

A natural element of womans life

Sociology



A woman's place was deeply connected to domestic duties. She was expected to cook and clean the house while tending to children's needs. She was not expected to hold elective offices or make decisions aside from her husband's approval. Moreover, she could claim no rights for children to which she gave birth. A woman's place was simple; she conformed.

However, a different breed of a woman was on the rise. Sarah Fuller's father instilled a somewhat nonconformist element in her at a very young age.

Timothy Fuller, one who revered education, insisted his daughter fulfill a dual role-as caretaker of the household and as an educated individual

(Macdonald). Before the age of four, Fuller's father forced her to read. By age eight, Fuller had to get out of bed at 5 a. m. to begin household duties but was not permitted to go to bed until completion of her lessons-which oftentimes was not until 11 p. m. In addition to tending to her six siblings, Fuller maintained the household and diligently studied. Not only did her father instill a love for learning in Fuller, but he also instilled an element not compatible with society's expectations of a woman.

On one hand, society granted Fuller the opportunity to grow. She pursued the art of education and displayed her abilities through intellectual exchange with others. By the time she was an adult, Fuller conversed with the most intelligent of men, including well-known Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, William Ellery, and Bronson Alcott. On the other hand, her personal life suffered, as men chose women who abandoned aspirations to stay home and fulfill wifely duties. Though Fuller possessed a pulsating desire to love and be loved, she found no immediate male to fulfill it. Thus, she cultivated and maintained intimate relationships with women who shared the same goal as her.

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Along with delayed love that was directly linked to her inconvenient pursuits, Fuller's limited life provoked a philosophy which she eloquently displays in her book. Moreover, her philosophy further evoked the following thought-provoking questions: Why is a woman not granted the opportunity to grow and unleash her innate intellectual powers If a woman were not truly capable, why does her intuition drive her to inquire Moreover, if inferiority were her true place, would a woman not be naturally satisfied

In an attempt to justify a woman's need, Fuller further questions man's superiority. She points out that a woman seeks not to occupy the place of man as an authority figure; however, the woman's natural need is to freely live and explore (which she requests). She concludes by saying that man will reap the benefits of allowing the woman free exploration. What Fuller neglects to realize is that freedom allows an individual not only to make decisions but also to question authority. To question authority is to be equal with that authority. The womanly growth that Fuller requests would eventually develop into an opportunity for a woman to govern, thus Fuller's proposed philosophy is contradictory.

Though eloquently written, Fuller's oxymoronic tone possesses a level of boldness and nervousness (ATW). The tone seems to be an intellectual plea for understanding of the woman's position in a male-dominating society.

During Fuller's time, society forced stereotypes upon women who dared not to challenge but simply acted accordingly. Thus, the nervousness in her tone continues to be appropriate because she dared to challenge authority (society). The brilliance of Fuller's writing permits her to plea with humility and boldness.

Even though some respected Fuller, Edgar Allan Poe deemed her acts as "

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bookish" and her books as "fewer thoughts than acts" (ATW). Despite criticism, Sarah Margaret Fuller's thoughts become words, which later transpired into actions. Furthermore, Fuller's work acted as a catalyst for the success of women's suffrage and civil rights, which continue to allow the woman to naturally and freely explore.