

GWYNEDD-MERCY COLLEGE

MARGARET FULLER SHAPES THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF AMERICA
THROUGH THE *NEW YORK TRIBUNE*

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BY

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ABSTRACT

Margaret Fuller shaped the self-awareness and consciousness of her American readers through both her literary and social criticism while living in New York City as well as her foreign correspondence for the *New York Tribune* from 1844 to 1850. She led her readers to appreciate European culture while encouraging them to discover and support their own distinctive American artistic and democratic voices.

INTRODUCTION

When Margaret Fuller moved from Boston to New York City to become Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* literary and social critic in late 1844, she undertook a bold venture to educate her American readers to savor their former European arts and culture while inciting them to partake of their emerging, new American aesthetic talents. In addition, she catapulted herself into the social concerns and political issues of the day to awaken America to enact reforms and live out the vital democratic principles on which the country was founded. Once she left America for Europe to become the *New York Tribune's* foreign correspondent in 1846, Fuller continued to address her pedagogical artistic, social, and democratic discourses to effect America's action at home and in the world. In essence, Margaret Fuller shaped the self-awareness and consciousness of her American readers through both her literary and social criticism while living in New York City as well as her foreign correspondence for the *New York Tribune* from 1844 to 1850. She led her readers to appreciate European culture while encouraging them to discover and support their own distinctive American artistic and democratic voices.

Thoughts On Emerson's Essays

Fuller began her first literary criticism for the *New York Tribune* focused upon the Transcendentalist thought of her friend and colleague, Ralph Waldo Emerson:

At the distance of three years this volume follows the first series of Essays, which have already made to themselves a circle of readers, attentive, thoughtful, more and more intelligent....Our people, heated by a partisan spirit, necessarily occupied in these first

stages by bringing out the material resources of the land, not generally prepared by early training for the enjoyment of books that require attention and reflection, are still more injured by a large majority of writers and speakers, who lend all their efforts to flatter corrupt tastes and mental indolence....The result of such a course is inevitable. Literature and Art must become daily more degraded; Philosophy cannot exist. A man who feels within his mind some spark of genius...should consider himself as endowed with a sacred commission....He must raise his mind as high as he can toward the heaven of truth, and try to draw up with him those less gifted by nature with ethereal lightness....¹

Immediately, one sees why Horace Greeley possessed the courage to invite Fuller to undertake the prestigious position of first female literary and social critic for his national newspaper. With great articulation and insight, Fuller acknowledged that Emerson had substantive and relevant information to share with his English and American audiences to enhance their being and living in the world. She had herself experienced the power and knowledge of which Emerson, as the father of American Transcendentalism, had spoken and written, so she was highly capable of addressing the distinction to her public between one who conveys the deep truths of life, which uplift people and lead them to create meaningful and moral lives, and one who misguides the masses by feeding them mere morsels of shallow concepts that keep them just where they are and not improving their lot.

Already, in this first essay, Fuller continued her practice and mission of educating Americans about themselves and making them aware of the importance and value of philosophy, literature, and art for the quality of their lives. Fully, she knew Emerson to be one of the voices of truth for her public's well-being and, therefore, highly recommended his native writing and speaking.

¹ Margaret Fuller, "Emerson's Essays," *New York Tribune*, 7 December 1844, p. 1.

To reach this pinnacle of comprehensive and superb intellectual and social enlightenment, Fuller actively immersed herself in her father's rigorous classical education, which he created just for her. Because he had yearned for a first-born male to educate, lawyer/politician Timothy Fuller licked his disappointment and enthusiastically substituted his first-born daughter, Sarah Margaret. While she worked on her Latin, Greek, literature, poetry and the Bible during the day as he represented his Massachusetts and Congressional constituency, Fuller then continued her lessons with her father in the evenings. He would make sure that she continued in the family male tradition of an education akin to his own at Harvard College, which included intense studies with little sleep.

Being pushed into such pressure of excellence, Fuller suffered horrifying nightmares and great insomnia.² Her only solace from the physical and emotional pain of academia was her transformative forays into her fragile mother's garden where she could enjoy the beauty of the plants and flowers. In the midst of exceedingly demanding male pursuits deemed appropriate by her aggressive father, Fuller was able to relish the feminine refinements of her shadowlike mother's delicate and sensitive nurturing nature.³

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, Fuller grew up with male companions who attended Harvard Divinity School and became Unitarian ministers. She thrived with them because she was so well-educated and could meet them in their thoughtful and chal-

² Margaret Vanderhaar Allen, *The Achievement of Margaret Fuller* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), 1-3.

³ Bell Gale Chevigny, *The Woman and the Myth: Margaret Fuller's Life and Writings* (Old Westbury, New York: The Feminist Press, 1976), 20-23.

lenging studies and discussions. Particularly, she studied German and the new German literature with friends James Freeman Clarke, Frederick Henry Hedge and William Henry Channing.⁴ Out of the new German philosophy was emerging Transcendentalism, a way of living based upon intuitive knowing instead of the traditional experience through the five senses.⁵ It was a reaction to Enlightenment reason and logic as a natural outgrowth of Romanticism, which emphasized emotions, the individual and Nature.

Dismayed by the theology of her Unitarian upbringing, Fuller experienced an epiphany while walking for hours in "Nature."⁶ Synchronistically, she was introduced by her Unitarian Transcendentalist friends to Ralph Waldo Emerson and innovative educator A. Bronson Alcott, both from Concord.

With her father's sudden and unexpected death in 1835, Fuller became the "man of the house" to support her mother and eight siblings. She taught with Elizabeth Peabody at Bronson Alcott's experimental Temple School in Boston, then moved to Providence, Rhode Island, to create her own progressive curriculum at the Greene Street School.⁷ Realizing that she could not teach school and develop her literary criticism skills, Fuller decided to move to Boston. There she sought to hone her skills through experiencing the spirit and potential power of a creative work to adequately be able to judge its merits for realizing its potential. Through her essays and criticism as co-editor

⁴ Katherine Anthony, *Margaret Fuller: A Psychological Biography* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), 34.

⁵ Nora Baker, "Sarah Margaret Fuller, Marchesa D'Ossoli," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 73: American Magazine Journalists, 1741-1850*, ed. Sam G. Riley (Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Inc., 1988), 114.

⁶ Mason Wade, *Margaret Fuller: Whetstone of Genius* (New York: Viking Press, 1940), 28-30.

⁷ Baker, 114-115.

of the Transcendentalist *Dial* from 1839 to 1841, she sought to empower her readers to consider the worth of these works for their own soul development.⁸

However, Fuller's friends and colleagues knew her brilliance in conversation. She was invited to be a founding member of the Transcendental Club, where informal discussions were lively and robust on equal terms with the men.⁹ Because of her gift of bringing forth the best in each person with whom she engaged, she began a series of "Conversations" for women in 1839. Fuller felt it was her duty to educate women to become more than their traditional roles of mother and wife allowed. Since she was privileged to have a classical education, she was compelled to share her good fortune with her sex who had not the opportunity to realize their worth and potential.¹⁰ Fuller encouraged her guests to come forth with their opinions and voices in discussion and reflection upon such subjects as Greek Mythology, Fine Arts and Ethics.¹¹ In thirteen winter sessions at ten dollars each, Fuller inspired her participants to new heights. She opened and closed her eyes, speaking as a sybil in a Delphic oracular trance.¹² Though she suffered severe migraine headaches and depression, which put her in bed after this work, Fuller facilitated the "Conversations" until she left Boston for New York City.¹³

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⁸ Eve Kornfeld, *Margaret Fuller: A Brief Biography with Documents: The Bedford Series in History and Culture* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 25-27.

⁹ Seon Manley and Susan Belcher, "I Accept The Universe: Margaret Fuller and The Peabody Girls," in *O, Extraordinary Women! or the joys of literary lib* (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1972), 138-140.

¹⁰ Lynn Pitts, "Margaret Fuller, Transcendentalism, and the 19th-Century *Dial*," in *America - Meet Modernism!: Women of the Little Magazine Movement*, ed. Barbara Probst Solomon (New York: Great Marsh Press, 2003), 8.

¹¹ Laurie James, *Men, Women, and Margaret Fuller: The truth that existed between Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson and their circle of Transcendental friends*, Vol. 3 (New York: Golden Heritage Press, Inc., 1990), 198-205.

¹² Perry Miller, ed., *Margaret Fuller: American Romantic: A Selection From Her Writings and Correspondence* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1963), xi.

¹³ Wade, 72-73.

In 1843 Fuller embarked on a life-changing travel trip to the western United States with her Unitarian friend, James Freeman Clarke, and his sister. She was deeply moved by the beauty and majesty of Niagara Falls, Ohio, Illinois and Wisconsin, the people and their culture, and the terrible condition of the Native Americans, who were stripped of their ancestral way of life.¹⁴

Once she arrived home, Fuller organized her journals, researched as the first woman allowed in Harvard Library, and produced *Summer on the Lakes*, her narrative travel guide.¹⁵ Fuller did not realize how this book would change her life.

Fuller's excellent and rich portrayal of the western United States astounded Horace Greeley, publisher of the *New York Tribune*, who savored the romance.¹⁶ Encouraged by his wife, who had sampled several of Fuller's "Conversations" in Boston, Greeley offered her the opportunity to become the first female literary and social critic in America for his newspaper.¹⁷ She would live with the Greeleys at their new country home on the East River at Turtle Bay.¹⁸ Even though they were Grahamites whereas she drank coffee and tea, and "fast with the pen" Greeley was frustrated with Fuller's slowness in writing, and they did spar constantly, Greeley respected the gifted Fuller and taught her how to write for the *Tribune*.¹⁹ But before she moved in, Fuller completed her

¹⁴ Joel Myerson, "Sarah Margaret Fuller, Marchesa D'Ossoli," in *The American Renaissance in New England: Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 1*, ed. Joel Myerson (Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1978), 68.

¹⁵ Wade, 124.

¹⁶ Mason Wade, ed., *The Writings of Margaret Fuller* (New York: The Viking Press, 1941), vii.

¹⁷ William Harlan Hale, *Horace Greeley: Voice of the People* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1950), 109.

¹⁸ Daniel W. Pfaff, "Horace Greeley," in *American Newspaper Journalists, 1690-1872: Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 43*, ed. Perry J. Ashley (Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1985), 263.

¹⁹ Hale, 112-113.

feminist tract, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, which was based upon her earlier *Dial* article, "The Great Lawsuit - Man versus Men; Woman versus Women."²⁰ Greeley and his *Tribune* business partner, Thomas McElrath, enthusiastically agreed to publish it in 1845.²¹ This book brought Fuller immediate national and international recognition and renown.

According to her Transcendentalist friends, Fuller's acceptance of this "inferior position" in the "vulgar" city of New York was not appropriate for her intellectual status and achievement in the cultured city of Boston. They did not encourage her. Even her brilliant, close and controversial friend Emerson could not envision what Fuller would accomplish in this foolhardy move.²² In the ongoing process of her awakening observations for the *New York Tribune*, Fuller would grow to report and affect dramatic change of consciousness and action in America and Europe.

²⁰ Susan Sutton Smith, "Sarah Margaret Fuller, Marchesa d'Ossoli," in *American Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide from Colonial Times to the Present, Vol. 3*, ed. Lina Mainiero (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981), 316.

²¹ Barbara Belford, *Brilliant Bylines: A Biographical Anthology of Notable Newspaper-women in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 7-8.

²² Miller, xi.

PART ONE:

THE NEW YORK YEARS, 1844-1846:

FIRST FEMALE LITERARY AND SOCIAL CRITIC

In the body of Fuller's first literary criticism in 1844 for Horace Greeley, she carefully assessed the permanent worth of her friend Emerson's accomplished thought and writing:

....This second series is superior in this respect to the former, yet in no one essay is the main stress so obvious as to produce on the mind the harmonious effect of a noble river or a tree in full leaf....These essays, it has been justly said, tire like a string of mosaics or a house built of medals. We miss what we expect in the work of the great poet, or the great philosopher,...Here is, undoubtedly, the man of ideas, but we want the ideal man also;...We could wish he might be thrown by conflicts on the lap of mother earth, to see if he would not rise again with added powers. All this we may say, but it cannot excuse us from benefiting by the great gifts that have been given, and assigning them their due place....You have his thought just as it found place in the life of his own soul. Thus, however near or relatively distant its approximation to absolute truth, its action on you cannot fail to be healthful....²³

Fuller passionately felt that he had connected and communicated with the highest truth, which he had been commissioned in the prophetic, poetic tradition of his Transcendentalist calling to pursue. However, somehow he had not been able to convey the whole, unadulterated message of which he was so earnestly capable. Emerson had just fallen short of creating what Fuller considered great art or writing. Yet she conveyed her desire for him to reach farther within himself and to his connection with Truth to be still and listen attentively to his calling, so he can feel and communicate his vast genius.

Fuller felt safe enough in her accomplished critical skills to savor and appreciate what Emerson accomplished so beautifully in his essays, yet she dug in and offered constructive criticism to hopefully instill insights and observations for him to consider in

²³ Fuller, "Emerson's Essays," p. 1.

his continued learning and growing as a renowned thinker, speaker, and essayist. Through her balanced criticism, Fuller offered her *Tribune* readers the opportunity to grow in their own lives by reading Emerson's *Essays* and other noteworthy books to which they were drawn and with which they resonated. She taught them to trust themselves and educate themselves. Fuller's intent was to help them lift themselves up to the highest truth and good.

Thanksgiving and Care for Others

At Thanksgiving 1844, Fuller took a look at the deeper and practical meaning of this significant holiday:

Thanksgiving...is not wholly without use in healing differences....if the design of its pious founders were remembered by those who partake....to show enough obedience to the Law and the Prophets to love thy neighbor as ourselves....if in this nation recent decisions have shown a want of moral discrimination on important subjects,...there is cause for thanksgiving and that our people may be better than they seem, the meeting last week to organize an Association for the benefit of Prisoners. We shall not, then, be wholly Pharisees....The prisoner, too, may become a man....We will treat him as if he had a soul....a...performance we heard a few weeks ago at Sing Sing. There the female prisoners joined in the singing of a hymn....The good spirit that dwelt in the music made them its own....Have we learned to do any thing, the humblest, in the service and by the spirit of the power which meaneth all things well? If so we may give thanks,...²⁴

In this thought-provoking essay on the spiritual meaning of Thanksgiving, Fuller moved critically from the traditional family get-together to its transcending opportunity for her readers to experience their shared humanity and to conduct social justice. She urged them to understand the religious reasons why the Puritans shared their treasured bounty with those Native Americans who gave them their knowledge and saved their

²⁴ Margaret Fuller, "Thanksgiving," *New York Daily Tribune*, 12 December 1844, p. 2, in *Margaret Fuller, Critic: Writings from the New-York Tribune, 1844-1846*, eds. Judith Mattson Bean & Joel Myerson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 10-13.

lives. Her extensive background in the Bible was evident as she appealed to her public to grow from the Pharisees to embrace Jesus' greatest commandment. She was acutely aware that her readers were well-versed in knowledge of the Bible, so she naturally used this to her advantage to build her case for care of others. Implying that America has not lived up to its supreme democratic mandate to eradicate slavery within its borders as well as to refrain from tensions with Mexico, Fuller never gave up on the integrity of the nation.

Proof of the pudding was her report that people have come together in an atmosphere of tenderness to create an organization for prison reform in New York. From her experience, she saw the prisoner as no different from any other person who could easily go astray due to difficult circumstances. If one treats the prisoner as human, then the prisoner has the opportunity for change and rehabilitation. Weeks earlier, Fuller had heard the female prisoners at Sing Sing prison sing hymns while filled with the spirit. She confidently and sincerely asked Americans if they could do their part to help those in less fortunate circumstances than themselves.

Fuller had gone deeper inside herself and outwardly into the world with her social criticism. She went into the dark and difficult places of America where people are pushed aside, left to fend for themselves, and forgotten. She bravely entered the prisons of New York to observe and to reflect upon people's conditions, then revealed the monsters and demons lurking within. She opened the locked door to penetrate the darkness and to bring the light to shine on the horrendous circumstances. As a social crusader, Fuller exposed the dark side of our American society and enlisted her audience

to become part of the healthy solution to benefit everyone. From her own life experience, she realized that there is no separation between one's own happiness and the welfare of others; in human interaction, human beings must all live beyond any racism, sexism, classism, and nationalism, which ultimately limit and undermine them.²⁵

The tenor of Fuller's 250 *New York Tribune* articles on location in New York City established Fuller as a gallant and articulate force with which to be reckoned.²⁶ She was given free rein as an editor by Greeley to engage her readers in social issues affecting America and the world and the importance of the arts from her critical perspective.²⁷ Her highly-regarded reputation as past co-editor of the Transcendentalist *Dial* prepared her well to continue her aesthetic commentaries in the *Tribune*. For Greeley, Fuller was hired to write two articles each week on literature and the arts and one concerning social issues. They appeared on the front page of the weekly and semi-weekly editions with her signature asterisk or star.²⁸ Clearly, Fuller was brought on board the liberal Whig newspaper's staff in its fourth year because she served its founding purpose to educate the working class and attack the growing social and political evils of the day.²⁹ Greeley also sought Fuller to increase women's readership of the newspaper; he supported women's rights and intended to provide stimulating and refreshing reading for

²⁵ Annamaria Formichella Elsdon, "Roman Fever Revisited," in *Roman Fever: Domesticity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing* (Columbus : The Ohio State University Press, 2004), 131-132.

²⁶ Catherine C. Mitchell, *Margaret Fuller's New York Journalism: A Biographical Essay and Key Writings* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 3.

²⁷ Annamaria Formichella Elsdon, "Margaret Fuller's *Tribune* Dispatches & the Nineteenth Century Body Politic," in *The Only Efficient Instrument: American Women Writers and the Periodical, 1837-1916*, eds. Aleta Feinsod Cane & Susan Alves (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), 25.

²⁸ Arthur W. Brown, *Margaret Fuller* (Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), 74-75.

²⁹ Elsdon, "Margaret Fuller's *Tribune* Dispatches," 28.

them.³⁰

In her columns, which were both starred and anonymously written at times, Fuller reviewed the classic writings and new American and European authors, whose works she selected.³¹ She chose stories for the *Tribune's* editorials by analyzing the foreign press. She visited patients and prisoners at New York hospitals and prisons to discover their stories and serve them through her exposes. She had left her small New England world and friends to grow in her skills and knowledge in New York as she met and interchanged with people from all walks of life. Fuller learned to meet her newspaper deadlines and matured in her heart, mind and being as she lived and worked in New York City between December 1, 1844, and August 1, 1846.³² She felt how important her *Tribune* criticism was for her readers and herself.³³

New Year's, Slavery and War

In her 1844 New Year's reflection upon the course of the nation, Fuller dug deeply into her Transcendentalist and mystical belief system to promote social and political justice:

....Let us look about us to see with...what acts of devotion, this modern Christian nation greets the approach of the New Year;...This last week brings tidings that a portion of the inhabitants of Illinois,...live...for themselves, acknowledging no obligation and no duty to God or to man. One man has freed a slave, but a great part of the nation is now busy in contriving measures that may best rivet the fetters on those now chained, and forge them strongest for millions yet unborn. National Honor is trodden under foot for a National bribe....it is impossible not to respect that of the Mexican Minister for the

³⁰ Brown, 74-75.

³¹ Phyllis J. Read and Bernard L. Witlieb, "Sarah Margaret Fuller Ossoli," in *The Book of Women's Firsts: Breakthrough Achievements of Almost 1,000 American Women* (New York: Random House, 1992), 170.

³² Brown, 74-76.

³³ Margaret Fuller, "To [?]," in *The Letters of Margaret Fuller: Vol. IV: 1845-47*, ed. Robert N. Hudspeth (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 39.

manly indignation with which he has uttered truths,...Yet we cannot lightly be discouraged or alarmed as to the destiny of our Country. The whole history of its discovery and early progress indicates too clearly the purposes of Heaven with regard to it....We too have been chosen,...If the nation tends to wrong, there are yet present the ten just men....There is still hope , there is still an America,...³⁴

Even in these dark days of Americans condoning slavery and the nation aggressively seeking its expansive policy of Manifest Destiny and war with Mexico, Fuller still knew that there were sane women and men who would stand up and act in accordance with what is right before God. She was totally convinced that America would remember its original democratic commitment to all who seek freedom and act accordingly as sanctioned by God. This was the greatness and promise of America for all its people. In her column, she repeatedly instigated whatever she could to lead her readers to recommit themselves to the nation's true glory of living its ideals at home and in relation in the world. Fuller instilled the thoughtfulness and vigor for them to be and act their best as Americans. Both she and Greeley adamantly opposed the expansion of slavery and Texas annexation.³⁵

America's Potential

While reviewing a new book on America in 1845, Fuller struck painfully at the heart of America's failure to live up to its promise:

....We doubt not the destiny of our Country, that she is destined to accomplish great things for Human Nature....But she has been so false to the scheme made out at her nativity that it is now hard to say which way that destiny points....America is as yet but an European babe:-some new ways and motions she has,...but that soul that may shape her mature life scarce begins to know itself yet....³⁶

³⁴ Margaret Fuller, "New Year's Day," *New York Tribune*, 28 December 1844, p. 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii-xviii.

³⁶ Margaret Fuller, "American Facts," *New York Tribune*, 19 May 1845, p. 1.

Through her substantial spiritual foundation and critical eye, Fuller saw the magnificent potential of America in its infancy. How the nation manifests this great hope needs to awaken American fortitude and democratic consciousness.

On the Fourth of July 1845, Fuller stirred the hearts of Americans to take a good, hard look at themselves and their country in the mirror:

The bells ring;...And yet, no heart,...can beat to-day with one pulse of genuine, noble joy....to unbiased minds must come sad thoughts of National Honor soiled in the eyes of other nations,...America is rich and strong; she has shown great talent and energy....But the noble sentiment which she expressed in her early youth is tarnished;....This year, which declares that the people at large consent to cherish and extend Slavery as one of our "domestic institutions," takes from the patriot his home....for what is Independence if it does not lead to Freedom?...The Country needs to be born again; she is polluted with the lust of power, the lust of gain....³⁷

Fuller spoke for the dismay of the country concerning the increasing proliferation and profits of slavery. America had turned a blind eye to its full democratic heritage, which must be reborn. America had lost its soul purpose. Yet Fuller invited her readers to reclaim their birthright.

Gravely concerned about her country, Fuller continued her call for Americans to free themselves to receive the treasures of all nations with open arms in 1845:

We love our country well....Our thoughts anticipate with eager foresight the race that may grow up from this amalgamation of all races of the world....And as the men of all countries came hither to find a home and become parts of a new life, so do the books of all countries gravitate towards the new centre...the new thought which is to grow into American mind and develop American literature....But...we dare to say it, will not be again genius *like* that of Italy,...*There* we find fulfillment....³⁸

With desperate immigrants from all nations of the world coming to America for freedom, Fuller anticipated the emergence of the new American. She insisted that they will ripen

³⁷ Margaret Fuller, "Fourth of July," *New York Tribune*, 4 July 1845, p. 2.

³⁸ Margaret Fuller, "Italy (Alfieri)," *New York Tribune*, 13 November 1845, p. 1.

the treasures they carry within of their ancestral homes into a new integrated American aesthetics and voice. As she reviewed the exceptional biographies on poet Vittorio Alfieri, sculptor Benevenuto Cellini, and Dante Alighieri, Fuller celebrated the extraordinary arts and cultures of Greece and Rome. In her youth, Fuller's father taught her to appreciate the gifts of these vast centers of classical civilization. Fuller would never lose sight of her increased fascination and longing for Italy and Europe.

During one of socialite Anna Lynch's literary soirees, Fuller met James Nathan, a Jewish businessman from Hamburg, who wrote poetry and played the guitar. They began a relationship that grew very passionate, then cooled very quickly when Nathan moved back to Hamburg with his mother. Fuller was devastated by his departure.³⁹ When she was invited to make the Grand Tour of Europe with her wealthy Quaker friends, Marcus and Rebecca Spring, as governess for their son Eddie in August 1846, Fuller was fulfilling a lifelong dream.⁴⁰ She wrote to Nathan of her plans to spend a year visiting England, Germany, France, and Italy, in the hopes of seeing him again.⁴¹

But first Fuller worked out a deal with Horace Greeley to become the *Tribune's* foreign correspondent writing letters for publication at ten dollars per dispatch from the journal of her travels. As the Springs and she departed for Europe on the steamer *Cambria* on August 1, 1846, the Greeleys saw them off.⁴² At the same time, the *Tribune* published her farewell.⁴³

³⁹ Anthony, 113-115.

⁴⁰ Wade, *Margaret Fuller: Whetstone of Genius*, 169-170.

⁴¹ Margaret Fuller, "To James Nathan," in *The Letters of Margaret Fuller: Vol. IV; 1845-47*, ed. Robert N. Hudspeth (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 189-191.

⁴² Wade, 170-171.

⁴³ Miller, xii.

Farewell to New York city, where twenty months have presented me with a richer and more varied exercise for thought and life, than twenty years could in any other part of these United States....New York is the focus, the point where American and European interests converge....I hope for good results, from observation, with my own eyes, of life in the old world, and to bring home some packages of seed for life in the new....I go to behold the wonders of art, and the temples of old religion. But I shall see no forms of beauty and majesty beyond what my country is capable of producing in myriad variety, if she has but the soul to will it;....⁴⁴

Eager to live her dream in Europe, Fuller never lost sight of America's great promise.

She hoped to continue to nourish and affect the young nation through her literary and social observations from Europe.

⁴⁴ Margaret Fuller, "Farewell to New York," *New York Tribune*, 1 August 1846, p. 1., in *Margaret Fuller: American Romantic: A Selection From Her Writings and Correspondence*, ed. Perry Miller (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1963), 250-252.

PART TWO:

THE EUROPEAN YEARS, 1846-1850:

FIRST FEMALE FOREIGN NEWS CORRESPONDENT

Arriving in Liverpool, England, in the record time of ten days and sixteen hours crossing the Atlantic, Margaret Fuller and the Springs visited the industrial centers and cities of England and Scotland.⁴⁵ Fuller was happily surprised to learn in her travels that her essays in the *Dial* and *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* were widely read and known. Her newly-published book, *Papers on Literature and Art*, which critically reviewed American and European art and literature, was acclaimed as well.⁴⁶ Fuller's sparkling reputation led them to be hosted by socialites and luminaries. However, as their tour progressed, Fuller and the Springs moved farther away from the tourist attractions to penetrate the seething, underlying discontent of the masses.⁴⁷

As the first American woman to be employed as a foreign news correspondent, Fuller delivered thirty-seven letter dispatches to the front page of the *New York Tribune* from 1846 until 1850. Using the title, "Things and Thoughts in Europe," she recorded the sights and sounds of her travel and living experiences, which more and more characterized the evolving social and political issues of Europe, America and the world.⁴⁸

Poverty in Europe

Perceiving the severe poverty in Glasgow, Fuller noted:

Certainly the place,...more resembles an *Inferno* than any other we have yet visited.

⁴⁵ Wade, 172-189.

⁴⁶ Baker, 120.

⁴⁷ Kornfeld, 57.

⁴⁸ Elsdon, 24.

The people are more crowded together, and the stamp of squalid, stolid misery and degradation more obvious and appalling....I saw here in Glasgow persons, especially women, dressed in dirty, wretched tatters, worse than none, and with an expression of listless, unexpecting woe upon their faces, far more tragic than the inscription over the gate of Dante's *Inferno*....Yet there is every reason to hope that those who ought to help are seriously, though slowly, becoming alive to the imperative nature of this duty; so we must not cease to hope, even in the streets of Glasgow, and the gin-palaces of Manchester, and the dreariest recesses of London....⁴⁹

Fuller and the Springs sorrowfully comprehended the massive scope of suffering poor amidst the growing prosperity of England's industrial revolution. Those thriving industries and persons with means and wealth, Fuller insisted, have a duty to respond to and alleviate this overwhelming by-product of capitalism.⁵⁰

In London, Fuller was introduced in 1846 by the Springs to exiled Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini, who had created a school for poor Italian boys.⁵¹ She was so moved by his commitment to create a unified Italy through a republican government with no constraints from a foreign power.⁵² Fuller was eager and enthusiastic to write about him.⁵³ Enamored of his cause, Fuller agreed to carry letters for him to Italy and even take him there in disguise if necessary.⁵⁴

Poverty and Reform

In Paris for the 1846-47 winter season, Fuller realized the difficult plight of the people:

...the poorer classes have suffered from hunger this winter. All signs of this are

⁴⁹ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter VI," *New York Tribune*, 23 December 1846, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe; Letter VIII," *New York Tribune*, 7 February 1847, p. 1.

⁵¹ Wade, 185.

⁵² Pitts, 12-13.

⁵³ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter IX," *New York Tribune*, 19 February 1847, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Chevigny, 298-299.

kept out of sight in Paris. A pamphlet, called "The Voice of Famine," stating facts, ...was suppressed almost as soon as published; but the fact cannot be suppressed, that the people in the provinces have suffered most terribly....the need of some radical measures of reform is not less strongly felt in France than elsewhere,....The more I see of the terrible ills which infest the body politic of Europe, the more indignation I feel at the selfishness or stupidity of those in my own country who oppose an examination of these subjects,....⁵⁵

As Fuller watched and analyzed the people's unrest unfurling in her travels, she could not help but see how the same problems of poverty and class were occurring in America and also needed to be addressed expediently and wisely.

Arriving in Italy in the spring of 1847, Fuller delivered Mazzini's letters to his mother and allies in Genoa.⁵⁶ She was immediately welcomed into the core of his radical associates.

Rome and the Pope

With the Springs, Fuller traveled to reside in Rome and explore this ancient and exciting city:

There is very little that I can like to write about Italy. Italy is beautiful, worthy to be loved and embraced, not talked about....The ceremonies of the Church have been numerous and splendid during our stay here; and they borrow unusual interest from the love and expectation inspired by the present Pontiff. He is a man of noble and good aspect, who, it is easy to see, has set his heart upon doing something solid for the benefit of man....⁵⁷

What Fuller did not write about, even to her closest friends, was her chance meeting with Marquis Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, a young Italian nobleman, who was ten years younger, not intellectual, and a liberal. After attending the vespers service on Holy Thursday in

⁵⁵ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XII," *New York Tribune*, 12 May 1847, p. 1, in *Americans in Paris: A Literary Anthology*, ed. Adam Gopnik (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2004), 91-96.

⁵⁶ Pitts, 18.

⁵⁷ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XIV," *New York Tribune*, 5 August 1847, p. 1.

1847 at St. Peter's with the Springs, Fuller lost sight of them as she explored the chapels. Ossoli saw her searching, inquired to help and kindly walked her to her nearby apartment. A friendship ensued over the next few weeks, with Ossoli teaching Fuller Italian and the politics in his world.⁵⁸

Politically, Italy was divided into eight separate states. Under the dominant control of Austria were Lombardy, Venetia, Tuscany, Parma, and Modena in the north. The Kingdom of Piedmont in the northwest was the only independent Italian state governed by the native House of Savoy. In the south, the Kingdom of Naples was ruled by the Spanish Bourbons. The Papal States in the center of Italy were strongly influenced by Austria. There had been the growth of the Carbonari and Mazzini's Giovine Italia, which hinted of the hope for Italian independence and constitutional unity, but nothing substantially changed. With the election in 1846 of the liberal Pope Pius IX, political prisoners were given amnesty, a representative council with laymen was created and a civil guard was formed. These early reforms gave the people in the Papal States hope for democracy.⁵⁹

Seeds of Revolution and Reform

As Fuller toured northern Italy in the summer of 1847 with the Springs, she kept her *Tribune* public politically informed:

At this moment there is great excitement in Italy. A supposed spy of Austria has been assassinated at Ferrara, and Austrian troops are marched there. It is pretended that a conspiracy has been discovered in Rome; the consequent disturbances have been put down. The National Guard is forming. All things seem to announce that some impor-

⁵⁸ Wade, 201-217.

⁵⁹ Chevigny, 367-368.

tant change is inevitable here, but what? Neither Radicals nor Moderates dare predict with confidence, and I am yet too much a stranger to speak with assurance of impressions I have received. But it is impossible not to hope.⁶⁰

More and more, Fuller was being drawn into the deep democratic cause for Italy and its people.

While visiting Venice in 1847, Fuller became ill with fatigue and did not continue on the grand tour into Switzerland and Germany with the Springs. She slowly recovered as she reacquainted herself with the beauty, culture and politics of northern Italy at a comfortable pace.⁶¹ Eventually in October she returned to Rome, reporting her insights:

The Austrian rule is always equally hated,...there is always a force at work underneath which shall yet,..shake off the incubus....In the middle class ferments much thought,...The censorship of the press prevents all easy, natural ways of instructing them;...The Austrian policy is to allow them a degree of material well-being,...Her policy is, indeed, too thoroughly organized to change except by revolution....Alas! I have the more reason to be ashamed of my countrymen...who....have no heart for the idea, for the destiny of our own great nation: how can they feel the spirit that is struggling now in this and others of Europe?...⁶²

Through her ever-growing love of Italy and its people, Fuller attacked the Austrians' iron rule and assailed America for its loss of democratic identity and freedom. As she entered and supported the Roman revolution, so Fuller expected her fellow Americans to follow suit.

Upon her return to Rome in fall 1847, Fuller reestablished contact with Ossoli, whom she adored. Before she had left for the north, he had proposed marriage, which she declined. Now she accepted him as her lover and husband. Because Ossoli was a

⁶⁰ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XV," *New York Tribune*, 11 September 1847, p. 1.

⁶¹ Wade, 206-212.

⁶² Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XVI," *New York Tribune*, November 1847, p. 1., in *At Home And Abroad or Things and Thoughts in America and Europe*, ed. Arthur B. Fuller (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1971), 236-241.

Catholic from a traditional Vatican family, he could not officially marry Fuller, who was Protestant. However, they lived together as common law husband and wife. Fuller kept their relationship a secret from her family and friends in the United States because it was considered so scandalous.⁶³

Fuller increasingly kept her American readers aware of the current events developing in the Italian liberal national revival and Papal political reforms as they occurred in 1847:

In the spring, when I came to Rome, the people were in the intoxication of joy at the first serious measures of reform taken by the Pope....Heart had spoken to heart between the prince and the people;....For myself, I believe they will attain it. I see more reason for hope, as I know more of the people....I believe that Italy will revive to new life...The National Guard is hailed with no undue joy by Italians, as the earnest of progress, the first step toward truly national institutions and a representation of the people....I earnestly hope for some expression of sympathy from my country toward Italy. Take a good chance and do something;...This cause is OURS, above all others; we ought to show that we feel it to be so....⁶⁴

Harshly and enthusiastically, Fuller reached out to her American readers to remember their own democratic heritage and birthright to actively support their brothers and sisters fighting for their human rights in Italy. She encouraged them to give their support in all ways possible.

In the midst of her active engagement in the turmoil of the approaching Revolution, Fuller was secretly carrying her baby with Ossoli.⁶⁵ This tension helped to create her depression in Rome in 1848:

The climate of Rome at this time of extreme damp I have found equally exasperating

⁶³ Anthony, 155-162.

⁶⁴ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XVII," *New York Tribune*, 27 November 1847, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Robert N. Hudspeth, ed., *The Letters of Margaret Fuller: Vol. V:1848-49* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 6.

and weakening. I have had constant nervous headache without strength to bear it, nightly fever, want of appetite....Now this long dark dream-to me the most idle and most suffering season of my life-seems past. The Italian heavens wear again their deep blue; the sun shines gloriously;...First, the victorious resistance of Sicily and the revolution of Naples....This happened last week. The news of the dethronement of Louis Philippe reached us just after the close of the Carnival....Whatever be the result, France has done gloriously;....⁶⁶

Fuller conveyed the dramatic impact of these liberating events to her captivated readers.

They were living the Revolution in Europe and Italy with her.

Suddenly, Pope Pius IX reversed his liberal policies in 1848 and acceded to the demands of catholic Austria, repudiating his call for a unified Italian republic. He relinquished his power as Italian prince in favor of head of the church.⁶⁷ Fuller, speaking for the Italian revolutionary cause in 1848, wrote:

The loss of Pius IX is for the moment a great one....The responsibility of events now lies wholly with the people,...Hoping this era, I remain at present here....My friends write to urge my return; they talk of our country as the land of the future. It is so, but that spirit which made it all it is of value in my eyes, which gave all of hope with which I can sympathize for that future, is more alive here at present than in America. ...In Europe, amid the teachings of adversity, a nobler spirit is struggling,-a spirit which cheers and animates mine....This is what makes *my* America.....⁶⁸

Fuller could not leave her active participation in the Revolution as journalist because it had become her life. She felt vitally alive to report the ongoing progress of the Italian democratic movement to America, which she felt had lost its revolutionary spirit and fervor. Realistically, Fuller could not return to her native country because she expected a child. No one back home knew about this.

During the summer of 1848, Fuller moved to Rieti in the mountainous Abruzzi area to quietly give birth. Ossoli remained on duty in Rome with the papal Civic Guard.

⁶⁶ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XXIII," *New York Tribune*, 4 May 1848, p. 1.

⁶⁷ Hudspeth, 8-9.

⁶⁸ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XXIV," *New York Tribune*, 15 June 1848, p. 1.

With Ossoli present, Fuller gave birth to Angelo Eugene Ossoli on September 5, 1848.⁶⁹

She also worked on her history of the Roman Revolution.⁷⁰

Leaving her son safely in Rieti with a wetnurse, Fuller returned to Rome in November to be with her husband and support the Revolution. She acknowledged that the Roman Revolution was risky and very costly in 1849.⁷¹ The Pope's chief minister, Pelligrino Rossi, was assassinated and the Pope fled for his life in November 1848. With a power vacuum, the Roman Republic was established in February 1849 with Mazzini, Saffi and Armellini leading the Triumvirate.⁷²

However, the Roman Republic could not stand because the Catholic European powers needed to reestablish the papacy.⁷³ France and Austria began their plans for attack in 1849.⁷⁴

Desperate in the face of war carnage, Fuller still hoped for the republic to survive. In a final plea to her readers, she invited America to join in the Revolution with her. Yet she certainly realized that massive troops were pressing into Rome from all sides.

Faithfully yet sadly, Fuller continued to report the war as Oudinot and his French army descended upon Rome.⁷⁵ As the French bombarded Rome during June 1849, Fuller blamed the Pope for shedding Italian blood instead of Austrian. She shared the horrors of living through the bombing in the *Tribune*.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Hudspeth, 9-10.

⁷⁰ Allen, 165.

⁷¹ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XXVIII," *New York Tribune*, 4 April 1849, p. 1.

⁷² Allen, 162-167.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁷⁴ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XXX," *New York Tribune*, 23 May 1849, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XXXI," *New York Tribune*, 23 July 1849, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XXXII," *New York Tribune*, 24 July 1849, p. 1.

Understanding that all hope was lost for their cause, Fuller stoically wrote her last dispatch for the *New York Tribune*. She was disgusted and sickened by the devastating cruelty and destruction of lives and property.⁷⁷

The Roman Revolution was done. As political refugees under police surveillance, the Ossolis left Rome in 1849 to retrieve their son, who had been abandoned by his wet nurse in Rieti because the funds for his care had not been received in the disrupted post during the revolution. Fed and nursed back to health, young Ossoli was taken by his parents to live in Florence.⁷⁸ Fuller completed her history of the Roman Revolution and enjoyed her family. She grew acquainted with Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning who were also living in Florence.⁷⁹ Concerned about finances and publishing her book, Fuller made plans for the passage of her family on the *Elizabeth* to America.⁸⁰ She experienced dark premonitions about the voyage.⁸¹ On July 19, 1850, the ship went aground on a sandbar near Fire Island, New York, in a hurricane. The Ossolis drowned in the sea.⁸²

⁷⁷ Margaret Fuller, "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XXXIII," *New York Tribune*, July 1849, p. 1.

⁷⁸ Allen, 171-172.

⁷⁹ Anthony, 196-197.

⁸⁰ Wade, 263-267.

⁸¹ Margaret Fuller, "Memoirs," in *The Transcendentalists: The Classic Anthology*, ed. Perry Miller (New York: MJF Books, 1978), 338-339.

⁸² Baker, 121-122.

CONCLUSION

Though her history of the Roman Revolution was lost in the sea with her, Margaret Fuller's social and literary criticism from New York City and her European foreign correspondence for the *New York Tribune* from 1844 to 1850 awakened her American readers to consider their democratic heritage and build upon it by initiating action both in America and in Italy for positive social and political change. She encouraged them to look deeply into themselves and at America so they could revitalize and live the nation's original founding principles as well as manifest their own original American aesthetic voices using the treasures of their European past.

In her writings, Fuller passionately presented the established and new American and European literary and artistic voices to be savored for American development and growth, the horrific living conditions in hospitals, prisons and European industrial nations to be cleaned up by concerned and caring American citizens and the hope and progress of the Italian people's revolution to ignite sympathetic Americans to take up arms with the Italian people.

Margaret Fuller indeed shaped the self-awareness and consciousness of her American readers through her *New York Tribune* articles from 1844 to 1850.

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