CHAPTER 1

WOMEN QUESTIONS MYTH AND HISTORY

Ever since the creation of this world the question has always troubled mankind as to who came into existence first man or woman? According to the Bible God created the 'Heaven' and 'Earth'...

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have the dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth... And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat... Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be thy husband and he shall rule over thee (Gen. 1,2,3).

Saint Paul further clarifies the story and says that man is the image and glory of God and woman is the glory of man. In other words she is the 'other' or the 'second sex'.

Adam was first formed and Eve came afterwards and she
transgressed the will of God therefore she had to bear the pangs of motherhood. Men are superior to women on account of the qualities in which God has given them pre-eminence. John Milton in his Paradiso Lost reflects on the creation of this universe. He describes the reign of chaos as 'anarch-old' and the Holy spirit sits on it as a dove hatching the universe. Once again the Male is 'anarch-old' and female does the work of creativity. The Jews repeat the following lines in their prayer in the morning:

Blessed art Thou, Oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, that I was not born a gentile. Blessed art Thou, Oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, that I was not born a slave. Blessed art Thou, Oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, that I was not born a woman.

Male chauvinism has accepted this inferior position of women satisfying their own ego and needs, and women have become accustomed to their position. Infact they are like fish who is unaware that her environment is wet. Thus Individual equality in a patriarchal society is threatened from the beginning of the creation.

There is a Persian myth which gives the origin of Matriarchy. According to this myth a woman creates the world and she creates it by the act of natural creativity which is hers and which cannot be duplicated by men. She gives birth to a great number of sons. The sons, greatly puzzled by this act which they cannot duplicate become
frightened. They think, "who can tell us, that if she give life, she can take life." And because of their fear of this mysterious ability of woman, and of its reversible possibility they kill her. This myth points to the subjugation of woman by man on account of his inherent fear. It also helps us to understand the devaluation of female sexuality and sexual organs in terms of the present cultural devaluation and the ancient unconscious psychological devaluation of female sexuality. In the latter, woman proud of her natural creativity is able to give life to her sons. However, if men are frightened by and devaluate this capacity of women, there is only one way for woman to gain appreciation from and be protected by men. They must do this by first concealing from men their genuine pleasure in their natural creativity. Then, they must conceal their pleasure from themselves and lay stress upon another side of their role: the pain of labour connected with childbirth, the discomfort accompanying pregnancy, and the pain and discomfort of menstruation. Hence they call the latter "the curse" or "the cramps."

Freud's search for origins led him to invent the myth of the totem father slain by a gang of jealous brothers who then fairly shared out the woman. For Freud this civilization is patriarchal. Naturally, in patriarchal society Man is the master or the superior being and woman the slave or the inferior. Auguste Comte observes that the word "family" originally meant servants or slaves. The
philologists have traced the word "family" back to the Oscan word "famel" from which the Latin "famulus", slave, also proceeds. According to Engel's the original meaning of the word "Family" (familia) is the total number of slaves belonging to one man. The family has a patriarchal structure where father is the head and woman is treated only as a "rusty servant".

Patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It is both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society. Father is the head of the family. The Confucian prescription that the relationship between ruler and subject is parallel to that of father and children points to the essential feudal character of the patriarchal family even in modern democracies. Traditionally patriarchy granted the father total ownership over wife or wives and children, including the powers of physical abuse and often even those of murder and sale. Thus man was the master and the other members were his subjects. As Mary Wollstonecraft says, "she was created to be the toy of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused." Further she is called an idol, a servant, the source of life, a power of darkness; she is elemental silence of truth, she is artifice, gossip and falsehood; she is healing presence and sorceress; she is man's prey, his downfall, she is everything that he is not and that he longs for, his negation and
Man, from the remotest antiquity found it convenient to exert his strength and to dominate his companion by making her bend under the yoke of his power. Woman was evoked in the form of an 'angel' by Coventry Patmore and Tennyson, a 'madonna' by Ruskin and the 'Virgin Mary' by Sarah Ellis, representatives which together sum up the contemporary ideal: chastity, humility and transcendence. The myth of Mary is further elaborated by Simone de Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex*. Woman is at once 'Eve' and 'Virgin Mary'. The mutation of the Eve myth into the Mary myth, of temptress redeemer, implied a fundamental process of desexualization of the woman, who was bit by bit deprived of her carnal abilities: the housewife became at once the pillar of the home and the priestess of a temple. She was either the subject of man's adoration or the object of his condemnation. As a piece of property her virginity had to be kept intact. She was either angel or demon, the goddess or the fallen woman, she had to be beautiful to please and to satisfy the sexual appetite of man. "Taught from infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison." 'Masculine' signifies worthwhile, powerful, victorious, capable, whereas 'Feminine' becomes identical with obedient, servile,
subordinate. Feminine then as a term of literary description would suggest an art of which two distinguishing features are interiorisation and the conscious creation of mystery either around or within the work of art. The long historical insistence on the otherness of woman, the core of feminine mystery, makes her the natural focus for an art which finds no fruitful material in what it considers the process of ordinary life and which seeks to transcend the configuration of a known reality. Our society generally teaches men that they should dominate. It teaches women that they should be submissive. So, men have the opportunity to dominate women. Since the past, men have been the bread-winners and women have been depending on them for support. She has been confined to the home and children. But now women are trying to know their true selves. This has made them revolt against suppression and dominance. Androgyny is a Greek word split into andro and gyny meaning 'male' and 'female', a condition under which the characteristics of sexes — and the human impulses exposed by men and women — are not rigidly assigned. They were assigned by man only.

According to the Greek myth:

Eurynome the Goddess of All Things, rose naked from chaos, but found nothing substantial for her feet to rest upon, and therefore divided the sea from the sky, dancing lonely upon its waves. She danced towards the south, and the wind set in motion behind her seemed something new and
apart with which to begin a work of creation. Wheeling about, she caught hold of this north wind, rubbed it between her hands, and behold! the great serpent Ophion. Eurynome danced to warm herself wildly and still more wildly, until Ophion, grown lustful coiled about those divine limbs and was moved to couple with her.

According to the myth the North Wind or Boreas fertilises. So Eurynome was "Likewise got with child". If we trace the origin of human beings Eurynome seems to be created first. It was only through her copulation with Ophion that man came into being. This myth can point to the origin of matriarchy also.

Matriarchy controversy seems to be a dream now and the question hardly seems to find a satisfactory solution. But Sally Linton in her paper *Woman the Gatherer* presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in 1970 has given some positive reasoning to the question. She asks as where did the family come from? Why did women need men in the first place? What did paleolithic society look like? Was the position of woman better then? The only literature within anthropology which questions the existence of universal male domination and therefore implicitly assumes the possibility of a different kind of society in the 19th century work of Engels and Bachofen which claimed that matriarchies had preceded patriarchies at some period of history. Although
the evidence of pre-history does not rule out matriarchal societies, it certainly does not demonstrate that they existed, and in the face of the world-wide patriarchies of today, there is no strong reason to suppose that things were even different.

Engel's assertions for a universal stage of matriarchy rest, briefly, on historical matriarchism. Institutions are determined by material conditions, and before the existence of class society, women shared equally in social production and therefore were equal to men. Bachofen's theory of matriarchy is based on universal stages of social evolution, to which religious organization is the key. He argues that religions based on "the feminine principle" were dominant up to early states, when they were overthrown by patriarchal religions. These early societies had mother-right class as their analogue in social organization. His theory has many weaknesses both internally and methodologically. The existence of mother-goddess religions, no matter how well documented, does not automatically prove the existence of matriarchy or even higher status of women. Feminists have reviewed Bachofen and Engel. A number of papers and books have come out. They are sure that female dominance was there once upon a time; and women did have power and authority. It is difficult for the modern generation to believe this idea because power and authority are always associated with man. In fact, Simone de Beauvoir, Read, Firestone, Davis and Diner
believe that matriarchy did exist. Matriarchy meant the power of women, as a group, over men, that is female dominance, or that women's position or status was more equal and esteemed than in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Still there is a doubt whether matriarchal societies ever existed. Leacock expresses this doubt also and thinks that matriarchal societies were matrilineal (in which women hold power over men). The African Amazons seem to provide a good example for this. The Amazonians monopolized the government and other influential positions.

In the remote past women were not harmless second class drudges; they simply did what benefited the community in one way, while their unimpeded brothers did what benefited it in another. Persons lived this way for thousands of years. It was only when some got more advanced, when property entered the picture and people began to measure status by means of possessions, that man began to capitalize on the biological fact that he does not have to worry about pregnancy and nursing. It was this freedom to swoop down upon, much more than his superior strength or speed that enabled him to have and to hold. It resulted in his role as possessor, protector and provider while his mate, almost always vulnerable found herself being possessed, protected and provided for. As a matter of fact women came to be looked upon as property, not markedly different from cattle, slaves, land and other measurements of wealth. Patriarchies developed while she assumed her position below as inevitably as he assumed his
above. She became the 'second sex', 'the castrated being' and the very word 'feminine' seemed to be overpowered by the great power of 'masculine'. The matriarchal culture seemed to be a dream while the patriarchal system took hold of society. She was either the 'weaker sex' or the 'fairer sex' and man was her protector in the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Gough, Firestone and Simon de Beauvoir also think that woman has always been the "second sex". The extent of inequality varied according to the ecology and the resulting sexual divisions of tasks, which later on resulted in the suppression and oppression of women. The fundamental problem revolves around power. If women are to be supreme, would not men necessarily be subordinate? If women are to rule, won't men be the subjects? Why should they, who have the reins in their hands agree to this state of affairs?

Mary Wollstonecraft dedicated her A Vindication of the Rights of Women to M. Talleyrand - Perigord, Late Bishop of Autun. In the beginning of the book she writes in her Dedication address:

I plead for my sex - not for myself. Independence I have long considered as the grand blessing of life, the basis of every virtue - and independence I will ever secure by contracting my wants, though I were to live on a barren heath.
She wishes to support the cause of virtue and morality.

Further, she says:

If women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights of mankind, prove first, to ward off the change of injustice and inconsistency, that they want reason — else this new flaw in your New Constitution will ever show that man must, in some shape, act like a tyrant; and tyranny, in whatever part of society it rears its brazen front, will ever undermine morality.

She wishes to demand justice for one half of human race (women).

In the patriarchal society women were regarded as slaves, bereft of reason, virtue and knowledge. Women were in a deplorable state. Even when man regarded her as a queen it was only to be deluded by his hollow respect. They were only confined in cages like the "feathered race," to amuse men with their beauty and service. Perhaps they would never be able to make use of their reason, virtue and knowledge. When their task of life would be fulfilled, after death, rising from the grave perhaps may say to the Lord — "Behold thou gavest me a talent — and here are five talents." Even Rousseau, whose ideal was "Liberty, equality and fraternity" deprived women of independence. He declared:

woman is expressly formed to please the man:

if the obligation be reciprocal also, and the
man ought to please in his turn, it is not so immediately necessary: his great merit is in his power, and he pleases merely because he is strong.

He denies individuality and independence to woman. But whether woman is loved or neglected her first wish according to Mrs. Wollstonecraft should be to make herself "respectable." Rousseau observes "Educate women like men and more they resemble our sex the less power will they have over us." But Mary Wollstonecraft pleads with women not to care about their power over men but they should have "power over themselves." It is true that Nature has given woman a weaker frame than man; but to ensure her husband's affections must a wife, who by the exercise of her mind and body whilst she was discharging the duties of a daughter, wife, and mother, has allowed her constitution to retain its natural strength, and her nerves a healthy tone, is she, I say, to condescend to use art and feign a sickly delicacy in order to secure her husband's protection? Weakness may excite tenderness, and gratify the arrogant pride of man; but the lordly caresses of a protector will not gratify a noble mind that pants for, and deserves to be respected.
This male arrogance and superiority was psychologically brought out later by Freud who was refuted by Germaine Greer in her *Female Eunuch*.

In Chapter V of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Mary Wollstonecraft quotes Rousseau, according to whom Sophia should be a perfect woman as Emilius is a man. Rousseau proved "that woman ought to be weak and passive, because she has less bodily strength than man; and that it is her duty to render herself 'agreeable' to her master — this being the grand end of her existence." Mrs. Wollstonecraft earnestly feels:

> would men but generously snap our chains and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers — in a word better citizens.

In fact, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* is the first document asserting full humanity of women and insisting upon its recognition. A friend of Paine and of French Revolutionaries, its author was sufficiently in touch with revolutionary thought and directed it towards the emancipation of women.

Between the appearance of "the two great texts, William Thompson's *Appeal* in 1825 and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* in 1869", the ideal of an exclusive family vocation and freedom for women was exposed to
criticism. The concepts of woman's freedom and 'influence' were the main targets. In *Society in America* Harriet Martineau sarcastically says "____ the virtual influence of woman, her swaying the judgement and will of man through the heart. ____ One might as well try to dissect the morning mist". Mrs. Hugo Reid revealed the 'mystical' and 'ideal' side of women. George Eliot observed that in the literary sphere women enjoyed more freedom in France than in England. Francoise Basch says: "As for the 'spheres and duties' of the women, narrowly defined as an acceptance of family vocation, early feminists considered that no one had the right to enclose her within this".

The first Woman Suffrage Society was set up in 1866. Barbara Bodichon wrote a long article on the enslavement of women over the centuries. But all this could not diminish the oppression of women. Harriet Taylor complained that woman was "too much degraded". Before *The Subjection of Women* the only texts that dealt seriously with female suffrage were Harriet Taylor's article in the July 1851 issue of the *Westminster Review*, and Mrs. Hugo Reid's *A Plea for Women*. Mill and Harriet believed in the complete equality of men and women, including political equality. Mrs. Reid concentrated on the injustice that women suffered in civil rights and education. She thought that through civil rights and education women's oppression could be put to an end.

Feminism of the first part of the Victorian era was
concerned with the 'wife - mother' ideal and the oppression of woman. It was a typical patriarchal society where man was the dominant ruler. He used women for his own benefit. Women were obliged to earn their own living also. A.Taine visited England in 1860 and was struck by the contradiction between the universal obsession with marriage and the wife's dependence. As a wife and mother woman had no identity of her own. Mill married Harriet Taylor and was liberal enough to denounce in writing the 'odious powers' of the husband that he had gained as legal right. He wrote an article on the emancipation of women which appeared in the Westminster Review in July 1851. It was a protest against the subjection of women. Women had been considered physically and mentally inferior to man. A married girl had to lose all her rights as a 'feme sole'. A woman, in law, belonged to the man she married. But Barbara Bodichon and Caroline Norton inspired by their own marital unhappiness pursued an indefatigable crusade for a reform of married women's legal status. A wife, treated as a minor entirely lost her own legal status. Mrs. Norton even wrote a letter to the queen where she mentioned the position of women as totally "non-existent" in a country governed by a female sovereign." In 1844 a clause was added in the New Matrimonial Act which decreed that a husband could not force his wife to return home. In 1857 the first Matrimonial Causes Act was passed which sought to guarantee every woman the right to what she owned. Important changes in the wife's status only came about
after 1870 in the Married Woman’s Property Act, under pressure from the feminist movement that had crystallized. Spinsterhood was still regarded as a misfortune; marriage provided security and status.

Ruskin says in ‘Of Queens Gardens’:

The man, in his rough work, in the open world, must encounter all peril and trial: to him therefore must be the failure, the offence, the inevitable error, often he must be wounded, or subdued, often misled; and always hardened. But he guards the woman from all this, within the house, as ruled by her, unless she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offence.

Thus we find that man guarantees woman security only if she is chaste and does not err or stoop down from her high pedestal of morality. The burden of this new idea of home fell on women, they became custodians of moral conscience. Returning home from the pressures of the real world, economic man was supposedly soothed and elevated by the spirituality, virtue and domestic charm of his wife. Ideally she had to be a companion who would raise the tone of his mind from low anxieties and vulgar cares. In fact, the idea of an ideal home haunted the Victorians so much that it was used as an argument against women’s suffrage. We have anti-feminist women like Mrs. Lynn Lynton who put the question “where will be the peace of home when women
like men plunge into the troubled sea of public life?"
Women were asked to be ideal housewives rather than to govern the state. In Victorian novels we have the chaste virgin who duly blossoms into the model wife and mother, the 'angel' in the house whose charms are strictly domestic.

Ruskin believes in the 'subjection' of wives. In general he says that the task of woman is to serve man and family through "womanly guidance". It is to this end that education should prepare her. This theory is an exact parallel of Rousseau's. But Ruskin goes a step further when he says that female education is to be directed toward making women wise, "not for self - renunciation." He further says:

A man ought to know any language or science he learns, thoroughly; while a woman ought to know the same language or science only, so far as may enable her to sympathize in her husband's pleasures, and in those of his best friends.

He is solicitous to warn women away from accomplishment. Man is the wisest and woman has to bow before him. Ruskin apprehended that serious female interference would be fatal to patriarchal religion. Woman should not become a 'dictionary', but a loving object for man - her intellectual superior. According to him home is the true place for woman. But J.S. Mill thinks differently. According to him 'home' is the centre of 'domestic slavery'. Mill is against the sovereignty of husbands.
He thinks that most slaves had greater rights than wives under the law. Submissiveness and modesty are regarded as the nature of women. Mill points out "What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing - the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others." Man exercises his power over woman legally, physically and by suppressing her psychologically also.

Mill set an example of being the liberator of woman when he married Harriet Taylor and solemnly denounced "the odious powers" confirmed on him as a husband by marriage. He wished to raise the legal status of the wife. His article on emancipation of women appeared in Westminster Review in July, 1851. His Subjection of Women was read by Freud, who disliked the essay. Freud responded to Mill by arguing that sexes are inherently different in temperament, and then, despite the logical contradiction, by deploring changes in upbringing which might erode these differences. He says that nature has determined woman's destiny through beauty, charm and sweetness. He thought that Mill's ideas were based on the personal instances of his marriage with Harriet Taylor. But Freud would have preferred his fiance to keep away from the 'struggle'.

In 1844 the New Matrimonial Causes Act decreed that a husband could not force his wife to return home. The condition of women was extremely in a deplorable state. As J.S. Mill writes, "The shoes on their feet, or the cudgel in
their hand — the horse or the ass that carries their burdens — the wife and children — all are 'theirs'.

It is the universal belief of the labouring class, that the law permits them to beat their wives. Woman's identity was 'non-existent'. 'Non-Existence' meant that it was impossible for her to take even the smallest step, such as signing a contract or a lease. In such complete impotence a wife was easy game for her husband or anyone else.

Thus, the first feminists fought for the legal status of the wife. In 1857 the New Matrimonial Causes Bill modified divorce procedure, stipulated that a legally separated woman would be considered a 'feme sole'. A woman deserted by her husband could ask for protection of her assets through a magistrate. This was an essential step towards recognition of the wife's role as a breadwinner.

In 1870 Married Woman's Property Act was passed which guaranteed the wife personal enjoyment of her earnings, investments, inheritance, rents, revenues and any money gifts over two hundred Pounds. As a result of a law passed in 1873, the court could entrust the mother with the custody of children up to sixteen years. By 1878 both the husband and wife could divorce for adultery committed by either. But it was easier for the husband to prove her adultery, whereas she was powerless. It was only in 1929 that grounds of divorce became the same for both the partners. But still the sin of woman was always regarded as greater by the Victorian society.
The ultimate aim of the first wave of feminists was to gain equality with men socially, physically, economically and politically. Victorians wished to suppress women, because they thought that otherwise they would not become good wives. The heroines of George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte were passive. But the New Women are assertive, questioning and sceptical. Thomas Hardy has been accused of giving birth to the New Women in his novels. He calls this emergence of the New Women as 'the ache of modernity'. This conception of liberating women was further elaborated by D.H.Lawrence in his novels.

Patricia Stubbs says that "sexual topics were absolutely taboo because any breach in the wall of silence might lead to women finding out all sorts of dangerous things." Contraception, prostitution, sexual relationships would spoil the minds of girls - these topics were banned for women. This sexual taboo in polluting the minds of young girls further and sexual suppression resulted in unlimited sexual desires. Patricia Stubbs quotes lines from R.Ussher's Neo-Malthusianism (1898)

It (Contraception) would very considerably diminish ante-nuptial chastity on the part of both men and women, especially of the latter. If they came to know that they could indulge all sexual appetite without any fear of becoming mothers, they would undoubtedly surrender their virginity much more readily than if the fear of
Ussher reveals that women did not figure as 'Supra-sexual' beings, and that their sexuality was so strong that it had to be restrained by 'artificial checks'. They had to be prevented from breaking their 'chastity belts'. Thus a double-standard prevailed. Women often appeared to be virgins outwardly although they lived a life of 'concubinage.' Knowledge of birth control was a key to women's emancipation. It threatened the idea of sexual self-restraint. But it provoked bitter criticism. Ideally a girl was supposed to be totally ignorant about sex when she married, as we have Henry Jame's Pansy Osmond in *The Portrait of A Lady*. Thomas Hardy's *Tess* and Mrs. Gaskell's *Ruth* were a challenge to this conception of morality. The Victorian moralists could not take these feminist challenges bravely.

Sexual suppression produced neurotic patients for psychologists like Freud to examine and treat women. Freud further refuted Feminism on psychological grounds. He said 'Anatomy is Destiny'. This middle class Victorian genius identified the female reproductive system as the inexorable vice that kept women emotionally unstable, submissive, passive, masochistic and devoid of creative intellectual potential. Freud's distorted view of female psychology was the most palatable of all his theories to this day, because it appeared to give a physiological basis to the prevailing theological and cultural attitudes - towards women. Seventy years later, it remains his most comforting
pronouncement to many scientists, physicians, politicians, professors, university presidents, business executives, husbands and lovers. It has sadly, been embraced also by the very women who are bound by its chains. The female as a defective male has been bred into the love of our culture. Feminists like Germaine Greer have called her a 'female eunuch'. Doctors or physicians think that she suffers hormonal imbalances during the monthly cycles of menstruation. Feminists are fighting for this psychological oppression of women.

Women were economically dependent. Marriage provided them security and status. They were not permitted to control their property. The husband had the right to collect the wife's wages, to decide upon the education and religion of the children and to punish his wife if she displeased him. All this was portrayed in fiction and the authors also conveyed the idea that woman should be raised from the foot-stool of man to be his equal. Happy marriages as those of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning were rare. Mr. and Mrs. Gaskell maintained quite an independent relationship. Carlyle's wife Jane was economically depended on him and was always hand to mouth for her household expenses. In fact, a wife was just a 'Senior Servant.' Women were regarded as a minority group.'

Thomas Hardy is influenced by the feminist advocate John Stuart Mill. Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* shows how deep
the influence of Mill went. Mill's argument was, that all human beings ought to have the fullest possible freedom of speech and action, so long as this did not harm anyone else. A good many people would have argued at the time that it did do harm; that those who attacked religion, for example, or conventional morals would corrupt other people and might undermine the whole civilization. The Victorians were very harsh with anyone who stepped out of line on these matters, and in some ways, Mill claimed, English society was actually tyrannical. He campaigned for women's rights and wrote a book *The Subjection of Women*. The women's rights movement rapidly bestowed on Mill a devotion commensurate to his own dedication to the Cause. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, who participated in the 1860s Feminist Movement and thought it "an enormous advantage to the whole women's movement, not only in England, but all over the world," to have for its 'champion' a man in the front rank of political leaders and thinkers. Though other eminent contemporaries such as Charles Dilke also devoted much energy to women's rights, it was Mill whom the histories of the movement and the memoirs of its leaders revered as the 'patron saint' of female equality.

Mill confided to a female correspondent that "whatever there is in *The Subjection of Women*" which shows any "unusual insight" into nature or life was learnt from women - "from my wife". He thought that man and woman were the natural complement of each other. He treated Harriet, his wife, as his equal and gave her full emancipation. In his
private life he displayed an equally intense concern for women's rights. In 1832 he wrote to Harriet:

--the great occupation of woman should be to beautify life: to cultivate, for her own sake and that of those who surround her, all her faculties of mind, soul, and body; all her powers of enjoyment, and powers of giving enjoyment; and to diffuse beauty, elegance, and grace everywhere.

John Stuart Mill had a deeper influence on Thomas Hardy than did any other Victorian thinker. Mill even revolted against the subjugation of woman by the society and for denying her the rights of a free individual. He says "the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality."

Hardy saw Mill only once, in 1865 and heard "this demagogic of men address an uncomprehending audience in Covent garden." He called him one of the "profoundest thinkers" of the last century. He was particularly impressed by Mill's essay On Liberty, which he knew almost by heart. The thesis of On Liberty is that if freedom is denied to the individual, the whole society will suffer as a result. Particularly the third chapter on Individuality—he quotes in his Jude the Obscure, when Sue is trying to persuade her
husband to let her leave him. She continued: "She, or he, "who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty that the ape-like one of imitation", J.S. Mill's words, those are. I have been reading it up. Why can't you act upon them? I wish to, always."

Phillotson answers "What do I care about J.S. Mill! I only want to lead a quiet life!" Phillotson realizes that the kindest thing is to dissolve his marriage. There is a dreadful incompatibility between him and Sue which is intellectual as well as sexual: "Her intellect sparkles like diamonds, while mine smoulders like brown paper—she's one too many for me!" Although he loves his wife and knows that society would support him in making her stay with him, he feels conscientiously forced to let her go. Hardy agreed with Mill that human happiness was more important than institutions. If a marriage makes either husband or wife unhappy, then the marriage should go. It is true that Phillotson has to sacrifice himself to what Mill would have called the "general good", but ultimately it would not make him happy, either to go on exploiting another person. The whole of Jude the Obscure shows how deep the influence of On Liberty went. Hardy presents Sue as an emancipated girl who laughs at religion and makes her own decisions on matters of sex. When Sue and Jude break down in the end, they are defeated and Hardy is frustrated. But Hardy's plea for individual liberty and freedom is even stronger than Ibsen's Nora. He
questions the basic institution of marriage which tries to snatch from woman her rights as a free individual. When Sue leaves Phillotson, he tells his friend Gillingham "I was not her goaler." Like Hardy, even Phillotson hates conventions and agrees to let her go and stay with Jude. Hardy strongly felt that people who dissented from the received opinions were bound to suffer. In the story of Clym Yeobright in The Return of the Native, he shows the same thing. The movement in the direction of greater freedom of sex expression is evident in the fiction of Thomas Hardy, who is fascinated by the irrational compulsion present in sexual love.

Hardy describes two kinds of women in his novels, the 'submissive' and the 'sensuous', for instance Thomasin and Eustacia in The Return of the Native, Arabella and Sue in Jude and Obscure and in the character of Tess she is both angel and demon, the pure innocent girl and the murderess. Nina Auerbach in her book Woman and the Demon points to the powerful and the submissive Victorian woman. In fact, she herself says that Carlyle's hero fades before the power of woman. In George du Maurier's Trilby Trilby is not fragile, but a virtual giantess. Even in Bram Stoker's Dracula the sinister count is less terrifying than his three hungry wives, George Eliot's Lamia like Rosamond, Tennyson's Vivien all find their greatest triumphs in displacing authorities. The origin of these powerful women can be traced back to Medusa. The dual nature of
Tess as innocent and murderer can also be likened to that of an angel and demon. But in spite of being powerful their controlling factor is man. Dracula and Trilby portray sexual repression in the Victorian Age. These demonic women seem to be the forerunners of the New Women whose powers became a threat to patriarchal system. But men were responsible for the dual nature of women. They made them angels and demons. Behind Trilby was Svengali, behind Lucy and Mina was Dracula, and behind Tess was Angel. The Victorian fallen woman is mainly the sexually seduced or raped woman. Hardy tried to raise her by fighting against the society of that time. For Browning and Tennyson the fallen woman becomes the abased figurehead of a fallen culture; her imaginative resonance justifies the punishment to which she is subjected. But Victorian social reformers found her as painful a presence as do contemporary feminist critics. She seems to enlightened minds a pitiable monster, created by the neurosis of a culture that, because it feared female sexuality and aggression enshrined a respectably sadistic cautionary tale punishing them severely. Freud's patients specially women undergo empowering transformations. Freud as 'narrator/healer/magus/master' is always in control, as if to galvanize in anticipation the feeble magic of Svengali and Dracula. Hardy turns the innocent Tess into a murdress, but Lawrence curbs and castrates her powers, thinking that if he did not overpower her, she would overpower him.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


7. Wollstonecraft, *Vindication* 82.

8. Wollstonecraft, *Vindication* 91.


15. Wollstonecraft, *Vindication* 224.

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