Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Definition of Woman by Julia Ward Howe

Gayle Ann Gullett

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\[\text{Signature} \]
Gary M. Ross, Associate Professor of History

\[\text{Signature} \]
Betty Stirling, Professor of Sociology

\[\text{Signature} \]
Fredrick G. Hoyt, Professor of History
PREFACE

It is dangerous to write a thesis on a subject that has again become a hotly debated issue. Feminism was discussed in an emotional environment in the nineteenth century; it is now surrounded with the same ambience. The writer who attempts to deal with such a controversial topic must guard against the dangers of taking sides or of allowing the contemporary issue to influence a report of the past. As for this paper, the author attempts to avoid both and to assume an objective, neutral position. But the reader should note that this thesis deals with nineteenth century feminism; he should not try to find in it the answers or problems of the twentieth century.

The contention of this paper is that Julia Ward Howe believed women to be equal although different from men, except in the one area of morality where women were superior. This definition had two radical implications. If women were ethically advanced, then they must have freedom in order to serve the community in whatever sphere suited their talents. Women must be free and they must be able to use this freedom.

Chapter one, a short biography of Mrs. Howe with special emphasis on her personal rationale for becoming a feminist, her poems for the first time to reveal her feelings regarding women's nature and role in society. Chapter two describes the definition of women given by Mrs. Howe in speeches, newspapers, and journals. The final chapter places
Mrs. Howe and her definition of women in the larger context of the woman's movement.
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In the nineteenth century, the world of achievement was limited to the male; women, however talented and ambitious, were expected to confine themselves to a single sphere of domesticity. A woman who had the audacity to challenge this assumption was Julia Ward Howe. Her personal life was marked by her "vision of some great work or works which [she] should give to the world." This glorious vision of personal achievement "formed a part of [Mrs. Howe's] spiritual make-up"¹ and impelled her beyond the restrictive role of women. "She could not bear to be 'left out,' reported two of her daughters in their Pulitzer Prize winning book, Julia Ward Howe 1819-1910.² Mrs. Howe demanded freedom to enter the world of action in whatever field she chose. To unlock herself and other women from their narrow sphere, Mrs. Howe redefined women's nature; women, according to Mrs. Howe, were equal, although different from, men.

When Mrs. Howe died in 1910 at the age of ninety-one, she had achieved many things: author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," prominent member of the woman suffrage movement, founding figure of women's clubs. These achievements represent not only a victory for


Mrs. Howe and what comprises her greatness but also a victory for woman-kind. The little girl who told herself at night that she would stretch until she was so long that robbers would think she was an adult never lost her desire to stretch. The life of Mrs. Howe was the story of a woman, compelled by her sense of glorious mission, who achieved greatness by striking down the barriers of custom and prejudice that held all women in bondage.

The first barrier in the life of Julia Ward Howe was an overprotective father. Mr. Samuel Ward, a prosperous New York banker, provided her with the best education he could afford, an education concentrated on music, dancing, literature, and modern languages. However, he was a devout Episcopalian who carefully and strictly shielded his daughter from all worldly influences. The young Miss Ward resented the restrictions placed on her life; her father, despite "all his noble generosity and overflowing affection, appeared to [her] as a jailer," and she seemed to herself "like a damsel of olden times, shut up within an enchanted castle." Locked in a golden jail that included a picture gallery for her instruction and amusement, Miss Ward, kept from the normal activities of youth, spent her hours studying and writing essays on Goethe, Schiller, and Lamartine in the New York Review and Theological Review and poems in the New York American.

The family of this attractive, auburn-haired, young woman not only worried about her "love affairs," which were harmless flirtations; they were also gravely concerned with her unquenchable "thirst of

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3Richards, II, 161.

knowledge" that produced such unladylike ambition in her. In a letter to her aunt in July, 1838, Julia wrote that "by a strange and inexplicable caprice Papa took it into his head today that I must make some pies." After complaining of the "miseries of pie making" (which included the "kneading up and rolling out of paste, of stewing, sweetening, stirring and worse still, tasting the gooseberries, of daubing one's self with butter, lard, and flour") Julia hoped she would "never again have the same painful duty to perform." Her "only consolation" was that although she made them, father would have to eat them.5

Mr. Ward may have had other plans to domesticate his daughter but they seem to have had little effect. Ten days after the pie episode, one of Julia's brothers, Marion, noted in a letter that his sister had locked herself up in her room to write. She seems, he wrote, "to be revolving over some plan for literary distinction" but he hoped that as she grew "older and wiser" she would lay aside her scheme. Five years later, in 1842, Marion again writes that Julia was "studious almost to a fault" but "she seems to have had a gay time in Boston."6

It had been a "gay time;" Julia had met her future husband, Samuel Gridley Howe, the handsome Bostonian, who was well known in America for his romantic role in the Greek Revolution and internationally famous as the first person to teach the deaf-blind to communicate. Dr. Howe, famous reformer, did not see in Miss Ward the young scholar but "a New York belle--apparently an artificial one--possibly by some

6Elliott, pp. 175-177, 182-3, 223.
thought a beautiful one." Her father's death in 1838 and the marriage of her brother Samuel to Emily Astor the following year had given Julia the freedom and the means to enter the social whirl that had been closed for so long to her and she had entered it with enthusiasm. Samuel Howe was certain that the "true woman . . . had nearly been stifled" but he was positive that Julia Ward would become "a wife who lives only for her husband." The king of Greece made Samuel Gridley Howe a Knight of St. George in grateful remembrance of his contribution at the time of the Greek revolution; the title was never used by Dr. Howe but to his wife he was always the "Chevalier," the dashing, romantic, hero-crusader.

The two were married in 1843; after a long European honeymoon they returned to Boston to make their home at the Perkins Institute for the Blind where Dr. Howe was headmaster. "Home" came as quite a shock to the new Mrs. Howe. She was forced to make several adjustments: psychological, physical, environmental. Psychologically, the new bride had to adjust to the change from her position "as a family idol and 'superior young lady' of an admiring circle to that of a wife overshadowed for the time by the splendor of her husband's reputation." The psychological changes Mrs. Howe "accepted willingly," but the physical changes nearly overwhelmed her.


9Howe, Reminiscences, pp. 150-151.
Her life of "easy circumstance" amidst "brilliant surroundings" was transported to the grim Institute which was in a "distinctly unfashionable suburb" in Boston, inconveniently located far from the downtown area. The young miss who was accustomed to spending hours with her books now found a totally alien specialty, housework, standing between "her literary dreams and their realization." Mrs. Howe attempted to learn housekeeping skills but with indifferent success; furthermore, her duties increased every few years with a new baby. Julia Romana was born on their long European honeymoon in 1844 and she was quickly followed by Florence Marion (1845), Henry Marion (1848), and Laura Elizabeth in 1850.10

The change in her environment was the most confusing adjustment required of Mrs. Howe. As a "petted visitor from New York of the four hundred" she had once visited the "Boston of the forty" but now she was introduced to another city--"the Boston of the teachers, reformers, cranks--and apostles." "Wondering and floundering among these new surroundings," Mrs. Howe attempted both to learn from her new friends, such as William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Parker, and Charles Summer, and to retain, at the same time, her ties to "general society." The situation generated tension. Often, when she heard the reformers spoken of with contempt, she repelled the attack "with the heat of temper." She was quickly classified "as a seeker after novelties, as one likely to offer a premium for heresies of every kind--in other words, a radical."11

11 Howe, Reminiscences, pp. 150, 218-220.
Labeled a radical, Mrs. Howe's early years were subject to much criticism. As a New Yorker in a Boston that distrusted all outsiders, a mother whose child-training methods were suspect, and a wife of a zealous reformer Mrs. Howe did not find ready acceptance in Boston society. Furthermore, Mrs. Howe's close friend Thomas Higginson noted, "there was a slight uncertainty in her own mind that was reflected in her early poems." But her uncertainty was hidden beneath her extroverted, youthful nature and her most un-Bostonian sense of humor. Her jokes, Higginson confides, were "never absolutely out of taste; but it must be owned that she would fearlessly venture on one half dozen poor jokes for a good one." Mrs. Howe never feared to take a risk at any moment, this amazed proper Bostonian admits.12

Mrs. Howe's daughter, Florence, remembers a time in her book Memories Grave and Gay when her mother teased a "Mr. R" about his attentions to a very young girl; he solemnly swore that Mrs. Howe must be entirely mistaken. On her return home, she declared she would hang up a placard reading, "Remember R," as a warning to her "never to try to joke with persons devoid of a sense of humor."13

Proper Bostonians did not immediately accept Mrs. Howe, but eventually she established her own friends and a life style distinct from that of her husband. The children could easily divide their parents acquaintances into two groups. Their mother's friends were called "the Owls"; they were poets, philosophers and theologians, "speculative men who sat long and discussed abstract things." Friends

13 Hall, p. 126.
of Dr. Howe were statesmen, soldiers, militant philanthropists, all men of action. The difference between the two lifestyles did not escape Mrs. Howe. Her own "true life" she described as that "of a student and of a dreamer"; but the Chevalier was a man of "practical knowledge," devotion, zeal and action that made him a champion of human freedom.

Dr. and Mrs. Howe were two exceptional people. "We could not fail to notice," wrote their youngest daughter, "that our parents were above the average. Everybody told us so; almost every word of theirs proved it." Mrs. Howe, the continual student and striver for excellence, was anxious to join her husband in his world of action. After several of her initial attempts at becoming a co-reformer were rebuffed, Mrs. Howe reminded her husband that he had encouraged Florence Nightingale in her career against her parents' wishes. Mrs. Howe recorded the answer of her Chevalier in her journal, "that if he had been engaged to Florence Nightingale, and had loved her ever so dearly, he would have given her up as soon as she commenced her career as a public woman."

In 1854 Mrs. Howe wrote her sister that the past three years of her marriage had been times of "constantly increasing unkindness and estrangement." The decision must be made between reconciliation or a final separation. The latter was in the mind of her husband; he

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15 Howe, *Reminiscences*, pp. 84-85.

16 Maud Howe Elliott, *This was my Newport* (Cambridge: Mythology Co., 1944), p. 64.

17 Tharp, p. 296.
continually brought up his dream of marrying a "young girl who would love him supremely." (Mrs. Howe was twenty years younger than her husband.) The Howe's did not separate. Later in the year Mrs. Howe in a letter calls her unborn child, their youngest daughter Maud, the "price of reconciliation." Unfortunately, it was not a long lasting reconciliation. In 1865 Mrs. Howe wrote in her journal that after twenty years of marriage she had never known her husband to approve any act of hers which she valued. "Books-poems-essays-everything has been contemptible in his eyes because not his way of doing things."¹⁸

Mrs. Howe filled these lonely years with literary activity; her dream of success was never extinguished by her husband's lack of interest. Instead, poetry was the vehicle used by her to express her deepest emotions. She called her poems by her "dangerous things," spontaneous expressions that nearly wrote themselves.¹⁹ A woman with few intimate friends and an impenetrable reserve, her inner nature is only glimpsed, her daughter wrote, in "her poems, and occasionally a page in her diary."²⁰

Her first book of poems, Passion Flowers, was published anonymously in 1854. Mrs. Howe later referred to it as "a timid performance upon a slender reed" but she believed that it won her a seat "in the noble orchestra of writers."²¹ The review of Passion Flowers in the


¹⁹Julia Ward Howe to Francis Lieber, April-May 1847, Julia Ward Howe Collection, Huntington Library.


²¹Howe, Reminiscences, p. 229.
Southern Quarterly said that it was "too much impressed with the ability, the earnestness, and the intensity of the writer, to speak other than words of cordial recognition." The Southern Quarterly politely avoided discussing the "expediency of revelations so personal." 22

The problem was unavoidable in the Howe household. Mrs. Howe wrote her sister that "one bitter drop poisoned" all her pleasure in the success of her first published book; her husband took it "very hard" that it contained several thinly disguised references to their marriage. Worst of all, the offending poems were concerned with the problem of wifely obedience. 23

In one of the poems in Passion Flowers, entitled "Mind versus Millstream," Mrs. Howe suggests:

If you would marry happily
On the shady side of life,
Choose out some quietly-disposed
And placid tempered wife,
For men will woo the tempest,
And wed it, to their cost,
Then swear they took it for summer dew,
And ah! their peace is lost! 24

To recover their lost peace, agreement must be reached between the Howe's, but Mrs. Howe asked in another poem from Passion Flowers, "Philosoph-Master and Poet-Aster," "When I and Theologus cannot agree,
/Should I give up the point, pray you or he? /Shall I outhector him, stubborn and horrid . . . ?" But the "Thund'rer" and "Vulcan" cries out "Acknowledge your Master!" His wife replies, "Oh yes! you are


23 Tharp, p. 179.

24 Julia Ward Howe, Passion Flowers (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, & Fields, 1854), pp. 84-85.
foremost at that, if you will /If a triumph of noise be a triumph of skill."25

The growing alienation between herself and her husband over the publishing of *Passion Flowers* could only increase Mrs. Howe's sense of loneliness expressed in her book. "I am God's orphan and the world's, /Even thou [Dr. Howe] shalt scarcely rest my friend." Sometimes, she was revived as a "drooping flower" by his large heart and generous sympathy but she remained restless.26 She longed to "walk the darkness /On the Midnight's folded arm" for "midnight lends a passion /To all of soul and sense."27

In 1857 another book of poems by Mrs. Howe, *Words for the Hour*, was published; two dramas were also written by her in the same year. Several poems in *Words for the Hour* gave an explanation for Mrs. Howe's restlessness for they graphically describe the tension between the position assigned to her as a woman and the role she wished to have in society. The poem "Florence Nightingale and Her Praisers" comments:

> If you debase the sex to elevate  
> One of like soul and temper with the rest,  
> You do but wrong a thousand fervent hearts,  
> To pay full tribute to one generous breast.

The only difference between Nightingale and other women was that "she had freedom"; it was unjust to praise her when many "hearts akin to hers /Are held as springs shut up."28

26Howe, *Passion Flowers*, pp. 159-160.
27Howe, *Passion Flowers*, pp. 154-156.
Lack of freedom was reason for Mrs. Howe's growing dissatisfaction with her role; however, as a mother she did not feel she was free to desert her children to pursue her own ambition. Fanny Kemble was a woman who had left an unfortunate marriage to flee to Europe, leaving her family behind her. The poem "Fanny Kemble's Child" in Words for the Hour was the voice of Mrs. Howe's own anguished conscience:

Do thy forsaken ones cry out to thee
For the brave nurture left aside one day
To follow stormy feeling around the world?

The poem attempted both to censure Kemble and to provide justification for women's role:

Thine was the lot of Woman, only thou
Wert more than Woman in thy haughty will,
And less than Woman, in humility.
Battling for higher tasks, and loftier praise
Thy matchless office was unknown of thee.
A helpful partner? whence are mightest laws
But of opposing forces, greatly wed?
A nurse of babies? what is Nature else?29

Mrs. Howe could write poems to serve as conscience for someone else who would dare desert woman's traditional role but she could not rid herself of the feeling that woman's position in society was a hard place to stand. "Furthermore," a poem also printed in Words for the Hour, moans that women are held by men in "narrow chains." Women are dwarfed by men:

to suit the measure of your pride
Thwarted in all our pleasures and our powers,
Have yet a sad majestic recompense,
The dignity of suffering, that is ours.

Of the success and glory of your lives
Ye think it grace to yield the meanest part.

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29 Howe, Words for the Hour, pp. 63-67.
Ev'n Nature, partial mother, reason thus:
To these the duty, and to these the right;  

Since even Nature was a "partial mother" who distributed rights to men and duties to women, there was no alternative but to accept your lot in life, regardless of any personal unhappiness.

In 1852 two plays were written by Mrs. Howe: Lenora, or the World's Own and Hippolytus. The two dramas had similar themes. In both, pure virginity was assaulted, and although in the first play the heroine yielded and in the second the hero resisted, in the end they both died. Both plays had a woman entirely given up to wickedness and evil plotting. Lenora sought cruel revenge from her faithless lover and not only brought his death but the death of his wife. Hippolytus, the chaste prince, was wooed by his faithless, sensuous stepmother, Phaedra, whose lies to her husband caused the death of Hippolytus. In each drama there was a man who worshipped at the shrine of pure womanhood. Hippolytus worshipped literally before the altar of Artemis, the goddess of chastity; Edward adores Lenora and his sentiments are voiced by his close friend, Count Lorenzo, who sees the "pride of womanhood" even in a prostitute. For if she is "lifted a little from the mire" she will "give to view/The germ of all we honor, in the form/Of all that we abhor."  

Lenora, with its theme of an innocent, seduced girl who plots the death of her lover in revenge, received terrible reviews when it was played in New York. The brother of Mrs. Howe, Sam Ward, wrote from

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30Howe, Words for the Hour, pp. 43-44.

31Julia Ward Howe, Lenora, or the World's Own (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1857), pp. 63-64.
New York, "All women should stand up for the author of The World's Own. Men have an object in abusing it . . . beastly men, knowing how true a picture you have drawn of the beastly customs of their sex, take up the cudgels to frown down the adoption of revenge." Ward warned his sister that men would attempt to drive her back into "the ranks of the propriety, army of dumb and conventional forbearance" for her portrayal not of mere seduction, which was a common tale, but for her portrait of a woman who dared to revolt against convention. It was a senseless, violent revolt portrayed by Mrs. Howe, perhaps because she was not certain that women should rebel, but a revolt nonetheless.

Hippolytus was a play written by Mrs. Howe for Edwin Booth, a family friend, but it was never produced. In an era that stressed the hardship imposed on men when they must restrain their animal passions, Hippolytus was a man with a pure, undefiled nature. The figure of "pure man" served two purposes for Mrs. Howe. First, it was a reproof to her husband. Her next volume of poems, Later Lyrics, which were written over this period makes several explicit references to her husband's extramarital affairs. Secondly, although Mrs. Howe was discontent with contemporary sex roles, she had no desire to see the standards of moral purity lowered. Men and women should arrive at the same level of purity. For as she told her son, she gave him:

a palace
And a kingdom to control:
The palace of his body,
The kingdom of his soul.33

32Elliott, Uncle Sam Ward and His Circle, pp. 447-449.
The Howes again considered divorce in 1857. The idea was rejected once more and their sixth child, a son, named for his father Samuel Gridley Howe, was born in 1859. His death three years later in 1861 crushed them both. Mrs. Howe wrote her sister Annie that they felt "baptised into a new order of suffering" which made the earth a place "sown with tears, with the beauty and the glory gone out of it." Dr. Howe grieved for the boy to the end of his life. After the death of Mrs. Howe her children discovered a little book of verses and a letter written to her lost child in which she poured out her grief.

Religion and study came to the aid of Julia Howe at the death of her son. The summer after Sam's death, she studied Fichte and Kant extensively and by the end of the summer she had six essays prepared for publication. But she decided to lecture instead, following the example of her friend, Elizabeth Peabody, and her female mentor, Margaret Fuller. Mrs. Howe, despite the growing success of her poem, the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," desired to "express ideas that could not be put into rhyme or rhythm"; she wanted to speak publically. However, Dr. Howe was "averse to public appearance" of his wife and she consented to arrange small parlor readings instead in 1863.

34Tharp, p. 235.
36Hall, Memories Grave and Gay, p. 152.
37Richards, I, 299-303.
38Tharp, pp. 252-254.
39Howe, Reminiscences, pp. 304-305.
The press report on these lectures spoke of a "woman of genius" whose essays given to close friends were "worthy of Emerson." Mrs. Howe was unsatisfied with the results of these lectures. Many years later in reference to them she said, "I got up high to speculate upon the universe, /And folks who heard me found themselves no better and no worse."41

In 1866 _Later Lyrics_, another book of poems by Mrs. Howe, was published. The poems in it reflected her growing personal dissatisfaction with both her husband and woman's role in society. Love and pain were combined in Mrs. Howe's feelings for her husband or as she stated in "Blushes":

> I can not make him know my love;  
> Nor from myself conceal  
> The pangs that rankle in my breast,  
> Sharper than flame or steel.42

The reason for this pain was recorded in the poem "Jealousy" where Mrs. Howe mentions "she who flouts me, fallen from my prime" and bemoans that "We have not lost a gesture nor a tune, /Before a rival revels in our right."43 "Warning" urged Dr. Howe to "Keep one great love, purely, solely, /Till it make thy nature holy."44 The prayer of Mrs. Howe was a petition to God to "Keep the thing I love from deadly sin" because the "harrow of temptation wildly /Tear his

40Tharp, pp. 261-262.


44Howe, _Later Lyrics_, p. 205.
green and blooming purpose o'er."45 "The line that runs between us," wrote Mrs. Howe, "is narrow, but black as night." Her husband was out in the "world's wild hubbub" but she remained at home "with lovelorn Tasso /With Dante, hooded and crowned," the "sons of science," the prophets, the "good Physician," and "sorrow, greater than all."46 Mrs. Howe had filled her hours with intellectual activity yet she wrote:

> From gentle studies, arts beloved,  
> My thoughts all fix on thee;  
> Oh! speak one word so kindly rude  
> So greatly stern and true,  
> That I may kiss thy feet for shame,  
> And rise, absolved and new.47

The poems in *Later Lyrics* also expressed her change regarding women's position. In the poem "The Tea-Party" Mrs. Howe had only scorn for women's gossip; she could not join them because her life had striven "for broader scope." Their cruel "forward speech" may have helped unfurl women's standard but she warned them not to try to rule the world because:

> What strife should come, what discord rule and times,  
> Could but your pettish will assert its way!  
> No lengthened wars of reason, but a rage,  
> Shown and repented twenty times a day.48

Women should not attempt to rule the world; rather, they should "leave the weighter tasks of strength, /The underpinnings of society,  
/And flutter with [their] graces nearer heaven." Women were perceived by Mrs. Howe in the traditional manner; they were both incompetent and

too pure to take a position outside the home. Women have a passive role as the "steadfast Caryatid," "the Angel at the top, /That crowns and lightens all the heavy work."^49

However, the passive role had little appeal to Mrs. Howe. Making a reference to roulette where the gambler bets on either the red or the black, Mrs. Howe wrote, "I stake my gold upon the red." To her, red was the color of the river of life, of faith and hardihood, and of "passion from the gods."^50 Two poems in Later Lyrics began with the word "new," "New Sculptor" and "New Exodus," and they both presented the vision Mrs. Howe had received regarding the position of women. In the first poem a stranger came to her "Fancy's hall," destroyed all of her marble sculptor that "lived on symmetry and song" and replaced them with a living form entitled "To-day." When Mrs. Howe questioned this stranger as to why he would give her a being that required "nurture and feeding," surely this was not "the burden of [her] maidhood's tasks, /Nor [her] high breeding," he replied:

"Behold . . . life's great impersonate
Nourished by labor!
Thy gods are gone with old-time faith and fate;
Here is thy Neighbor."^51

In the "New Exodus" as a "frowning Angel" drove Adam and Eve from the garden to a life of toil so today all should "go, learn how workmen thrive."^52 The new vision Mrs. Howe had received was the insight that women need not restrain themselves to serve as docile

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^49 Howe, Later Lyrics, pp. 186-189.

^50 Howe, Later Lyrics, pp. 195-196.

^51 Howe, Later Lyrics, pp. 152-155.

^52 Howe, Later Lyrics, pp. 313-316.
angels above the crowd; instead, women have a duty to work actively in
their community.

Mrs. Howe once wrote her editor that she was beginning to have
"fears that [she] may not be, after all, the greatest woman alive." In her fifties, her plans for glory seemed largely unfulfilled. Her
sure prospects of fame rested on a single poem, the "Battle Hymn of the
Republic." The rest of her poems were judged by Thomas Higginson to be
lacking in concentration; he believed they reached the ear attractively
but not with positive mastery. Or as Jeanne Robert tactfully wrote in
the Review of Reviews, Mrs. Howe was at her best when she attempted
least, that is, in her simple, spontaneous lyrics. There was a feeling
of a loss of power in her longer poems, where spontaneity was sacrificed
to content. Mrs. Howe had written two dramas. Hippolytus was never
produced publicly in her lifetime. On The World's Own Mrs. Howe had
the comment that "a friend who went to see it said she fainted right
away."

But Mrs. Howe did not give up her search for the glorious. All
her life she felt herself to be "a pilgrim in pursuit of something that
is neither house nor lands, nor children, nor health. What that some­
thing is [she] scarce knew." In her youth she had been taught that

53 Julia Ward Howe to Fields, December 2, 1861, Julia Ward Howe
Collection, Huntington Library.

54 Higginson, pp. 301-302.

55 Jeanne Robert, "Julia Ward Howe as a Writer," Review of Reviews,
Vol. 43 (February, 1911), p. 253.


57 Richards, I, 126.
only a few extraordinary women, such as Madam de Staël or Harriet Martineau, were able to cope with men in matters of thought and attainment. Mrs. Howe had sought the glorious in one of the few fields open to women at the time, literature, but had not succeeded as she desired. One of the reasons she saw herself as failing was that she "looked to the masculine ideal of character as the only true one." "

Obviously, this doctrine of masculinity created an absurd conflict for Mrs. Howe. Her striving for self-fulfillment would only be self-defeating if she must identify herself with the masculine to achieve identification. The problem was solved by Mrs. Howe when she was converted to "the whole glorious gospel of higher womanhood." Her conversion gave her the inspiration of a "reasonable and religious hope," and confirmed her "faith in the divine ordering of the universe." The "divine order of the universe" now made sense to Mrs. Howe for she had come to believe that women occupied a equitable position in society. She no longer believed that occasionally "superior women" should rise above the great mass of womankind, to hover in limbo beneath the masculine heaven; rather, women were the "moral and spiritual equivalent of men." If this was not the case, women would not have been entrusted with the responsibilities of maternity.


60 Hall, Julia Ward Howe and the Woman Suffrage Movement, p. 8.

61 Howe, Reminiscences, p. 373.
Mrs. Howe now believed that women were the moral equals of men and that they had a work to perform in society; women must make the "New Exodus" into the world. Her husband had been in the service of the great American reformers through the fourth and fifth decades of the nineteenth century; now in the late 1860's Mrs. Howe began the third phase of her life, that of reformer, leaving behind the first two phases, student and artist.62

During this time period, when Mrs. Howe was forging a new image of womankind in her mind, she became a charter member of the New England Woman's Club. Clubs were not something new to Mrs. Howe for during her long career she began and joined many clubs. These included: the Town and Country Club, formed by Mrs. Howe for the summers she spent in Newport, the club she organized in Paris for female students of art and medicine,63 and the Women's Rest Tour Association whose object was "simply to make it easier for women who need a trip abroad to make one."64 But her favorite association was the New England Woman's Club; she always referred to this organization as "my dear club." The club rewarded her affection with the office of president in 1871, an honor she held almost continuously until her death.65

Mrs. Howe's interest in women's clubs was often revealed by the numerous offices she held. In 1881 she was elected president of the Association for the Advancement of Women, a body of women "devoted

62Richards, I, 358-359.
63Howe, Reminiscences, pp. 400-407.
64Richards, II, 188-189.
65Tharp, pp. 302-304.
to general culture and inclusive social service." It played an important pioneering role in laying the foundation for later women's organizations; but the A.A.W. died a natural death, replaced by the more complex structure of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs in 1890. Mrs. Howe had helped to found the General Federation and was the director from 1893 to 1898, as well as the first president of the Massachusetts Federation of Women's Clubs, organized in 1893.

Mrs. Howe organized women into clubs because she believed these clubs had several functions to perform in society. First, female organizations should act as an antidote to male associations because male groups "always generate something of the element of brute force." Women's clubs "uphold order, morality, and good taste." At first, Mrs. Howe was content to limit the aims of female associations to the improvement of moral and intellectual culture but she changed her mind and added another goal. Women's clubs were "schools of citizenship" that taught women how to take their place beside men both morally and politically. Mrs. Howe was once afraid to enlarge the female sphere to include the political world because she feared that if women became political, they would become less feminine. She changed her mind because she saw womanhood was "not only static, but also, and much more, dynamic. . . . True womanliness must grow and not diminish, in its


69Hall, Memories Grave and Gay, pp. 258-259.
 Increasing women's sphere to include the political world made women more, not less, feminine. But Mrs. Howe did not come to this conclusion quickly or easily. Indeed, she was almost pushed from her haven of women's clubs to women's suffrage. She was "invited and induced" to attend a women's suffrage meeting as a delegate of the New England Woman's Club. A most reluctant representative, she hoped to avoid notice but found herself forced to sit on the platform, able only to take comfort in the fact that she was surrounded by old and close friends: William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Colonel Thomas Higginson, and James Freeman Clarke. Convinced, as she listened to the arguments presented, that justice would only be served when white women as well as black men could vote, Mrs. Howe arose before the women's suffrage meeting to announce, "I am with you."\(^7\)

Colonel Thomas Higginson believed that from the moment of her pledge to the women's movement, there was a visible change in Mrs. Howe. She had a new brightness to her face and a new friendliness in her manner; Mrs. Howe was among friends at last, now free to disregard her old critics.\(^7\) Perhaps it was the last point that meant the most to her, for when she speaks of the "comforts" of the women's suffrage movement, she mentions the "relief from the sense of isolation and eccentricity." This sense of relief came from two sources: "from the better acquaintance with [her] own sex, and the experience of the power

\(^{70}\text{Hall, Julia Ward Howe and the Woman Suffrage Movement, p. 223.}\)

\(^{71}\text{Howe, Reminiscences, pp. 373-375.}\)

\(^{72}\text{Higginson, p. 288.}\)
resulting from associated action in behalf of worthy objects." Mrs. Howe no longer needed to think that most women were irrational, powerless creatures or that her longings for glorious achievements were hopeless or strange; she now came into almost daily contact with talented women with the same longings, women with whom she could work to organize a powerful organization for equality. Mrs. Howe had come home.

It had been a torturous route, and she had to leave behind many things on the way. One of them was her role as a female writer. After listening to a lecture on English literature, Mrs. Howe complained that nothing was said about her writings, "which deserve to be spoken of in characterizing the current literature of the day." Unable to bear the thought that her work had been passed over, or even worse, unread, Mrs. Howe could only conclude, in a martyr's tone, that she had been slighted because "people think of [her] nowadays more as an active woman's woman than as a literary character." This was a great trial to her for she did love to hear praise for her literary achievements and she did wonder about the correctness of her decision to change from the literary field to reform. But if the choice had been a mistake, "it was one of those honest mistakes it is best to make." Mrs. Howe might switch fields of endeavor, but she still wanted to star in all of them.

Of course, Mrs. Howe could hardly plan to enter the exciting struggle for women's suffrage without some comment from Dr. Howe. Fortunately, by the 1870's Dr. Howe had begun to mellow. In a letter

73 Howe, Reminiscences, pp. 372, 376.
74 Richards, I, 341.
to his daughter Laura on her European honeymoon, he mentions that her mother

old never-tire, is the most vigorous, active and jolly of that noisy and clamorous group who are now holding a Suffrage Fair in Music Hall. Not content with having all mankind of all ages voluntarily at their feet and serving them, they now want legal power to keep their servants in life-long subjugation. The first act in the new Gospel will be, husbands obey your wives. 75

Dr. Howe would not prevent his wife from crusading for woman's rights but it is obvious that he had his reservations which he made clear three years later in a letter written in 1874. Dr. Howe believed that the question was not over the problem of suffrage; women should have it and probably will have it soon. Nonetheless, "zeal in pursuit of it, does not justify neglect of domestic relations and occupations." Nor should any attempt be made "to abolish those differences in our political and social sphere and duties, which spring out of differences in the very organization of the sexes." 76

Mrs. Howe agreed completely, and perhaps joyfully, with Dr. Howe's statements concerning the validity of women obtaining the suffrage. But Dr. Howe did not stop there. He quickly added that although the reform movement she had joined was a just cause, it was hardly a crusade, for it lacked one vital element of success—"good, strong opposition." Dr. Howe reasoned that women suffrage would not encounter the stormy opposition that made abolition or the free school movement reform movements fit for men. Mrs. Howe quite naturally resented his statement and she looked for opposition everywhere until at last she could rejoice that

75Tharp, pp. 304-305.
76Schwartz, pp. 328-329.
the woman's movement had "grown important enough to raise enemies."77

Not that Mrs. Howe ever was to be found wanting in looking for the enemy. In 1869, the year after her conversion to the women's suffrage movement, she gave her first speech in its advocacy before a legislative committee in the State House in Boston, a practice she continued for the next twenty years. In 1870 she was one of the founders of the Woman's Journal, a journal closely connected with the American Woman's Suffrage Association. Mrs. Howe was also a prominent and official member of the A.W.S.A., serving in various offices, lecturing, writing numerous articles, and even editing a book in defense of coeducation.78

The Franco-Prussian War in 1870 deeply impressed Mrs. Howe with a "feeling of the cruel and unnecessary character of the conflict." It was barbarism for men to kill each other over an issue that could have been settled peacefully. As a mother, her heart went out to those many other mothers who had lost their sons in countless wars. Alone, she could do nothing to help them. But what if the mothers of mankind united to prevent the waste of human life of which they alone knew the cost? The dignity and terrible responsibilities of motherhood now appeared to her in a new light. She had been taught that the responsibilities of motherhood were so sacred that women must remain at home; now she believed that women must transform love for their own children into peace for all mankind.79

Women were the source of life in the

79Howe, Reminiscences, p. 327.
world; this fact gave them "sacred and indisputable right to become guardians of the world's power." No one, not even Dr. Howe, could deny the importance of this reform.

She quickly drew up an appeal to women all over the world to assist her in the calling and holding of a congress of women for peace in London. Apparently quite unaware that Frederika Bremer, the Swedish novelist, had done exactly the same thing during the Crimean War, Mrs. Howe devoted the next two years to an attempt to make the women's peace congress a reality. She corresponded endlessly with leading women in different countries. In New York and Boston she took steps towards the formation of the Women's International Peace Association and a World Congress of Women in behalf of the International Peace Association.

In 1872 Mrs. Howe went to Europe. She attended the Paris Peace Convention as a delegate only to be denied permission to speak at the public meeting, although she was allowed to speak to the officers of the peace convention afterwards. Undaunted, Mrs. Howe went to England hoping to bring to reality a Woman's Peace Society. She attended an anniversary meeting of the English Peace Society but was denied permission to speak on the ground that women had never spoken at these meetings. To gain a hearing, this small, Yankee woman organized her

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80 Hall, Julia Ward Howe and the Woman Suffrage Movement, pp. 148-149.


own series of meetings to be held on Sunday afternoons for five or six weeks. 83

Two conflicting reports were given on the effectiveness of these meetings. Mrs. Howe reported that attendance was good, not only in numbers but in character. Furthermore, many of the distinguished "co-occupied the platform" with her. These included Ernestine Rose, a woman active in the suffrage movement, and Sir John Bowring. 84 Sir Bowring had twice been a member of Parliament and had once served as the English minister to China. Mrs. Howe was sure that the "earnestness of his character" gave weight to his arguments for peace and his encouragements to women to work for universal brotherhood. 85

Justin McCarthy in the New York Evening Mail reported that Mrs. Howe's meetings were only "moderately attended," although he did not report on the character of the audience. McCarthy characterized Sir John Bowring as that "restless, egotistic old gentleman, fond of notoriety, and ready to attach himself to any scheme which promises to give it" who was remembered as the minister to China whose "hotheadedness and blundering" contributed to dragging the British into a disagreeable war. Even people known in England for their interest in peace work ignored Mrs. Howe's meetings, but not Mrs. Howe, for she was much admired. "Everyone speaks well of her," McCarthy declared, "but everyone says her project of peace was, here at least, only a charming delusion,

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83 Howe, Reminiscences, pp. 329-332, 338.


and a tender dream."86

Why had Mrs. Howe tried at all? In a speech given before a Woman's Peace Congress after she had returned home to America, Mrs. Howe stated that her advocacy of peace had been founded on philosophical and religious doctrine. Philosophically, it was necessary to acknowledge the "duty of recognizing instead of destroying one's opposite." Diversity in society was the means by which one agent was able to complement another. The religious doctrine of peace was found in all Christian ethics; the results of religious peace was a loving society which was the true Christian Church.87

Mrs. Howe had hoped to see not only a new era but a new power possessed by women on a basis entirely their own. Women were to defend the home "by the extension of the family affections to the great human family."88 Women, by remaining women, could fulfill God's commission for them by abolishing "the last enemy of mankind that shall be destroyed."89 Men had made a mess of this planet, filling it with wars and hatred; pure womanhood would be his salvation, an irony that was not lost on Mrs. Howe. The universal mother would bring peace to her warring sons, to the universal acclaim of all mankind. Women would be an unquestionable source of moral power within society.


But Mrs. Howe's personal peace crusade for women had to be given up due to lack of support. She was able to recognize that many steps needed to be taken before women were ready to be organized, and began to devote herself full time to the promotion of female suffrage and women's clubs, associations that not only organized but at the same time prepared women for their future role as the saviours of mankind. However, Mrs. Howe remained active in peace movements throughout her long life. She instituted a "Mother's Peace Day" to be celebrated every June 2 which was observed in various places for several years. For many years she was director and vice-president of the American Peace Society. In 1907, when Mrs. Howe was a very elderly lady, unable to attend the Peace Convention of that year, she sent them a letter to be read by her daughter at the Convention. In it she contrasted the poor reception that her peace crusade of 1872 had received to the great success of the peace movement of the early twentieth century. Mrs. Howe believed that the change had been brought about by higher education for women and the "discipline of associated action." Mrs. Howe had chosen the other road; she had worked for women's rights and organizations, but she did not regret it for these rightly trained women would supply the armies of peace with their soldiers.

Mrs. Howe wanted to see women educated in colleges and women organized in clubs; why not women preaching in the churches? Why not,

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90Howe, Reminiscences, p. 336.

91Richards, II, 359-360.

indeed? Clubs and colleges were doing a work of moral uplift but why
stop short of the greatest of the moral institutions, the church? Mrs.
Howe began encouraging women preachers, and in the spring of 1875 she
played a leading role in calling a convention of women ministers.93
For many years she held women's minister conventions in her home. Not
only did Mrs. Howe encourage other women to become ministers, she often
preached herself. The female ministry was always a topic close to her
heart; in 1905 she reflected that "surely preaching has been [her]
greatest privilege and in it [she] has done some of [her] best work."94

In January of 1876 Dr. Howe passed away. His death deeply
grieved Mrs. Howe. Their marriage had been a stormy one, but through­
out her poems runs the thread of her devotion to the man who was always
her Chevalier. Her wish for a closer relationship with her husband is
mentioned several times in different metaphors. If she could only
approach him as the moon draws near the cloud, "With still and stately
courtesy, /Clear-eyed and solemn-browed." (Mrs. Howe had no intention
of forfeiting her dignity.) Nonetheless, when the moon did meet the
cloud, "her face /In his deep breast doth hide, /The heavens are still,
in solemn joy, /The world is glorified."95 Perhaps if they could meet
as the first pair with the new-created world at their feet, then she
would hang upon his breath "With the tender zeal of childhood, /With
the constancy of death."96 It is not known if Mrs. Howe ever learned

93Howe, Reminiscences, pp. 311-312.
94Richards, II, 338.
95Howe, Later Lyrics, p. 103.
96Howe, Later Lyrics, p. 118.
in this life to hang upon the words of Samuel Gridley Howe, but their relationship in its later years had mellowed, and she missed him greatly.

Typically, she threw herself into even more activity. She went on a lecture tour in the Midwest and then took a tour of Europe with her daughter Maud. (Altogether Mrs. Howe visited Europe six times and twice she came out to the west coast.) When she came home from Europe, she went on a lecture tour of Kansas. She continued serving in various positions in her favorite associations until it appeared that she was playing nothing more than musical offices. For example, in 1880 she was vice-president of the Massachusetts American Woman Suffrage Association; in 1881 she was on the executive committee of the New England Woman's Suffrage Association and the foreign corresponding secretary for the American Woman's Suffrage Association, an office Mrs. Howe often held in many organizations because of her multi-lingual abilities. She was president of the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association (1870-78, 1891-1893), and president of the New England Woman Suffrage Association (1868-77, 1893-1910). Her other activities included a biography of Margaret Fuller written in 1883 and the direction of the woman's department of the New Orleans Cotton Exposition in 1884.97

In the remaining decade of active work Mrs. Howe had left to her, she continued not only her hectic pace in women's organizations, including president of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs, and her lecture tours, but she also became very interested in various and diverse nationalist movements such as the American Friends of Russian

97Woman's Journal 1870-1910; Reminiscences, Julia Ward Howe, passim.
Freedom and the United Friends of Armenia. In part this interest came from Mrs. Howe's attempts to once again follow her husband, for he had often worked for such groups. But it also reflected her growing interest in European affairs and a curious change of emphasis.98

In the 1870's Mrs. Howe had stressed peace but now, at the turn of the century, she believed that "there is one word even more holy than peace, namely, justice."99 "We must feel that all are brothers," she announced in a speech before the United Friends of Armenia in 1898, "and that none can be wronged, even at the ends of the world, without our being wronged."100 Americans must not merely say that they are sorry when injustices are committed nor must civilization stand impotent before barbarism, not when the friends of humanity have the power to end wrong doing. Rather, "righteous people should rally around a new sentence: 'right is might, and shall prevail.'"101

Of course, Mrs. Howe never relished the thought of war and welcomed every step that brought mankind closer to peace. Yet life must sometimes be risked "when we take our stand in defense of what we believe in." She found herself utterly unable to understand those who called themselves "anti-imperialists." She believed the American action in the Philippines to have been a "military necessity" and to have

98 Woman's Journal 1870-1910.
99 Richards, II, 326-327.
brought to the Philippine Islands all the privileges of democracy. Mrs. Howe was such a great admirer of Teddy Roosevelt, who was godfather to one of her grandchildren, her daughters report, that she would never allow any adverse criticism of him in her presence. After all, "Who as he Acceptably Can represent the Nation?" Mrs. Howe was in the words of her daughter "an imperialist, an expansionist, and a Republican dyed in the wool." Mrs. Howe's "new militancy" was perhaps best represented in the following quotation. Socrates, she said, was "wrong to stay and suffer by unjust laws and popular superstition. A first-class American would have got away and would have fought those people to the bitter death."

But although Mrs. Howe's methods for world brotherhood might change, her human values never changed. She often quoted Margaret Fuller's phrase "I accept the universe" because she was always conscious of a universal citizenship that made the affairs of every oppressed people her affairs. A Boston judge, the Honorable W. D. Foulke, and Mrs. Howe once spoke together before a Friends of Russian Freedom meeting. They both gave their speeches in English, which met the crowds approval, but the speeches given afterwards in Russian were greeted with wild enthusiasm. Later, the judge began to worry that

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103Richards, II, 305-306.


105Richards, II, 354-355.

106Elliott, The Eleventh Hour in the Life of Julia Ward Howe, pp. 41-42.
they had been fooled into unconsciously aiding with their presence the Russian anarchists. When he confronted Mrs. Howe with this information, she replied quietly, "We can afford to make very great fools of ourselves in such a cause as that of Russian freedom." 107

Mrs. Howe changed her views of peace and justice as society changed them but she did not change all her values. A reformer in her own right, the wife of a reformer, and friend to countless crusaders, she did not understand how Americans of the 1890's could forget the great reforms of the past in their pursuit of the materialistic pleasures of the Gilded Age. In a published lecture, Modern Society, Mrs. Howe bemoaned the fact that money had grown so omnipotent in the last twenty years that it had swept over and obliterated most of the old landmarks. Personal, spiritual virtues were no longer rewarded, for all human resources, material and intellectual, had been reduced to the level of display. 108

Surely Americans, the children of the Puritans, were not made for such a "career of fuss and feathers" that limited all possibilities for spiritual growth, Mrs. Howe wrote in the introduction of the book The Value of Simplicity. (Ironically, this book dedicated to the "value of simplicity" was bound in sea-green suede with its title stamped in forest green leather and gold. The inside cover was moire of ever-changing design and each page is covered with a floral print.) America had lost its simple life style and now possessed a spirit of


excess that threatened the country itself. For "if our Republic is to continue, we who form it must be republican in our judgment and feelings." America was no longer republican in its taste but disgustedly panted after not only wealth but the power that it conferred. Mrs. Howe wondered if the "finger of fate" was not "receding on the dial," taking America back to the reign of savage violence and barbaric splendor.  

Mrs. Howe had become the prophet of American virtue and in her last years people revered her as they revered the flag. She was a living symbol of a past and purer America, the America of Emerson, Sumner, Garrison, Longfellow, Booth, and Theodore Parker. She had known them all: dreamers, teachers, reformers, and misfits. And somehow she seemed to carry lightly on her small shoulders the weight of all their virtue. She could not enter a public meeting in Boston without the people standing on their feet and singing the "Battle Hymn."  

In her youth she had longed for the glorious, and she had filled her middle years with activity: writing, meetings, lectures. She now received veneration from the public, but it was not for her achievements as a scholar or leader but for her "beautiful and lofty


111 Elizabeth Stanton, Susan Anthony, and Matilda Gage, History of Woman Suffrage, VI (New York: Charles Mann, 1887), 278.  

character" which represented to thousands of Americans the "great old traditions of the Republic.113

Even to her family she seemed in those last years to be like a saint "whose faults had all been burned away by the fires of life, leaving only the ethereal spirit behind."114 Fortunately, Mrs. Howe had a strong sense of humor that protected her from believing all she heard regarding her wonderful character. "Why, bless you," she wrote on her eighty-ninth birthday in 1908, "I ain't nothing, nor nobody, nor much-- /If you look in your directory you'll find a thousand such . . . Yes, I've had a lot of birthdays, and /I'm growing very old; /That's why they make so much of me, /If once the truth was told."115 Mrs. Howe was, and remained, a human being, not a saint.

Mrs. Howe wrote that if she had to sum herself up in one term, she would call herself a student.116 In her youth she studied Goethe and in her middle age she read German philosophers: Kant, Fichte, Hegel. But it was Kant that she acknowledged as her master and in the 1860's, when she was in her forties, her diary was filled with Kant's philosophy. When she was fifty she learned Greek (she already knew Latin, German, Italian, and French) and read Aristotle, Plato, and her New Testament in Greek to the last.117

114Hall, Memories Grave and Gay, p. 332.
116Howe, Reminiscences, p. 205.
117Elliott, The Eleventh Hour in the Life of Julia Ward Howe, pp. 54-58.
But while many of Mrs. Howe's hours were filled with study, the title of student does not seem adequate. She did not maintain the detached view of life of a scholar, but threw herself into it. She was the "jockey, starved, sweated to weight" who for love, not for money, rode wagers with Fate.\textsuperscript{118} She had staked her life on the red and she had won. After all, she had a winning combination of traits that even her contemporaries could see: intellectual ability, fervid patriotism, deep religiousness, and a strong sense of justice.\textsuperscript{119} "It is not too much to say of Mrs. Howe," declared \textit{Outlook} magazine at her death, "that she was the most distinguished woman in America."\textsuperscript{120}

If Mrs. Howe could be summed up in one term it would not be student, but striver for the glorious. The petted darling of a prosperous, New York household, she studied to become an intellectual, superior woman. Overshadowed by her famous reformer husband in critical Bostonian society, she did not cease her efforts at self improvement until people came on pilgrimage to Boston to see her, as they might to a historic monument.\textsuperscript{121} But what made her great was her ability to extend her glorious vision to others. Mrs. Howe saw the Civil War as a struggle between good and evil; people now had a song to sing that forever proclaimed victory for the just. Frustrated by women's position in society, she broke the boundaries, allowing other women

\textsuperscript{118} Howe, \textit{Passion Flowers}, pp. 128-131.


\textsuperscript{120} "Two American Poets," \textit{Outlook}, Vol. 96 (October 29, 1910), pp. 486-487.

to walk through. Mrs. Howe's vision was not always perfect; she made many mistakes, but she always strove for glorious perfection. The Nation said, in what was meant to be a complement, that Julia Ward Howe was never an "old woman" but a "grand old man" in the good fight for humanity. 122

Her last years were still active but the pace had slackened. In 1900 she published Reminiscences. The critique in Book Buyer called it an informal review of a life that has touched the whole life of its times at several vital points. 123 In 1908 she became the first woman elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters; she had no other female companion to share that honor until 1930. In 1910 she died of pneumonia at the age of ninety-one.


Woman, as defined by Mrs. Howe, was a human being who, although different from man, was nonetheless his equal. The equal participation by women in a common humanity with men entitled them to a role in society which provided women with the same rights and freedoms as men. This definition appears redundant to twentieth century minds; if women are human beings, then they are entitled to human rights. But, the obvious implications in this argument were not believed in the nineteenth century; therefore, it was a radical move for Mrs. Howe to accept this rationale.

The "radicalism" of her outlook on women is best understood when compared to the traditional view of woman as held by the famous historian, Francis Parkman. In an article that appeared in the October 1879 edition of *North American Review* on the "woman question," Parkman created a controversy that aroused such prominent people in the woman's movement as Julia Ward Howe, Thomas Higginson, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Wendell Phillips—people who obviously would not bother to answer an article considered innocuous and harmless.

Parkman believed Nature to have decreed that men and women occupy different roles in society and to have given them correspondingly different characteristics. In man's bosom remained a "certain remnant of primitive ferocity" which prepared him for conflict, adventure, and hardship. Not only a mighty warrior, man was also a rational creature,
subject to reason. He could clear the forest, rule kingdoms, and write philosophy.

But woman was rounder, softer, and more delicate, made not for "rude conflict" but for serenity. If thus disqualified from entering a man's world, however, woman nevertheless possessed power, for she created and maintained the standard of national morality. But, Parkman added, woman elevates morality in the intimacy of home, and for several reasons. First, woman's private virtues could not be transported into the political arena without becoming tarnished. Then too, a woman's preoccupation with child rearing left no time for the outside world. The third and last reason hit upon an essential part of woman's make-up: females had different moral susceptibilities than men and were more emotional, impulsive, and excitable. Women could not safely be allowed the franchise because they were not subject to reason.

Women, Parkman felt, are not "smaller and weaker men" but entirely different beings in their emotional, moral, and intellectual life. Yet these differences between men and women appeared to be complementary. Man, the warrior, needed woman, the peace-lover; and the emotional woman needed rational man. One should never expect to enter the other's sphere. It was against nature for men to be as moral as women or women to be as


competitive as men.\(^4\)

Representing the conservative, anti-feminist viewpoint, Parkman thus found woman to be not the same as man but to have a distinct role to play in society. At first glance this definition differs little from that of Julia Ward Howe, who believed that woman was the equal of man although the female differed from the male. But the similarity between Howe and Parkman vanishes as one penetrates the hidden outlook that underlies their definitions.

Mrs. Howe agreed that women were distinctive. A speech before the Woman's Ministerial Conference listed the special gifts given to women: the "powers of patience and detail, and still more, a quicker sympathy, and a simple, childlike faith in redemptive power of religious experience."\(^5\) "Creative power," another unique talent of women, entered the list in a speech at Paris. By virtue of their valuable abilities, women have strength that is equal to, although different from, men's power.\(^6\)

Sex roles confine each human being to certain spheres. Yet within each social type there existed for Mrs. Howe freedom for each person to develop an individuality. Man's freedom in his sexual sphere allowed him to choose from a broad spectrum the lifestyle that suited his talents. Woman was not at liberty to develop her personality; instead, she was confined to the single role of domestic female.


According to Mrs. Howe, woman was capable of achieving her personal identity within her sexual role because she shared with man an equal capacity for achievement. Or, as succinctly put in a suffrage meeting, "Intelligence has no sex, no, gentlemen, nor folly either!" Intellectual capability of women was as variant as that of men; furthermore, nature's gifts were "equally diffused in both sexes."  

Mrs. Howe's definition stated that women were equal, although different from men, but in one area, morality, women were superior to men. True, men and women were made "of the same clay and in the same image," but women acquired moral superiority "from the office of motherhood, and from the reverence for its church, which is the home." The responsibilities of maternity, thought by Mrs. Howe to be more important than any other job in society, became a mold that created ethically superior women. The moral supremacy of women was a point beyond debate for Mrs. Howe. The belief that women were inferior to men was belied by the fact that even the "roughest, most vicious and most careless men" expect from women an ethical achievement beyond masculine reach because moral superiority is attained by women through motherhood.  

That moral achievements of women were not to remain on the shelf


10Florence Howe Hall, Julia Ward Howe and the Woman Suffrage Movement (Boston: Dana Estes & Co., 1913), pp. 95-96.

11Hall, pp. 93-95.
at home disagreed sharply with Parkman's views that women could only efficiently practice their virtues far from the public stage. The "natural guardians of social morals" are women, Mrs. Howe said in a speech before the Association of the Advancement of Women. Motherhood, with its unsurpassed training in ethics, gives the "moral initiative" to each woman. This initiative to maintain the standards of society can only be efficiently used by women who are free to guard morality wherever they desire. Women should never, it was warned in the Woman's Journal, be perceived as merely the agency by which men are born; women are not the means but the end, not an agency but half of humanity.

Women's nature was different from men's, and the special obligations of maternity gave women a superiority in ethics that was not reached by men. Yet women should be viewed by men not as a stereotype, either as the divine mother or an emotional incompetent, but as individuals. Women should be allowed as much individual freedom to develop within their sphere as men were given in the masculine world. During the first two-thirds of her life Mrs. Howe believed that women could attain freedom to develop only by striving for the masculine ideal. The discovery by Mrs. Howe that women were the equals of men, free to develop their personalities in any direction as women and free to share with men rights and responsibilities, was such a relief to her that she said it was as if she had added a new continent to the map of the

12 Hall, pp. 93-114.
Mrs. Howe always emphasized that the new freedom women had gained came not only with new rights but new responsibilities. Women were to grasp the opportunity of becoming individuals within the female sphere, and to use their natural gifts for "noble and worthy objects, of building our hope, faith, and love into the social fabric of present and future." By denying women their freedom and thereby depriving themselves of women's aid and comfort, men had mismanaged the world dreadfully. Yet women alone were no more capable than men of producing a better world. If equal freedom was granted to women, not to be men, but to be ideal women, then men and women could work together to produce a free world. "Free women only can bear free men," wrote Mrs. Howe. "Free men and free women only can found a free and stable state."16

Answering why woman, man's equal, occupied a secondary position in society, Mrs. Howe acknowledged in a speech before the American Woman Suffrage Association the possibility that social subjection was the natural result of her "instinct of secondariness." However, according to Mrs. Howe, woman's belief in her inferiority does not begin in childhood. A girl knows that a boy may have more physical strength, but she may have greater intellectual power. She can offer her sympathy more often for his floggings than he can scorn her failures.


Not only is a girl the equal of a boy, but she was made more efficiently, as she needs less "machinery" than he to arrive at the same ethical and mental results. Nature may have given man, Mrs. Howe said, a "mental hammer" but it gave woman a "mental needle" with which she has embroidered the rainbow before he has forged the thunder.\textsuperscript{17}

"Mental hammers" and "mental needles" are inherently equal intellectual capacities. Men and women acquire unequal positions in society because they receive an unfair portioning of freedom. Boys grow up with freedom as their birthright, a freedom that offers to them the hope of being able to fulfill any ambition, develop any talent, or follow any career. Assured of the possibility of success, boys strive for goals that develop their abilities and provide them with power in their manhood. But girls are denied their freedom and given in its place only the "dispiriting aspect of a secondary and derivative existence, with only so much room allowed them as may not cramp the full sweep of the other sex." Girls never have the hope that only freedom can provide to encourage them to strive for self mastery. They are told to limit themselves to the small circle of the family and develop only their talents that will be useful in the home. "We are only women," is the line that passes from mother to daughter. "It does not matter that we are deprived of freedom; we must adjust ourselves to a secondary role."\textsuperscript{18}

However, one thing that Mrs. Howe never became was "only a woman." Before a woman's suffrage meeting in 1871 she urged that both

\textsuperscript{17}Elizabeth Stanton, Susan Anthony, and Matilda Gage, \textit{History of Woman Suffrage} II (New York: Charles Mann, 1887), p. 793.

\textsuperscript{18}Julia Ward Howe (ed.), \textit{Sex and Education: A Reply to Dr. E. H. Clarke's "Sex in Education"} (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874), p. 28.
girls and boys be given an equal opportunity for success in life. Men had been unjust to women, denying them liberty and teaching them to revolve around men, but children must be trained equally, as they are equal before God.  

Girls were not given an adequate education, much less an equal one, and they entered adulthood believing that they, as women, were created by nature to occupy a secondary position in society. Other handicaps were also placed on adult women. The average man, Mrs. Howe said in the Woman's Journal, expects to rule the average woman with an "iron gauntlet," striking her with blows when and where he pleases. "Women are to be what we want them to be," men cry; "Although she is weak from childbearing, we shall make her weaker with our laws and institutions." She is the "instrument of our pleasures, the condition of our comfort, the slave of our will." Blind and passive obedience shall be a virtue in woman, and any attempts by her to raise herself to a "truly human level shall be offense against order, and treason to Nature."  

Although marriage was an institution beneficial for the State, Mrs. Howe noted, nothing was done by the State to render the contract equal as required by justice. Instead, the "barbaric element, the male's superior physical force," was allowed to be oppressive under the name of protection. A husband received legal right to all his wife's financial resources and to their children, who were born at the cost of her  

great suffering. Man not only created biased laws and maintained unjust institutions; he also prevented his wife from receiving useful knowledge, encouraging in her only the accomplishments that gave him happiness: dressing, dancing, and "ready acquiescence in his sovereign pleasure."21

Deprived of freedom in their girlhood, women became second-class citizens by training and self-realization before ever reaching adulthood. As adults, they are oppressed by customs, institutions, and laws which said her only career was marriage, a career which was by current definition unequal. Male dominion over women was the "most subtle, widespread, and unconscious tyranny in the world."22 Yet the struggle should not be a battle between male and female, Mrs. Howe held, but by the "gospel of fairness and justice against the intrenched might of selfish passion, inertia, and prejudice."23 They should not fight each other, for there existed between the sexes a "mystical harmony." Cooperating with one another, they achieved far more than was ever possible when they worked as separate units. To achieve this productive cooperation each sex must be willing to care unselfishly for the other more than for itself. "Mystical harmony" demands not only justice but love.24

Society was torn into warring factions: male and female, the tyrant and the suppressed, the just and the unjust. Abilities and

21 Stanton, II, 793-795.


23 Julia Ward Howe, Modern Society: Changes in American Society (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1881), p. 84.

talents were lost or wasted in this unnatural conflict. Progress will come to mankind and harmony will exist between the sexes, Mrs. Howe wrote, when women are no longer demoralized. Society must take women from their bondage and out of a despotism that has degraded and deformed them by denying them equal opportunities for advancement and equal rights to practice. 25 If men would remove these arbitrary and artificial barriers and give women their freedom, women will be able to achieve their own equality and reach it reasonably, guided by their own "native love of proportion." 26

Freedom was the necessary ingredient for peace between men and women. Human beings, male and female, grow in the same climate and in the same soil. 27 Both require the same care, have the same needs, desire the same things. Society can only benefit by their cooperation, but "only equal freedom and equal action will keep the two side by side ... linked with one obligation, drawn by one attraction, following one immortal destiny." 28 Nor should men fear that women would be unable to handle their new found freedom or try to suppress their former masters; no, women would enjoy and use their power quite as well as men and probably with a delicacy and generosity lacking in men. 29


29Julia Ward Howe, "The Leap Year Ball," Woman's Journal, Vol. 8 (March 11, 1876), p. 84.
freedom to develop their talents and to exercise their rights would be a just act that would benefit women but it would also benefit humanity. If women were given an equal role in society, then they could join all good men in promoting justice and goodness throughout the land. The forces of good within human society have the power, Mrs. Howe believed, to transform it for "character attracts, character rules," but "it cannot rule unless men and women have it equally, unless both may rise to their own height of aspiration and development."  

Woman, as defined by Mrs. Howe, was a human being who, although admittedly different from man, was nonetheless his equal. Woman had been deprived of her freedom as a child and oppressed as an adult. If woman, who was capable of as much individual variation and accomplishment as man, were granted her full citizenship, she could join in true cooperation with man to produce the better society. But man was not likely to yield to woman's just demands, and even worse, many women realized neither their oppressed state nor the great heights that they could reach if granted their freedom.

To prove her definition Mrs. Howe must change woman's role within contemporary society in such a way that woman's position would gradually evolve to its proper sphere. Woman's role was redefined by Mrs. Howe in four different areas: education, politics, reform movements, and the home. The purpose of suggesting reforms in these areas was to bring woman up to the realization of her full potential. Not all women would be interested in changing in all four areas but many would find useful her suggestions in at least one area. As they enjoyed success in one

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30 Hall, p. 119.
such area, their feeling of individual self-worth would be increased. They might even join with other women to form associations to achieve other goals and learn how powerful even a woman could be when she joined with other women. Once realizing her own individual value and the power she could achieve through joint cooperation with others, woman could deal with the two "barbarous instincts" that kept her subordinate: the instinct of male domination and female compliance. When women could demand their rights and when men could yield to the justness of their demands, then and then only would the kingdom on earth be at peace.

The role of women within society must first be redefined in the field of education. At the Baltimore Woman's Suffrage Convention in 1906 Mrs. Howe said that it was "inferior education and restricted activity that made women the inferiors of men, as naturally as training, education, and free agency make civilized men the superior of the savage." "Ignorance," she said in another speech, "is the first condition of enslavement, and ignorant women will always be the tools of the men who are the enemies of freedom." Women were made into inferior citizens through the denial of an adequate training. This rendered them hopelessly incapable of ever achieving goals outside of women's traditional role. Therefore, if women were to become the peers of men in the community, they must receive an equal education. All other goals must be subordinate to education, for without education women would not be prepared to make the change from slavery to freedom.

32 Richards, II, 343.
33 Hall, p. 135.
Mrs. Howe, an accomplished linguist in five languages, a student of philosophy, a poet and dramatist, never doubted that all women were capable of serious study. Women's minds were not the same as men's, but they were their equivalent. Men study with a "strong and heavy pull;" women study with "more play and elasticity." Each uses a different technique to learn the subject material, but a different technique does not mean a difference in intellectual competence. Thus the basic thesis of Mrs. Howe that men and women are equal, although different, was reaffirmed in her educational theories.

Education for women must be granted as a guarantee of freedom and it must be the same education given to men. Assurance of freedom for the female sex could be dated by Mrs. Howe "from the hour the first university received women graduates on the same terms as pupils of the opposite sex." Women should receive a liberal education and not one that only emphasizes their future role as wives and mothers. An adequate education should enable women to serve the community as equal and useful members, with dignity, regardless of whether or not they marry.

Mrs. Howe's definition of woman required a new perspective on woman's role in society, a process she began by creating changes within the educational system. Proposals for innovations within the schools were not the only contribution made by Mrs. Howe; she actively campaigned for equal education for women. The key that opened the door of freedom

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34 Hall, p. 85.
36 Howe, Modern Society, p. 84.
37 Hall, pp. 167-169.
to women was education; therefore, a denial of equal educational opportunity for women meant that women would languish in oppression.

Mrs. Howe's passionate commitment to equalize education for women can be seen in her quarrels with those who advocated liberal education for men alone. A meeting of the American Social Sciences Association in May, 1873 debated the topic of coeducation. All the members voted for equal education for both sexes except President Eliot of Harvard. Julia Ward Howe told the president that if she were young enough to go to Harvard she would refuse for fear that she would learn there from him to despise her sisters, human beings who were equal to man before the eyes of God. In *Religious Monthly* her outburst was referred to as the "excited and petulant address of Mrs. Howe." She replied that it was an honest and earnest protest from someone who had been deprived, and suggested that it be measured against the obligation that society owes to all women from whom it has denied an equal education.

Mrs. Howe regretted her personal attack against President Eliot all her life; nonetheless, she still condemned all who suggested that women should not receive the same education as men. But the battle was more subtle than merely declaring whether or not women should be allowed to attend schools in the same manner as men. Not only did men declare that women should not receive an equal education; they also said that females could not benefit from intellectual training designed for the masculine mind. Two gentlemen who believed that women could not be

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educated as men were Dr. E. H. Clark and Mr. John Maudsley. Sex and Education, a book edited by Mrs. Howe, attacked the book of Dr. Clark, Sex in Education; several articles written by Mrs. Howe denounced the views of Mr. Maudsley.

The views of these men so irritated Mrs. Howe that she appeared to be crusading. In the opinion of Dr. Clark women's minds could not be developed without greatly endangering their physical well-being and female functions. American women had "undeveloped busts, fragile figures, and uncertain health" because they had received an education that was suited only for the male mind and the male body. A school program designed for men was not the appropriate program for women because it ignored the demands made upon women by their "periodical function."

Neglect to care for their menstruation was the chief source of disease among women, but women at educational institutions for men were forced to ignore unnaturally the demands of their own body in order to develop their minds. The obvious result at coeducational schools, Dr. Clark concluded, was that women would lose their physical strength and men their mental ability as the standards of learning are lowered in order to accommodate both sexes at the same institution. The result of coeducation would be physical and sexual chaos. 40 Mr. Maudsley, whom Mrs. Howe called, "flippant, frivolous, and unfounded," was quoted by Mrs. Howe as stating that not only diseased women but women without the instinct or desire or capacity to nurse their babies were the result of higher education. 41


According to Mrs. Howe, Dr. Clark's and Mr. Maudsley's "positive and public manner" in referring to the "periodical function" was an underhanded attack on female equality designed to convince and to intimidate unthinking men and women. To the uninstructed their statements appeared to be based on fact; surely, a physical function as distinctive as menstruation in women implied an inherently different and unequal mental capacity. The disagreement of Mrs. Howe was pronounced. These gentlemen, she wrote in an article for Woman's Journal in 1874, are mistaken in attributing mental weakness in women to menstruation. Women have a distinctive physical function but it does not affect their minds adversely. Indeed, intelligent women find this time of the month beneficial for thought, not a drain upon their strength. Men, said Mrs. Howe, are not the adequate judges of women's sexual differences and abilities. Women are different from men, but men must not in all fairness therefore judge women unequal.

In her long public career, only one personal attack by Mrs. Howe was recorded; it was against a man who restricted his college, Harvard, to men. She was so indignant that a doctor would theorize that a woman's body could be only healthily maintained if her mind remained underdeveloped, that she edited a book as a rebuttal. And Maudsley, the Englishman, who wrote essays declaring that women lose their maternal instincts when they are given a higher education, was simply "Maudlin." These arguments were to Mrs. Howe as the red cloth to the bull; she must


"charge" because they, with their sharp swords, were not only wounding her definition of women as equal, but also murdering all possible chances of women ever achieving success within society as equal partners of men by denying females the opportunity of an equivalent, liberal education.

The importance of equal education notwithstanding, Mrs. Howe rated another objective as the "most important feature of a great movement for the advancement of women, the uplift of mankind." This most important goal was suffrage for women. Gripped for life with the necessity of granting women the vote, Mrs. Howe repeated this toast on her seventieth birthday: "The ballot, the most perfect weapon yet devised of moral and intellectual power. We do not wish to take it from the hands of any man; we would put it into the hands of every woman."

After she became an abolitionist, Mrs. Howe perceived the ballot as the most important and perfect weapon of the woman's movement. In an article for Outlook magazine she remembered that she had once laughed at woman's suffrage and asked why women should need this "very superfluous function;" however, while she was laughing at suffrage for women she was working to free the slave and provide him with enfranchisement, the guarantee of citizenship. The vote, she realized, was a vital condition of freedom for the American citizen. The Negro male lacked many of the necessary prerequisites for intelligent voting and citizenship; he had not received an education to teach him the values and responsibilities

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of the American civilization. But he would never receive his equal rights, much less an equal education, unless given the right to vote. Suffrage, Mrs. Howe clearly saw, was the first and most important key to equality. Indeed, the ballot was such a significant device in democracy that she no longer thought that it should be denied to the "august company of mothers" when it was granted to the black man whom she believed to be "illiterate and of rather low morality."  

Mrs. Howe called suffrage the "perfect weapon;" nonetheless, she did not believe it would achieve perfect results. Women were, after all, human, and their appearance on the political stage would mean the disappearance of only some, not all, evil from the world. The ballot was a tool of political expression devised for an imperfect world; its "perfection" came from the fact that it allowed the nearest approximation to justice to be reached in a flawed world. Women exercising their vote would not possess the power to change completely the world, but they could certainly use their enfranchisement as wisely as men used their ballot.

Suffrage was the means by which women obtained their freedom, but once it was granted to women it would benefit not only women but also society. Society should grant the suffrage to women, Mrs. Howe said before the National American Woman Suffrage Association meeting of 1890, not only because justice demands it but because "mankind needs the 'touch

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of sentiment to fulfill the law." The feminine mind, she declared in 1902, complements the masculine mind; therefore, society could only be made whole if both sexes expressed themselves freely, each bringing to the community their unique gifts, insights, and talents.

The particular advantages of woman suffrage for society were numerous. If women voted, laws would quickly improve because women would be able to influence directly the legislators. For fifty-five years in Massachusetts Mrs. Howe noted, mothers had worked to become equal legal guardians of their minor children, but when women received the vote in Colorado the legislators gave mothers guardianship of their children in the next session. Female enfranchisement would guarantee that all public affairs would be more concerned with humanitarian reform; of course, in order to pass these just laws and humane reforms political candidates would improve with equal suffrage because women, Mrs. Howe was positive, would deprive of public office those who were "drunkards, notorious libertines, gamblers, and men in the liquor business." John Kingman of the Wyoming Supreme Court (Wyoming had granted its women equal suffrage) was quoted by Mrs. Howe as saying that the presence of a few ladies at a political caucus was worth a squad of police. Indeed, the entire electoral process became orderly when it included women; they would insure honest government and election campaigns because most political frauds have been committed by men.

49 Stanton, IV, 170.
50 Stanton, V, 154-156.
When society granted equal suffrage to women, both society and women benefited: as women exercised the rights of their citizenship the quality of the community and of the women improved. Withholding of suffrage from women meant that they would remain an undeveloped potential within society. Without the stimulus of obligations beyond the home, Mrs. Howe wrote in 1890, women will never become the equals of men because the duties of wifehood and motherhood, although sacred, are also confining and self-limiting. If women have responsibilities only in the home their interests will become narrow and selfish, their talents will remain unpolished and undeveloped. Men's abilities increase because they are inspired and stimulated by the demands of the world-stage; women will reach the same level of development only when females receive the same challenge and the same duties. Women are now superficial because they have superficial responsibilities; their limited cry is, "Let us dress and dance, for tomorrow we marry or grow old unmarried," but if they were given equal obligations their motto would change to "let us study and attain, for tomorrow we vote."\(^{52}\)

As women were educated by their duties of citizenship, they would become able to take over responsible positions, such as public office, denied to them because they were not electors. Women, married or single, form part of the state and have an equal obligation in the state.\(^{53}\) The law of duty demands that human beings, male and female, fulfill their

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\(^{53}\) Stanton, II, 817.
duties; however, they must also be granted their rights. Women's duties, the "awful and inevitable responsibilities of maternity," are as important as any obligations entrusted to men. Women are men's equal because they have been given equal obligations; therefore, women must be granted equal rights.

Woman have been denied their equal rights, some men argued, because women do not have the same amount of civic responsibility. Women are not required to serve in the military. The protection provided by the military, Mrs. Howe fervently replied, could never compare to the protection given by mothers to their helpless babes. A generation may pass without men being called to arms, but women of every generation endanger their lives by giving birth to children and devoting their time to the care and training of future citizens. To deny the importance of women's duties was to deny society's very foundation. Women determined the quantity and the quality of society and of future societies to come. If the standards of morality and justice are to be extended, then, women must share with men the privileges of their rights as they share the responsibilities of their duties.

Mrs. Howe based her work for equal suffrage on the notion of progress. Her "Creed of Suffrage" written for the Woman's Journal begins with Mrs. Howe's avowal of belief in human progress, transmitted by education and resulting in self-government. The true, liberal church teaches self-government to its members. Most church members are women,

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54 Hall, pp. 218-221.
55 Richards, I, 359-360.
56 Richards, I, 371.
Mrs. Howe observed; therefore, most women are better prepared for self-government than most men. The result of granting suffrage to women, a part of the population that was church-attending and self-controlled, would be that liberal institutions would replace absolute rule; despotic government would not be able to exist in a country where individuals rule themselves.  

"We are in the van of the army of progress," she declared before the New England Suffrage Festival. Free, well-trained women would help win the battle against human misery, backwardness, and barbarism. Women were not free from the shackles of custom and prejudice to seek their own enjoyment; they have been set free in order that they could enlist in the army of progress, the militia of reform.

The greatest boon given to women was not the chance to improve their intellect but the opportunity to change their position in society from a passive to an active role, a role filled with opportunities for service to mankind. Women were no longer doomed to sit as "mere spectators" in society; rather, armed with their moral instincts and trained for ethical warfare, they may join the "eternal conquest of right."  

To engage in this crusade against evil, women must do more than share with men their educational privileges and rights; they must regard their womanhood, not as a weakness or as a negative condition from which

59 Hall, p. 174.
60 Stanton, IV, 170.
something has been withheld, but as a power and a sacred gift. Women were not lesser men but human beings with unique gifts which had been given to them for the uplift of all humanity; therefore, women have the obligation of sharing their gifts in the great work of reform. "Are your dreams all of muslin and artificial flowers?" wrote Mrs. Howe to all her "dear daughters" in the Woman's Journal of 1872; then, look further within, for surely some of your dreams include visions of service and honor. This is your true dream. "There is a great work of redemption set for human culture and conscience to accomplish. Half of this work belongs to womankind."62

The duties of women were not limited to the home but extended to the human race; women's job was not house work but the cleansing of the world from evil. The great task of women demands from them a "life of corresponding nobleness;" never must they be content with their "ignorance, folly, and frivolity."63

Women brought unique gifts to reform; first and most important, "women will supply that inexhaustible element of hopefulness, without which reforms are a mere working back and forth of machinery." Women's ability to hope far surpassed men's, according to Mrs. Howe, and it would aid, indispensible, the cause of moral reform.64

An important battle in the crusade against evil was the fight


63Hall, pp. 98-99.

64Richards, II, 377.
against materialism, a deadly problem to which Mrs. Howe believed Americans were particularly susceptible. The love of money is the root of all evil in America, she wrote; however, the "high heart of womanhood, were it once freed and enlightened, would redeem the sex and humanity from the barren love of splendor and the love of money." Men bedecked their wives and families with jewels and fine clothes to display their male wealth and supremacy; but women, if the chains were taken off their hands and the blinds from their eyes, possessed within their nature the power to redeem America from the idolatry of materialism.  

Men, if left to themselves, would scorn the possibility of re-forming the human race and devote themselves to the gathering of gold and, most tragic, warring with other men. Women provide the hope for the redemption of humanity, they extend men's grasp beyond mere materialism, and they have the power to bring peace on earth. Before a New England Woman Suffrage Association, Mrs. Howe moaned that women's voices were confined to the "nursery song, the kitchen scolding or the curtain lectures;" but, if women were freed, then they would "rock the world to peace with [their] mother music." Mrs. Howe had desired peace for a long time; she organized practically a one-woman crusade for peace, based on an appeal to mothers to join hands for peace so that all mothers' children would be safe from the horrors of war. The office of motherhood made women the moral superiors of men; mothers could save the world from the powers of male destruction.

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In the glorious vision of Mrs. Howe, educated women, with their minds prepared to use their rights wisely, would ransom society with the precious gifts that nature had given to females alone. It was a grand vision: free women marching against evil. The problem was to reconcile the vision with the demands that motherhood and wifehood placed on most women of the late nineteenth century.

Members of the woman's movement should never encourage women to neglect the home; rather, a reconciliation should be made between the "priestess and the temple, the woman and her home." All the efforts of Mrs. Howe to raise women to their rightful position in society in education and equal suffrage had been made to aid women to achieve the highest perfection within their own homes.

Do college graduates, asked Mrs. Howe, walk less gracefully to the wedding altar because of the intellectual wealth they carry? Men might believe that "knowledge and nature-wisdom" are enemies; women know differently and shall unite the two in their person, being filled with intellectual knowledge and the tender instincts of motherhood. The distinctive gifts of womanhood would not be lost when females were educated; as education was a refining process, the home of well-instructed women would be happier and healthier. The last thing to fear, in Mrs. Howe's opinion, was that "women will ever incline to forsake the time-honored institution of matrimony" because the "companionship of men and women has too deep a sanction in nature to lose anything of its value


68Hall, pp. 184-186.
in the light of the larger education."\textsuperscript{69} Education would aid women to fulfill the destiny that nature has given them.

One of the reasons woman suffrage was promoted by Mrs. Howe was to aid in the building, not the tearing down, of the home. By sharing in the political life of their community, attending political rallies together, campaigning for their candidates and voting together, both partners would find their relationship enriched by their common interests and shared activities. The problem of split party loyalties within the family was not mentioned by Mrs. Howe; she clearly believed that the family that votes together, stays together.\textsuperscript{70}

Education and suffrage were aids, in the eyes of Mrs. Howe, in the home; another aid needed by women to create a perfect home was the skill to keep house. Remembering the traumatic first years of her own marriage when she had not had the least idea of how to cook or manage a household, she advised every young girl to learn how to make a home. Housewives should intelligently manage their chores, not for mere household efficiency, but so they would have time for intellectual pursuits, for "art and literature of some sort." Household chores were never disparaged or neglected by Mrs. Howe because she thought they could be done wisely, efficiently, and quickly, leaving time to develop the mind.\textsuperscript{71}

"How shall the woman keep up her dignity of mind, her individuality of character, while this heavy business of the nursery is

\textsuperscript{69}Hall, pp. 162-167.


\textsuperscript{71}Howe, \textit{Reminiscences}, pp. 216-217.
going on?" asked Mrs. Howe in the Woman's Journal in 1871. Study was recommended to all middle class women. Those women who spent their leisure time dancing or in fashionable visiting would not find themselves as restored to mental and spiritual health as their wiser sisters who improved their minds through reading and study. Women needed a retreat from their rounds as wife and mother because, Mrs. Howe wrote, the more wives' functions were limited to the birth and material care of their offsprings, the more the resemblance is increased between that of women and the lower mammals.72 The home, which should be women's crown jewel, may, in reality, be a millstone around their neck. Women are "half of humanity" and half of humanity should never be limited to animal duties. A mother must be able to increase her children's discernment of spiritual lessons, to encourage their mental growth; yet, the physical tasks of women in the home are allowed to blunt their spiritual and mental powers. It is insincere and false, she wrote in 1882, to say that the "function of maternity should be the paramount theme of woman's thought and the supreme end of their lives."73

The holy work of the home, if it was not expanded through the use of women's spiritual and mental powers, may become degrading. Even women who are devoted to committing their time to their moral and intellectual development may miss the better life by not only the kind but also by the very amount of work females are forced to do at home. Both sexes have an equal need of marriage; however, Mrs. Howe ironically


noted in a speech before the American Woman Suffrage Association, women have an unequal burden, in fact, a "five fold force" burden.\footnote{Stanton, II, 793.}

Overburdened with degrading work, women were unable to fulfill the grand vision that Mrs. Howe depicted of them serving as mothers to all mankind, bringing them progress, peace, and prosperity. The solution, she said, is the realization that although the family is a unit, it is a "unit composed of two equal parts which, like the equal sides of an arch, stand ready to receive and uphold the sacred keystone of duty."\footnote{Hall, pp. 178-179.} The answer was freedom for women so that they could be free to develop their unique garden of gifts that would flower for the benefit of the family, the church, and the society.

With the granting of freedom to women must come the recognition of its twin, equality. Women as free agents would be useless unless it was recognized that they possessed the ability to become men's equal partners, sharing with the male equally important, although perhaps different tasks. Women in the home, Mrs. Howe held, must not be regarded as people forced by nature and circumstances to bear the burdens of the home; rather, women should be thought of as "free agents, who from motives of wifely and parental affection, consent to realize the values of [their] lives in the performance of household duty." Women were once a "dependent class": persons who were supported by other persons, thus losing their freedom and claim to individuality. But this tradition was no longer true; now women were independent, free, and equal creatures who support themselves, whether they work inside
or outside the home. Women's housework was not something they are obliged to do for their survival but an elective chore that women have chosen because of the affection they felt for their family; nonetheless, housework retains a monetary value. 76

"The college, the platform, the press, the pulpit are now open to you. Achieve in these directions what you may," suggested Mrs. Howe yet she adds, "but return from your furthest flight to the dear shelter of your home." Women must reconcile the duties of the home and the outside world; women must not so serve the world that the "sacred flame of life" which burns only at the home altar flickers and goes out nor must they so tend their own fire that the neighborhood becomes dark. 77

Women's individual obligations to develop themselves, their duties to the home, and responsibilities to the community, all must, and can, be reconciled with justice. Educated and in the full possession of their rights, women were capable of extending their love from the small home circle to the outer reaches of the earth's sphere by their freely given works of service.

This vision of women possessing a nature equal to men's and morally superior to the male, inspired Mrs. Howe to work for educational and political rights for women commensurate with their abilities. It was a glorious vision to her because she believed that women had been granted distinctive gifts and a unique training through motherhood that qualified them to redeem the world. If Goethe, Mrs. Howe wrote, could believe "'the eternal womanly draws us one,' we may rest in the belief


77Hall, pp. 171-172.
that the immense value vested in women is designed to enrich the future even more than it has the past." 78 Masculine force and violence will give way to the feminine power of gentleness, affection, and charity; a new "empire of moral sentiments" shall be founded upon the rock of the New Jerusalem and the "true temple of humanity" shall be God's kingdom upon earth. 79 Ultimate perfection would thus be reached by the combined efforts of men and women as the "General direction and tendency of human nature, male as well as female, is towards greater freedom." 80 However, if society would advance toward perfection, it must free women so that they may fulfill their glorious destiny on behalf of all mankind.


Chapter 3

GLORIOUS?: AN ANALYSIS

The nineteenth century was an age of opportunity for the white male. De Tocqueville portrayed a society where men measured their lives in terms of their "chances" to succeed and where success was possible to everyone. Men could know themselves as a power to the extent that they were able to move successfully in society. The women whose men were caught up in the world of motion faced a situation of frustrating simplicity. The more their men succeeded, the less the women were needed; the more their husbands worked, the less they had to work. In the previous century, females had been scarce and in demand; women were needed partners on the farm, in business, and even in the professions. But the middle class housewife in the nineteenth century no longer made an obvious economic contribution. Instead, the home and the family were supported by men who made money which was turned into possessions. Women at home, who made no money, ran the danger of becoming possessions. In fearing that they were in danger of becoming enslaved, white women linked the drive to abolish slavery to their own anxieties.¹

The escape used for forty years in the pre-Civil War era was the contention that women were superior. A female existence radically different from that of men in its refinement and its transcendence above

hard materials of the world became a style for those who could afford it. But in the post-war era society seemed to be disintegrating and the "superior woman" doctrine was not able to provide stability. Rather, the family was seen as a central bulwark of values because the family revolved around the "key figure in civilization," the mother. But regardless of whether women were seen as superior beings or as the Mother, women were weak, passive creatures, the opposite of men who were powerful and self-sufficient.²

John Ruskin's lecture, "Of Queens' Gardens," is believed by Walter Houghton, a noted Victorian scholar, to be "the most important single document . . . for the characteristic idealization of love, women, and the home in Victorian thought."³ According to John Ruskin, men and women possess different natures that prepare them for clearly defined, complementary, dependent roles. In matchless prose Ruskin described the sex roles by stating:

The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary. But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle,—and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims and their places. Her great function is Praise: she enters into no contest, but infallibly judges the crown of contest.⁴

Man, daily involved in the worldly struggle, protects woman

²Meyer, pp. 53-57.


⁴John Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies (Boston: Dana Estes & Co., 1871), pp. 86-87.
from all danger and temptation. Woman, in the sheltered atmosphere of the home, creates for man a haven "not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division." If a home fails to provide the required shelter, it can never be considered a home. To fulfill her role as homemaker, woman must possess within her nature enduring, incorruptable goodness and instinctive, infallible wisdom. Woman's virtues will direct her, not to self-development, but to self-renunciation; she will not strive to set herself above her husband but to stand always by his side.5

Woman's pure, godly nature allowed her to fulfill her challenging role within the home; in return, man gave her the same "obedient devotion" that the lover offers his mistress. Men are subjectively dependent upon women for encouragement, praise, reward, and direction. The soul's armour is never worn correctly unless a woman's hand has fastened it. Husbands are dependent upon their wives' "guiding function;" nonetheless, this is a duty performed by women within the bounds of true wifely subjection in the home.6

John Ruskin summarized both for British and Americans a view of women that defied her nature, enshrined her in the home temple, and offered the humble adoration of her male subjects. And the view of woman he so adeptly portrayed at the end of the nineteenth century persisted among Americans throughout the century. In fact, in America, women developed what Barbara Welter labels the "cult of true womanhood," a cult which measured women by their attributes of piety, purity, sub-

5Ruskin, pp. 86-87.

6Ruskin, pp. 84-85.
missiveness, and domesticity. 7

Sara Clarke, a "beloved friend" of Julia Ward Howe, 8 wrote that "true feminine genius is ever timid, doubtful, and clinging­ly dependent; a perpetual childhood." 9 Occasionally, society would produce a "woman of genius" whose abilities were not suited for the home and children. But Sarah Josepha Hale, another close friend of Mrs. Howe, 10 used Margaret Fuller as an example and proof that the "greater the intellectual force, the greater and more fatal the errors into which women fall." Horace Greeley, friend and editor to Margaret Fuller, wrote in his autobiography that "noble and great as she [Margaret Fuller] was, a good husband and two or three bouncing babies would have emancipated her from a great deal of cant and nonsense." Some gifted women might have developed their womanhood outside of the normal domestic role, but they had done so at their own risk. 11

The cult of true womanhood, apparently a faultless device to insure the domesticity of women, carried within itself the seeds of destruction. If woman was a creature only a little lower than the angels, a pure being capable of directing men in the home, then woman surely had the responsibility to take a more active role in running the


9Welter, p. 160.

10Richards, I, 128.

11Welter, pp. 154-170.
By the middle of the nineteenth century women, under the stimulus of individualism, did want to become active in society, but the cult of domesticity, equal in popularity to individualism, restricted them to the home.\textsuperscript{13}

No longer content with the traditional Victorian system of values which revolved around the home and the chaste mother-priestess, women wanted a role that was nonrestrictive. This demand for equal rights for women naturally threatened a Victorian society that had given the family significance out of proportion to its functional value. Feminism, when it threatened the domestic system, became a radical movement.\textsuperscript{14}

Most middle class women were limited to the home by the cult of true womanhood and not by need; therefore, it was mostly middle class women who accepted feminism as an alternative to their "useless" idleness. Repulsed by the sheer mindlessness of the life which a girl was expected to lead, these women, who often had intellectual ambition, feared that they were getting life in "translation" and longed to extend their horizons.\textsuperscript{15}

Feminism, as seen by these intelligent, middle class women, demanded not political, economic, and social rights but autonomy. Women

\textsuperscript{12} Welter, p. 170.


\textsuperscript{14} William O'Neill, \textit{A History of Feminism in America: Everyone was Brave} (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), pp. 6-7.

wanted to be regarded, not as saints or slaves, but as independent human beings. The female sphere must not be defined by men; it must be defined by women.16

Popular woman's literature from 1820 to 1860 reveals how women slowly redefined their sphere. Sarah Josepha Hale and other successful writers such as Catherine Sedgwick and Mrs. Stowe crusaded for women with identical themes. Woman has a mind and it should be developed. Home is the woman's proper sphere and she should stay in it. Woman's influence is profound and she should exercise it.17

It was a very "subtle subversion" of woman's role. Sarah Josepha Hale, the popular editor of the Godey's Ladies Book, owed her very success to her fortunate reconciliation of the old traditions with the new subversion. The other popular women authors of the time, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lydia Maria Child, Lydia Sigourney, and Catherine Sedgwick, were followers of Godey's Ladies Book. Sarah Hale thought female education was necessary because women were the moral and refining forces of the modern world. Mrs. Hale conceded that a woman's education might be different from a man's, but she qualified even this concession by insisting that women should study anything that could help them make their loved ones happy. She believed that the "true arena for woman's awakened intellect is . . . at home, and in promoting the progressive improvement of her own sex." In fact, woman's influence should not only uplift the home and the female sex but it should also "bless as well as beautify civil society." Mrs. Hale subverted the traditional

16 Kraditor, pp. 7-8.

role of woman by changing woman's duty from the preserver of family morality to the uplifter of social ethics.18

Actually, all of Mrs. Hale's arguments regarding women derived from the basic tenet that women were the moral guardians of society. William R. Taylor in his brilliant book, Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character, argued that the moral guardian theory is the response of a society replacing the Puritan morality with the business ethic. Woman was made the guardian of morality because men had become involved with money-making.19

The moral guardian theory appears innocuous, a theory that served the needs of the industrial society while staying in the bounds of the traditional concept of family life. But while the traditional concept stressed women as passive members of society, the moral guardian theory saw them as active and influential members. Being the first time any power had been attributed to women in the Victorian society, the theory had tremendous implications. It was the key used by middle class women to open every new field.20

Woman's role had been subverted from passive to active; it remained to decide what active role women should play in society. Women made up the vast majority of active members of churches to such a degree that it is not an overstatement to say that on the level of the practical


20Riley, pp. 224-226.
daily life of the faithful, Protestant churches became thoroughly feminized. Whereas tradition viewed woman as a pious church member, the moral guardian theory stressed the missionary responsibilities of the female church member. Women assumed positions of power within the church and took what Page Smith calls their "Protestant passion" into secular missionary fields. Often it was hard to tell secular movements from religious ones as women started meetings of antislavery, temperance, peace, and woman's rights movements with prayers and hymns. Women moved out of the churches and into the world.  

The first active roles played by females were in literary pursuits and church work, but these fields soon appeared limiting. To extend further their obligations within society, women denounced the current ideas and institutions that restricted their freedom and accepted all private advantages that increased it. Education was regarded as the great key to freedom; by 1870 eleven thousand women were enrolled in some five hundred institutions of higher learning, while many more had obtained enough formal schooling to become teachers. Women with and without formal education formed societies and clubs for self-culture and community improvement. By 1860 the emancipation of women proceeded on two levels: privately, women who became students, teachers, club members, or even pioneers in a few professions were enlarging their "sphere;" and publicly, in the still limited woman's rights movement, in temperance work, and most striking of all, in the anti-slavery crusade, women challenged Victorian stereotypes and laid the ground-

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work for the empire of women's organization soon to be born.  

The Civil War stimulated the nascent woman's movement. Conventional audiences had been "scandalized" by women lecturing on the public platform for the rights of the slave, but a grateful, if somewhat surprised, nation benefited by the female energies that were being redirected from the home to the war effort. Women worked for the slave, believing their liberties would come with his. When it appeared obvious, with the passage of the fourteenth amendment, that women would not receive their rights with the black man, feminism bifurcated.

The suffrage movement in New York, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan Anthony, wanted the vote for women even at the expense of the Negro. In Boston, the woman's movement was content to believe that it was now the "Negro's hour" and sought woman's suffrage only if black male enfranchisement should occur. Of course, there were also other areas of friction between the two groups. The Stanton-Anthony forces campaigned for woman suffrage, disregarding the pleas of the abolitionists, but they also included a broad range of liberal social reforms with their demand for woman suffrage. The leaders of the woman's movement in Boston, Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell, Julia Ward Howe, and Thomas Higginson, restricted their activity to woman suffrage. In 1869 the woman's movement in New York became the National Woman Suffrage Association; the feminist organization in Boston became the American Woman Suffrage Association.

The National Woman's Suffrage Association advanced well beyond the issue of voting; it considered the ballot to be "not even half

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22O'Neill, pp. 5-13.
the loaf; it is only a crust—a crumb. The ballot touches only these interests, either of women or men, which take root in political questions. But woman's chief discontent is not with her political, but with her social, and particularly her marital bondage."\textsuperscript{23} The liberalism of the National Woman Suffrage Association, especially their backing of Victoria Woodhull, a free love advocate, aroused such public outcries that the National retreated from its attack of the "social and marital bondage" to the restricted field of equal suffrage. As the National Woman Suffrage Association abandoned its liberalism and concentrated on the vote, its resemblance to the American Woman Suffrage Association increased until the newly similar organizations again became one movement in 1890.\textsuperscript{24}

Women began by crusading for a new identity; they ended by asking for the vote. "The woman suffrage movement," states Aileen Kraditor in \textit{The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement 1880-1920}, "was a child of the woman's rights movement." Early in the woman's movement, everyone worked for the New Jerusalem: the slave was to be freed, alcohol consumption was to cease, justice was to be served. The vote was to be given to all minority groups, blacks and women, because all human beings possessed rights. But the rationale changed at the beginning of the twentieth century, Kraditor argues, to the demand for the vote because it was expedient. The woman's vote could aid reform, it could counteract the immigrant and black vote; it was useful and


\textsuperscript{24}O'Neill, pp. 24-29.
its use changed before each audience. 25

As women gained the vote in 1920, suffrage organizations disappeared. They had campaigned for the ballot alone, claiming that the female vote would cure society's problems and free women from their narrow sphere. The woman's movement concentrated on the vote, expecting that all its aims and all its goals would be fulfilled by equal suffrage.

Julia Ward Howe's long life parallels the development of the woman's movement. A bright (and exceptionally well educated) woman of the middle class, discontented with the confining role of the Victorian woman in the nineteenth century, she first sought to enlarge her sphere of activity in literature, a traditionally woman's field. She also entered another conventional field, the church, and later became an active supporter of women ministers. Accepting the popular theory that women were angelic creatures, mothers of all mankind, Mrs. Howe became a married housewife with five children of her own.

But she could not and would not restrain herself to the passive, domestic role of the home. At first, she was only frustrated in her attempts to break out of her confining position. But the Civil War had a powerful effect on Mrs. Howe, just as it had on the woman's movement. Her husband organized the Sanitary Commission; Mrs. Howe helped to organize fairs that made thousands of dollars for the North. Perhaps most important of all, she wrote the hymn that became the anthem of a victorious nation, the "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Mrs. Howe subverted the traditional definition of the female.

Woman remained the angelic, morally superior creature for Mrs. Howe, but the role had changed from passive to active. After the Civil War, she began to lecture on the philosophical studies she had undertaken in private. From the founding of the New England Woman's Club in 1868 it was only a few steps for Mrs. Howe to join the woman's movement in 1869. She already believed that women should have an active role in society, and the woman's movement appeared to be an efficient way of increasing the influence of moral women. Organized public institutions and laws prevented women from their heavenly appointed task of reforming society. Women should therefore organize to combat these restrictions; females rather than being confined, must be allowed to develop their own identity and their own role in society.

Mrs. Howe was a native New Yorker but an adopted Bostonian, and as a proper woman of the latter society, she joined the American Woman Suffrage Association. The woman's movement in Boston did not endorse all liberal causes as did its sister organization in New York, but under the direction of Lucy Stone it carefully selected worthy, ladylike causes. Eleanor Flexner, in her study of the woman's movement, states that Julia Ward was the "very epitome of the American Woman Suffrage Association's attitude. . . .[Mrs. Howe] cast a highly desirable aura of prestige and propriety over the woman's cause." The "most distinguished convert and leader" of the American Woman Suffrage Association, Mrs. Howe was a prestigious member of Boston society, the wife of a nationally known figure, an accomplished woman in her own right as a serious scholar, and the famous poet of the "Battle Hymn."26 Many

people who had been shocked by the liberal schemes of the Stanton-Anthony group could listen to Mrs. Howe. She changed the Victorian view of women only slightly, presenting an acceptable picture of the future that transformed familiar values into glorious realities. Indeed, it was a Victorian paradise, a world filled with moral women who cooperated together equally with pure men in the continual building of a better world.

Mrs. Howe presented a future that appealed to the refined and to the middle class. She neglected the problems of the working women, hoping that the vote of the educated white women would cancel the vote of the ignorant, the immigrant, and the morally degenerate. It was Mrs. Howe's conservatism that limited her range of reforms and broadened her public appeal in the woman's movement of the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Reverend Charles Ames commented on the eightieth birthday of Mrs. Howe that "She has never been run away with by her radicalisms, which are pretty numerous, nor stupefied by her conservatism, which is pretty solid." Mrs. Howe served as a connecting link between the liberal pioneers of the woman's movement who wanted equality and the twentieth century suffragist who wanted the vote. A comparison was made in the Woman's Journal of 1871 between Julia Ward Howe and Lucy Stone, the first woman college graduate in the classical course, an early abolitionist speaker, and a founding figure in the American Woman Suffrage Association. Mrs. Howe was "the brightest star, the most cultured, polished woman on the platform," a speaker who delivers her address "in the finest, rarest language possible, until [the

audience], ravished by her words, half forgets the wrongs she would redress." But Lucy Stone, a small, unassuming country-raised girl, delivers her message with "sledge-hammer blows" in language adorned only with the truth. Mrs. Howe needs to repeat her speeches several times before a "promiscuous audience can fully understand her delicate allusions, her polished satire, her lofty ideals." However, a boy can often understand every sentence of Lucy Stone. But Lucy Stone was so pleased that Julia Ward Howe became a leader in the woman's movement that she mentioned on her deathbed the happiness that it gave her when Mrs. Howe accepted the presidency of the New England Woman Suffrage Association.29

Mrs. Howe seemed to bring an aura of prestige and propriety to the suffrage movement, although in truth it was not Mrs. Howe that made suffrage respectable; she only symbolized the forces that drew feminism into the mainstream of middle class American culture. In the last few decades of the nineteenth century, the years of her greatest activity in the woman's movement, American society rapidly polarized between the affluent and the dispossessed. Smug in its attainments, the middle class identified all social turmoil with organized labor, a movement it regarded with unmixed horror. Crusaders of the early nineteenth century openly violated the law for their convictions, but later reformers hesitated to go to prison in the era of the Haymarket hysteria. The suffrage movement, changing as society changed, became more con-


servative and conventional. 

As the woman's movement made the transition between the radical and the traditional, mediators were needed between the two camps. Mrs. Howe filled the job perfectly, making peace between the liberals and the conservatives by "softening and toning down somewhat the startling words of the former to suit the taste of the latter." 

Perhaps "liberal" and "conservative" are misleading titles. It is probably more accurate and less confusing to state that Mrs. Howe bridged the differences between the pioneers of the woman's movement of the nineteenth century and the suffragists of the twentieth century. The earlier, "liberal" thrust of the mid-nineteenth century was to stress the equality of all mankind. All men and all women were created equal, and therefore all had the right to vote. But at the end of the nineteenth century and through the first few decades of the twentieth century, the white, middle class, Protestant woman, sharing the alarm of her male counterpart at the growth of the ignorant, alien, working class population, ceased to stress the common humanity of all men and women and noted that the enfranchisement of the white, middle class woman would counteract the votes of the undesirable part of the electorate. Suffragists no longer emphasized the similarities between men and women that implied women had the right to vote but stressed, instead, the differences between men and women which meant that women had a duty to contribute their special insights and abilities to the country. 

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30 Flexner, pp. 216-218.  
Throughout her long career as a feminist, Mrs. Howe shared the beliefs of the pioneers in the woman's rights movement that women should receive their rights because justice demanded it. In 1901 she wrote in the *Woman's Journal*, "Women are full sharers in the attributes of humanity, and consequently in its rights." However, she often included with her demand for justice an argument of expediency. In the second chapter it was noted that her arguments for woman suffrage included benefits that would aid society when women possess equal rights. Furthermore, Mrs. Howe was not free from the prejudices of her class, and although she never openly based her appeal for the suffrage of white woman on racial grounds, her audiences did not overlook the advantages of the white, female vote. In a speech before the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association, Mrs. Howe stated that when the black male obtained the ballot, "then for the first time we saw the whole of one sex governed by the whole of the other--every Negro man governing every white woman. . . . After holding the door open for the Negro, we might at least have been allowed to go in after him."

As a former abolitionist, Mrs. Howe made a distorted plea for justice. She asked for fairness but hinted at inequality between the races. But with Mrs. Howe it remained only a hint; it was other women who made the advantages of the white female vote obvious to all as a method of controlling the lower, non-Anglo-Saxon classes. Mrs. Howe served in Boston "as a nexus between the refined, cultured or aspiring

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of the newer races settling in this country and the best thought of Boston. For her none of the exclusiveness of race, religion or caste which would prevent the New England of tomorrow from profiting by the assimilation of Italian and Greek."\textsuperscript{35}

As did the early pioneers in the woman's movement, Mrs. Howe sought equal rights for women on the basis of justice. But she did not stress the similarities between men and women that gave women their natural rights; rather, she emphasized their difference, which implied the moral obligation of women to exercise their vote. Mrs. Howe believed that women possessed a nature that was purer, holier, and morally more responsible than man's. Woman's hallowed state entitled her to the position of moral guardian in the home and in the society.\textsuperscript{36} The theory of the moral guardianship of women was a traditional one, yet Mrs. Howe believed it had special appropriateness to the last decades of the nineteenth century when men "seem to have lost their faith in manhood, and to have taken on a belief in moneyhood."\textsuperscript{37}

The moral guardian theory was a popular belief because it incorporated the traditional views of women. Mrs. Howe's appeal closely resembled the conventional "separate but equal" doctrine of the respective sphere of men and women; however, because women are different they have an obligation to share their distinct gifts with male society.\textsuperscript{38}


\textsuperscript{36}Florence Howe Hall, \textit{Julia Ward Howe and the Woman Suffrage Movement} (Boston: Dana Estes & Co., 1913), pp. 105-106.


\textsuperscript{38}Kraditor, \textit{Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement}, p. 16.
Beneath Mrs. Howe's conservative request for justice so that women might freely spread their moral influences lay two very radical implications.

The first radical change implied in Mrs. Howe's call for moral justice was the change for women from a passive to an active role. "The one thing I am ashamed of," she said in 1892, "is the cowardice of our women. They do not think things out, and even when they do, they have not the courage to stand up and say they have thought them out, and to stand by them." In 1908 she said, "The chief source of mischief and of a low level of thought among women lies in what has been looked upon as one of women's special virtues—submissiveness and a willingness to believe what we are told." Women, if they are to serve as the moral guardians of society, must be well-informed, responsible members of society who are not afraid to challenge injustice. A woman who acts as the keeper of the standards of society will not be an uneducated, downtrodden, submissive citizen.

Traditionally, women were considered equal but confined to their sphere, which was The Home and Motherhood, regardless of individual capacities or wishes. Mrs. Howe conceded to traditionalists that women did possess a different nature from men, but she disagreed radically with the convention of confining women to their sphere. A proper guardian of society does not restrict herself to only a small

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41 Kraditor, Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, p. 12.
segment of the community, the home, but possesses the freedom to challenge wickedness wherever her talents lead her.

Freedom was the second radical change implied in Mrs. Howe's most conservative call for moral reform. "Woman ask for the freedom men have, not to be men, but ideal women," Mrs. Howe wrote in 1874. Women want to "become men" only in the sense that they wish to be "free, self-moving, self-inspiring human beings," people who will not minister to the convenience and pleasure of men in a state of subjection.42

Mrs. Howe repudiated the theory that women would neglect their "natural sphere" upon receiving the ballot. Shirts, socks, and families would not be ignored if wives and daughters became the equals of husbands and fathers.43 The family would not fall into a state of disrepair; the state would be strengthened when all its citizens, male and female, cooperated on equal terms in its duties and offices. The home would be exalted when blessed with the rich gifts of "true patriotism and a wise public spirit."44 The state would become the ideal republic depicted by Plato when men and women shared equal rights and equal duties.45

The woman's movement began when Victorian women grew discontented


with their new, sexually defined role which limited them to the Home and Motherhood. But the conclusion of William O'Neill in his history of feminism, *Everyone was Brave*, is that women, stifled by their Victorian role, nonetheless accepted the nineteenth century myths in order to make feminism respectable. Nineteenth century society said that woman's nature was too pure to be contaminated by the outside world, and even if leaving the home circle was not dangerous, a woman must remain there to administer the holy functions of maternity. Feminists restated the Victorian mystique. If woman's pure nature enables her to bless humanity through the duties of motherhood at home, then women have the obligation to serve as the moral guardian, the mother, to the nation.\(^{46}\)

O'Neill uses Julia Ward Howe as an example of a "moderate and greatly admired feminist" who "persistently reminded women that emancipation was intended to make them better mothers as well as freer persons."

Mrs. Howe gave such a glorious definition of woman's nature that women were inspired to think of themselves as a kind of super race condemned by historical accident to serve their natural inferiors. Furthermore, although Mrs. Howe's veneration of motherhood was used to extend women's freedom, it was a deadened technique because it led to increased support for motherhood and not to more freedom for women.\(^{47}\)

Yet the women who attacked the Victorian female mystique soon lost not only all public support, but even a public audience. Victoria Woodhull, who rejected the Victorian ideals so completely that she

\(^{46}\) O'Neill, pp. 33-36.

\(^{47}\) O'Neill, pp. 36-38.
advocated free love, received such a poor reception for her effort that she fled the country. The National Woman Suffrage Association experimented with proposals to change the traditional marriage structure. Again, public pressure forced the National to become as conventional as her sister in Boston, the American Woman Suffrage Association.  

Certainly, the use of the Victorian mystique of pure womanhood and blessed maternity carried its reactionary dangers. Yet, to ignore public sentiment meant that no audience would be given to suggestions for a change in the role of women. Mrs. Howe turned the Victorian myth of women on its head. The sacred duties of motherhood gave women an ethical superiority; therefore, women had an invaluable role in society, the duty of moral guardians. All women have been entrusted with this responsibility but each woman must be free to decide where she will best serve her community. Every woman must receive a liberal education that will train her properly for her enlarged sphere of service. The ballot would be used by free females to cleanse government; reform movements with the essential aid of the female population would transform society. The millennium would arrive when free women fulfilled their true destiny. Yet even in the midst of their missionary activities, the duties of the home and of motherhood would not be neglected. Mrs. Howe had a vision of women:

Mothers! the wrong of ages wait! 
Amend them, ministers of fate! 
Redeem the church, reform the state.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{48}O'Neill, pp. 23-29.

Victorian audiences listened, applauded, and approved the role Mrs. Howe assigned to women, but the whole "woman question" turned on the issue not merely of what roles men and women ought respectively to play but of the respective nature of the sexes. Mrs. Howe could give women a new role in society because she had redefined women's nature. Women were equal, although different, from men.

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50 Lasch, pp. 56-57.
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Although neglected by historians Julia Ward Howe contributed much more to American civilization than the words of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." She was one of the founders of women's clubs and a prominent member of the women suffrage movement. At the turn of the century, Mrs. Howe was nearly a household name. She was eulogized at her death in 1910 as "the most distinguished woman in America." Mrs. Howe was the first woman elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a distinction not shared by another woman until 1930.

Several biographies have been written on the life of Mrs. Howe, but no one has analyzed her thought regarding woman. The purpose of this paper was to discover Mrs. Howe's definition of women and to note how her philosophy influenced her lifestyle. Mrs. Howe expressed her beliefs regarding women in such media as speeches, newspaper and magazine articles, books, poems, dramas, and letters. Research of the statements of Mrs. Howe as expressed in these various types of communications reveals that Mrs. Howe defines woman as equal to but different from men, a definition which motivated her to become an active feminist.

Women, according to Mrs. Howe, are equal to men in all areas except one, morality, where women are superior to men. Of course, men and women begin life with the same moral character, but the sacred duties of motherhood build in women an unmatched ethical excellence.
This was not an unique theory with Mrs. Howe; all Victorians glorified mothers as the cornerstones of virtue in society. But Mrs. Howe radically changed the conventional theory of women; she moved mothers from the home into the community. If women are the repositories of virtue, then they have a solemn duty to work in society for the moral uplift of humanity. Furthermore, if women are to serve as the moral guardians of society, they must have freedom to fulfill their obligations wherever their talents lead them. Mrs. Howe worshipped at her shrine of motherhood in the traditional manner, but she demanded that this worship include radical innovations of freedom for women: freedom to act and freedom to choose a sphere of action.

Mrs. Howe's definition of women influenced her work in four different areas. Women must be granted an equal, liberal education if they are adequately to serve mankind as guides to righteousness. Suffrage must be shared by both sexes if society is ever to progress to goodness. Reform movements must include female members if the world is to be brought to the millennium. But women must never forget their duties in the home as they serve as moral guardians of society, thus bringing man to peace in the world and in the home.

The definition of women given by Mrs. Howe is worthy of study because it describes the rationale of an important and neglected figure in the women's movement. Further, it reveals how the traditional views of women were subverted just enough to allow for change but not so much that all innovations of women's new role were rejected. This study also demonstrates how Mrs. Howe mediated between the liberal and conservative camps of feminism. Mrs. Howe agreed with the liberal pioneers: women
were equal with men; therefore, women should share equal rights. But she also believed, as did the conservatives, that women were different from men. Female purity was needed in society; therefore women must be free to act.