

Margaret Fuller, Brutus, and George Bancroft: A Journalist's Beginnings

Albert J. von Frank

*I*n recalling Margaret Fuller's role as a pioneer among female journalists, one is apt to imagine her baptism as occurring at the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1844 under the patronage of Horace Greeley – or, positing a somewhat different definition of journalism, a half-decade earlier in Boston, during her two years' editing of the transcendentalist quarterly, the *Dial*. It is easy to overlook the fact that her introduction to the field actually occurred in 1834, in her twenty-fourth year, or that her first publication of any sort, a brief article entitled "Brutus," appeared on 27 November of that year in the *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*, in dialogue with the eminent historian George Bancroft.¹ The precise circumstances of Fuller's debut as a writer and a journalist shed significant light on her subsequent career and the kind or style of journalism she would pursue.

In the *North American Review* for October 1834, Bancroft had published "Slavery in Rome," a work of historical scholarship meant to show that the existence of a large class of slaves had been the source of social, political, and economic corruption in ancient Rome and was eventually the cause of the empire's downfall.² Clearly offered as an allegory of the contemporary American situation Bancroft's essay argued that the systematic exploitation of an immense underclass for the maintenance of a tiny, luxuriously wealthy elite had necessarily to end in catastrophe for any society so constructed. Bancroft invoked nearly all of the particular indictments that would become standard in American abolitionist

literature over the next thirty years, from the induced view that labor was disreputable to the physical impoverishment of the soil, from the threat of slave revolts to the corruption of politics and the enervation of the leader class. The one paragraph, however, in all this lengthy and cogent discussion that arrested Fuller's attention was a brief and almost irrelevant assault on the character of Marcus Brutus, a leader, along with his brother-in-law, Gaius Cassius Longinus, in the assassination of the tyrant Julius Caesar.

Disposing of the conduct of Cassius with the remark that it had "ever been ascribed to personal malevolence and not to patriotism" (432), Bancroft turned his attention to the more famous conspirator:

But Brutus! – History never manufactured him into a hero, till he had made himself an assassin. Of a headstrong, unbridled disposition, he never displayed coolness of judgment in any part of his career. It was his misfortune to have been the son of an abandoned woman, and to have been bred in a home, which adultery and wantonness had defiled. The vices of early indulgence may be palliated by his youth and the licentiousness of his time; but Brutus, while yet young, was notorious as a merciless and exorbitant usurer, at the rate of four per cent. a month, or forty-eight per cent. a year. When his debtors grew unable to pay, he obtained for his agent an appointment to a military post, and extorted his claims by martial law. The town of Salamis, in the isle of Cyprus, owed him money on the terms we have mentioned. He caused the members of its bankrupt municipal government to be confined in their town-hall, in the hope that hunger would quicken their financial skill; and some of them were starved to death. Such was Brutus at that ingenuous period of life, when benevolence is usually most active. Brutus hated Pompey, yet after deliberating, he joined the party of that leader, and remained true to it, so long as it seemed to be the strongest; but no sooner was the battle of Pharsalia won, than Brutus

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gave in his adhesion to Cesar, and to confer a value on his conversion, he betrayed the confidence of the fugitive, whose cause he had abandoned! In the plot against Cesar, Brutus was the dupe of more sagacious men.... (432-33)

Fuller dissented from this portrait, at first privately in conversation with her father Timothy at their home in Groton. They knew the identity of the author, even though, as was the practice then at the *North American Review* (and at most other periodicals), the essay was unsigned. Discovering authorship was a pleasant, undemanding pastime and a source of literary gossip among the journal's readership. Already a veteran contributor to the *Review*, Bancroft had, the previous July, increased his celebrity very markedly by publishing the first volume of his monumental *History of the United States*. The following October, he entered the political arena, hoping to be elected as state representative from Northampton. At the moment when his essay on Roman slavery appeared he was trying to acquaint the public with his liberal, pro-labor political views.³

Timothy Fuller seems to have challenged his daughter to write out her objections to Bancroft's treatment of Brutus and was sufficiently impressed with the result to arrange its publication in a Boston newspaper over the signature "J":

BRUTUS.

To the Editor of the Daily Advertiser.

In the last number of the *North American Review* appeared an article on "SLAVERY IN ROME," which I have read with much pleasure. The views of the writer are liberal, and based upon extended knowledge. Many facts, not, as I believe, generally known, are brought together in a very interesting manner. The sentiments are such as must meet with warm approbation from most enlightened minds in this part of the world.

But one part of the article occasioned me a painful surprise. I refer to the character of MARCUS BRUTUS, given there, and not as if any new light were thrown upon

the subject, but as if the stains upon the life of Brutus were of general notoriety. Brutus is described as a man of “a headstrong, unbridled disposition;” “time-serving, treacherous” – on a trying occasion, “the dupe of more sagacious men in the plot against Cæsar; avaricious and cruel.” No authorities are quoted in support of an opinion diametrically opposed, if I may trust the testimony of a multitude of poets and historians, to that of the present and past ages.

I cannot, and I should suppose others would not, feel content to let this pass without some inquiry. Our firmament is not so rich in these “particular stars,” bright with the light of good deeds,⁴ that we can well endure to have any one of them withdrawn. The character of Marcus Brutus has been, from time immemorial, held up to the youthful aspirant, as a model for imitation; and if we are to lose this object of reverence from among the heart’s household gods, the witnesses whose evidence has led to its degradation, ought to be brought before us.

The most ample account of Brutus with which I am acquainted is that of Plutarch; which upon examination will be found to contradict in almost every point the statements in the N.A.R. The writer referred to says “History never manufactured him into a *hero* till he had made himself an assassin.” If by *hero* is meant one distinguished in the field, this is undoubtedly true; – Brutus was still a young man at the time of Cæsar’s death; and his employments had been civil rather than military. If the term implies the sacrificing one’s own interests for the benefit of others, it must be allowed that *great* occasions for signaling one’s self in this way do not occur very frequently in the course of a single life; and that there is no record of Brutus’s being deeply tried until the death of Cæsar. But there appears to

be sufficient evidence that his life had not been passed in inglorious idleness, and that his reputation was constantly rising in Rome. – Plutarch says – “he was happily formed to virtue both by nature and education.[”]⁵ Being sent by Cato with a difficult commission to the Island of Cyprus, although he undertook the commission with reluctance as “by no means proper for a young man in pursuit of philosophy,” yet “he executed it with such diligence that he had the approbation of Cato.” – Again: – “His principles were reason, honour, and virtue, and the ends to which these directed him, he prosecuted with so much vigor that he seldom failed of success. No flattery could induce him to attend to unjust petitions, and though that ductility of mind, which may be wrought upon by the impudence of importunity is by some called good nature, he considered it the greatest disgrace.” “Brutus was acquainted with all the sects of the Greek philosophers, and understood their doctrines.” – “He spoke with great ability in Latin both in the field and at the bar. It was *universally* said that Brutus hated the Imperial power, and that Cassius hated the Emperor.” When, in addition to all this, we remember that all the conspirators refused to engage in the plot unless Brutus would take the lead; – for “the world, they knew, would conclude that had the action been honorable, Brutus would not have refused to engage in it,” we cannot doubt that, if any weight be attached to the testimony of Plutarch, Brutus, before history could have much occasion to speak of him, was esteemed as a man highly distinguished for learning, talents and virtue[.]

As to his being of a “headstrong, unbridled disposition,” I can only say I know no proof of this. Brutus is no where *defended* by any author, with whom I am acquainted, because no where *accused*. He is charged by this writer

with being a time server, because he joined the cause of Pompey, “whom he hated,” and deserted it after the battle of Pharsalia. It would have been but fair to mention that Brutus had some reason for “hating” Pompey, who had put his father to death. As to his motive for siding with Pompey rather than Cæsar (who, it was well known, loved him above all Romans, and would, if crowned with victory, load him with honors,) I know of no proof that it was other than a pure one, and where there appears no such proof, we should judge by the general tenor of a life. As to his going over to Cæsar after Pompey had fled from the field, I know of no law of honor or of morality which binds followers to maintain a cause, which its leader had deserted. Would the generals of Napoleon be blamed for abandoning his banner after he had fled from the field of Waterloo? With regard to his betraying the *confidence* of Pompey, it no where appears that Pompey had confided to Brutus the direction in which his flight was to be pursued, which I presume is what is referred to.⁶ As to his being “the dupe of more sagacious men in the plot against Cæsar,” this must be a matter of opinion. If success be the test of good judgment, both Brutus and his coadjutors were unwise. And when we consider that according to the general opinion Cæsar intended to make Brutus his successor in the world’s dominion, Brutus was certainly a “dupe,” as far as regarded his own interest.

The accusation of *cruelty* and *AVARICE* is entirely new to me. Plutarch speaks of Brutus’s promising his soldiers the plunder of Lacedæmon and Thessalonica as “the only circumstance of his life, for which no apology can be made;” gives repeated instances of his generosity towards the vanquished, often dismissing them without exacting any ransom or tribute, and always showing a

moderation, which contrasted in a striking manner with the conduct of his colleague Cassius. Plutarch sums up his character thus: "Brutus, on account of his virtue, was respected by the people, beloved by his friends, admired by men of principle, and *not hated even by his enemies*. He was mild in his temper, had a greatness of mind, that was superior to anger, *avarice* and the love of pleasure. He was firm and inflexible in his opinions, and zealous in every pursuit where justice and honor were concerned. The people had the highest opinion of his integrity and sincerity in every undertaking, and this naturally inspired them with confidence and affection."⁷ Paterculus, certainly a witness not to be questioned on this subject, as he would as far as possible avoid saying anything that might be displeasing to the Cæsarean family, says "*Fuit autem dux Cassius melior, quanto vir Brutus; Equibus Brutum amicum habero malles, unicum magis times Cassium. In altero major vis in altero victus. Qui vi ricis sent, quantum reipublicæ interfuit, Cæsarem potius habere Brutum quam Cassium.*"⁸

I doubt not an infinity of similar authorities might be quoted by one of more extensive reading and accurate memory in support of the belief that the vices of Brutus could not have been "notorious." As the avenues to the temple of Fame become more and more thronged with eager devotees, there has arisen a class, who seek to win notoriety, by broaching new opinions on topics and characters apparently long since as well settled as the relation the earth bears to the sun. They labor to set aside the verdict of our forefathers; and industriously collect from the annals of the past, rubbish, beneath which they seek to bury the shrines of our old religion. I am far from meaning to accuse the accomplished gentleman, said to be the author of the article in question, of an offence so great

in the court of conscience. But I would not have him *seem* to associate himself with this band of irreverent levelers, nor sanction any levity in the treatment of a great name. The hearts of the illustrious departed are now tranquillized after the long struggles and unrevealed agonies, which, steadfastly endured, have won them a glorious immortality. They can no longer shrink from the harsh scrutiny, which would reach their recesses for unworthy motives. They can no longer answer the forgotten or refuted calumnies of obscure foes. But the faith of the living bleeds, and young ambition droops, when the shades of the just are summoned back from the Elysium to which their appropriate judges had consigned them, to repass the consecrating river, and appear before some revolutionary tribunal of modern date. – Let us not be too hasty in questioning what is established, and tearing to pieces the archives of the past. There are other sorts of skepticism, not less desolating in their tendency, than that of religion. That keen observer, Dr. Spurzheim, warned the people of this country that their great danger lay in *want of reverence*.⁹ Those most distinguished among us for talent and culture should rather check than encourage this tendency.

Nevertheless, it is never desirable to hold false faith; and if the writer in the N.A. Review bring authorities, which substantiate the charges of “cruelty and avarice,” we must, however reluctantly, give up our old enthusiasm, and no longer use the name of BRUTUS as a synonym for virtue. I recal the following lines in a youthful effusion from the same pen:

“Was it for this that Brutus left a name

Bright with the beams of freedom’s holiest flame?”¹⁰

But perhaps this refers to Junius Brutus.¹¹ What would be Shakspeare’s astonishment if he could be present at the

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representation of his tragedy, and at the close of his fine eulogy,

"This was the noblest Roman of them all.
All the conspirators, save only he,
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar.
He only, in a general honest thought,
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him, that nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, *this was a man!*"¹²

some members of the chorus should step forward and recite the unceremonious attack we have been examining!

Yet I ask but JUSTICE. – To use still further the words of the great bard –

"According to his *virtue* let us use him,
With *due* respect"¹³ – No more.

J.

Fuller, the heretofore unpublished twenty-four-year-old home-schooled daughter of a U.S. Congressman, takes advantage of the municipal newspaper to engage, in public, one of the country's leading historians on a topic in Roman history. Apart from the courage such an act might seem to require, it is evident that she comprehends the democratic potential of the new journalism.¹⁴ Significantly, Fuller's first published writing is not a stand-alone treatment of a subject of her own choosing (not, like Bancroft's piece, an unrequested lecture), but the second half of a conversation, a thing she is provoked to. The nature of the provocation is also instructive: she is not playing the part of the fussy antiquarian quibbling over the accuracy of some detail in the archive, nor is she trying to top an opponent in pedantry. Bancroft's arraignment of Brutus feels to her like an assault on private and established values: it constitutes, she says, a "painful surprise." One of the most characteristic aspects of her reply is that it issues from a specific undisguised personality. In the course of her brief performance she deploys the first-person singular pronoun no fewer than twenty times, whereas Bancroft uses it not at all. This centering of a courteous but aggrieved

persona – the Fuller who is objectionably acted upon by Bancroft’s Olympian assertiveness – contributes importantly to the essay’s mission of protest, which aims not a little at the (male) scholar’s essentially unearned assumption of a sufficient verbal authority. Her complaint, for example, that Bancroft fails to cite sources at points where he might be contradicted (instead of trusted) could be seen as targeting a form of conventional gentlemanly privilege in scholarship.

At stake in this controversy is whether Brutus is entitled to continue a hero to the world’s imagination. One sees that Fuller and Bancroft come at the question from radically different sets of assumptions and purposes. As both his sense of history and his immediate thesis require, Bancroft finds little room for heroism in Roman society, morally devastated as it has been by the egregious dependence of its aristocracy on slavery. He supposes that any such society must fall (as a kind of inevitable punishment) under the sway of the political autocracy that slavery naturally invites and that Julius Caesar represents – so the conspirators must be reckless, selfish, short-sighted, and malignant. As a new-model liberal historian devoted to ideas of progress and democracy, Bancroft is inclined to doubt the unique agency of the “great man.” “History,” he says, “has consisted chiefly of the personal achievements of a few individuals, the victories of armies, the scandals of courts, the intrigues of the palace; on the character, rights, and progress of the great mass of the people, it has been silent.”¹⁵ Accurate historical perception, in other words, depends on seeing the contingency or situation of an action, and is inconsistent with the assertion of some heroic (that is, ahistorical) transcendence of character over and against conditions.

Fuller’s Brutus, the paragon, derives from Plutarch by way of Shakespeare: essentially he is a fictional character, whose heroic personality is no more and no less than an organization of admirable traits. His character, as character, stands for emulation and is an objectified sign of the love of freedom. From this “literary” point of view Brutus is not legitimately subject to historical revisionism. As an available, exemplary figure, Fuller’s Brutus is not tied to a specific time or social circumstance, though the historian is obliged to imagine that he is. He may be said to inhabit moral

rather than historical space, and in that sense is both "classical" and mythological. Fuller's position in the debate is neatly summed up in her concluding quotation from Shakespeare, in which she joins her voice to that of Marc Antony in asserting that Brutus is to be *used* "according to his virtue" – or not at all.¹⁶

This is perhaps Fuller's way of being delicate about the fact (one that Bancroft tends also to downplay) that the Brutus narrative is, of course, at bottom, about patricide. The Ides of March conspiracy kills the autocratic "father" in order that the "children" might have their freedom. Indeed, Plutarch suggests that in the case of Brutus (whose mother, Servilia, was known to have had an affair with Caesar around the time that Brutus was conceived), the assassination may have been a literal and not merely a metaphorical patricide.¹⁷ Subversion is often figured as a killing of the fathers, a more or less dramatic getting out from under the authority of what Emerson, less than two years later, would refer to as "the foregoing generations," and which he regarded as a daunting limitation. Those who were coming to maturity in the 1830s, including Fuller, needed to know how to feel about "the sepulchres of the fathers."¹⁸ Brutus, then, the mythic anti-father, used according to his virtue, had to remain available, as Fuller contends, and not be rendered up a sacrifice to the historical imagination's vulgar penchant for accuracy.

One reason why Fuller felt so called out by Bancroft's attack on Brutus assuredly lies in the way his methodology and rhetoric comprised a facsimile of Caesar's own authority and imperial command. As Fuller knew from her own father's mind, this is what Harvard had been doing to its inmates going back several generations. It had become the hallmark of scholarship and, indeed, the sign of conquest in serious masculine writing. Fuller does not "kill" this demonstration, but almost, as it were, concedes its Roman character and makes room, as a counter to it, for a moral and mythological alternative, just as, in her "Autobiographical Romance," she represents the hardness, strength, and precision of the Father as Roman and the life-affirming organic morality of the Mother as Greek. In her own developing mythology of gender, gathered (she would have us believe) out

of the materials of her childhood, the Father is judge, his realm the law and public life, the Mother's realm is myth and literature – instead of judicial criticism, “that spontaneous love for every living thing, for man, and beast, and tree, which restores the golden age.”¹⁹ In Fuller's first publication, then, we see the case being made for a woman's social, interlocutory place in journalism and in writing in general.

The Fuller-Bancroft debate had its sequel a week later, when “H” from Salem continued the conversation in the *Advertiser* for December 4:

FOR THE BOSTON DAILY ADVERTISER & PATRIOT.

CHARACTER OF BRUTUS.

MR. EDITOR – A paragraph concerning the character of Brutus in the able and interesting article on Slavery, in the last number of the *North American Review*, has drawn forth the strictures of a writer in your last Thursday's paper. He appears to think that the charges which the Reviewer makes against Brutus, especially those of avarice, cruelty and treachery, are entirely new. Your correspondent writes with ability and candor, but I think without having fully examined the subject. The charges affecting the character of Brutus are by no means now brought forward for the first time, nor are they unsupported by strong evidence. They are in fact but little more or less than an abridgment of the Digression on the character of Brutus, in the fifth volume of Gibbon's *Miscellaneous Works*.²⁰ Your correspondent wishes the Reviewer to produce his authorities, especially in regard to the charges of avarice and extortion. I do not know from what sources he derived his information, but whoever will read in Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*, the last letter of the fifth Book, and the three first letters of the sixth Book, will find sufficient evidence to justify the charges of avarice and cruelty.²¹ The following extract from Gibbon is merely a condensed statement of the facts contained in those letters:

“Plutarch singles out of the whole life of Brutus one exceptional action; his promising the plunder of Lacedæmon and Thessalonica to his troops. But had Plutarch been better acquainted with the epistles to Atticus, he would have seen in that faithful mirror of the times some instances of avarice and inhumanity, which the philosophic Brutus could not have excused by the sad necessity of civil war.

“When Cicero was appointed Proconsul of Ciliciæ, his first object was to relieve the cities of his government, almost ruined by the heavy debts which they had been obliged to contract in order to satisfy the rapaciousness of his predecessors. The case of Salamis in Cyprus, deserved peculiar compassion. One Scaptius, a Roman broker, strongly recommended by Brutus, claimed very large sums as due to him from that city. The deputies of Salamis acknowledged the debt, and made a tender of the money with legal interest, as it was fixed by Cicero’s edict at twelve per cent. and compound interest at the end of every year. But Scaptius demanded forty-eight per cent. according to the condition of his usurious bond; and to enforce his demand by military execution, he had obtained from the former Proconsul a troop of horse, with which he kept the Senate house of Salamis closely besieged, till five of the most obstinate senators were actually starved to death. This Proconsul was Appius Claudius, the father-in-law of Brutus; and when the province of Cilicia devolved upon Cicero, the same Brutus recommended with more than common earnestness the affairs of Scaptius to the favor of the new Governor. Cicero was at first surprised at finding so intimate a connexion between a man of merit and an infamous usurer, but he was still more astonished when the shameful secret was disclosed. The wretched

agent disappeared, and the virtuous Brutus without a blush, avowed *himself* the creditor of the Salaminians. As soon as he threw off the mask, instead of commiserating the ruin of a city under his immediate patronage, he insisted on the utmost rigor of his iniquitous demands, and requested of Cicero in the most haughty terms, that he would send the same Scaptius into Cyprus at the head of a second troop of horse, to exact the extravagant amount of the accumulated principal and interest. On this occasion the virtue of Cicero was supported by a noble firmness. I should be desirous (he repeats in several places) to oblige Brutus, but I cannot sacrifice to his interest the feelings of humanity, the principles of justice, the uniformity of my character, and the approbation of all good men. I shall be concerned to lose his friendship, but I shall still more be concerned to lose the esteem I have ever entertained for him.

“The numerous crimes of Verres, exaggerated as they most probably have been by the strongest powers of eloquence, scarcely furnish such an instance of unrelenting avarice as this transaction of Brutus, which is related by Cicero with the candid simplicity of a private correspondence. – The money due from the city of Salamis amounted to about twenty thousand pounds; a small part of the immense sums which Brutus appears to have lent out on similar securities. We cannot forbear inquiring, by what arts a private citizen, the son of a proscribed father, and who had never commanded armies, or governed provinces, could accumulate so ample a fortune; the inquiry would lead to some suspicions, severe but not unreasonable.”

Thus far Gibbon, and to the same effect see Middleton’s Cicero.²² Both however are derived from the same source,

the letter to Atticus. Here is ample evidence of avarice and cruelty in this transaction. Perhaps, however, the expression of the reviewer may be too strong, that Brutus was notorious as a merciless and exorbitant usurer. From the uniform and increasing applause bestowed on Brutus as the most perfect model of Roman virtue, we may perhaps infer either that he was not notorious for these vices, or that similar transactions were so common with the great men of Rome as to occasion no disgrace, and that enormous usury and oppression in the provinces, especially the more distant ones, was not incompatible with a high character for integrity and patriotism at Rome.

It is Burke, I think, who says in the trial of Hastings, that the humanity of Englishmen is often one of points and parallels, and that the man who is just and merciful in England, may be an oppressor and a robber in India.²³ This conduct of Brutus in Asia might not prevent his being a good patriot at Rome. The provinces at this time suffered oppression to an extreme degree; and most of the magistrates, senators and men of influence at Rome shared in the plunder.

The charge that Brutus betrayed the confidence of Pompey, whose cause he had abandoned, seems to be too strongly stated, though there is some foundation for it. Plutarch says that the opinion of Brutus, that Pompey's flight was for Egypt, induced Cæsar to pursue him in that direction. A few months after, Brutus accepted from Cæsar a most important command, that of Cisalpine Gaul, while Cato, Scipio and Labienus, at the head of the Republican party, were in arms against Cæsar, and Cicero, Marcellus, and other eminent men on the same side had gone into retirement or exile. These facts seem hardly consistent with fidelity to his party, zeal for the cause of freedom, or

inflexible opposition to arbitrary power.²⁴

Brutus was eminent for literature and eloquence in that enlightened age, but has no just claim to the character of a great statesman or general. His fame rests chiefly upon the death of Cæsar, an event on which the opinions of the most enlightened men are never likely to be unanimous.

Salem, Dec. 2, 1834.

H.

Thus H responds directly to Fuller's question about sources – as precisely, indeed, as Bancroft himself might have done. Still (and again like Bancroft) he evinces none of the concern that Fuller has for the moral utility of Brutus as hero or paragon, suggesting that they, unlike Fuller, pride themselves on having, in a modern, iconoclastic, and anti-romantic gesture, decoupled history from myth.

Oscar Cargill's identification of this writer as Nathaniel Hawthorne seems to rest entirely on the initial and the Salem address, but as Hawthorne nowhere appears as an academic classicist or a pedant or a pedestrian stylist, the assignment of authorship can safely be ignored.²⁵ Fuller was delighted that her essay drew a reply and that her views had been taken seriously: as Thomas Wentworth Higginson observed, "it was quite a triumph to be gravely answered."²⁶ A few months afterwards, in March 1835, she alluded to the performance in a letter to Frederic Hedge, discretely and indirectly offering it as a qualifying credential for accepting an invitation to write for Hedge's projected journal, *The Transcendentalist*, a never-realized forerunner to the *Dial*. "My father," she explained, "requested me to write a little piece in answer to Mr. B's attack on Brutus in the N.A. Review which he published in the Daily Advertiser some time since – It was responded to (I flatter myself by some big-wig as we say in Groton) from Salem. He detected some ignorance in me nevertheless as he remarked that I wrote with 'ability' and seemed to *consider me* as an elderly gentleman *I considered* the affair as highly flattering and beg you will keep it in mind and furnish it for my memoirs as such after I am dead."²⁷

Washington State University, Emeritus

Notes

¹ The authorship of "Brutus" was first divulged by Thomas Wentworth Higginson in his 1884 biography of Fuller, although it attracted no attention until the discussion by Charles Capper more than a hundred years later. See *Margaret Fuller, an American Romantic Life: The Private Years*, 144-46, where Capper stresses its dutiful echoing of Timothy Fuller's politics. Fuller's essay is here reprinted for the first time.

² [George Bancroft], "Slavery in Rome," *North American Review* 39 (October 1834): 413-37. A version had been offered earlier that year as "The Influence of Slavery on the Political Revolutions in Rome. A Lecture, delivered before a Society of Young Men in Massachusetts." Bancroft included this piece in his *Literary and Historical Miscellanies* (New York: Harper, 1855), 280-317, under the title "Decline of the Roman People, 1834."

³ On Bancroft's unsuccessful campaign, in which he ran as an independent, see Lilian Handlin, 141-42. Bancroft had already made a name for himself following his graduation from Harvard as one of the first American doctoral students at a German university (accompanied in Europe by Frederic Henry Hedge, a close friend of Fuller's by the early 1830s). On his return to the United States Bancroft attracted attention as a promising Unitarian minister in Boston, where he was looked upon as, in Emerson's phrase, "an infant Hercules" (Emerson, *Letters*, 1:127). Emerson was disappointed when a short while later Bancroft left the pulpit to organize the prestigious Round Hill School in Northampton with partner Joseph Cogswell (Emerson, *Letters*, 1:134). Fuller might have known Bancroft in any or all of these capacities; the fact that she quotes a snatch of Bancroft's poetry in the course of her rejoinder (see note 10) discretely reveals that she well knew who the author was.

⁴ "Twere all one/ That I should love a bright particular star/ And think to wed it, he is so above me" (*All's Well that Ends Well*, 1.1.96-98).

⁵ Fuller's quotations in this paragraph are drawn from "M. Brutus," *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. John Langhorne and William Langhorne (mainly from pages 52-60).

⁶ Fuller may be splitting hairs here: Plutarch indicates that information about Pompey's flight from the lost battle of Pharsalia came to Caesar from

Brutus, but he alleges that Brutus merely “conjectured” that the destination was Egypt (Plutarch, *Lives*, 6:56-57).

⁷ Plutarch, *Lives*, 6:94, 78.

⁸ The Latin is somewhat garbled, probably by the newspaper typesetter. “Cassius was as much the better general as Brutus was the better man. Of the two, one would rather have Brutus as a friend, but would stand more in fear of Cassius as an enemy. The one had more vigour, the other more virtue. As it was better for the state to have Caesar rather than Antony as emperor, so, had Brutus and Cassius been the conquerors, it would have been better for it to be ruled by Brutus rather than by Cassius.” C. Vellei Paterculi, *Historiae Romanae*, Liber II, Capitula 72.

⁹ Johann Gaspar Spurzheim (1776-1832), the leading exponent of phrenology, spent his last months in the United States. His Boston lectures in September and October 1832 were well attended and his death from typhus on 10 November was widely lamented.

¹⁰ Bancroft, “Rome,” *Poems*, 74.

¹¹ Lucius Junius Brutus led the revolt against King Tarquin in 509 BCE., which led to the establishment of the Roman Republic. Plutarch mentions the division of opinion as to whether Marcus Brutus was among his descendants. It is likely that, as Shakespeare notes (*Julius Caesar*, 1.2.158-61), the reputation of Junius Brutus as an opposer of kingship functioned as a motive to Caesar’s assassin.

¹² *Julius Caesar*, 5.5.68-75.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 5.5.76-77, where Octavius says of Brutus, who has committed suicide, “According to his virtue let us use him,/ With all respect and rites of burial.”

¹⁴ Coincidentally, the issue of the *North American Review* that carried Bancroft’s article also carried an essay surveying the history of American journalism, which pointed out that no colonial periodicals survived the Revolution, and those founded in its aftermath essentially all failed before the turn of the century. I have appropriated the worn term “new journalism” to refer to the early nineteenth-century consequence of this discontinuous history, to the robust proliferation of journals and

newspapers in the thirty years before Fuller's career began, and the tendency of such media to reinvent itself under constantly shifting religious and political influences.

¹⁵ "Slavery in Rome," 415.

¹⁶ In the Shakespearean linguistic context a person is well- or ill-used when his character is praised or blamed; Fuller, in a sort of mild pun, extends the meaning to embrace the idea that persons of admirable character may subserve a moral purpose: i.e., they are of use to others in ways that, implicitly, Bancroft fails to appreciate.

¹⁷ Plutarch, *Lives*, 6:55-56.

¹⁸ Emerson, *Nature* (1836), in *The Collected Works*, 7.

¹⁹ "Autobiographical Romance," in *The Essential Margaret Fuller*, 25.

²⁰ The extract from Edward Gibbon, "Digression on the Character of Brutus," given below, is actually from volume 4 of *The Miscellaneous Works* (London: John Murray, 1814), 101-3.

²¹ *The Letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero to Titus Pomponius Atticus*, in *Sixteen Books*, trans. William Heberden (London: 1825), 308-56.

²² Conyers Middleton, *The History of the Life of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, 3 vols. (Dublin: 1741).

²³ The paraphrase of Burke by "H" seems to follow the version given by Hannah More in *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*, in *Works* (London: T. Cadell, 1830), 7:19, rather than the original version in *The Trial of Warren Hastings, Esq. Part I.* (London: James Ridgway, 1788), 14.

²⁴ Gibbon, *Miscellaneous Works*, 4:106, writes of Brutus's giving information to Caesar about Pompey's flight to Egypt: "Some casuists, Spaniards and others, have attempted to justify this conduct."

²⁵ Cargill, 849. The claim is that Hawthorne was currying favor with Bancroft and that this gesture of support led in due course to his appointment at the Boston Custom House in 1839. But Bancroft could not have been looked to for patronage in 1834, since he was not yet affiliated with the Democrats.

²⁶ Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, 50.

²⁷ Fuller, *Letters, Volume I*, 226.

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