New York seemed to point to the necessity of her doing precisely that which she had determined not to do, a determination based on her awareness that acting on her private principles as a public person constitutes interference in, rather than observation of, American society. But the situation in 1830s America demanded more than sterile investigative reporting, especially from one whose foremost guiding principle in all her undertakings was absolute fidelity to what she called her "inward witness."

The process culminating in Martineau's public "confession" is consistent with the rhetoric

of martyrdom typical of early abolitionist writing. As a result of her public avowal, she admits, "I was unexpectedly and very reluctantly, but necessarily, implicated in the struggle" (*AB* 2:25). Later, her perception is more philosophical: "Having thus declared on the safe side of the Atlantic ["Demerara"], I was bound to act up to my declaration on the unsafe side" (*Retrospect* 2:163). Phrased in terms of the religious underpinnings of the abolitionist movement, Martineau must endure baptism by fire--the public confession--before she is worthy of bearing witness to America's principles, a quite different sort of credibility than that required of an objective reporter.

The backlash resulting from her pronouncement, once exploited in the press throughout the country, earned her social rejection and even death threats. Following the press's "declaration of hostilities," she remarked, "the abuse of me ran through almost every paper in the Union" (*AB* 2:35; 46). Newspapers throughout the country carried accounts of her declaration, most of them distorted and some, in Martineau's phrase, just plain "filthy." Demonstrating critics' tendency to discredit women's political activism by attacking their femininity, one writer charged: "that unwomanly act of hers, -- the delivery of a speech at an abolition meeting," is typical of what one might expect of "this Malthusian lady" (Chapman 172).⁴ Rather than a return invitation, Southern newspapers invited her "to come and see how they would treat foreign incendiaries. They would hang me: they would cut my tongue out, and cast it on a dunghill" (*AB* 2:46). Some abolitionists were appalled at the notoriety they feared might compromise the movement, while friends were concerned for her safety; socialites, to protect their reputations, shut their doors against her, no longer interested in courting the celebrity "lion" of the season. Unruffled, Martineau advised all concerned to "trust me to bear the consequences of saying abroad what I had long ago printed at home" (*AB* 2:36).

In a letter to Garrison, Ellis Grey Loring lamented the "storm of abuse" Martineau was enduring as a result of her "independent conduct." Loring noted with some surprise that "she goes even further than some of us" in her insistence on immediate and complete emancipation without compensation to slave-holders. "Respecting, as I do, Miss M's pronounced judgment

and wide information,” concluded Loring, “I am gratified at her adhering to immediate emancipation as well in an economical as in a moral point of view.”⁵ Although as a political economist and social reformist Martineau’s work was typically characterized by her dual attention to both economic and humanitarian concerns, she is here less accommodating, arguing that a social crime of the magnitude of slavery, in which humans are regarded commodities, must not be further degraded by a concern for slave-holders’ economic well-being.

Garrison’s response to the public outcry reflects the idea that Martineau must align her public practice with her private principles. “I have just read the scandalous attack upon Miss Martineau, in the Daily Advertiser,” he wrote to Samuel May:

It will confirm her in the faith, for it is too passionate to convince or alarm a steadfast and enlightened mind like hers. [...] We ought not to be surprised, however, that the attendance of Miss Martineau at the anti-slavery meeting creates a stir among our opponents, for it is as if a thunderbolt had fallen upon their heads. I believe, could they have foreseen this event, to prevent its occurrence they would have permitted even George Thompson to address the ladies without interruption.⁶

The significance of the event is best indicated by Garrison’s assertion that the influence of the “little, deaf woman from Norwich” far eclipses even the famous George Thompson, despite her being, like all women of the time, “politically invisible.”⁷ Clearly, however, her influence -- unofficial though it may be -- was considerable, judging by the vigor of public response to her rather mild proclamation.

The remainder of her stay in America was marked by public infamy, private snubs, and the possibility that vigilante “justice” might triumph over her status as a woman, a foreigner, and a celebrity. After hiding her papers and travel journals, she altered her itinerary upon learning that some who had “sworn vengeance” aimed to arrest and prosecute a trumpet-wielding Englishwoman.⁸ “Much worse things were contemplated at the slave-holding city of Louisville,” she observes cryptically, but the ambiguity is resolved by Loring’s grave assertion, “They mean to lynch you” (AB 2:48). Outwardly calm “in the midst of a clamour which left me scarcely any quietness for reflexion,” she was in fact quite shaken by “the hubbub of censure in which I was

living--enough to confound the soberest senses" (AB 2:43-4). But she later admits:

There were times when I was sorry that I was not the victim of the struggle, instead of Lovejoy, or some other murdered citizen. I was sorry, because my being a British subject would have caused wider and deeper consequences to arise from such a murder than followed the slaughter of native Abolitionists [...]The murder of an English traveller would have settled the business of American Slavery [...] more speedily than perhaps any other incident. (AB 2:56)⁹

Her comments signal an outspokenness that began tentatively, at the Society meeting, and increased proportionately with every instance of social apathy, violence, and censorship she encountered in America, an orientation that was to characterize the remainder of her life and work.

Writing of these events in the *Autobiography* twenty years later, she was "pleased to find [...] that in the South I am still reviled [...] and held up, in the good company of Mrs. Chapman and Mrs. Stowe, to the abhorrence of the South" (AB 2:40). Her claim that "The accident of my arriving in America in the dawning hour of the great conflict accounts for the strange story I have had to tell about myself" (2:61) attests to the profound significance of these three influences on her life -- Chapman, Garrison, and the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society -- all dating from the Autumn of 1835.

It was not until after the Society meeting that Martineau first met Garrison, an encounter which she initiated and which took place at the home of Ezra Stiles Gannett, an associate of William Ellery Channing.¹⁰ Although she was initially startled by Garrison's "excessive agitation," her misgivings quickly faded: "His aspect put to flight in an instant what prejudices his slanderers had raised in me. I was wholly taken by surprise. It was a countenance glowing with health, and wholly expressive of purity, animation, and gentleness" (*Retrospect* 2:218). While she disapproved of the tone and language of his writing, she warmed to the style and content of his talk, pronouncing it "as gladsome as his countenance, and as gentle as his voice" (2:219). Their meeting lasted several hours, prompting her claim that Garrison was "the most bewitching personage" she had met in America (2:220). Before sailing home to England, she

secured his portrait, which hung in the place of honor over her mantlepiece.

Martineau's early alignment with the Garrisonian viewpoint, particularly its synthesis of race and gender issues, strengthened as "Woman Question" debates were employed to discredit the participation of women like herself and Chapman in public discourse. The Garrisonians applauded Martineau's courage to speak and write with conviction and authority, attributing much of the success of the movement to her. Chapman credits her with "The ultimate rehabilitation of a race and the redemption of a continent," citing Martineau's influence as "one important link in the chain of causes still producing happy effects" (165). "The Political Invisibility of Women," an idea introduced in *Society in America*, finds fuller expression in *The Martyr Age of the United States*, where Martineau develops the analogy linking the status of women and slaves as it manifests in institutional resistance to women abolitionists' activism. She cites Garrison's "Prospectus" to the *Liberator*, which makes clear this dual commitment: "As our object is *Universal Emancipation* -- to redeem woman as well as man from a servile to an equal condition -- we shall go for the Rights of Woman to their fullest extent" (*Martyr* 54). But the Garrisonians faced formidable opposition to such radical thinking from two of the most powerful institutions of the era: church and state. Alarmed about the general "alteration [...] taking place in the female character" in the form of self-reliance in political and social matters (*Martyr* 53), the General Association of Massachusetts Clergymen formally censured the women abolitionists. "It is wonderful," Martineau wrote with profound irony, how many sermons of the period conclude "with a simile about a vine, a trellis and an elm" -- an ideology "worthy of the dark ages" (54).¹¹ In their aim to intimidate women back into their homes, the clergy contributed to the division within the abolitionist movement that resulted in the formation of the National Anti-Slavery Society, which opposed women's participation and favored abolition through politics, and the American Anti-Slavery Society, the Garrisonian wing promoting universal emancipation through grass-roots activism.¹²

Women's activism was condemned in political circles as well. Martineau records an exchange between John Quincy Adams and his congressional opponent, a man who rejected as

inadmissible political petitions signed by women abolitionists, objecting that such "discreditable" departure "from their proper sphere" is ruinous to the national character.¹³ Adams retorts that politicians use "erroneous, vicious" principles to exclude women's participation in politics and to dismiss the intensifying threat posed by abolitionist debates: "women are not only justified, but exhibit the most exalted virtue when they do depart from the domestic circle, and enter on the concerns of their country, of humanity, and of their God [...It] is a virtue of the highest order" (*Martyr* 78). Jane Tompkins' observation that abolitionist writing like Stowe's *Cabin* is, "as a political enterprise, halfway between sermon and social theory" (126) pinpoints the very anxieties demonstrated by the religious and political resistance to social change, in terms of race and gender, outlined in Martineau's writing about slavery in America.

In 1855, news of Martineau's near-fatal illness prompted the Garrisonians to compose an official testimonial of her contributions to their cause:

Resolved, That, since the briefest historical retrospect of the last quarter of a century would be imperfect without an expression of feeling in view of one great and holy life which the world has seen so unreservedly and strenuously devoted to the welfare to mankind; and since that whole noble life [...] has peculiar claim on *our* hearts, we [...] express to Harriet Martineau, [...] our deep, affectionate, and reverential gratitude for the benefit of her labours, the honour of her friendship, and the sublime joy of her example. (Chapman 365-66)

Garrison was as eloquent about his indebtedness to Martineau in this private letter:

[...T]wenty years ago, caricatured, reviled, hated, and ostracised as I was universally, [...] words of sympathy and approval were to me as cold water to the thirsty spirit [...]. Those you gave me [...] at the risk of social outlawry, popular contempt and indignation, and pecuniary loss [...Y]ou thus sublimely took up the cross, 'despising the shame,' and have ever since been the unfaltering championess of justice, humanity and freedom, on a world-wide scale.

Garrison rejects her ostracization at the hands of "a hireling priesthood and a corrupt church"; he admires her skepticism, her "conscientious dissent and honest doubt," and concludes:

"Conformity is never a virtue, *per se*. Heresy is the only thing that will redeem mankind." As one who had been pilloried his entire adult life for going against the grain of popular opinion,

Garrison keenly understood the wages of passionate commitment to ideals one is compelled to pursue. Having realized his abolitionist ambitions with the help of heretical women like Martineau, Garrison singles out her exemplification of women's untapped potential: "by the force of her intellect, the scope of her philanthropy, and the vigor of her writings [...she...] vindicated the equality of woman with man by a method as practical as it was conclusive." Demonstrating the strong affinity between himself, Chapman, and Martineau, Garrison observes: "My appreciation of her [Chapman's] genius, intuition, far-sightedness, moral heroism, and uncompromising philanthropy [...] is equalled only by my profound regard for your own exalted intellectual and moral endowments."¹⁴

In 1884, the surviving members of the Boston Female-Anti-Slavery Society honored Martineau's memory by commissioning a statue of her by American sculptor, Anne Whitney. During its unveiling, the speaker observed, "Miss Martineau has the great honour of having always seen truth one generation ahead [...] The first element in Harriet Martineau's greatness is her rectitude of purpose, by which was born that true instinct which saw through all things."¹⁵ Never a stranger to controversy, Martineau's nonconformist attitudes during an era defined by social upheaval earned her, too, the martyrdom she attributed only to those active in the front lines of America's great civil conflict. Clearly, her modest assessment of herself as no more than a popularizer is eclipsed by her foresight as one who, instead, apprehended truth at least "one generation ahead."

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¹ HM to unknown recipient, n.d. (National Library of Scotland, ms 7261, f58).

² British abolitionist George Thompson (1804--1878) originally intended to sail to America on the same ship as Martineau, but was obliged to reschedule. Thompson lectured for the London Anti-Slavery Society and was instrumental in the passage of Britain's 1833 emancipation bill; he came to America at Garrison's invitation. The captain's concern with Martineau's landing in New York stemmed in part from the July riots and from the rumor that "if his [Thompson's] presence was known in New York, he would be a dead man before night" (*AB* 2:12). In the public mind, Martineau and Thompson were linked as "foreign incendiaries." It is a singular coincidence that they both spoke in Boston at the height of the mob-violence against Garrison; Mrs. Thompson was among those present when Martineau spoke at the BFASS meeting.

³ R. K. Webb records New York Governor W. L. Marcy's 1835 letter to historian George Bancroft: "I regard Miss M. as an exceedingly clever writer whose opinions of us will go far in Europe to give us a character." Webb adds, "I know of no better indication of the seriousness with which her visit was regarded" (148).

⁴ Ellis Gray Loring was a Unitarian Boston attorney who helped support Garrison's *Liberator*. Loring and his wife Louisa welcomed Martineau into the abolitionist fold -- it was Loring who prompted Martineau to speak at the BFASS meeting; both were dismayed by her resulting public ostracization in the press. Martineau was accompanied by the Lorings for part of her journey north and west.

⁵ HM to Ezra Stiles Gannett, Dec. 15, 1834 (Houghton Library, Harvard, ms am 1844.4 [25] item 27). Gannett was a Unitarian preacher affiliated with William Ellery Channing. It was in Gannett's home that Martineau first met Garrison, at her own request, although Gannett's attitude toward Garrison and his radical abolitionism has been described as "extremely hostile." As is typical of Martineau's approach to America, it was *because* she heard "every species of abuse" about Garrison that she was most keen to meet him (Mayer 208).

¹ See her discussion of this episode in *Society in America* (112-14) and in *Autobiography* 2:23-4.

² In her description of the democratic inclusiveness of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, Martineau notes: "Upon such a set of women was the responsibility thrown of vindicating the liberty of meeting and of free discussion in Boston; and nobly they sustained it" (*Martyr* 27). These women met in defiance of a city ordinance prohibiting, ostensibly, any public meeting, but designed specifically to prevent abolitionist meetings.

³ The meeting was held at the home of Boston businessman Francis Jackson, one of Garrison's patrons.

⁴ The writer refers to various tales in the *Illustrations of Political Economy* notorious for gently hinting that sexual abstinence (including delayed marriage) provides the most logical solution to over-population and economic oppression in the working-class, a standard tenet of Malthusian social thought.

⁵ E. G. Loring to W. L. Garrison, Dec. 5, 1835 (Boston Public Library, ms.a.1.2. v5 p76).

⁶ Garrison to Samuel May, Dec. 5, 1835 (*Letters of William Lloyd Garrison* 6: 232-33). Samuel May, a Unitarian clergyman and abolitionist, both praised and condemned Martineau's brand of abolitionism, ultimately lauding her as one of the two British abolitionists (George Thompson was the other) whose loyalty to American abolitionism never wavered (see Samuel May letters, Boston Public Library, ms.b.1.6v9).

⁷ Lord Chancellor Brougham, affectionately if patronizingly, praised the insightful political economy of the "little, deaf woman from Norwich." A chapter on the status of American women in Martineau's *Society in America* is

entitled “The Political Invisibility of Women” -- in her account, the title says it all. But although Martineau had no official political power (like the franchise), her political influence is indicated by the peers and Parliamentary members frequenting her London home and the intensity with which her political alliance was courted all over America.

⁸ Martineau’s deafness was somewhat mitigated by her ear trumpet, a hearing-aid device.

⁹ Elijah P. Lovejoy, a Missouri newspaper editor, lynched and murdered for publishing pro-abolitionist propaganda. See *Martyr Age* for an extensive account of his death.

¹⁰ There was little agreement between the conservative Channing and radical Garrison; according to Martineau in *Martyr Age*, their differences rested not with the question of abolition but with the approach to accomplishing that goal (44). Channing, a Unitarian divine, resisted women’s participation in the abolitionist movement. His pamphlet, *Slavery* (Boston, 1835), revealed him to be more of a “fence-sitter” than an abolitionist: he condemned the ownership of humans but warned against abolitionist radicals --like Garrison--who demanded unconditional, immediate emancipation.

¹¹ She refers to the gender iconography popular at the time, in which men were imaged as virile supporters (like an elm tree) of weak women, providing a framework (trellis) for women’s vine-like dependence on men.

¹² See Constance W. Hassett’s “Siblings and Antislavery” for a discussion of the striking parallels in the relationships between abolitionist Harriet and her clergyman-brother, James, and between abolitionist Chapman and her conservative pastor-mentor, William Ellery Channing. Both women were as determined to persist in their antislavery activities as the clergymen were to silence their public activism. Writing to Chapman of her visit to HM, Lucretia Mott relayed Harriet’s hope that “much good will result from your labors against clerical assumptions and priestly power” (Boston Public Library, ms.a.9.2 v13 p24).

¹³ This point is related to the Gag Bill, which prohibited discussion of certain topics, like slavery and abolition, in Congress. Adams devoted much of his congressional career to rescinding this bill. Although the Gag Bill encompassed controversial topics promoted by a variety of special-interest groups, petitions signed by women apparently generated a higher degree of antagonism from Congressmen wishing them to remain politically invisible.

¹⁴ William Lloyd Garrison to HM, Dec. 4, 1855 (U. Birmingham, Special Collections, hm349).

¹⁵ Boston *Inquirer*, Jan. 12, 1884 (Harris-Manchester College, Oxford).