

Impact of Mill's *The Subjection of Women* on the Scandinavian 'Modern Breakthrough' in the 1870s and 1880s

Kirsi Warpula¹

Resumen

Uno de los intereses que compartía con Peter Laslett era la curiosidad sobre el impacto de la obra de John Stuart Mill, *El sometimiento de la mujer*, en Escandinavia. La idea central de John Stuart Mill es que el cambio de la situación de la mujer tendría efectos beneficiosos para la sociedad en su totalidad. La igualdad entre los sexos era esencial para «la mayor felicidad para el mayor número de gente» y, también, era la condición previa para la «mejora de la humanidad.» Georg Brandes, un crítico literario, que se quedó impresionado por la obra de Mill, fue uno de los que introdujo sus obras en Escandinavia. Allí, sus escritos tuvieron mucha influencia en el mundo literario. Él fue quién dio la definición y el sentido a la literatura realista, conocida como 'la brecha moderna' en Escandinavia.

La crítica hacia el matrimonio y la cuestión de la mujer eran temas centrales tanto de la corriente de 'la brecha moderna', como de las discusiones alrededor de *El sometimiento de la mujer*. Mill hablaba sobre el alma femenina, pero no sobre el cuerpo femenino. Eso dio cierto estímulo a las propias mujeres en el Norte para entrar en el debate. Las organizaciones femeninas en Escandinavia incluyeron los principios filosóficos de Mill en sus programas y esos principios se convirtieron en la base ideológica de las organizaciones femeninas. La cuestión de la mujer y su discusión estaban presentes antes de la llegada de la obra de Mill, por lo que nunca fue un tema importado, pero su aparición estimuló la discusión, introdujo nuevos objetos de debate y una mejor formulación de los temas relacionados con la mujer.

Palabras clave: John Stuart Mill, género, brecha moderna, feminismo, familia.

1 Researcher, Department of History, University of Helsinki, Finland, e-mail: kirsi.warpula@helsinki.fi.

Abstract

One of the interests I shared with Peter Laslett was the curiosity of the impact of Mill's *The Subjection of Women* in Scandinavia. John Stuart Mill's central view in *The Subjection of Women* was that change on women's situation would benefit the society as a whole. Sexual equality was essential for 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number', and a prerequisite for 'the improvement of mankind'. Literature critic Georg Brandes, was impressed of Mill and the one who imported Mill to Scandinavia. At the same time he gave definition and direction for the realistic and problem-oriented literature: 'modern breakthrough' influencing widely on Scandinavian authors.

Criticism towards marriage and a woman question were at the centre of both 'modern breakthrough' and debate around *The Subjection of Women*. Mill talked about women's soul, not of the female body. This gave the encouragement for women's own search in North. Scandinavian women's organizations took Mill's philosophically well formulated principals directly to their programs and used them as an ideological basement. The woman's question and the discussion of it were there well before Mill. So, it was never an imported question, but the simulation of the discussion, raising new questions and better formulation of the women's issues were gained through Mill's *The Subjection of Women*.

Keywords: John Stuart Mill, gender, modern breakthrough, feminism, family.

Résumé

Un des intérêts que je partageais avec Peter Laslett était la curiosité sur l'influence de l'oeuvre de John Stuart Mill *La soumission de la femme* en Scandinavie. L'idée centrale de Mill dans son livre, est que le changement de la situation de la femme aurait des effets positifs pour la société dans sa totalité. L'égalité entre les sexes était essentielle pour «le plus grand bonheur pour la plupart de gens», et aussi elle était une condition préalable pour «une amélioration de l'humanité». Georg Brandes, un critique littéraire, fut impressionné par l'oeuvre de Mill et il décida d'importer ces oeuvres en Scandinavie. En même temps, ce fut lui qui donna la définition et le sens à la littérature réaliste «Brèche Moderne», qui eut une énorme influence chez les auteurs scandinaves.

La critique envers le mariage et la question de la femme étaient des sujets centraux tout aussi bien dans «Brèche Moderne» que dans *La soumission de la femme*. Mill parlait de l'âme féminine, mais non pas de son corps. Cela donna une certaine force aux femmes dans les pays scandinaves pour chercher leur propre réponse. Les organisations féministes en Scandinavie inclurent les principes philosophiques de Mill dans leurs programmes et ces principes se transformèrent en leurs bases idéologiques. D'un autre côté, le sujet autour de la femme et sa discussion étaient présents dans les pays nordiques bien avant l'arrivée de Mill. Donc, ce ne fut jamais importé, mais la simulation de la discussion, l'ouverture de nouvelles questions et une meilleure formulation des sujets reliés à la femme se sont enrichies avec l'arrivée de l'oeuvre de Mill *The Subjection of Women* en Scandinavie.

Mots clés: John Stuart Mill, genre, brèche moderne, femme, famille.

'I am sure you know Mill's *Subjection of Women*? Do you not think that as a young woman you should rather be interested in his book's international significance as a history of family systems?'

It was in 1996, and during one of the very first of my visits to Peter's room in Trinity College Cambridge, when he cheerfully said this to me while showing off his own copy of Mill's *Subjection of Women* from the year 1869. Ever since that afternoon, I spent many fascinating hours with Peter over the years in the field of the history of family. And after I started research on themes of gender systems in Scandinavia, I found myself back in Cambridge, talking with Peter. Most of all, Peter was curious about one question: How spontaneous was the early Scandinavian feminism? Then he wanted to know what kind of influence it had inside Scandinavia. As an historian of political philosophy, he was keen to find out what sort of impact and reaction *The Subjection of Women* caused in Scandinavia. At that time, neither of us knew that *The Subjection of Women* had been already translated into Danish and Swedish in 1869. And in the same year, it was also introduced to Norway and Finland.²

Unfortunately, I did not manage to satisfy much of Peter's endless curiosity. And considering the scale of the question, it is impossible to answer even now. However, neither Peter nor the Cambridge Group have been afraid of important questions. Keeping this as an encouragement, I will now try to show some of the impact which *The Subjection of Women* had on Scandinavian feminism and realism during the 'modern breakthrough' period from 1870 to 1880.

As a researcher of both the history of family and political philosophy, Peter was always aware of the intimate connection between the natural, hierarchical order between the sexes and generations, and the family structures which could have been identified by quantitative methods in the past. His work on both the 17th century patriarchal political philosopher Sir Robert Filmer and liberal theorist John Locke gave him an understanding not only of the model of the family in society, but also the strength of family relations. Later, he spoke of how his interest in family history had its roots in the studies of Filmer's patriarchal principles based on an hierarchical family, and Locke's opposition of authority and demands for equality.

2 In Danish, Georg Brandes 1869, *Kvindernes Underkuelse*; Swedish translation «Qvinnans underordnade ställning» by A. F. Åkerberg. In the same year, Adelaïde Ehrnrooth reviewed the Swedish translation in Helsingfors Dagbladet.

Filmer thought that a wife's subjection as well as parental authority had its foundations in nature and the Bible. This divine and natural order of the world placed women in subordination. Patriarchal order was defined in the marriage contract, where one sex was legally subordinated to the other. Even the liberal theories of John Locke and the Enlightenment did not change these aspects of the institution of marriage, although the equality between men was mentioned.

John Stuart Mill was challenging the patriarchal side of liberalism.³ He argued against 'The Natural Complement Theory of male and female human nature' and wanted that traditional liberal rights should be extended to women as well. Mill knew that it was a question of power, of one sex dominating the other. He used the words 'justice, freedom, slavery' to fight against inequality.

Like earlier philosophers, Mill was also aware that the family was a political system in microcosm, and he extended his liberal principles to the institution of marriage, the foundation of the family. Mill also applied his main ideas about human beings to a social structure. His utilitarian view was that change in the situation for women would benefit society as a whole. His liberal feminism was part of his political theory. Sexual equality was essential for 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number', and a prerequisite for 'the improvement of mankind'. 'The family, justly constituted, would be the real school of the virtues of freedom. It is sure to be a sufficient educator in everything else. It will always be a school of obedience for the children, of command for the parents. What is needed is that it should be a school of sympathy in equality, of living together in love, without power on one side, or obedience on the other.' (Mill 1989:160-161) 'The moral training of mankind will never be adapted to the conditions of the life for which all other human progress is a preparation, until they practice in the family the same moral rule which is adapted to the normal constitution of human society.' (Mill 1989:161).

1. GEORG BRANDES: A LINK BETWEEN MILL AND SCANDINAVIA

A link between Mill and Scandinavia was Georg Brandes (1842-1927), a young Danish translator and cosmopolitan literary critic. Bran-

3 On Liberty, originally published in 1859.

des' crucial role cannot be overemphasised, not only as creator of the first translation in Danish *Kvindernes Underkuelse* (1869) and *Utilitarianism*⁴ (1872) with prefaces he wrote himself, but also his lectures in Copenhagen, writings, international contacts, and his highly influential relationships with the Scandinavian literary elite and women activists. Brandes had tremendous ambition to fight against stagnation, tradition, and prejudice. He gave definition and direction to the new realistic and problem-oriented literature in Scandinavia. And he gained spectacular publicity with his widely-reported public lectures. Eventually, the waves of modern literary thought would have reached Scandinavia without Brandes, but he happened to be situated in the centre of it.

Brandes used his critics and his insights into his own native culture to make profound changes in the thinking of the time. He was personally in contact with the authors and quickly became a hero to the impressionable young who responded well to anything 'new'. Soon after the publication of *The Subjection of Women*, Brandes visited Mill at Blackheath. He admired Mill's *Utilitarianism*. It was during his time in Great Britain and France that he made his personal 'breakthrough'. Soon, he radically declared it to Copenhagen. To him, it was essential that we see things realistically and speak out boldly. Brandes' *Gjennembrud*, (*Modern Breakthrough*) meant 'what shows a literature to be living in our day is the fact that it subjects problems to debate'. These problems were often related to the new social and political radicalism, anti-religious feelings, trends in literature towards realism and naturalism, and criticism towards the marriage and the question of women. Along with the rising Scandinavian literati (Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, J. P. Jacobsen, Jonas Lie, Alexander Kielland, Victoria Benedictsson, etc.), Brandes made a lasting entry in the life of modern international literature. The 'Modern Breakthrough' was a pan-Nordic phenomenon, although Brandes, Ibsen, and Strindberg were at the centre of it. (A History of Swedish Literature, Algulin 1989:109-132; A History of Norwegian Literature 1993, (James McFarlane, Norwegian Literature 1860-1910): 107-112; Nordisk Kvinnolitteraturhistoria 1993, 2: 330-565; Downs 1987: 118).

The Subjection of Women impressed Brandes and it had a lasting influence on him. In the preface to his translation, he wrote: 'Mill's book has strengthened my understanding that in my earlier thoughts I had

4 Utilitarianism, originally published 1863.

been right. At the same time, the book has given me much better and more complete means to express these thoughts. So much better than what I would ever be able to do by myself' (Brandes 1869: Kvindernas Underkuelse, Forord, til første Udgave). In the preface of his translation, Brandes sets himself on the same side as Mill, but gives Mill the credit and admiration for his achievement in formulating clear thoughts on equality, liberty, and the question of women.

Like his brother Edvard, Georg Brandes was in frequent written and personal contact with many Scandinavian authors, informing them of the recent intellectual and philosophical trends in Europe. He had an ambition to educate and to influence them. He and his brother Edvard exchanged letters with Henrik Ibsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Jonas Lie, Victoria Benedictsson and many others during 1870s and 1880s these decades. In the 1850s, he exchanged views with Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, but soon their disagreements cooled their relationship (Keel 1999:25-26). Later, Bjørnson and Brandes presented very different views in the debate on sexual morals, Bjørnson demanding stronger sexual control for men, and Brandes sexual freedom for women as well. From the late 1860s, Ibsen and Brandes often wrote to each other. Ibsen responded quickly to Brandes' call for new literature, as did Bjørnson, Jonas Lie, Alexander Kielland, and many others.

Soon, the lectures of Brandes given at the university of Copenhagen during the autumn of 1871 were published as *Hovedstrømminger i det 19de Aarhundredes Litteratur, 1872-1890* (*The Main Currents of Nineteenth Century Literature*), where he was formulating and rationalising the recent developments in literature. It was even translated into Finnish (*Päävirtauksia 19:n vuosisadan kirjallisuudessa* 1887) by the Finnish author and feminist forerunner Minna Canth, together with Hilda Asp, in the year 1887.

Brandes reported new ideas and impressions of the cultural and literary world from various European countries in the new intellectual magazine *Tilskueren* (*The Spectator*, 1884-1899) and together with Bjørnson in *Politiken* (1884) (Politics). Brandes, as a self-appointed reformist, was not only the link between Mill and North, but he also offered many other masterpieces of European literature and philosophy. Taine, Darwin, Spencer, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche were all well-known and well-read among the educated in Northern Europe. Brandes was mastering the transition from romanticism to realism and naturalism, and later individualism and psychologically focussed

modernism. But it was the woman question where Mill through Brandes had a profound philosophical impact.

2. SCANDINAVIAN AUTHORS AND CRITICISM AGAINST MARRIAGE

The modernismity and social radicalism of 1870s and 1880s got its strength and foundation from the earlier 'liberalism breakthrough', which started in the late 1830s, and strengthened during the 1840s and 1850s. Liberalism demanded the freedom of the press, education for people, liberty to pursue a trade, and more humane legislation.

I will now introduce two highly influential pre-'modern breakthrough' Scandinavian authors, who were both widely known in the north of Europe, and whose radical ideas were the topic of much discussion. Carl Jonas Almquist (1793-1866) was the Romantic genius who shared liberal and social utopian views. Fredrika Bremer (1801-1865), was a pioneer of both Swedish realism and women's emancipation.

Carl Jonas Love Almquist⁵ had been named as 'a harbinger of the modern breakthrough'. With his novel *Det går an* ('It Can Be Done', 1838), he provoked one of the biggest discussions on the position of women and marriage in nineteenth-century Scandinavia. In his novel, he introduced new forms of marital freedom and cohabitation, including new relations built on the basis of inner communion. His ideas opposed women's dependency and he wrote that finances and homes should be separate (Almqvist 1965). Almquist also gave a great contribution as a radical writer for *Aftonbladet*, where he edited and wrote articles against social injustice. Almquist was before his time, and his radical views came under fierce attack (Algulin 1989:86-93).

Det går an received a lot of attention, both in Sweden and Finland. The intensiveness of the discussion could be seen only in two newspapers in Finland, *Helsingfors Morgonblad* and *Helsingfors Tidningar*, in

5 Almquist wrote long series of realistic stories which portrayed the lives of Swedish people. Part of this is his excellent study, *Svenska fattigdomens betydelse* (The Significance of Swedish Poverty). The other important study in this series was the novel *Det går an*, probably artistically less remarkable, but the work for which Almquist became famous in all the Nordic countries.

which 23 separate articles on *Det går an* were published at the beginning of the 1840's. Most of the writers strongly defended traditional marriage and the female role as mother and wife. Some could not even believe that Almqvist, so well-respected in the past, had written anything quite so scandalous (Häggman 1994:162-163).

In the 1840s, several intellectual women began to discuss female desire, the possibility of female education, and the constraints of marriage and family. One of the most influential was Fredrika Bremer, who can be called a pioneer of the Scandinavian realistic novel. She started writing her realistic novels, often dealing with the question of women and protesting against the male-dominated home, during the 1830s in Sweden. Her novel *Hertha, eller en själs historia* (*Hertha, or the History of a Soul*, 1856) provoked a debated on the status of unmarried women, and it led to the new law that they were legally independent at age 25.

Bremer was attached to modern English social philosophy, such as Bentham and Mill, but also German romantic philosophy and Christian mysticism (Algulin 1989:98-99). She demanded education for women, and more independence and freedom, both at home and in society. Bremer was an example and forerunner of both the women's movement and female novelists. She is probably more well-known for her social contributions than her novels.⁶

Both Fredrika Bremer and Carl Johan Love Almqvist were attracted by social utopianism, humanism, and demands for female emancipation. Almqvist was even more radical about this than Bremer. Typical for emancipation in the 1840's, it focused on the woman's position inside marriage and the family, and it was done through newspaper writings and literature. The question of women had been part of Mill's intellectual thinking since the early 1830s (Offen 2000:141).

Danish Thomasine Gyllenbourg (1773-1856) reviled her own marriage in her book *Ægtenstand* (*Marriage*, 1835) and wrote about the conflict between her own sexuality and the will of her family. Later, in *To Tidsaldr* (*Two Ages*, 1845) she describes a very devoted love relation-

6 Her contributions to literature were: *Teckningar ur vardagslivet* (Sketches of Every-day Life), *Familjen H* (The H-Family), 1830-1831, *Grannarna* (The Neighbours), 1837, *Hemmet* (The Home), 1839, three volume: *Hemmen I den nya världen* (The Homes of the New World), 1853-1854, *Hertha*, 1856, *Livet i gamla världen* (Two years in Switzerland and Italy, Travels in the Holy Land, Greece and the Greeks), 1860-1862.

ship. The following decade, Mathilde Fibiger (1830-1872) attacked the notion of marriage as an institution and the sexual hypocrisy of the time in her books *Clara Raphael Tolv Breve* (*Clara Raphael Twelve Letters*, 1850) and *Et Besøg* (*A Visit*, 1851) (Rossel 1992:226). Before the time of Brandes, discussions of sexuality were also raised in Denmark by Frederik Dreier (1827-1853), Carl Bagger (1807-1846), Poul Chievitz (1817-1854) and Thomasine Gyllembourg (1773-1856) (Rossel 1992:217-228).

In the 1880s and 1890s, Swede Ellen Key carried on the emancipation started by Bremer and Almqvist on the issues of family, marriage, and sex. Key worked actively to rediscover the writings of Almqvist and to put them into use in modern discussions on marriage and sex (Algulin 1989:171).

3. NORA'S DEPARTURE – THE SCANDINAVIAN WOMAN QUESTION

In Henry Ibsen's (1828-1906) play *Et Dukkehjem*, (*A Doll's House*) a wife, Nora, walks out from a male-dominated marriage and the patriarchal concept of womanhood. The woman's search for individual freedom became a major debate when Ibsen's Nora declared her independence. The wife and the mother who left her husband and children⁷ to find self-realisation was at the centre of discussions in Scandinavian newspapers, even much more than Mill's *The Subjection of Women*. *A Doll's House* was first performed in Copenhagen in 1879. Nora provoked a scandal and vivid debates in most parts of Europe. Within a few months of its publication, it was being performed in all the Scandinavian capitals (McFarlane 1993:123).⁸

Here is a discussion between Torvald Helmer and his wife Nora at the end of the play *A Doll's House*:

'Helmer: *Before all else, you are a wife and a mother.*

Nora: *I don't believe that any longer. I believe that before all else, I am a reasonable human being, just as you are – or, at all events, that*

7 Mill had argued that the laws that deny the wife equal legal rights over children are also a profound violation of personhood and autonomy, Nussbaum 1999:64.

8 In 1889 'A Doll's House' was played in London, where it also provoked vivid discussion. Goodman 1996: 207.

I must try and become one. I know quite well, Torvald, that most people would think you are right and that views of that kind are to be found in books; but I can no longer content myself with what most people say or with what is found in books. I must think over things for myself and get to understand them. (Ibsen 1992:68)

Nora declared herself 'a new woman', who wants to find herself, and who could act independently without the permission and control of her husband. For many, she offered a liberating image of the woman of the future, but for conservatives, she was a harmful creature.

Through *A Doll's House*, Henrik Ibsen showed women's position in society. 'A woman cannot be herself in contemporary society; it is an exclusively male society with laws drafted by men, and counsel and judges who judge feminine conduct from the male point of view.' (Oxford Ibsen 5:436). Not only women suffered, but also men, public morals, and the whole of society, and they all would benefit from greater equality between sexes. *A Doll's House* is more a drama of conflict between woman and society than between husband and wife. It is society which denies her equal chances and imposes its patriarchal laws upon her. Nora leaves in order to realise herself as a woman. Ibsen was very concerned with the concept of responsibility: individual responsibility for both the self and others. People should look after the well-being of their neighbours, but at the same time one should take it upon the self to be the director of one's own actions (Downs 1987:116-117).

Ibsen himself never admitted that Mill had any influence on his play *A Doll's House*. Ibsen did not like Mill's *The Subjection of Women*. In his letter to Brandes, he expressed sorrow for Brandes in that he had wasted that much time with Mill, when he could have written a better book by himself. Instead of Mill, he emphasised the importance of Hegel and other German philosophers and their leading role in the social philosophy of his time.⁹ The reasons why Ibsen did not like Mill are difficult to identify, but we cannot assume that Mill would not have had great impact on him as well. Ibsen had not only read Mill's book, but also followed the discussions about it among his other contemporaries in Scandinavia. One could see Ibsen's possible intellectual zealousness, or at least defensiveness towards Mill. In many of the fundamental questions, Ibsen basically agreed with Mill, although he never

9 Henrik Ibsen to Georg Brandes.

referred or mentioned him or admitted to any influence from him. Although Ibsen hardly got any direct influence from the teachers of Brandes did Brandes himself affected him greatly (Downs 1987:111-115, 123-126). Brandes both admired *Utilitarianism* and *The Subjection of Women*, and had engaged himself in the emancipation of the opposite sex.

4. THE SELF-REALISATION OF SCANDINAVIAN WOMEN

The 1880's was the decade of Scandinavian women's emancipation. Once again, newspapers and literature were the forums for discussion. This time, female writers had a leading role. For many of them, the emancipation process was the central theme of their work. They carried on questioning the female roles in- and outside the family and marriage. They paid attention to the various stages of women's lives: being an unmarried maiden, a wife, and a widow. They also took an interest in female sexuality, and started to defend their own right to define it. Women's organisations were founded, and women were politically active to gain their rights. Socialism became part of the interest, along with women's rights.

Mill's work had been taken as a part of the emancipation program of women's organizations¹⁰ and it was used in the campaign for equal rights in education. The campaign for rights and opportunities finally brought results. During the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s, several legal reforms had been made to promote women's rights. In 1874, Swedish universities opened their doors to women. They got permission to study everything except theology and law. In 1882, the first woman in Norway entered university, and a few years later, the coeducational high school was founded. Denmark followed the same year, when women were allowed to study at the University of Christiania. In addition, in Denmark in 1884 and in Norway in 1888, married women were given equal property rights, and a right to earn. Both Ibsen and Bjørnson had signed the petition for it (Ingwersen, F., 1993:359; Downs 1987:121).

10 In the year 1883 founded Finnish Women's organization (Finska Kvinno Förbundet) took *the Subjection of Women* into their program as a philosophical basement for the movement.

To get their voices heard, the leading women started to establish special women's magazines. They continued to write in the popular press, although this remained a male-dominated domain. In Sweden, there was *Tidskrift för hemmet* (1886) in Stockholm and *Framåt* (1886-1889) in Göteborg. Founded in Norway in 1887, *Nylande* was a new journal for the Norwegian Society for Women's Rights (Norsk Kvindesagsforening) (Ingwersen, F., 1993:359). In Finland, the famous realistic author Minna Canth published her own journal *Vapaita Aatteita* (1889-1890). In Iceland, Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttir (1856-1940) published the magazine *Kvennabladðið* (*Women's Journal*). At the same time there came out the other women's magazine: *Framsókn* (*Further*).

Before Brandes and his new realistic literature, Camilla Collett wrote the 'realistic' *Amtmandens døttre*, 1843 (*The District Governor's Daughters*, 1992). From the late 1860s until her death in 1895, she devoted herself to campaigning for women's self-realisation. During the later part of her life, she was in personal contact with Ibsen, and was able to share her emancipated views with him. Many other female authors and emancipated women also discussed the social and political problems of the day with Ibsen.

Norwegian Aasta Hansteen (1824-1908) campaigned against the Church definitions of a woman's rightful place in her book *Kvinden skabt i Guds billede* (*Woman Created in God's Image*) in 1872-1873. Her radical views and bold speeches were too much for the cultural circles of Norway. She had also participated in the debate on Mill's *The Subjection of Women* and became a frequent writer in the new women's journal *Nylande* (*New Land*). Another Norwegian, Amalie Skram¹¹ (1846-1905) caused a scandal with her novel *Constance Ring* in 1885, which reviled the double-standards of female sexuality. In her novels *Forraadt* (*Betrayed*, 1892) and *Professor Hieronimus* (1895) she deals with her own autobiographical experiences of a betraying husband and dictatorial treatment in a mental hospital (Ingwersen, F., 1993:358-359).

Danish Adda (Adele Marie) Ravnkilde (1862-1883), a student of Brandes, wrote *Judith Fürste* (1884) published with a preface by Georg Brandes. Her *En Pyrrhussejr* (*A Pyrrhic victory*) stressed equal rights for women and hopes for free individuals. Women's hopes of gaining an independent position in society were often expressed in pessimistic

11 Later she also lived in Copenhagen.

tones. Many female writers never saw their new hopes breaking through, but gave up in depression and desperation. Adda Ravnkilde was one of the disappointed, along with Victoria Benedictsson. They both committed suicide.

In Finland, Minna Canth (1844-1897) wrote realistic novels about women's everyday difficulties in family and society. She had a strong positive belief that the situation could be changed once the truth came out! Canth's *Työmiehen vaimo* (*A Worker's Wife*), written in 1885, attacked both society and the family systems planned and governed by men. She carried her societal criticism in a novel about a young girl's development (*Hanna*, 1886) and in both *Köyhää kansaa* (*Poor People*, 1886) and *Kovan Onnen Lapsia* (*Unlucky Children*, 1888).

Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttir (1856-1940) can be considered the first leading feminist in Iceland from the 1870s. She had read both John Stuart Mill and Georg Brandes. In Reykjavik in 1887, she presented her speech 'Um hagi og réttindi kvenna' ('Of Women's Possibilities and Rights'), where she criticised the presentation of women in the Bible, in St Paul's texts, and in Christianity in general. She also wrote about women's socio-economic position: for women, she wanted both political rights and the same salary for the same work (Kristjánsdóttir 1993:468-479).

In her novel *Pengar* (*Money*, 1885), Victoria Benedictsson (1850-1888) compared marriage without love to prostitution. In her other novel *Fru Marianne* (*Mrs. Marianne*, 1887) she dreamed of an ideal marriage. Her literary success brought her in touch with cultural elite of Stockholm and Copenhagen, where she also met Georg Brandes. Her life took a new turn when she fell in love with Brandes, but her disappointments in that love broke her down and she committed suicide. Her diary, called *Stora Boken* (*The Great Book*) describes her struggle for personal liberation during these last difficult years. She had decided that nothing human could be strange for her. Everything concerning love, sexuality, and relationships between the sexes interested her, and she wrote about them in her *Stora Boken*. She wrote down her thoughts about society, birth-control, syphilis, prostitution - questions most women did not know much about (Sjöblad & Witt-Brattström 1993:538-539). Along with Benedictsson, many female authors started to travel within Scandinavia, especially to Copenhagen to listen Brandes, but also to London, Paris, Rome and Hamburg.

Ibsen had used a female writer Laura Kieler (1849-1932) as the model for Nora in *Et dukkehjem*. Kieler had been thought guilty of

fraud. She was separated from her husband and had lost the custody of her child. Copying the method, Kieler herself used other fellow-authors as models in her own writing. She reviled the free love relationship of Victoria Benedictsson and Georg Brandes in her book *Maed af are* (*Men of Honor*, 1888). This book, praised by Ibsen, tells a story of a woman who is seduced by a critic into a love relationship and is later abandoned by him. After that she commits suicide (Ingwersen, F., 1993:358).

The first sign of the breakdown of the 'modern breakthrough' was the argument between Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Georg Brandes, after Bjørnson's novel *Hanske* was published in 1883.

Bjørnson demanded the same moral constraints for both sexes. To Brandes, sexual freedom was meant for everyone. It would have only been immoral if one would not have any desire for it (Hjordt-Vetlesen 1993:341). Most of the younger generation in support of the modern breakthrough took the side of Bjørnson, behind the so-called 'Hanske-moral'. In a public debate, Arne Garborg, August Strindberg, and Victoria Benedictsson sided with Brandes against Bjørnson, which parted old friends and modern breakthrough allies alike (Ingwersen, N., 1992:266). The question was raised about whether society should increase the sexual freedom of women rather than tighten that of men.

The second half of the 1880s was a period of stagnation for emancipation. The modern breakthrough had reached its highest peak when Bjørnson and Brandes were discussed sexual morals. Brandes and Ibsen became more interested in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche than female emancipation. At the same time, August Stringberg, one of the leading modern breakthrough authors (although never on the question of women), had turned even more misogynist in his book work *Giftas II*. Sexually threatening female images, created by male artists, started to invade art and literature.

The question of women was also at the centre of the split in the modern breakthrough movement. The main events were the debate over sexual morals (*sedlighet*) and leading role in emancipation moving to women from the male Brandes, Ibsen and Bjørnson, in order to carry on the fight in their own terms. Women wanted to take the matter into their own hands at the same time that Brandes, Ibsen, and Strindberg turned towards Nietzsche and Zola. Brandes also fell into confrontations with early feminists, although he had considered himself an early emancipator of women in Scandinavia.

During the 1880's, when male Scandinavian authors lost their fashionable interest in the question of women, the real women's breakthrough happened. Women were no longer afraid to write about their dreams of a lifelong mutual understanding between men and women. Mill's 'union of souls' was what women dreamed about. Female authors also started to write on eroticism, sexuality, and participate in the discussion of prostitution. One common theme was female relationships: that between two friends, or mother-and-daughter relationships. The older generation often prevented the individual development of younger women, and many female authors saw this problem and wrote about it. Most of the writing showed a positive outlook for the future of Scandinavian women. They themselves were 'new women', through their self-realisation.

5. SUBJECTION OF WOMEN AND LIBERAL HUMANISM

There is no doubt that Mill had a profound influence on Scandinavia, both directly and indirectly. Early feminists, socially and politically active people, writers, and other intellectuals were reading his work, talking about it, providing opinion, and making it known to a wider public audience. The Danish and Norwegian new literature, influenced and transformed by Georg Brandes, were at first ahead of that in Sweden, Finland and Iceland, but these were quickly affected by the new thought and produced much socio-realistic literature with a strong feminist tone.

The Scandinavian women's movement took Mill's work very seriously, and most of the modern breakthrough female authors who had read it became inspired by it. Georg Brandes had built up a large network of female writers, reviewing, supporting, and teaching them.

Good examples of a more indirect influence were several significant novels by Scandinavian modernist authors, both male and female, of whom many had read Mill, or at least been guided and taught by Georg Brandes. Not all of them agreed with Mill, or liked him, such as Ibsen. But, even if not directly affected by Mill, the modern breakthrough also changed Ibsen's literature by giving women the central role in his provocative writing. It has been said that Ibsen very much wanted to be an original thinker and writer. And like a Scandinavian response to

Mill, after the modern breakthrough in his literature, Ibsen sent back to England his own version of 'the question of women': *A Doll's House*.

In several of his writings, Ibsen chose the woman to fight for the freedom of the human spirit. He and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson both saw how the weak position of women was the main social problem in society. Scandinavian emancipated male author and critic Brandes agreed with Mill that it is not only women who suffered under the prevailing system, but men, public morals, and society as a whole would ultimately benefit from greater equality.

Basically, the same issue burned in the minds of the Scandinavian literati as that of Mill: individual and community happiness, liberty, and utilitarianism. Women's self-realisation was the key to their happiness, liberty and well-being, through which the happiness of the whole of society was improved. The utilising the intelligence and skills of the other half of the population was of benefit for everybody.

As mentioned earlier, Mill was not the only influential philosopher in modern breakthrough and before Mill's influence during the 1830's, 1840s, and 1850s, there was already a wide discussion of marriage, women's education, and the female's role within the family, as the work of Almqvist, Bremer, and many others demonstrated. It was the time of liberalism and social utopianism when Mill developed his views on women's rights.

Mill had argued that a liberal regime is ill-served by a model of family, which is based on the subordination of one sex to another. Liberalism cannot deny women the rights it gives to men, and therefore the stability of a liberal regime demands a legal reform of the family. It was around this argument most of Scandinavian modernist authors agreed with Mill.

It was very much the question of women which opened up modernism in Scandinavia, including a demand for realism and an expanding critique against the institution of marriage. Mill talked about the soul of women, not the female body. This encouraged women in their own search in northern Europe. In every Nordic country, women organised themselves and founded special women's magazines devoted to the promotion of women's political and socio-economic rights. Female authors decided definitions in the question of women themselves and the whole balance of the modern breakthrough shifted from male authors to female.

The 1880s saw the start of an active and widespread discussion about sexuality, including female sexuality, sexual morals, prostitution, relations between the sexes, and criticism towards the institution of marriage. It was called 'sedlighetsdebatten'. Bold questions were raised, such as whether the same sexual morals should apply to both men than women, or whether women should enjoy the same sexual freedom as men.

Brandes and Ibsen emphasised liberation and the development of the personality. Ibsen's Nora wanted to find herself. Later, women in 1880s Scandinavia developed the ideas of self-realisation, the searching female soul, and her intelligent brain themselves. They created a distance from their emancipated male contemporaries and kept their own right to define what a woman is about.

Scandinavian women's organisations took Mill's philosophically well-formulated principles and applied them directly in their programmes of change, using them as an ideological base. It is not surprising that Mill's most influential work in Scandinavia was *The Subjection of Women*. Apart from Almqvist, neither Nordic male writers and thinkers, nor the first feminists, could have created this sort of foundation for the process of self-realization for women, which started to change the society quickly in the 1880s. The question of women and the discussion of it were there well before Mill. As a question itself, it was not imported to northern Europe, but Mill's *The Subjection of Women* stimulated discussion, exposed the problem, raised new questions, and helped to better formulate women's issues in Scandinavia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- ALGULIN, I. (1989), *A History of Swedish Literature*. The Swedish Institute. Uddevalla. Publishers. Boston.
- ALLEN, R. (1996), 'New Women in the theatre' in Lizbeth GOODMAN (ed.): *Literature and Gender. Approaching Literature*, The Open University, Routledge, London: 207-227.
- ALMQVIST, C.J.L. (1965), *Det går an*. Faksimil of 1839 edition with author's own comments, edited by Erik Gamby, Bokgillet, Uppsala.
- BRANDES, G. and BRANDES, E. (1939), *Brevveksling med Nordiske Forfattere og Videnskabsmaed*. Udgivet af Morten Borup, under medvirkning af Francis Bull og John Landquist. IV. Copenhagen. Gyldendalske Boghandel Nordisk Forlag.

- BRANDES, G. (1871) *Päävirtauksia 19:nen vuosisadan kirjallisuudessa 1887. G. Brandes'in syyslukukautena 1871 Kööpenhaminan yliopistossa pitämiä luentoja. Suomentaneet Minna Canth ja Hilda Asp. Suomalaisen kirjallisuusseuran kirjapainossa*. Helsinki. (The Main Currents of Nineteenth Century Literature). Lectures given by G. Brandes in the University of Copenhagen during the autumn term 1871. Translated in Finnish by Minna Canth and Hilda Asp. Finnish Literature Society. Helsinki.)
- DOWNS, B. (1987), 'Modern Problems' in *Critical Essays on Henry Ibsen*, in Charles R. LYONS (ed.), *Critical Essays on World Literature*. G.K Hall & Co. Boston, Massachusetts.
- DURBACH, E. (1991), *A Doll's House. Ibsen's Myth of Transformation*. Twayne's Masterwork Studies. Twayne Publishers. Boston.
- FINNEY, G. (1994), 'Ibsen and feminism' in James MCFARLANE (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, Cambridge University Press. Cambridge: 89-105.
- GOODMAN, L. (1996), *Literature and Gender. Approaching Literature*. The Open University. Routledge, London,
- HÄGGMAN, K. (1994), *Perheen vuosisata. Perheen ihanne ja sivistyneistön elämäntapa 1800-luvun Suomessa*. Hist.tutk. 179. The Century of Family. The Ideal Family and Bourgeois Lifestyle in Nineteenth-century Finland. Summary, 247-252. (Societas Historica Finlandiae). Helsinki.
- HEMMER, B. (1978), *Ibsen og Bjornson. Essays og analyser*. Aschehoug. Oslo.
- HEMMER, B. (1994), 'Ibsen and the realistic problem drama' in James MCFARLANE (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Ibsen* edited by, Cambridge University Press. Cambridge: 68-88.
- HJORDT-VETLESEN, I.L.(1993), 'Modernitetens kvinnliga text. Det moderna genombrottet i Norden'. Fadershuset 1800-talet. Nordisk Kvinnolitteratur historia 2. Bandet 2. Höganäs, Wiken.
- IBSEN, H. (1992), *A Doll's House*. Dover Publications, INC. New York.
- INGWERSEN, F. (1992), 'Danish and Faroese Women Writers' in *A History of Danish Literature in* Sven H. ROSSEL(ed.), *A History of Scandinavian Literatures*. Volume 1. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London: 587-608..
- INGWERSEN, F. (1993), 'Norwegian Women Writers' in *A History of Norwegian Literature in* Harald S. NÆSS (ed.), *A History of Scandinavian Literatures*. Volume 2. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London: 349-371
- INGWERSEN, N. (1992), 'The Modern Breakthrough' in *A History of Danish Literature in* Sven H. ROSSEL (ed.), *A History of Scandinavian Literatures*. Volume 1. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London: 261-318
- JANSDOTTER, A. (1997), 'På turné för sedligheten'. Nathalie Andersson-Meijerhelms resa i södra Sverige våren 1883. In *Seklernas sex. Bidrag till sexualitetens historia*. Red. Åsa Bergenheim, Lena Lennerhed. Carssons. Stockholm:159-175
- KEEL, A. (1999), *Bjornstjerne Bjornson. En biografi 1880-1910*. Gyldendal. Gjøvik.

- KRISTJÁNSDÓTTIR, D. (1993), »'Förhinder' Från rim till reformer på Island». Fadershuset 1800-talet. Nordisk Kvinnolitteratur historia 2. Bandet 2. Wiken.
- LAURILA, K.S. (1922), *Ibsen ja politiikka* (Ibsen and Politics). Otava, Helsinki.
- LUCAS, F. L. (1962), *The Drama Ibsen and Strindberg*. Cassell. London.
- MCFARLANE, J. (1993), 'Norwegian Literature 1860-1910', in NAESS, H. S. (ed.) *A History of Norwegian Literature*, in Sven H. ROSSEL (ed.), *A History of Scandinavian Literatures*, Volume 2, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London.
- MCFARLANE, J. (ed.) (1994), *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
- MILL, J. S. (1885), *Kvindernes underkuelse. Paa Dansk ved Georg Brandes. Anden udgave. Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag* (F. Hegel & Søn). København.
- MILL, J. S. (1989), *On Liberty and other writings*. Edited by Stefan Collini. Cambridge texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
- NAESS, H. S. (ed.) (1993), *A History of Norwegian literature*, University of Nebraska Press.
- NORDIN, H.; NORDIN HENNEL, I. and SJÖBLAD, C., (1993) »'Lyckligare ungdom har aldrig funnits' Det moderna genombrottet i Sverige». Nordisk Kvinnolitteratur historia 2. Band 2 Fadershuset 1800-talet.
- NORDISK KVINNOLITTERATUR HISTORIA 2. Band 2 Fadershuset 1800-talet. (1993), Höganäs, Wiken.
- NUSSBAUM, M. C. (1999), *Sex and Social Justice*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.
- OFFEN, K. (2000), *European Feminisms 1700-1950. A political History*. Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- PERRIDON, H. (1998). *Strindberg, Ibsen & Bergman. Essays offered to Egil Törqvist*. Edited by Harry Perridon. Shaker Publishing. Maastricht.
- ROSSEL, S. H. (1992), 'From Romanticism to Realism' in *A History of Danish Literature*. in Sven H. ROSSEL.(ed.), *A History of Scandinavian Literatures*. Volume 1. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London: 167-259.
- SJÖBLAD, C. and WITT-BRATTSTRÖM, E. (1993), »'Jag vill skriva om kvinnor' Om Victoria Benedictsson». Nordisk Kvinnolitteratur historia 2. Band 2 Fadershuset 1800-talet. Höganäs, Wiken.
- SUOMEN KIRJALLISUUSHISTORIA 2. (1999). *Järkiuskosta vaistojen kapinaan*. SKS (History of Finnish Literature) Finnish Literature Society. Helsinki
- TIIRAKARI, L. (1999), »Miten Minna Canthia luettiin?» In *Suomen kirjallisuushistoria 2. Järkiuskosta vaistojen kapinaan*. SKS (History of Finnish Literature) Finnish Literature Society. Helsinki: 17-42
- TULLOCH, G. (1989), *Mill and Sexual Equality*. Billing and Sons Ltd, Worcester.

