Reflections on the letters of Geraldine Endsor Jewsbury (1812-1880) to Walter Baldock Durrant Mantell (1820-1895); with a focus on 1869
Organisation of Presentation

- Background and Context of Geraldine Jewsbury, her family and friendship with Jane Welsh Carlyle
- Brief background of Walter Mantell
- Brief background of their mutual friend, John George Cooke
- Some notes on researching Victorian handwritten script
- A brief focus on 1869
- Epilogue
Geraldine Endsor Jewsbury

• Geraldine was born on August 22nd 1812
• She died on September 23rd, 1880, aged 68.
• Monday 23rd September 2019, marks the 139th anniversary of her death.

• Geraldine Jewsbury in right profile, seated with hands in lap, dated April 1855 by Robert Scott Tait, photographer, Thomas Carlyle Photograph Albums, Volume 1, Page 18, Retrieved from https://carlyleletters.dukeupress.edu/photo-viewer/1/19
Family Ties

Geraldine’s parents, Thomas Jewsbury (1765 – 1840) and Maria Smith Jewsbury (1778 – 1819) were parents to seven children:

Maria Jane Jewsbury Fletcher (1880 – 1833); Thomas Smith Jewsbury (1802 – 1877); Henry Richard Smith Jewsbury (1803 – 1873); Geraldine Endsor Jewsbury (1812–1880); Arthur Jewsbury (1815–1847); Robert Endsor Jewsbury (1817 - ?); Francis Harding (1819 – 1878).

Maria Jane was 19 years old when her mother died and she became responsible for the management of the household, the care of her siblings and her father.

The life of Geraldine Jewsbury is intertwined with that of her older sister, Maria and needs to be considered when researching her life and work.

Geraldine Jewsbury in three-quarter left profile, standing by a chair, dated April 1855 by Robert Scott Tait, photographer. Thomas Carlyle Photograph Albums, Volume 1, Page 19, Retrieved from https://carlyleletters.dukeupress.edu/photo-viewer/1/20
Despite her heavy domestic load, Maria Jane also managed to find time for writing and struck up a friendship with William Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy Wordsworth. Maria Jane contributed to several periodicals and published four books: *Phantasmagoria* (1825); *The Unknown and Letters to the Young* in 1828; *The Three Histories* (1830); *Lays of Leisure Hours*, a book of poetry in 1829 (Howe, p. 11).

To Geraldine, Maria was a mother-figure, cherished sister, and also a role model for a woman of letters.
Geraldine Jewsbury

Maria married the Reverend William Kew Fletcher, a chaplain of the British East India Company and the couple embarked for India. Maria Jane contracted cholera and died on October 4th 1833 (Howe, p. 18).

After Maria married, Geraldine took over the management of the Jewsbury household and the care of her father and her youngest brother Frank. She was noted in Manchester as being an excellent housekeeper and hostess (Howe, p. 19). In between her domestic duties she read voraciously and laid the foundations of her writing career.

Geraldine lived in Manchester until the age of 42, at which time she moved to London to be closer to her friend, Jane Welsh Carlyle (1801 – 1866), wife of Thomas Carlyle (1795 – 1881).

• Geraldine Jewsbury (1812 - 1880) in left profile, seated with open book, dated 30 April 1855 by Robert Scott Tait, photographer, Thomas Carlyle Photograph Albums, Volume 1, Page 18, Retrieved from https://carlyleletters.dukeupress.edu/photo-viewer/1/19
A literary Life

• Geraldine wrote six novels:
  • Zoe (1845);
  • The Half Sisters (1848);
  • Marian Withers (1851);
  • The Sorrows of Gentility (1854);
  • Constance Herbert (1855);
  • Right or Wrong (1859);
• She also wrote two children’s stories:
  • The History of an Adopted Child (1852);
  • Angelo or the Pine Forest in the Alps (1855);
• She edited Lady Morgan Memoirs, Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence (1862) and contributed to a variety of periodicals, wrote over 2,300 reviews and reported on more than 800 novels as a manuscript reader.

  • Geraldine Jewsbury (1850s). Photographer unknown, Mantell Album, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington
Miss Jewsbury the Authoress of *The Half Sisters* & the most intimate friend I have in the world—and who has lived generally at Manchester since we first knew each other, has decided to come and live near me for good. Her Brother married eighteen months ago—and has realized a Baby, and a Wife's Mother in the house besides—So Geraldine felt it getting too hot for her there. It will be a real gain to have a woman I like so near as the street in which I have decided on an apartment for her.
Carlyle House

Geraldine was to become a frequent visitor to the famed abode where the Carlyles welcomed many literary figures, philosophers and social critics of the time.

The list of people, who were admitted to the “lightning play of words and wits” would include most of the names known to English literature and art in the early to mid-nineteenth century.

Names such as: Leigh Hunt; John Stuart Mill, Charles Dickens, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Ruskin, Alfred Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning and many more.

‘A Chelsea Interior’, (1857) by Robert Scott Tait
John George Cooke (1819 – 1880)

John George Cooke (1819–1880), my gr gr gr grandfather, was a close friend of both Geraldine Jewsbury and Jane Carlyle. He was a frequent visitor to the famous Carlyle Parlour.

In 1841 John George Cooke, describing himself as ‘colonial bitten’ sailed for New Zealand aboard the barque, the *Amelia Thompson*. He returned to England in 1850.

John George Cooke met Walter Baldock Durrant Mantell in New Zealand. When Mantell returned to London for a short period, Cook introduced him to the Carlyles and Geraldine Jewsbury in 1856.

Ngapei Ngatata (circa 1811 –1906)

Ngapei Ngatata (my gr gr gr grandmother was a common-law wife to John George Cooke and would bear him two children: Te Piki Ngatata also known as Mary Ann Cooke (1843-1932) (my great, great grandmother) and George Gray Cooke (1848 – 1865).

John George Cooke, learnt te reo Māori and Geraldine mentions hearing him sing Māori lullabies to his English children, in a letter to Mantell.
Letter written by Jane Carlyle

Writing to Kate Sterling Ross on 27 December 1856, Jane states:

My Dear! George Cook comes to call for me almost every Sunday!— I should mention,—“not to put too fine a point on it,”—that he comes on his road from Geraldines! Geraldine and he seem to have “sworn everlasting Friendship”— with proviso, on his part, that there should positively be nothing more tender!

• John George Cooke, nd, Photographer not known. Thomas Carlyle Photograph Albums, Volume 2, Page 15, Retrieved from https://carlyleletters.dukeupress.edu/photo-viewer/2/14
Mantell held a variety of posts in the New Zealand colonial government. In August 1848 Mantell was appointed to the office of commissioner for extinguishing native titles, Middle Island (South Island), with the initial responsibility of setting aside reserves for Ngai Tahu within the Canterbury block, recently purchased by Henry Kemp. Mantell was instructed to induce Ngai Tahu to combine their numerous settlements into as few localities as possible, while making 'liberal provision...for their present and future wants'. The promises he and others made to Ngai Tahu were not fulfilled, a concern that was to haunt his conscience and affect his career for the rest of his life (M. P. K. Sorrenson, http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1m11/1)

Walter Baldock Durrant Mantell, Photographer and date unknown, Alexander Turnbull Library
Walter Baldock Durrant Mantell - a ‘Philo Māori

Walter Baldock Durrant Mantell can be described as a ‘philo Māori (lover of things Māori and a speaker of te reo), albeit, a frustrated one. Having helped to deprive South Island Māori of nearly all their land, he later bitterly regretted what he came to regard as an unjust process. He became a minister in several governments but resigned each time because the government failed to honour its promises to Ngāi Tahu (https://teara.govt.nz/en/anti-racism-and-treaty-of-waitangi-activism/page-1).

Walter Baldock Durrant Mantell, circa 1870, possibly photographed by William Henshaw Clarke, Retrieved from https://natlib.govt.nz/records/22394956?search%5Bpath%5D=items &search%5Btext%5D=Walter+Baldock+Durrant+Mantell++
Geraldine and Walter – a brief history of their friendship and correspondence (1857 – 1880).

• When John George Cooke introduced Geraldine to Walter Mantell in 1856, she spotted him as something out of the way, and was much taken with him. She felt ‘drawn with instinct to wish to come near’ him (Howe, p. 147).

• Geraldine was eight years older than Walter Mantell but he found her companionable and easy to talk to. For two years Geraldine and Mantell saw each other regularly.
Matara, Ku and Manu

- Geraldine had asked Mantell for a Māori name and he had suggested Manu, (bird). She wrote to him incessantly, sometimes on a daily basis, signing herself as Manu and addressing him as Matara, a transliteration of Mantell. John George Cooke had the Māori name of Ku and the three friends would write to each other using these Māori nick names. Some of Mantell’s replies to Geraldine during the period of 1856-1859 when he was in England, are actually headed, from ‘Ku’s office’ (Stevens, 1969).
In 1859, as Mantell’s departure back to New Zealand became imminent, Geraldine wrote several impassioned letters imploring him to marry her and take her back to New Zealand with him:

- Matara, why are you flinging me away? Do you imagine that anything I could have had to endure from you as your wife with the right to endure it could have given me half the pain I have had to suffer since your return from Scotland? The utter blank despair – the days passing over like drops of lead – feeling the very life being slowly stamped out of me?... Matara, either take me with you or let me come to you.... I have the female qualities which you need.... Where will you find a woman who loves you as I do? Take me away with you or send to fetch me or else – set your foot on my neck and kill me. It is neither right nor just to leave me in this misery (cited in Howe, p. 158).
Reaching a friendly Understanding

• Geraldine was distraught at Mantell’s leaving and thought of asking John George Cooke to marry her and to take her out to New Zealand so she could watch over Mantell’s life and interests (Howe, p. 152).

• Eventually, Mantell and Geraldine came to a friendly understanding and she was able to say goodbye to him in a calm and collected manner, imploring him to think of her as a friend without limitations (Howe, p. 158).

• After Mantell returned to New Zealand (in 1859) he and Geraldine corresponded for over twenty years. Their phenomenal literary exchange in the form of over 500+ letters written between 1859 and 1880.
Deciphering the Ink
Writing, writing everywhere and not a jot to read

• Much of the phenomenal literary exchange in the form of over 500+ letters written by Geraldine Jewsbury to Walter Mantell, between 1859 and 1880 are illegible to those, untrained in deciphering Victorian Script.

• Nevertheless, transcriptions do exist and demonstrate that Geraldine had a keen interest in colonial affairs.
A Pākehā Ally from afar

• Via her Victorian lens on a colonial Aotearoa/New Zealand Geraldine Jewsbury consumed Mantell’s letters from the perspective of a female Pākehā ally.

• She followed developments in New Zealand with great interest, and continually urged Mantell to publicize his views and put his ideas into effect. In 1860, having heard the news of the outbreak of war with the Māori in Taranaki, she encourages him to send her any information he considers should be known in England, 'any authentic statement of the fact of things as they are', (cited in Wilkes, p. 113)
Wilkes, 1988, p. 106), argues that, “For someone with no first-hand experience of either New Zealand or Māoridom, (her letters) show a very engaged and sympathetic response; they also show the frustration of a woman unable, on account of both her gender and her circumstances, to influence events directly herself.
1869 (or there abouts)

• In 1869 Geraldine turned 57. She remained unmarried though had many friends.

• She maintains a steady correspondence with Mantell and continues her interest in New Zealand. On reading of another outbreak of hostilities in 1869, she writes: 'the slaughter of those brave Natives wrings my heart, surely we might have done something better with them than killing them — they are better generals than our own' (Wilkes, p. 115).
1869 (or there abouts)

• In 1869 John George Cooke was 50. He married Margaret Townsend Ward (widow of Crosbie Ward) in 1864. His first child with Maggie, Harriet Marcia Cooke was born in 1869. The couple had three more children, though a son died in infancy.

• Manu kept Matara informed of Ku’s marriage, its new arrivals, the loss of a baby son, Mrs Cooke’s health etc. In 1870 she writes: He did not find it easy at first to be tied to his hearth and home, have been so much of a Mormon in some respects (cited in Stevens).
1869 (or thereabouts)

• In 1869, Walter Mantell was 49 years old and held a seat in the Legislative Council. He married his first wife, Mary Sarah Prince on 5 August 1869.

• He had kept up his interest in the Moa and delivered a paper on it to the New Zealand Institute in 1868.
Cartoon-style sketch of Mantell, enclosed in a letter from Geraldine, 11 April 1868

• Geraldine notes: 'There is a wonderful picture intended to represent you and your Cats and your Moa!... I told [Mrs Elizabeth Paulet, the artist] the Moa was a gigantic goose as big as an elephant — I told her to make you very good looking but as she imagined you were like a certain man we knew years ago with a dash of Ku, superadded — the result has been something to frighten the Crows—but as she said "I made him look very clever" so that may be compensation.' (Wilkes, p. 116).

Ref for Sketch, WBD Mantell Papers, MSS 83, fol.327.
Mantell continued to argue for what he saw as the rights of South Island iwi. In 1868, he gave evidence to the Native Land Court in a dispute over the reserves in the 'Port Levy' block on the Banks Peninsula, claiming that, although at the time he had believed the reserves he had provided were sufficient, according as they did with the then accepted benchmark of ten acres per head, he now considered them inadequate. He also recalled the intimidatory tactics he had used in his negotiations, and declared, 'I am not prepared to swear that any single step taken by me or by the Government with respect to these Natives was fair'.

In 1869 he strove to clarify, particularly for Māori, the implications of the Treaty of Waitangi, by demanding that both Māori and English versions be tabled in Parliament, together with accurate translations (Wilkes, p. 116).
Epilogue

• Geraldine died of cancer on 23 September 1880, aged 68. Before she died, she kept her promise to Jane Carlyle and destroyed all but one of her letters. She was buried at Brompton Cemetery, London. Her grave is adjacent to that of her friend Lady Morgan.

• John George Cooke died of cancer, on 20 October 1880, aged 62. He too, was buried at Brompton Cemetery.

• Walter Baldock Durrant Mantell lived on for another fifteen years after Geraldine Jewsbury and John George Cooke departed this mortal coil. He died at Wellington on 7 September 1895, aged 75 years.
Reflections on the life and letters of GEJ (and other eminent Victorians), can provide an insightful over-view of the changing urban socio-economic conditions in which they lived. For women such as GEJ, unmarried and independent, her letters clearly demonstrate how opportunities for women to earn their own livelihood were emerging as they continued to seek emancipation.

At a more personal level, her letters provide a window to reflect on her personality, her intellect and what Elizabeth Barrett Browning called her “daring, half-audacious power”.

As EBB wrote in 1851, “She drew my heart out of me a good deal. I felt inclined to love her in our “half-hour's intercourse”.
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