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Friends of the John Stuart Mill Library Newsletter

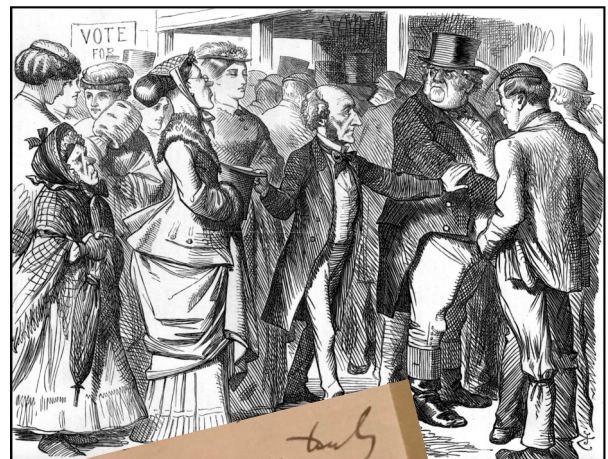
Growth of the John Stuart Mill Collection

Last year we reported on an exciting new direction for the John Stuart Mill library, namely, expanding the collection with the purchase of two books that came from his Avignon library and three letters that had recently come up for sale. There was a lot of interest in these acquisitions and so we decided to continue to look for opportunities of adding to the collection. This was funded through a crowdfunding campaign, generously supported with matched funding by Christopher Kenyon, one of our most loyal Friends. We were also fortunate enough to receive a grant from the Friends of the National Libraries for the purchase of letters. In the end we managed to acquire seven further letters, six of which had never been published and are therefore of particular interest to John Stuart Mill researchers. More about these can be found on p 2. Also in this issue is the latest news on the Mill Marginalia Online project, the text of this year's John Stuart Mill Lecture, some exciting and ground-breaking work being undertaken to uncover faded and unreadable marginalia and news of next year's events.

Finally, a reminder that subscription renewals are now due—see p 14 for details.

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*Yours very truly
J. S. Mill*

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ACQUISITIONS

FNL

Friends of the National Libraries
saving the nation's written and printed heritage

Following a very successful crowdfunding campaign and a generous grant from the Friends of the National Libraries, we were able to buy seven letters written by John Stuart Mill from antiquarian dealer and specialist in Mill material, Hamish Riley-Smith. The text below comes from his catalogue

<https://tinyurl.com/yzgd68f9> and we are grateful to him for permission to reproduce it here. Six of the letters acquired have not been published before. The seventh is in the collected works but as it is a particularly interesting letter, we included it in the collection.

Please contact the Librarian librarian@some.ox.ac.uk if you would like to examine the letters or receive a copy of the transcripts

1– 4 Four unpublished letters to Albany Fonblanque and George Armstrong concerning George Armstrong's proposed paper for the *London & Westminster Review* 1836-1838. Albany Fonblanque [1793-1872], radical journalist and editor-proprietor of the journal *Examiner*, and correspondent with John Stuart Mill. In 1833 to save Fonblanque and the *Examiner* from bankruptcy Mill actively helped in raising £1000 .

George Armstrong [1791-1857] was a Unitarian minister who over a period had a few papers published in the journals. With the help of Albany Fonblanque his paper *Church and State Fallacies* is forwarded to John Stuart Mill for consideration for publication in the *London & Westminster Review*. It was apparently never published.

1. Autograph letter signed to Albany Fonblanque. Kensington, Tuesday [April 19th 1836]

Small quarto, 12.7 x 10.1cm, 3 pages + 1 blank, in ink, last page endorsed in ink in a contemporary hand *John Stuart Mill*. Mill writes that "this little book, is written by a young man new at Cambridge & for a young man there is I think much observation, reflexion, & power of expression. It was given me by a friend of the author, who also sends a copy to you on my instruction that I think you will probably like it. If you do, perhaps you will say something about it, as I think of doing in the L & W."

2. Autograph letter signed to Rev. George Armstrong. Kensington, April 19th 1836

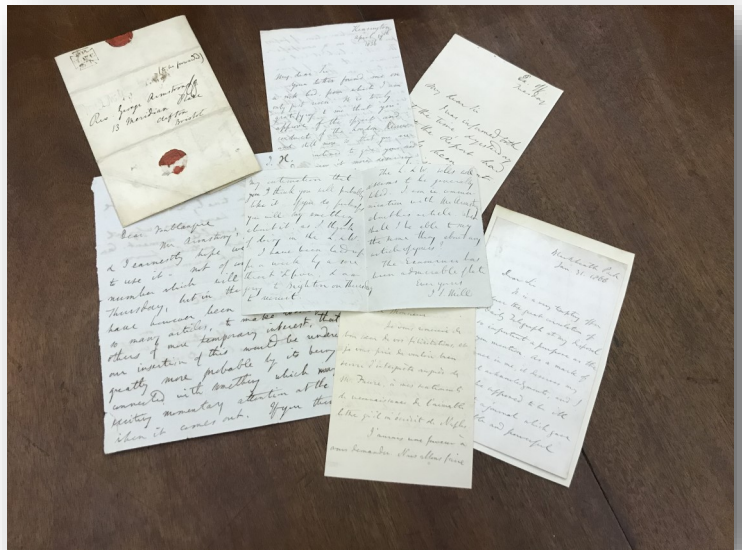
Octavo, 20 x 12.6 cm, 4 pages ink. Armstrong [1791-1857] Unitarian minister in which Mill reveals the doctrine behind the journal at that time. He writes "It is truly gratifying to me that you approve of the spirit and conduct of the *London Review* - and still more so that you are not disinclined to give your aid in reading it more deserving of that approbation. Your paper "Church & State Fallacies" seemed to me excellent both in matter & manner"

3. Autograph letter signed to Albany Fonblanque. 1[ndia] H[ouse] , Monday [April 1836]

Quarto, 23.0 x 18.5cm, 2 pages in ink Mill writes that "Mr Armstrong's paper is excellent, & I earnestly hope we may be able to use it - not in the number which will appear next Thursday, but in the following..."

4. Autograph letter signed to Rev. George Armstrong. *India House, August 13th 1838*

Quarto, 23 x 18.5 cm, 4 pages in ink including integral address leaf, ink postmark, wax seal. Mill writes about "the excellent publication of which I have recently received a copy through Simpkin & Marshall & which I have read with the warmest sympathy. It will serve me on some occasion or other as a tent from which to shew what men the present Constitution of the English Establishment drives to the necessity of separating themselves from it."



5. Autograph letter signed to Pastor Louis Rey of Avignon. *Blackheath Park, August 13th 1865*

Octavo, 17 x 10.8cm, 3 pages in French in ink. Newly discovered letter from John Stuart Mill to Pastor Louis Rey in Avignon, asking for an introduction to MM Dollfus [presumably Jean Dollfus 1800-1887, cotton manufacturer] in Mulhouse to see the work that the philanthropic factory owners had done for the benefit of their workers. In Mulhouse, industrial paternalism took the form of efforts to build housing for workers, known as *cites ouvrières*, to offer educational opportunities, to organise health services, to administer a variety of pension plans, insurance programmes and savings accounts, and to organise leisure-time activities. In 1866 at a meeting in Mulhouse, Frederick Engel-Dollfus explained the rational behind Mulhousian industrialists' adoption of paternalist projects in 1866; "The manufacturer owes something more to his workers than a salary; it is equally his obligation to concern himself with their moral and physical condition, and this obligation, which no type of salary can replace, must take precedence over considerations of private interest". Pastor Louis Rey [circa 1837-1936] was pastor of the local Protestant church at Saint Veran, Avignon where John Stuart Mill had bought a house near to where his wife Harriet was buried.

6. Autograph letter signed to Edwin Arnold. *Blackheath Park, Jan 31, 1866*

Octavo, 18.0 x 11.3 cm, 3 pages in ink. Edwin Arnold (1832-1904), then leader writer, and later editor of the *Daily Telegraph*.

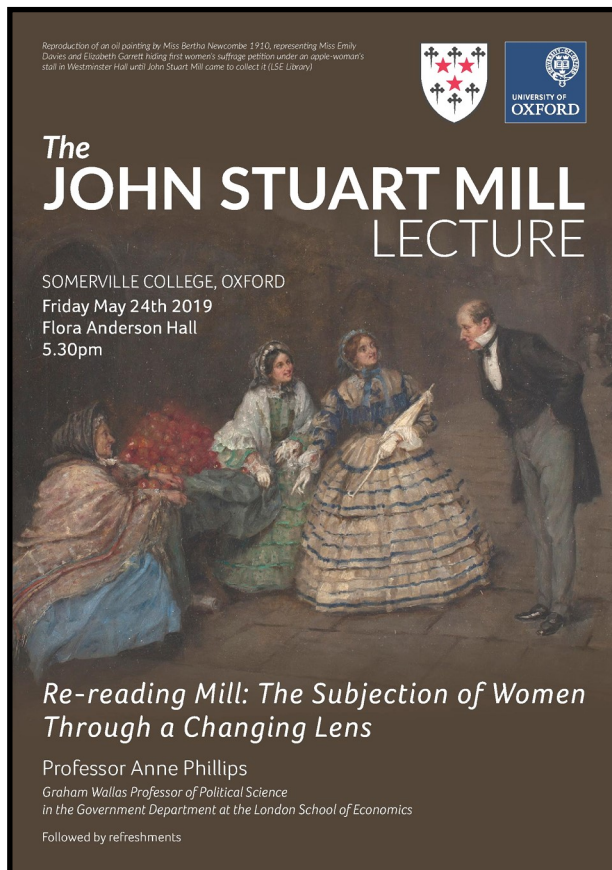
Mill writes "But it is totally impossible for me to have any personal connexion with a paper which takes the part the Telegraph does on the Jamaica question. Not only every principle I have, but the honour and character of England for generations to come, are at stake as the condign punishment of the atrocities of which, by their own not confession, but boast, the Jamaica authorities have been guilty; and I cannot, while that question is pending, select as my special organ on another subject, a paper with which, on a matter of such transcendant importance, I am at open war."

Published in Marion Filipiuk, *Additional Letters John Stuart Mill*, no.914A

7. Autograph letter signed to William Cabell Ex[aminer's] Off[ice] Tuesday [no date circa 1832-41]

Octavo, 17.8 x 11.4 cm, 2 pages in ink. William Cabell [1786-1853] was at this time Senior Clerk in the Secret and Political Department and Assistant Secretary at the Board of Control. Recent discovery of Mill's letters in the archival series in the India Office Library [including several to William Cabell] has greatly enhanced knowledge of his career there and of the East India Company's operations

THE ANNUAL JOHN STUART MILL LECTURE
MAY 24TH 2019



2019 marked the 150th anniversary of the publication of Mill's essay *The Subjection of Women* and our annual lecture was given this year on 24th May 2019 by **Professor Anne Phillips**, Graham Wallas Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics

The illustration is from a 1910 oil painting by Bertha Newcombe representing Emily Davies and Elizabeth Garrett hiding the first women's suffrage petition under an apple woman's stall in Westminster Hall until John Stuart Mill came to collect it (LSE Library)

John Stuart Mill's essay *The Subjection of Women* was published in 1869 to great acclaim within the British - and wider - women's movements. It reads, at one level, as a classic text of liberal Feminism, challenging the social and legal conditions that restrict women's freedom. But it is also a radical critique of marriage and male power; and a paean to the progress of modernity, held back only by this one exception. In this lecture, Anne Phillips reflects on different ways of reading the text, shaped by the preoccupations of different periods, and lending themselves to different insights. The full text is published in the pages following.

*We are delighted to announce that in 2020, our speaker will be **Professor Emeritus of Moral Philosophy at the University of St Andrews, John Skorupski**. The lecture will take place at Somerville College on Friday 22nd May 2020*

RE-READING MILL: *THE SUBJECTION OF WOMEN* THROUGH A CHANGING LENS



Professor Anne Phillips, Graham Wallas
Professor of Political Science, London School
of Economics

My title might suggest a sweeping survey of the different ways in which *The Subjection of Women* was received over the 150 years since it was published. With apologies, I plan to do something more limited – arguably more self-indulgent – and focus on my own shifting reading of the text. This is not because my successive readings are especially insightful, but because reflecting on the way perceptions of a text change is an important reminder of how situated we all are within the preoccupations of our own moment. Reflecting on this can help protect us from the tendency to put things in boxes, give them overly neat labels, a tendency I, for one, have certainly been prone to at different stages in my life.

So, to begin. I studied Mill as an undergraduate, but only his essays on *Utilitarianism* and *On Liberty*. I knew about the extraordinary education he received at the hands of his father; I knew about the mental breakdown when he lost faith in Benthamite principles of social reform and later regained his sense of direction through poetry; but I don't recall his feminism coming up in any of our discussions. I did not know that he had been elected as MP for Westminster in 1865 on a platform that included votes for women; that he presented the first mass petition for women's suffrage to Parliament in 1866; or that in the discussion of the 1867 Second Reform Act, it was Mill who (unsuccessfully) proposed an amendment to replace the word 'man' with 'person', an amendment that would then have enabled women who met the property qualification also to vote. I did not know that he had published a long essay on *The Subjection of Women*.

I discover this essay only in the mid to late 1970s, when I signed up for an evening class on the History of Feminism, taught by Barbara Taylor and Sally Alexander. Barbara Taylor was then completing *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, a book on the Owenite utopian communities of the early to mid-nineteenth century and their often radical ideas about transforming the family and gender relations. Sally Alexander (whose involvement in the disruption of the 1970 Miss World contests inspired the character played by Keira Knightley in the forthcoming film *Misbehaviour*) was particularly immersed in the feminism of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was one of those poorly funded adult education classes – mostly now defunct – that in those days provided a minimal source of income to people who would nowadays probably have prestigious post-doctoral research fellowships. It was a time when little feminist history had yet been published, and little history of feminism, and I think most of us in the class were overwhelmed to discover just how much had been written and argued and lived and campaigned for in the decades and centuries before the contemporary women's movement. When we were asked to choose a topic for presentation, I volunteered for *The Subjection of Women*, a text, as I then learnt, that was much more widely read by nineteenth century feminists than Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Rights of Woman*, which had been rather sunk by Victorian distaste for her supposedly scandalous life.

At that point, I read Mill as a classic example of a liberal feminist. He was the leading liberal theorist of nineteenth century Britain and, as I now discovered, also a passionate feminist, so what else could he be other than a liberal

feminist? That term had a particular resonance in the 1970s women's movement, where we commonly divided feminisms up into their liberal, socialist/Marxist, and radical varieties, and were usually pretty sniffy about the liberal sort. Liberal feminists were thought to be devoted to achieving equal opportunities for women and men, primarily by removing all forms of legal and institutional discrimination; and were widely regarded as lacking sufficient understanding of the forces ranged against women's liberation. Socialist and Marxist feminists, by contrast, understood that the subjection of women was sustained by the deep structures of capitalism, which paid only for that which was commodified (so not for all the reproductive work that fell to the lot of women), which treated women as a reserve army of labour (to be brought in and pushed out of the labour market as required), and which happily promoted a dual labour market that concentrated women in lesser paid, poorer skilled jobs. Meanwhile, radical feminists argued that it was male power, and the violence of men against women, that sustained patriarchy. They criticised liberal and socialist feminists alike for what they saw as an agent-less understanding of the forces ranged against women, as if men, as men, played no role in this, as if it were entirely a matter of failed laws or bad social policy or the power of economic structures.

This was the lens through which I first read *The Subjection of Women*, and it stopped me seeing much of what is significant about the work. What I read in it was an argument about competition and the market as potential liberators for women, and an attack on the male prejudice that was blocking this process. What, Mill asks,

is the peculiar character of the modern world – the difference which chiefly distinguishes modern institutions, modern social ideas, modern life itself, from those of times long past? It is, that human beings are no longer born to their place in life, and chained down by an inexorable bond to the place they are born to, but are free to employ their faculties and such favourable chances as offer, to achieve the lot which may appear to them most desirable.

He goes on to say

But if this principle is true, we ought to act as if we believed it, and not to ordain that to be born a girl instead of a boy, any more than to be born black instead of white, or a commoner instead of a nobleman, shall decide the person's position through all life – shall interdict people from all the more elevated social positions, and from all, except a few, respectable occupations.

How, he asks, can one possibly justify all the legal restrictions the nineteenth put upon women? And why do people think we need them?

Nobody thinks it necessary to make a law that only a strong-armed man shall be a blacksmith. Freedom and competition suffice to make blacksmiths strong armed men, because the weak-armed can earn more by engaging in occupations for which they are more fit.

Reading Mill in the 1970s, this captured for me both the radicalism and the limits of that radicalism. John Stuart Mill had no time for any of the nonsense about women being naturally unfitted for this occupation or that responsibility. As he repeatedly argued, none of us can possibly know what women can or can't do when no woman has yet been given free rein for her capabilities, when laws and customs so much confine and mould and deny her. He was fully open to the possibility that women might be less able in certain spheres than men, or might on average choose different paths in life, but if they were or did, so be it. Why, however, would you make laws to enforce this? If women really are different from men, then that difference will naturally emerge. Why do societies need such a panoply of laws and institutions and social pressures to make sure it turns out this way? Let freedom and competition decide.

That was the radicalism. But then, the problem that a 1970s feminist like myself would be quick to spot: that Mill expected, and clearly hoped, that women would, mostly, continue to choose being wives and mothers, that most of them would not want to study law or medicine or become Members of Parliament. He then failed to address what we would nowadays see as a crucial component in the liberation of women, which is the radical re-organisation of the care responsibilities that so much to shape

women's lives, and the sharing of these between women and men. Mill wasn't bothered by the idea that most women would continue to see their lives as located primarily in the domestic sphere. 'In an otherwise just state of things,' he argued, 'it is not a desirable custom, that the wife should contribute by her labour to the income of the family' (among other things, he worried that this would simply push down the price of labour), and though he considered it essential to a woman's dignity that she had the *power* of earning money, 'it would not be necessary for her protection', in that just state of things, 'that during marriage she should make this particular use of her faculties.'

Here, the 1970s feminist would typically make a comparison (and I seem to recall I did just this in my presentation) between Mill's overly complacent acceptance that the majority of women would carry on assuming the major responsibility for the care of children and household, while men ventured out into the world of politics and work, and the greater radicalism of the woman who was to become his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill. In an essay on *The Enfranchisement of Women*, published in 1851 under Mill's name but now widely attributed – by Mill himself as well as by most Mill scholars – to Harriet Taylor, there is much stronger support for the idea of married, as well as single women, going out to work.

Even if every woman...had a claim on some man for support, how infinitely preferable is it that part of the income should be of the woman's earning, even if the aggregate sum were but little increased by it.... Even under the present laws respecting the property of women, a woman who contributes materially to the support of the family, cannot be treated in the same contemptuously tyrannical manner as one who, however she may toil as a domestic drudge, is a dependant on the man for subsistence.

You don't read this kind of sentiment in the *Subjection* (the publications are separated by about twenty years, though written more like ten years' apart) so it is reasonable to assume that it was never a crucial argument for Mill. He then comes over as impressive in his undoubted support for women's freedom and equality, but also pretty limited in his imagination of what that entailed.

And as I later discovered, this was also what was thought by some of the feminists of his time. Mill was, in many ways, an iconic figure for the Victorian women's movement. Members of the newly formed London National Society for Women's Suffrage cited his 'fearless and eloquent advocacy' as contributing enormously to the society's growth and success, and his speeches to such bodies were always punctuated by loud cheers and applause. Millicent Fawcett, just a young girl at the time, but later the leader of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, went rather overboard in her praise of Mill, virtually attributing the development of the women's suffrage movement to 'the life-long advocacy and guidance of the late J.S. Mill'. But others were more sceptical. Josephine Butler, who led the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts, did not consider Mill's arguments in *The Subjection of Women* especially advanced. 'On the contrary,' (she said in a letter), 'they are but the somewhat tardy expression of a conviction which has been gaining strength in society for the last twenty years'. Emily Davies, who campaigned particularly for women's access to higher education and co-founded Girton College in Cambridge, worried that Mill's association with the cause of women's suffrage made it seem just his 'personal crotchet', as she put it, in a letter to Barbara Bodichon. 'If Mr Mill had made it his first concern, it would have been a different case. As it is, we get mixed up in the public mind with Jamaica and the Reform League which does us no good.'

One of the aspects of the *Subjection* that feminists of the time worried about was that Mill seemed – to them – overly preoccupied with the plight of married women. For many in the nineteenth century women's movement, it was the plight of the single woman that presented the most urgent challenge: the women who did not marry, who could not rely on the financial support of fathers or husbands, yet were denied access – either by legislation or by custom – to most of employment, and were then reduced either to dependence on grudging male relatives or to grinding poverty. (George Gissing's novel *The Odd Women* partly captures this, though not always in the most sympathetic of ways.) In my own first reading of the *Subjection*, Mill's focus on marriage slightly escaped me, though I now find this hard to

understand. The essay is, in fact, at its most passionate when Mill describes the personal subjection of women within marriage and the family, including a powerful passage where he describes the wife's vulnerability to marital rape. Bear in mind that a man was legally entitled to have sex with his wife, regardless of her resistance or consent, until a landmark case in 1991, and that it was not until the 2003 *Sexual Offences Act* that marital rape was explicitly declared illegal in England and Wales, so Mill was way ahead of his time on this.

In the *Subjection*, as in other writings, Mill was very much a believer in what he termed the 'influence of circumstances on character', and he thought the absolute power which marriage laws gave to men brought out the worst in both sexes. For men, the family became 'a school of wilfulness, overbearingness, unbounded self-indulgence, and a double-dyed and idealized selfishness'. For women, it stunted both moral and intellectual growth. Mill was in fact considerably more polite about the stunting effects on women than Mary Wollstonecraft had been eighty years earlier: Wollstonecraft's depiction of the preening and empty-headedness that patriarchy required of middle and upper class women is almost misogynist in its language and tone. The focus of Mill's argument is more on the effects of the absolute power on the men. He recognised that not all took advantage of the powers the law allowed them – there were good husbands, and good marriages – but 'laws and institutions require to be adapted, not to good men, but to bad'. As he argued, we do not justify absolute monarchy by citing instances of kindly kings.

The uniqueness of male power, he argues, as compared to other abuses that have been more successfully challenged through the ages, is that it sustains itself through a combination of bribery and intimidation.

Every one of the subjects lives under the very eye, and almost, it may be said, in the hands, of one of the masters – in closer intimacy with him than with any of her fellow subjects: with no means of

combining against him, no power of even locally overmastering him, and, on the other hand, with the strongest motives for seeking his favour and avoiding to give him offence. In struggles for political emancipation, everybody knows how often its champions are bought off by bribes, or daunted by terrors. In the case of women, each individual of the subject-class is in a chronic state of bribery and intimidation.

This is a language more commonly associated with radical than liberal feminism, and the resonance is even stronger in the additional explanation Mill provides as to why women's subjection continued for so long. With most abuses of power, he argues, men divide into competing classes, some fighting for change, others to retain the status quo. But when it comes to the subjection of women, 'the whole male sex' shares an interest in keeping things as they are, for rich and poor alike can all enjoy their mastery over women. I said earlier that liberal feminists were sometimes criticised for an agent-less understanding of patriarchy, as if men as men played no role in it. You cannot really say this of Mill, who is very strong on the role of men and male power, and depicts the male sex as sharing a quasi-class interest in subjecting women to a state of virtual bond-slavery. What you might say, however (and here I am echoing a point made by Amy Allen in a discussion of Foucault's understanding of subjection), is that Mill's adoption of a master-slave paradigm leads him to understate the extraordinary power of gender norms, and the role these play in accustoming us to particular life choices. It is not that these are absent in the text – he writes of the 'moralities' and 'sentimentalities' that teach women to make 'complete abnegation of themselves' – but in his account, we have the men, with their interest in mastery, and we have the laws that accommodate and permit this. If, after reforming all this, it turns out that most women still accept wife and mother as their primary role in life, he could not see this as something to worry about. He didn't, that is, see how much of subjection is achieved, not through people dominating us or laws that permit this domination, but through the many

ways in which we subject ourselves.

Mill had particular reasons to chafe at the marriage laws of nineteenth century England, because, at the age of twenty-four, he met and fell in love with Harriet Taylor, a married woman with two young children and soon to have a third. The third was her daughter, Helen Taylor, who was eventually to become Mill's step-daughter, and it was Helen Taylor (or rather her niece, Mary Taylor, acting for Helen Taylor) who in 1905 left what remained of his library to Somerville College. John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor became very close. They shared many intellectual and political interests, including the commitment to feminism. In his *Autobiography*, written after her death, Mill attributes many of the ideas in his work to her influence, but not, he says, the basic conviction that all legal, political, social, and domestic relations between the sexes should be ones of complete equality, which he says predated his first meeting with her. Indeed, he rather sweetly says that the strength of his conviction on this issue was 'more than anything else, the originating cause of the interest she felt in me'. One might add to this that at this time in his life, John Stuart Mill was a very attractive young man, who still had all his hair – a 'rich auburn' – and hadn't yet succumbed to the persistent ill health that prematurely aged him. When Thomas Carlyle first met him in 1831, when Mill was 25, he described him as 'a slender, rather tall and elegant youth, with a small clear Roman-nosed face, two small earnestly-smiling eyes; modest, remarkably gifted with precision of utterance, enthusiastic, yet lucid, calm: not a great, yet a distinctly gifted and amiable youth'. We get a somewhat misleading picture of the Mill/Taylor relationship from the portraits we most commonly see of them: hers taken when she was in her twenties; all of his from later in his life.

I guess if John Taylor, Harriet Taylor's husband, had been one of the brutal husbands described in the *Subjection*, she might have left him to live with Mill, though that would itself have been a very difficult decision in those days. But after a trial separation, partly spent in Paris with Mill, she came to the conclusion that it would be unfair to leave the marriage: that her husband had never failed in his affection for her; that it

was not his fault that he was unable to share her interests; and not his fault that she had fallen so



deeply in love with Mill. And so began nearly twenty years of the arrangement. She remained in the marriage, though mostly living apart from her husband; she and Mill met constantly, took holidays together, wrote one another

passionate letters, and worked together on many intellectual projects; but they only married in 1851, two years after the death of her first husband. The general consensus is that they did not have a sexual relationship through this period, which might suggest a rather cool and bloodless relationship. But if you read some of their letters (collected together, rather curiously, by Friedrich Hayek) you sense Mill's desperation for her to leave the marriage, yet total acceptance that this must be her decision, and complete support of her when she concluded that she could not do this. This is a young man deeply in love, chafing at the constraints, coming to think of marriage as an institution that, in the unreformed state of society, is probably necessary to protect women from the sensualities of men, but was not so necessary for what he described as 'higher natures' guided only by morality and love. He argued – long before it came close to a reality – for no-fault divorce. 'Would not the best plan,' he wrote in 1832, 'be divorce which could be attained by any *without any reason assigned*, and at small expense, but which could only be finally pronounced after a long period?' He suggested a period of two years.

There is a third aspect to the *Subjection* that I want to talk about, and this is one that has come more to the fore in recent years in the context of increased scepticism about modernity and progress, and increased scrutiny of Mill's thinking on Britain's colonial empire. Like his

father, Mill had a post in the East India Company, which he started working for at the age of seventeen, and he continued with this till the Company lost its charter in 1858. His view of empire— at least at the beginning – blended with the progressivist optimism that characterised so much of nineteenth century liberal thinking about the colonies. More specifically, it also reflected his understanding of how we learn to think and act for ourselves. The ‘influence of circumstances on character’ suggests that all of us are *potentially* able to govern ourselves, but also that many of us have not yet developed the necessary capacities. So, he supported the extension of the suffrage, but favoured plural votes (more votes for Oxbridge graduates than for a skilled worker, more votes for a skilled worker than an unskilled one). He favoured workplace co-operatives as a democratic schooling ground in which workers would learn how to take responsibility for decisions, but more for this than as a right to a fairer share of social resources. And he thought of Britain’s colonial empire as engaged in a civilising mission that would eventually – but only a long way ahead – educate its subjects up to the point where they could become self-governing. In arguing for liberty, he always included the qualification that this didn’t apply to peoples who had not yet arrived at the *right* stage of civilisation; and he explicitly favoured ‘a vigorous despotism’ as the best mode of government for training people who hadn’t yet arrived at this stage.

You find, then, in Mill’s thinking about colonialism that infantilisation of the colonised as a way of justifying their subjection that has been so characteristic of attitudes to colonialism, up to and including in our own day. It is striking that he is so clear about rejecting that way of thinking when it comes to women, yet permits it when it comes to empire; and indeed so clear, when it comes to women, that if you give one sex absolute power over another, you cannot presume that it will be used in a progressive way, yet seemed to accept the fantasies of the ‘civilising mission’ when it came to colonialism.

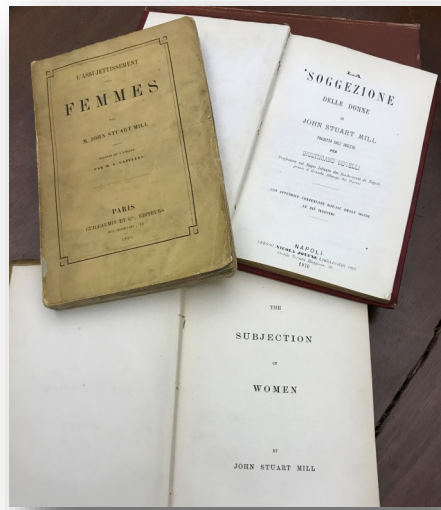
We could perhaps take it as evidence of the depth of his feminism that he saw through this kind of argument when it came to women – but it is then disappointing that he did not extend that insight to colonialism. Or perhaps he did. Some recent

analysis suggests that Mill became considerably less confident about this in the later years of his life: that, as Duncan Bell has put it, his colonial romance gave way to a colonial melancholia, as he increasingly registered the violence of colonialism and its tendency precisely to encourage that violence. Certainly in 1866, Mill was to take a leading role in the attempt to bring about the prosecution of Governor Eyre, who had violently put down a protest in Jamaica, leading to several hundred deaths. The Morant Bay massacre was for some a turning point, in which the fantasies of a benevolent colonialism gave way to greater realism about its true nature. Mill recognised and vehemently denounced the atrocities, though arguably he still thought that better regulation by the state could prevent them.

In *The Subjection of Women*, Mill is still writing as if modernity is on an upward trajectory, with the continuing subordination of women as the one great exception: ‘an isolated fact in modern social institutions; a solitary breach of what has become their fundamental law; a single relic of an old world of thought and practice exploded in everything else, but retaining in the one thing of most universal interest’. From my perspective – and this is me now, rather than in the 1970s and 80s – there are two major problems with this. First, just as a factual matter, it significantly overstates the degree of transformation in other fields. To give the most obvious example, in the *Subjection*, Mill repeatedly contrasts women’s continuing subordination to slavery (now, he says, abolished), in ways that can grate a bit on the contemporary ear. Slavery has *not* been abolished, but also the aftermath of slavery has lived on centuries later in often virulent forms of racism, and there is something overly complacent in the claim that slavery was done and dusted. In representing the nineteenth century as a period when successive abuses of power – all of them, except the abuses of power over women – have been curtailed and then ended, Mill tells an unconvincing story of progress. It is arguable, of course, that this was partly strategic. He arguably overstates the extent to which the ‘modern era’ is indeed characterised by a belief in achievement rather than ascription, a belief that all are free to employ their faculties to achieve what they want and can, rather than being restricted by the lot to which they are born, in order to highlight the

anomalous situation of women. Fair enough, maybe, but this encourages a degree of complacency about other continuing abuses of power.

The second problem with Mill's framing of women's subordination as the 'isolated fact' or 'solitary breach' is that it represents that subordination of women as a hangover from the past, as pre-modern, as nothing to do with the modern era. 'This relic of the past', he says, 'is discordant with the future, and must necessarily disappear.' Again, this is factually wrong. Part of what produced the women's movements of the nineteenth century, and those campaigns to which Mill so consistently gave his support, was that the nineteenth century (the 'modern era') brought with it a diminution of women's room for manoeuvre, a redefinition of public and private that fixed women more firmly in the domestic, and a biologism that marked them more permanently by what were seen as their bodily weaknesses. It was in the age of so-called modernity that we get the intensification of the notion of 'separate spheres'; and in the age of so-called modernity that female engagement in politics comes to be seen as at odds with advanced or civilised ideals. In previous periods, women's engagement in politics had often generated anxiety, but it was in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that it became subject to explicit prohibition. In 1778, the British House of Commons introduced a prohibition on women attending or listening to parliamentary debates; in 1793, the French National Assembly dissolved political organisations for women; in 1848, also in France, decrees were passed preventing women creating or belonging to political clubs or associations. In one analysis of this, Ann Towns goes so far as to argue that 'by the end of the nineteenth century, the following norm was evidently in place: *civilized states exclude women from politics.*'



We flatter ourselves when we suggest that the subordination of women is intrinsically at odds with the principles governing modern societies. In doing so, we also give too much credence to an association that has contributed in destructive ways to hierarchies between cultures, most notably in current representations of Islam. In debates about immigration and multiculturalism, attitudes towards sexual freedom and gender equality are often taken as significant markers of modernity, and are then deployed to demonise groups conceived of as backward or pre-modern.

European countries now commonly make access to citizenship depend on adherence to what are said to be 'core' values, and the list of these frequently includes equality of the sexes. No problem with that, you might say, except that it overstates the extent to which this is indeed a shared value; that it claims the value as somehow 'European', thereby establishing a global hierarchy; and that it has encouraged punitive bans on women's religious dress in the name of modernity, equality, and freedom. We do not know what Mill would have had to say about these. I hope and believe that he would have ranged himself firmly on the side of those opposing such bans – and much of his writing on *The Subjection of Women* and *On Liberty* would indeed support this belief. However, some of his thinking about progress and stages of civilisation might suggest the opposite.

Mill's essay on *The Subjection of Women* is an extraordinary achievement. It is extraordinary both in the radicalism of its arguments, and in the material it offers us for exploring these and other issues. It is also short enough so that one can realistically think of re-reading it every ten years or so, seeing different things in it each time, and - if you are at all like me - realising each time round what you missed in a previous reading, or how you distorted the message to fit with your preconceptions. This means of course that my current reading must also be regarded as provisional.

WHAT LIES BENEATH : HYPERSPECTRAL IMAGING WITH THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY

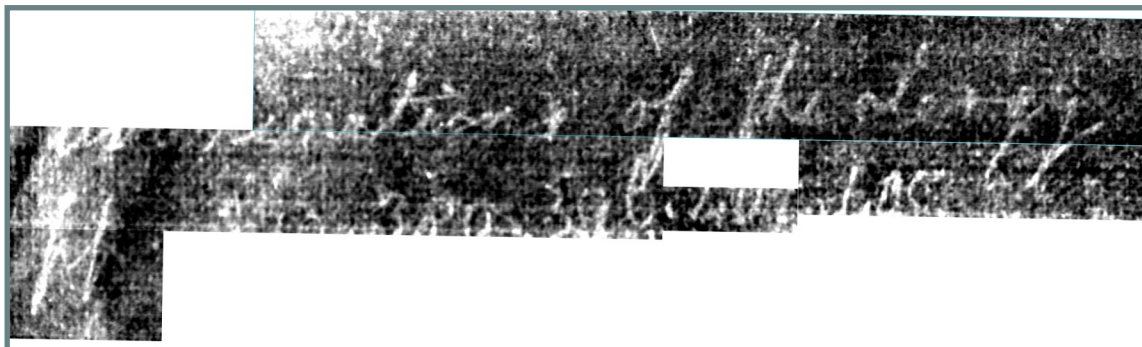
*The ongoing programme to digitize the marginalia in the John Stuart Mill Collection (carried out by a team from the University of Alabama led by **Professor Albert Pionke**) continues to work its way through the hundreds of volumes in the collection. During this project, the team have come across several instances of marginalia that has been erased or rubbed away making the text unreadable.*

*Following a successful application to the **Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation** in 2018, funds were raised to conduct cutting-edge technology called hyperspectral imaging on these items in an attempt to recover this previously inaccessible data. During the spring of 2019, **David Howells** at the Bodleian Library scanned 71 pages from 6 volumes. The resulting data needs further analysis but some exciting results have already been produced. In his article below, **Professor Pionke** reports on one particular finding.*

In his Textual Introduction to *Volume XX — Essays on French History and Historians* of John Stuart Mill's *Collected Works*, general Editor John Robson refers to three phases in Mill's lifelong investment in French history. The first, which extended into Mill's early twenties, included his "apprenticeship in British radicalism," during which, while advocating on behalf of a version of democratic politics inherited from his father, he "dreamt of being a British Girondist" (xciii). Written during this early period and published in the *Westminster Review*, his essay "Modern French Historical Works" reviews the radical

republican histories of Jacques Antoine Dulaure and Charles Sismondi. It generally praises both Frenchmen's work for accurately reconstructing the fundamental brutality of the medieval period and thereby exposing the truth behind his own conservative contemporaries' nostalgia for the age of chivalry.

The essay features a phrase that is unique in Mill's published works: "abominations of the clergy". (In context, Mill writes that "In this country, it has been the interest of the powerful, that the abominations of the clergy in the middle ages should be known; and accordingly they are known. But it has not been the interest of the powerful in this country, that the



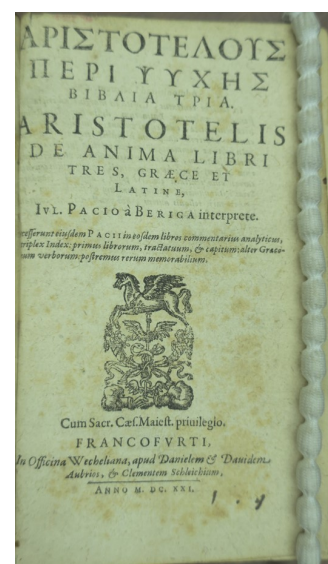
abominations of the barons should be known; and consequently they are not simply unknown, but their authors are believed to have been patterns of the noblest virtues") (p32). Fortunately, this is the very phrase that has been revealed by recent hyperspectral imaging of Mill's personal copy of the *Works of John Locke*.

Funded through the generous support of the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, this discovery allows us to append a caveat to Robson's assertion that "Nothing is known about the composition" of this essay (xciv). We now have material evidence that Mill stored a now-lost fair copy of his article in the back of volume 9 of his copy of Locke. This fact allows us to speculate that Mill may have been reading his 1823 Thomas Tegg edition of Locke while writing about French histories of the Middle Ages, and thus that the radicalism he expresses in "Modern French Historical Works" owes a debt not merely to his own philosophical father, but ultimately to *the* philosophical father of liberalism in England.

MILL MARGINALIA ONLINE UPDATE

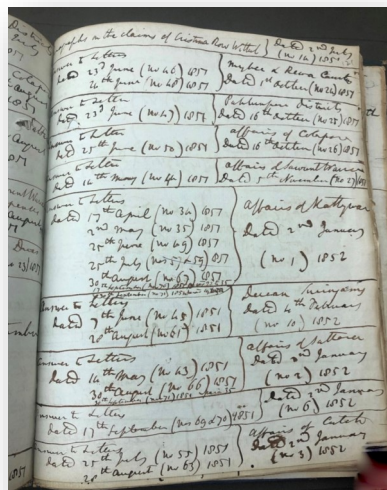
In March 2019, Professor Albert Pionke of the University of Alabama visited the library for two weeks to amass further data for the *Mill Marginalia Online* website. He recorded just over 9800 photos from 220 volumes, capturing approximately 7300 new examples of marginalia. These included the over 1800 individual marks and annotations found in Mill's 1621 Frankfurt edition of *Aristotelis de Anima Libri Tres*, a new record for marginalia in a single volume!

Mill Marginalia Online also recently uploaded a new tranche of page images and transcriptions, representing roughly 3600 new examples of marginalia, and bringing the total number of digitized volumes to 439 and the number of identified authors to 135. The project's new technical staff, Dr. Anne McDivitt and James Michelich, also succeeded in integrating links to full-text editions of otherwise identical books, allowing users to toggle between the individual pages with marginalia found in Somerville's Mill Collection and the full text as originally published and subsequently digitized on sites such as the HathiTrust Digital Library.



Albert has also been promoting the Mill Collection internationally. In February 2019, he was one of four panelists for an hour-long discussion devoted to "John Stuart Mill: A Life." Hosted by Patrick Geoghegan for Irish radio's *Talking History* program, the show is now archived as a podcast on Newstalk's website (<https://www.newstalk.com/shows/talking-history-234948>). His scholarly article, "Handwritten Marginalia and Digital Search: The Development and Early Research Results of *Mill Marginalia Online*", was also recently accepted for future publication in *ILCEA*, a peer-reviewed digital journal published by the Institut des Langues et des Cultures d'Europe, Amérique, Afrique, Asie et Australie at the Université Grenoble Alpes. Finally, his essay, "Mill, Comte, and the Literature of Sociological Critique", is forthcoming in the edited collection *The Socio-Literary Imaginary in 19th and 20th Century Britain*, to be published by Routledge later this year.

TEA WITH JOHN STUART MILL 2019



This year we had four speakers for our annual seminar on the John Stuart Mill project. Albert Pionke gave us his update on digitisation and the [Mill marginalia database](#) which is growing rapidly! David Howell gave us a preview of his hyperspectral imaging results (see p 12) and Bethany Slater, who has spent six months during the year pushing on with our task of finding and recording all the marginalia in the collection, gave a presentation on her findings to date in the literature section of the library.

Finally, Andrew Dalkin talked about his research into Mill and the East India Company, making the case that contrary to general assumption, John Stuart Mill did not regard his 35 years at the East India Company as simply a means of

supporting himself while he wrote extensively and engaged in British politics but that, on the contrary, Mill had a strong influence on the government of India. His research covers a sample of Mill's work, examining in detail his 'Political' dispatches to the Bombay Presidency from 1845 to 1856 and showing how characteristically Utilitarian ideas were applied to a whole range of subjects including disorder and crime, land and trade taxes, princely privileges, corruption and good government and social improvements.

FRIENDS OF THE JOHN STUART MILL LIBRARY

The Friends of the John Stuart Mill Library group was formed in 2016 by Somerville College to provide a focus for Mill enthusiasts from around the world to engage with this important collection of books and marginalia. The aim of the college in setting up the group is to provide support for the preservation and digitisation of the collection, to generate interest in and research on the library and to enable the dissemination of information and research about Mill and the collection to a wider audience.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

• JOHN STUART MILL SEMINAR AND EXHIBITION

Tuesday 17th March 2020

An opportunity to hear about the latest developments in researching, preserving and digitizing the John Stuart Mill Library and to see our latest acquisitions of letters

• ANNUAL JOHN STUART MILL LECTURE

Friday 22nd May 2020

Professor Emeritus of Moral Philosophy at the University of St Andrews, John Skorupski, will be giving our annual lecture this year. Please save the date!



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