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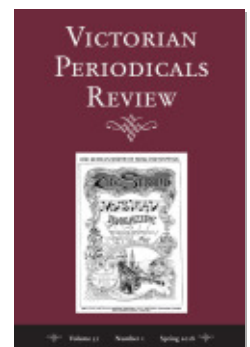
"Here, I Could Rove at Will": Harriet Martineau, *Sartain's Union Magazine* , and Freedom in the Transatlantic Periodical Press

Amanda Adams

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# “Here, I Could Rove at Will”: Harriet Martineau, *Sartain’s Union Magazine*, and Freedom in the Transatlantic Periodical Press

AMANDA ADAMS

Given her prodigious periodical legacy, it is no surprise that Harriet Martineau has received consistent critical attention in periodical studies, especially for her writing on slavery, women’s issues, and the industrial economy. Her work in the 1850s—a decade in which she commented on all of these subjects and more—has been well mined. Still, her Lake District writings of the same period have received less scrutiny. A group of writings that focus their attention on natural scenery and tourist sites, they might at first seem far removed from the issues of the day with which Martineau was so often engaged and as such have engendered few critical investigations. Alexis Easley constitutes the major exception with her treatment of Martineau in *Literary Celebrity, Gender, and Victorian Authorship, 1850–1914*. Easley links Martineau’s Lake District writings to the fraught issue of women’s celebrity, illuminating how Martineau was able to carve out an authorial position that “provided a model of how women could capitalize on the emerging industry of literary tourism as a way of enhancing their status as literary celebrities.”<sup>1</sup>

This essay focuses on one such Lake District writing—a series of articles published in the Philadelphia-based *Sartain’s Union Magazine of Literature and Art*. Conceived of as “A Year at Ambleside,” the articles purported to describe Martineau’s seasonal life from month to month in the English Lake District.<sup>2</sup> Like Easley, I am interested in the ways that these writings reveal a gendered cultural context. However, I focus on the transatlantic political theater in which Martineau was writing. As Bob Nicholson argues in his recent overview of the transatlantic periodical press, technological developments over the course of the nineteenth century “allowed news-

papers and periodicals to become the nineteenth century's most pervasive 'contact zone' between British and American culture, a channel through which words, texts, people, and ideas from one country entered the cultural bloodstream of the other."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, "A Year at Ambleside" functions as a transatlantic channel designed to capitalize on American interest in the storied environment and culture of the English Lake District. Viewed from this perspective, Martineau's writings appear to be a Victorian version of Wordsworth's writings aimed at an American audience: genial, tourist-minded accounts meant to celebrate the beauty, wildness, and literary heritage of the Lake District. Although the series was published in the United States during a particularly contentious year in the political struggles leading up to the Civil War—a year that included the Compromise of 1850 and, as part of it, a stronger Fugitive Slave Law—the articles at first seem disengaged from a transatlantic political context.

However, a closer look reveals that the series is not as apolitical as it at first seems to be, especially when carefully situated within a transatlantic context. As Paul Giles points out, British and American works can shift in meaning and "are apt chameleonically to change their shape when refracted through a spectrum of alternative cultural traditions."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, a transatlantic reading of Martineau's series reveals secondary subjects beyond the apparent focus on Lake District tourist sites of interest. Throughout the series, I argue, Martineau's purported subject gives way in key moments to another topic: the freedom of embodied mobility that such a landscape offers to women like herself. The "freedom" she explicitly claims for herself can and should be read in the context of the concurrent American debate about freedom and its counterpart, slavery. Indeed, slavery and freedom were clearly on Martineau's mind as she wrote her monthly essays and would continue to preoccupy her thoughts for years to come. In fact, Martineau not only donated some of her earnings from the series to two American anti-slavery publications but also obliquely engaged with the issue of slavery by focusing on women's bodily liberation and making indirect references to American slavery. Freedom, in other words, is at once a political goal and a rhetorical theme in the series. The question of slavery is never directly raised in the text, but it can be brought into focus through contextual analysis and Martineau's direct commentary on the freedom the Lake District afforded to women like herself. Thus, a seemingly innocuous description of a local place is actually engaged, directly and indirectly, with the transatlantic political debate about slavery.

*Sartain's Union Magazine* of Philadelphia was a counter-intuitive choice of venue for such a project given its nationalistic and apolitical reputation. Working in collaboration with William Sloanaker, British publisher John Sartain purchased the *Union Magazine of Literature and Art* in 1848 and added his name to the title. He then moved the magazine from New York

to Philadelphia and printed the first issue in January 1849. Sartain was already well known for his steel engravings and mezzotinto methods, and Sloanaker had been a business manager at *Graham's Magazine*, so both came to the project with experience in periodical publishing.<sup>5</sup> They hired John Hart and writer Caroline Kirkland (a future correspondent of Martineau's) as co-editors. The magazine lasted until 1852 and at its height boasted a circulation of fifty thousand.<sup>6</sup> Not unlike many periodicals of the time, *Sartain's* sought to publish relatively noncontroversial articles on arts and culture with a distinctive nationalistic undertone. As Heidi L. Nichols points out, "*Sartain's* served to promote a distinctly American literature and art, often wrestling with ways to embrace, yet distance itself from, its European and especially English cultural heritage, as well as from the social and economic underpinnings reflected in foreign work."<sup>7</sup> *Sartain's* pursued its nationalist agenda by printing mostly American authors, such as Edgar Allan Poe, Catherine Sedgwick, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Its commitment to American authorship was not exclusive, however, as it also printed Martineau's work and other non-American contributions. As Jennifer Phegley has argued in her study of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, the American reprinting of British works (or, we might add, British-themed works) wasn't necessarily at odds with a periodical's desire to fulfill a nationalist vision. Rather, in the case of *Harper's*, the "editors theorized that by providing the public with these examples of 'excellent' high culture texts, the magazine would raise the standards of American readers and, in turn, raise the quality of American literature."<sup>8</sup> Thus, the mission of instilling literary taste, even for British literature, could be construed as nationalistic.

The lack of copyright protection for British authors meant that periodicals could reprint their work less expensively than the contributions of American authors. Nevertheless, *Sartain's* was willing to pay for original work from American authors so as to enable them "to pursue their craft as full-time employment."<sup>9</sup> Sartain himself critiqued magazines that wouldn't publish well-known American writers because of high rates of payment, and he took pride in publishing works by American authors. He wrote, "We mean not to disparage the literary merit of the material of these periodicals, but, if we are to have a national literature, and compete proudly and successfully with Britain in the great rivalry of intellect, it is assuredly time that our native authors receive adequate compensation for their labours, and not be driven from the field, as it were, merely by the cheapness with which transatlantic productions can be obtained."<sup>10</sup> *Sartain's*, like other American periodicals, thus saw its mission as celebrating American culture and subject matter while also paying for contributions from British authors. Still, due to the tendency of American publishers to reprint British texts without payment, writers like Martineau entered into the American literary marketplace with some trepidation.<sup>11</sup>

The fact that an American publication saw Martineau's descriptive account of the Lake District as worthy of cultivating American taste and interest suggests that the region had a cachet that made it attractive to readers. An American audience for Lake District travel literature was only possible because of longstanding interest in the Lakeland poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge and the consequent status of the district as a tourist destination. Indeed, as Nicola J. Watson points out, the nineteenth century was the "period [which] saw the practice of visiting places associated with particular books in order to savour text, place and their interrelations grow into a commercially significant phenomenon."<sup>12</sup> While in 1850 there were fewer American tourists in the Lake District than there would be later in the century, tourists were visiting its literary haunts in increasing numbers.<sup>13</sup> There was simultaneously a robust American audience for the British Romantics' writing about the area.<sup>14</sup> In 1839, for example, editor Henry Reed wrote of Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*, "It may not be uninteresting to you to learn that a volume so purely local in its nature should afford so much value to a distant reader as I have drawn from it. I have found it a guide to the mind in kindred scenes and that it cultivates a taste for landscape which finds its indulgence in the worthy admiration of regions that are accessible to us."<sup>15</sup> Americans, it seems, were not only interested in the Lake District but also in the apparatus Wordsworth provided for appreciating its natural beauty. Martineau's descriptive account of her home in England was also well suited to *Sartain's* mission of cultivating American taste.

As part of its nationalistic agenda, *Sartain's* sought to avoid politically controversial topics such as slavery,<sup>16</sup> instead focusing on the seemingly apolitical topics of arts and culture.<sup>17</sup> In publishing Martineau's series, however, *Sartain's* inadvertently entered into Martineau's abolitionist project. Unbeknownst to American readers, Martineau had asked for most of the proceeds from her series to be given to two anti-slavery publications in the United States, the *Liberator* and the *Anti-Slavery Standard*.<sup>18</sup> Martineau wrote to her friend Ellis Loring Gray about her payment from the *Sartain's* series, asking if he would "be so kind as to receive this sum [20 pounds], & to pay half of it to Mr. Garrison for the benefit of 'the Liberator,' & the other half to 'the Anti-Slavery Standard.'"<sup>19</sup> She explained that it was precisely because of the magazine's apolitical stance that she needed Gray to serve as her go-between: "I impose the trouble on you merely because Messrs Sartain might not (possibly) relish paying money directly to such heretical papers; & it may be prudent to make all easy to them."<sup>20</sup> In her hope of raising money for a just cause, Martineau was savvy in her choice of *Sartain's*. By the 1850s, it had a wide audience which included men and women of the rising middle classes in all regions of the country.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, if Martineau wanted to reach women *and* men in the North *and* South, *Sartain's* was an optimal choice.<sup>22</sup>

As Martineau's donations suggest, "A Year at Ambleside" was more tethered to political concerns than first meets the eye. The series indirectly broaches the issue of slavery by foregrounding the issue of freedom from bodily confinement. Martineau casts the Lake District as a welcoming place for women like herself who enjoy freely walking in rural locales. She opens "January" by contrasting her previous state of confinement to her newly awakened freedom of movement. She remembers how in Tynemouth, "after a long illness, during which I never saw a tree in leaf for upwards of five years, and passed my life between my bed and my sofa," she was eventually restored to health.<sup>23</sup> First she "crept" outside, then "extended [her] rambles to a fine beach three miles from home," and finally moved to the Lake District to live, write, and walk.<sup>24</sup> She writes in the February installment, "There was no reason why I should not live where I pleased. . . . I was free to choose how to begin life afresh."<sup>25</sup> Here Martineau invokes the discourse of freedom to underscore her new-found mobility and self-determination, rights women—and slaves—were denied in the 1850s.

The fells around Ambleside provided ample opportunity for women like Martineau to walk, partly because there were so few men looking on. She explains that "in this valley, the gentlemen soon grow tired. They go off somewhere to find something to do,—some business, or foreign travel, or hunting."<sup>26</sup> In fact, Martineau writes, the Lake District "society becomes, in some sort, Amazonian."<sup>27</sup> During the Victorian era, the Amazonian archetype constituted a challenge to male-female dichotomies (as well as racial binaries).<sup>28</sup> Maeve E. Adams writes that in Victorian culture, "representations of the Amazon do not consistently or strictly adhere to the ways in which colonial ideology divided up the world into the powerful (white men) and the powerless (everyone else). The Amazon is a mobile archetype that appears, at times, to challenge the fixity of those boundaries."<sup>29</sup> For Martineau, to be among the Amazonians was to claim unfettered movement and to express independent agency. However, the trope's implicit deconstruction of racial hierarchies also proves relevant as Martineau writes, however indirectly, in the context of black slavery.

In each installment, Martineau generally begins in a domestic space but then quickly leaves it on foot. Of her newfound home in Ambleside, she writes, "Here, I could write in serenest repose; here, I could rove at will; here, I could rest."<sup>30</sup> The idea of wandering "at will" emphasizes self-determination and freedom from a constricting masculine gaze. Each monthly installment in the series is, for the most part, structured according to a walking path or direction. In "May," she opens with "What a morning it is! My early walk shall be to Stockghyll Force."<sup>31</sup> Later, in "June," she

walks to Bowness, deciding that the “walk will not be half a mile further, and that it will be much pleasanter, if we leave the highroad, and go up Wansfell. . . . It is a toilsome ascent at first,—stony and hot and close; but by the time that we come out upon the brook, a sweet air blows upon us from the lake.”<sup>32</sup> She keeps the reader’s eye tightly focused on natural details as together they “rove” freely through the landscape. The freedom of movement Martineau performs in these pieces is striking precisely because she is a middle-class woman, a status so often associated with domestic confinement. The appeal of “wildness” is undeniable—it is the reward for her being “free to choose how to begin life afresh.” As Stacey Alaimo notes, many nineteenth-century women writers “looked outward toward a natural realm precisely because this space was . . . not replete with the domestic values that many women wished to escape. Nature, then, is undomesticated both in the sense that it figures as a space apart from the domestic and in the sense that it is untamed and thus serves as a model for female insurgency.”<sup>33</sup>

Martineau celebrates her domestic life and her walks as parts of a multifaceted life, thus deconstructing the dichotomy between domestic life and professional work.<sup>34</sup> She, like many other women authors, felt pressure to maintain a domestic image even as she pursued a public role, whether by walking out alone or working in the public sphere. Certainly, as Easley points out, Martineau was keenly aware of domestic ideology, and in “A Year at Ambleside” she devotes many pages to describing the literal construction of her domestic space.<sup>35</sup> But rather than reifying a gendered public-private dichotomy, she destabilizes it by focusing alternately on the development of her home and the process of launching off from it. Indeed, she emphasizes the link between domesticity and nature by gathering plants on her walks that she can cultivate in her garden. In March, for example, she describes removing “heather from an enclosure which is sort of a heather preserve” and finds that “one trowel [is] small enough to take the ferns clean out of the crevices of the walls” to transplant in her own yard.<sup>36</sup> In other words, for Martineau, there is no clear separation between walking in the fells and leading a rich domestic life. In fact, each feeds and develops the other.

As part of her project to disengage domesticity from images of confinement, Martineau unequivocally insists on the importance of bodily freedom for women, whether by walking in the fells, planting ferns, or sitting at a writing desk. Her insistence on freedom being anchored in the body was also at the heart of her ongoing interest in abolitionism. While Martineau never mentions the word “slave” or “slavery” in “A Year at Ambleside,” the nineteenth-century concept of freedom, as Toni Morrison reminds us, “has no meaning . . . without the specter of enslavement, the anodyne to individualism; the yardstick of absolute power over the life of

another; the signed, marked, informing, and mutating presence of a black slave.”<sup>37</sup> While Morrison is referring to American literary tradition, her insight holds true for Britain, which had only recently outlawed slavery and was still engaged in less official forms of forced labor in its imperial holdings. Martineau’s references to freedom in “A Year at Ambleside” thus resonated with the “specter of enslavement,” not only because she donated her earnings to the abolitionist cause but also because she was dedicated to the mission of ending slavery throughout her career and explicitly linked the experiences of women and slaves in many of her writings. Her abolitionism began before her visit to the United States but her experiences there deepened her dedication to the cause. While in America, she received death threats because of her outspokenness on abolition, but this only sparked her further engagement with the issue in leaders for the *London Daily News* and other newspapers and periodicals in the 1850s and early 1860s.

For Martineau, the issues of slavery and women’s freedom were entwined. In *Society in America*, for example, she repeatedly ties American women’s lack of political standing to the position of slaves, as both are excluded from the claim in the Declaration of Independence that the government derives its powers “from the consent of the governed.”<sup>38</sup> White men claim to represent their interests, despite evidence to the contrary. She writes, “The Georgia planter perceives the hardship that freedom would be to his slaves. And the best friends of half the human race peremptorily decide for them as to their rights, their duties, their feelings, their powers.”<sup>39</sup> As Lesa Scholl has written of this section, “Both [white women and slaves are] in a similar bondage to the Law, . . . both held by the whim of Law, deprived of will and right.”<sup>40</sup> White women and black slaves, in other words, both suffer at the hands of those who falsely claim to represent them.

More pointedly, Martineau cites Thomas Jefferson’s correspondence in which he yearns for a “pure democracy” that he concedes must exclude both women and slaves.<sup>41</sup> Women must be disenfranchised because they would face a “depravation of morals” if they entered the public sphere and slaves, because they exist in an “unfortunate state of things with us [which] takes away the rights of will and of property.”<sup>42</sup> Martineau suggests that if the disqualification he claims for slaves (in other words, the lack of rights of will and property) were applied to women, it “would be nearer the truth than as it now stands.”<sup>43</sup> “By using the metaphor of women and slaves,” Caroline Roberts notes, “Martineau’s discourse participates in a tradition of women’s abolitionist rhetoric in England that began in the late seventeenth century, when women writers projected their anxieties about their own subordination onto their representations of slaves.”<sup>44</sup> Indeed, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women often did make this connection, including Mary Wollstonecraft, whose *Vindication of the Rights of*



*Women* is replete with the analogy. It is, of course, a fraught comparison, rife with questions of privilege and overstatement; nevertheless, it was a common analogy that, at least for Martineau, reflected a compassionate concern for both groups.<sup>45</sup> Roberts argues that in fact “Martineau’s use of the metaphor identifying women and slaves does not cause her to detract from the horrors of slavery or from the aims of abolitionism. Instead, Martineau unravels the metaphor at the same time she evokes it. She identifies two separate systems of oppression that are alike, but independent.”<sup>46</sup>

*Society in America*, where these analogies appear, was published in 1837 after Martineau’s American visit. I suggest that the two identities—slave and woman—remained roughly analogous for Martineau in 1850 when she wrote “A Year at Ambleside.” In this instance, however, she cloaks her abolitionist message in a vision of freedom for middle-class British women—as a celebration of mobility and self-determination, the freedom to traverse the static categories of public and private domains. This vision of freedom implicitly stands in contrast to enslavement. Freedom, for Martineau, is not just an abstraction; it is linked explicitly to bodily freedom or literal freedom of movement. This, too, was a point of focus in all of Martineau’s work regarding slavery but especially during the years just before and after “A Year at Ambleside.” In her other writing of the period, she discusses the lack of bodily freedom for female slaves in the Middle East and Africa—the members of the harem—and her esteem for the heroic mobility exhibited by runaway slaves.

Her treatment of harem women is especially pertinent given intersectional considerations of race and gender. In a letter published in the American *Liberty Bell* in 1848, just two years before “A Year at Ambleside,” Martineau writes of her visit to a harem and draws attention to one particular woman who suffers from the bodily confinement inherent in slavery: “There can hardly be a day when she does not sigh . . . to be again under the broad sky of her own land, working with her mother at the guhern, or driving the ox with her little brother”; instead, she is “imprisoned for life behind the curtains of the women’s abode.”<sup>47</sup> Her concern for the Eastern slave echoes her denunciations of the American slave system. Indeed, she begins another letter to the *Liberty Bell* by drawing an explicit connection between the slavery she witnesses in Egypt and that which she had seen in the United States, saying that “when I left your country, I thought I had seen the last I should ever see of slavery. . . . But I have been to the East, and have seen slavery again.”<sup>48</sup> Likewise, in her fuller treatment of the trip in *Eastern Life*, also published in 1848, she contrasts women’s physical liberty in Europe with the women of the harem: “Everywhere they pitied us European women heartily, that we had to go about traveling, and appearing in the streets without being properly taken care of,—that is, watched. They think us strangely neglected in being left so free, and boast

of their spy system and imprisonment as tokens of the value in which they are held.”<sup>49</sup> Martineau’s celebration of her own embodied freedom in the Lake District two years later stands in stark contrast to these images of imprisonment and subjugation. Feminist materialism, articulated compellingly by Alaimo, in fact places women’s physical experience at the center of questions of agency. In doing so, Alaimo and others theorize what Martineau had already recounted in “Ambleside” and elsewhere.

Similarly, Martineau had a long-standing respect for the physical daring exhibited by runaway slaves, dating back to her visit to the United States in the 1830s. In *Retrospect of Western Travel*, published after her trip in 1838, she includes a chapter titled “Restless Slaves.” She expresses admiration for them but is careful not to give away any details that may endanger them or future escapees. She does learn from the ferryman crossing the Niagara that the “leap ashore of an escaped slave is a sight unlike any other that can be seen.”<sup>50</sup> John Ernest notes that this moment is extraordinary for a travel narrative since the “conventionally sublime portrait of Niagara Falls gives way to the ultimately sublime portrait of the fugitive slave’s leap for freedom from the United States to Canada.”<sup>51</sup> Likewise, just one year after “A Year at Ambleside,” Martineau hosted fugitive slaves William Wells Brown and William and Ellen Craft in her Lakeland home. In his memoir of touring Europe, Brown recounts how Martineau “was much pleased with Ellen Craft, and appeared delighted with the story of herself and husband’s escape from slavery, as related by the latter—during recital of which I several times saw the silent tear stealing down her cheek, and which she tried in vain to hide from us. When Craft had finished, she exclaimed, ‘I would that every woman in British Empire, could hear the tale as I have, so that they might know how their own sex was treated in that boasted land of liberty.’”<sup>52</sup> In this anecdote, not only is Martineau deeply moved by the tale of escape but succeeds in identifying Victorian white women with a slave, Ellen Craft. Finally, in 1864, in her overview of the abolitionist movement written for the *Edinburgh Review*, Martineau again hails the runaway slave—and the freedom of movement such narratives capture: “There can hardly be a stronger test, both of the force of the desire of liberty and of the personal heroism of certain negro slaves, than the mode of escape adventured by some few of them when the Fugitive Slave Law rendered the old methods too hazardous.”<sup>53</sup> She celebrates those who “have thrown themselves into the broad Ohio or Potomac, preferring to drown within sight of the free shore to being caught by the horsemen who are shouting behind.”<sup>54</sup>

These celebrations of the runaway slave, stretching from the 1830s to the 1860s, bookend her celebration of her own physical freedom in “A Year at Ambleside.” These works demonstrate Martineau’s consistent admiration of runaway slaves, who often serve as powerful symbols of the

fight against slavery in general. Self-directed movement under duress offers an important symbolic contrast to the imprisonment of slavery she decries in her description of the harem women. Indeed, as Roberts observes, “For Martineau, the body is the site where feminist and abolitionist agendas converge.”<sup>55</sup> Likewise, Ernest, in focusing on William Wells Brown’s fugitive statues, notes Martineau’s mentorship of the writer and calls them both “fugitive tourists”: “They are fugitive tourists because they have stepped out of an assigned social position, a transgression that is liberating but that comes at a price.”<sup>56</sup> He adds that “ultimately, Martineau and Brown present a choreographic rendering of a world in which instability and movement are the only consistent characteristics, in which the fugitive is the only reliable guide, and in which strategic negotiations of the laws of mobility become the means by which authority can be crafted in a narrative performance.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, their mutual rejection of white patriarchal society is grounded in the importance of mobility and movement—a theme clearly picked up by Martineau in her meditation on freedom for middle-class women in “A Year at Ambleside.”

American slavery, then, exists in the subtext of “A Year at Ambleside,” an allusion which is available to those who might be familiar, then and now, with Martineau’s full canon on the topic. There are, however, a few more direct allusions to slavery in the series. Aware of her American audience, Martineau occasionally compares the Lakeland scenery to that of the United States, as she does in the April installment when discussing Lake Windermere, “which you Americans say, is so like their North River, near West Point.”<sup>58</sup> But more pointedly, in describing a restful moment she enjoys with her friend Fredrika Meyer in June, she writes, “The hours slip by as we lie couched among the ferns, reading our newspapers, or amusing each other by narratives of our wide travels. If F. M. tells me of the Pyrenees or the Danube, I tell her of the Mississippi, or Pharpar and Abana, the rivers of Damascus, or of adventures in Nubia.”<sup>59</sup> Here Martineau brings up the Mississippi, with its unquestionable associations with slavery (and Nubia, which is the setting of her visit to the harem in her previously published *Eastern Life*). This invocation of the primary artery of the internal slave trade is directly contrasted with her own freedom, as she immediately follows this reference by returning to their perambulations: “And then we walk round the island, which is a mile in circuit.”<sup>60</sup>

In the November installment, we again see the specter of slavery in Martineau’s discussion of Martinmas, a tradition in rural England: “The grand spectacle of the season is the Martinmas hiring—the half-yearly engagement of farm-servants, both lads and lasses. Those who wish to be hired, stand about the market-cross, with a sprig of green, or a straw in their mouths.”<sup>61</sup> Her description of the hirings sounds vaguely like a description of a slave auction, which reflects broader concerns about the practice.

For example, a writer some fifty years later mused upon the irony of the town Pocklington being both the birthplace of William Wilberforce and the host of the region's Martinmas hirings. He writes of the "widespread boorish (dis)organisation known as the Martinmas Hirings. The slave-market! where men and girls, in spite of the ransom procured for them by William Wilberforce, held themselves willing slaves to their own peculiar love of change, and their consistent patronage of an ancient custom which required them to act as cattle or slaves to be hired or sold in the market-place!"<sup>62</sup> Ironically, it is partly their status as migrant workers that makes them seem like slaves, but the act of putting their physical bodies up to be scrutinized and chosen by random employers is what seems to define them as chattel.

The Martinmas hirings are the focal point of Martineau's November installment, which distinguishes it from the other monthly articles that emphasize particular walks. In discussing the revelry that follows the actual hirings, Martineau describes how those locals who have broken social codes are subject to "punishment by lynch-law," which is "a terrible sight."<sup>63</sup> Here, Martineau compares the mob justice of a rural people to lynching in the United States, which she had written about in the past and would continue to write about in the near future. In an 1856 leader for the *London Daily News*, for example, she writes about lynch law in rural England but grounds its history in the American battle over slavery: "We need not recite the mobbings that have taken place in the United States within the last five-and-twenty years, from the time when the Slavery question became the recognized difficulty of the Republic. It is enough to point to the results of the extension of the practice in the barbaric temper of the Southern States."<sup>64</sup> The issue was personal to her, as she recounts in her *Autobiography*, because she herself had almost been lynched over her controversial comments on abolition. As she headed down the Ohio River following her public comments to the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, her friend Loring had warned her, "I must tell you what they mean to do. They mean to lynch you.' And he proceeded to detail the plan. The intention was to hang me on the wharf before the respectable inhabitants could rescue me."<sup>65</sup> In other words, "lynch-law" had a specific association with slavery for Martineau that was no doubt echoed in American readers' minds. Martineau's account of the rural English Martinmas celebration, with its attending imagery of the slave auction and mob lynchings, would have resonated with American audiences, who regularly read about such horrors in daily newspapers.

The freedom to "rove at will" among the beauty of the Lake District was, of course, denied to slaves and to many women less privileged than Martineau. It is tempting, then, to dismiss "A Year at Ambleside" as an aesthetic or purely literary endeavor that was simply consumed by a

transatlantic audience hungry for all things Lakeland. Doing so, however, not only ignores the radical vision of freedom for women that Martineau evokes—one that is embodied and that challenges and dissolves the restricting boundaries of the domestic—but also ignores that other vision of freedom, abolition, which occupied Martineau's thoughts throughout the 1850s. The fight for freedom for American slaves haunts the series, through indirect allusion and an evocative discourse of embodied liberty; this subtext comes into focus when we consider the transatlantic context in which it was written and read. It certainly haunted Martineau as she wrote, thus prompting her to donate the proceeds to the abolitionist cause. Reading it in this way reflects recent developments in the field of ecocriticism, which reveal how seemingly apolitical works on nature are indirectly engaged in political discourse. Jonathan Bate, for example, takes issue with readings of nature writing that view it “as an escape from, or even an active suppression of, socio-political reality.”<sup>66</sup> Martineau's accounts of walks into obscure locations around the Lake District cannot be separated from the transatlantic political issues she and so many others found pressing.

The series also reminds us how the periodical press—in this case, *Sartain's*—functions as a platform for poly-vocal intellectual exchange. It exemplifies and reflects the ways in which the press could exploit or promote American interest in British culture; publish British writers as part of a mission to cultivate American taste; act as a medium for abolitionism, however subtle that support might be registered; and provide a platform for an image of female embodied agency with all of its thematic extensions. In “A Year at Ambleside,” the Lakeland region, as represented in the pages of *Sartain's Magazine*, becomes an overdetermined site, as much a conceptual place as a geographical one. The body of the woman and the specter of the body of the slave march through this real and symbolic geography, guided by an author for whom freedom was a central value.

Muskingum University

## NOTES

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1. Easley, *Literary Celebrity*, 70.
2. In *Sartain's*, each article appears in the month corresponding to the title, except “March” and “April,” which appear together in the April issue of the magazine for an unknown reason.
3. Nicholson, “Transatlantic Connections,” 165.

4. Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections*, 1.
5. As explained by Heidi L. Nichols, this method involved “scraping and burnishing plates to create enhanced light and shadow in the resulting prints. The quality of John Sartain’s artwork exceeded that of most artists who were his contemporaries.” Nichols, *Fashioning of Middle-Class America*, 11–12.
6. Quoted in Schultz, “Editor’s Desk,” 92.
7. Nichols, *Fashioning of Middle-Class America*, 7.
8. Phegley, “Literary Piracy,” 64.
9. Nichols, *Fashioning of Middle-Class America*, 16.
10. Quoted in Nichols, *Fashioning of Middle-Class America*, 20.
11. From Martineau’s point of view, American publications were unreliable in their payment of British authors. Writing privately about her agreement with *Sartain’s*, she notes, “It is so rare a thing to us English authors to get any money from American publishers, that I shall not feel sure till the thing is done” (Martineau to Ellis Loring Gray, October, 23, 1850, in *Collected Letters*, 171). In another letter, she writes, “I have no reason to doubt their doing their duty by me. It is only that, somehow or other, such payments seldom come in” (Martineau to W. L. Garrison, October 23, 1850, in *Collected Letters*, 173). There was, then, both a tremendous interdependency and some scepticism in the relationship between British writers and American publishers.
12. Watson, *Literary Tourism*, 1.
13. While Wordsworth’s home, Dove Cottage, didn’t open as a public museum until 1890, the story of how it came to be a literary shrine “revolves around the desire of Victorian admirers of Wordsworth to keep something of him in the world after his death; tangible, and, crucially, something transferable.” Atkin, “Ghosting Grasmere,” 85.
14. Meredith L. McGill, in her introduction to *The Traffic in Poems*, suggests that “for British poets, American readers represented not only potentially vast, unrealizable profits, but also—because this field of reception was foreign, unpredictable, and fundamentally ungovernable—something like a present-tense index of future fame” (4–5).
15. Henry Reed to William Wordsworth, January 3, 1839, in Reed, *Wordsworth and Reed*, 6.
16. Sartain, on a personal level, was deeply sympathetic to abolitionism. He later wrote, “I, as an Englishman and as a sufferer for conscience’s sake, have a claim to speak. It is highly discreditable to human nature that as the North for years sided generally with the slave-power, all for the greed of gain, so for the same motive England, after goading Americans incessantly with irritating sneers about the disgrace of slavery, sided with slavery against freedom as soon as the conflict began.” Sartain, *Reminiscences*, 230.

17. The magazine did, however, give some space to women's issues, providing "significant, though not profuse, commentary" on them (Nichols, *Fashioning of Middle-Class America*, 139). *Sartain's* was also known for paying female authors fairly, and, of course, Caroline Kirkland served as co-editor.
18. Michael R. Hill, who edited Martineau's Lake District writings, briefly mentions in his introduction that by donating the money she earned to anti-slavery causes, she "actively linked the Lake District to her vigorous support of abolition in the United States" (47).
19. Harriet Martineau to Ellis Loring Gray, October, 23, 1850, in *Collected Letters*, 171.
20. Ibid.
21. Patterson, *Art for the Middle Classes*, 11.
22. Martineau was strategic in the way she thought about transatlantic audiences. In 1838, she wrote to Fanny Wedgewood that she was anxious to get her book on Toussaint L'Ouverture published in the *Penny Magazine* because her "chief object [was] to get at the Southern States, where they reprint the P.M. fearlessly, and will never dream of meeting me." Harriet Martineau to Fanny Wedgewood, February 20, 1838, in *Harriet Martineau's Letters to Fanny Wedgewood*, 11.
23. Martineau, "Year at Ambleside," 6:38.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., 6:141.
26. Ibid., 6:139.
27. Ibid.
28. See also Elizabeth Gaskell's references to Amazonians in *Cranford* (3).
29. Adams, "Amazon Warrior Woman," n.p.
30. Martineau, "Year at Ambleside," 6:141.
31. Ibid., 6:355.
32. Ibid., 6:382.
33. Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground*, 16.
34. In a letter to Elizabeth Barrett four years prior, Martineau made the case for a balanced life, combining what we traditionally think of as domestic work with professional work and connecting both to her life in the Lake District. She writes, "It is my desire to keep up that union of practical domestic life with literary labour wh has been such a blessing to me ever since I held the pen: but I feel pretty confident that much work (authorship) of a kind very serious & important to myself will be done on that spot where I so lately sat on the grass, & resolved there to pitch my tent. I have a horror of mere booklife;—or a life of books & society. I like & need to have some express & daily share in somebody's comfort: & I trust to find much peace & satisfaction as a housekeeper, in making my maids happy, & perhaps a little wiser,—in receivg overworked or delicate friends & relations to rest in my paradise, & in that sort of strenuous handwork wh I like better than

- authorship.” Harriet Martineau to Elizabeth Barrett, February 8, 1846, in *Harriet Martineau: Further Letters*, 154.
35. In fact, just before proclaiming her desire to “rove at will,” she notes that “every woman requires for her happiness some domestic occupation and responsibility,—to have one’s daily happiness to cherish.” Martineau, “Year at Ambleside,” 6:141. Indeed, given her lifelong writing on this subject, it is clear that she was genuinely committed to this concept.
  36. *Ibid.*, 6:292.
  37. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 56.
  38. Quoted in Martineau, *Society in America*, 148.
  39. Martineau, *Society in America*, 151.
  40. Scholl, “Mediation and Expansion,” 830–31.
  41. Quoted in Martineau, *Society in America*, 149.
  42. *Ibid.*
  43. Martineau, *Society in America*, 150.
  44. Roberts, *Woman and the Hour*, 42.
  45. For an important analysis of this analogy, see Zonana’s “The Sultan and the Slave.” In her study of “oriental feminism” in *Jane Eyre* and other Victorian texts, Zonana argues that during the nineteenth century, many women writers were “turning to images of oriental life—and specifically the ‘Mahometan’ and ‘Arabian’ Harem—in order to articulate their critiques of the life of women in the West” (594).
  46. Roberts, *Woman and the Hour*, 43.
  47. Martineau, “Incidents of Travel,” 80.
  48. Martineau, “Letter,” 45.
  49. Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 263.
  50. Martineau, *Retrospect*, 251.
  51. Ernest, *Chaotic Justice*, 169.
  52. Brown, *Three Years in Europe*, 200.
  53. Martineau, “Negro Race,” 109.
  54. *Ibid.*
  55. Roberts, *Woman and the Hour*, 48.
  56. Ernest, *Chaotic Justice*, 165.
  57. *Ibid.*, 166.
  58. Martineau, “Year at Ambleside,” 6:298.
  59. *Ibid.*, 6:384.
  60. *Ibid.*
  61. *Ibid.*, 7:268.
  62. Brierley, “North-Country Market,” 2.
  63. Martineau, “Year at Ambleside,” 7:268–69.
  64. Martineau, *Leader*, 4.
  65. Martineau, *Autobiography*, 2:48.
  66. Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 54.



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