

Overcoming Fragmentation in Summer on the Lakes

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After Margaret Fuller's untimely death in 1850, her brother Arthur took upon himself the daunting task of editing her works, both those that had previously been issued and others that had never before appeared in book form. Although Arthur possessed the abundant good will required for the task, his sense of literary form was perhaps more subject to question. In 1856, when prospective purchasers thumbed the pages of *At Home and Abroad*, a collection of Fuller's travel writings from Europe and the American Midwest, they may at first have been pleased to observe the title page's assertion that the volume represented a "new and complete edition" of the anthologized material. Their pleasure would likely have sagged somewhat, however, if they had taken the time to read the editor's preface. In order to keep the volume to a "reasonable size," Arthur had consented to the omission of several passages from his sister's first book, *Summer on the Lakes* – a decision to which he had come after "much reluctance," but which he felt did not "materially [...] diminish" the value of the collection. Arthur's excisions included both the original romantic tale "Mariana," and his sister's lengthy discourse on the Seeress of Prevorst – two episodes that, taken together, account for about a quarter of Fuller's original text. Arthur excused himself on the grounds that the episodic nature of his sister's narrative "enabled the Editor to make omissions without in any way marring its unity." Indeed, if cohesiveness and flow were the sole or even the first criteria for judging *Summer on the Lakes*, one would be tempted not only to accept Arthur's apology but to agree with his further assertion that he had improved upon his late sister's

text, to wit, that “the volume even gain[s] [...] by the omission of extracts [...] not connected in any regard with Western life.”¹ One might well suppose that Arthur felt that he had done his late sister a favor.

And therein lies the problem. Anyone who has read the full text of *Summer on the Lakes* (and, to a lesser extent, even Arthur Fuller’s abridgement) is no stranger to its many quirks and, indeed, frustrations. Its multitude of disjunctures and digressions are at first surprising. Of all literary genres, one might naively expect few to have a more inherent arc and pace than travel narratives. The inescapable trajectory of departure, journey, arrival, and return would seem to provide a foolproof structure for even the most wayward of literary stylists. Yet both of the most celebrated travel narratives of the American transcendental era, Thoreau’s *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* and *Summer on the Lakes*, gloriously defeat such expectations. In the latter, Fuller constructs a monument to the nonlinear and the anti-cohesive. Multitudes of genres – epistolary narrative, gothic tale, lyric poetry, book review, and informal dialogue, to give only a partial list – improbably crowd against one another. The evident *raison d’être* of Fuller’s book, the description of sights seen while traveling to and through the Midwestern frontier, is continually pushed aside to make room for snippets of conversation, fictionalized personal recollections, and speculations on the spirit world. *Summer on the Lakes* exemplifies a mode of writing that Lawrence Buell has called the “literary excursion,” a form in which physical travels provide the basis for a simultaneous, serendipitous venture into non-geographic spaces. Buell observes, “the excursion is [...] a potentially encyclopedic form. [...] it tends to become, in effect, an account of the whole universe as it appears to the speaker” (Buell 188).

Traveling beyond her accustomed geographic confines, Fuller felt free in a parallel sense to explore uncharted figurative territories, following a literary itinerary that expanded to include multiple genres, myriad mental states, and a host of provisional personae. Jeffrey Steele has accurately observed that Fuller’s account of her physical excursion to the West documented an unseen journey as well, which enabled her “to focus on the changing responses of the narrator as [s]he confront[ed] a wide range of

events, both internal and external" (Steele 136). This essay will argue that the disjunctures of *Summer on the Lakes* form the very essence of the text: they are mimetic of the brokenness that Fuller perceived in American literary culture; they reflect her hope of importing the atmospherics of German Romanticism into American writing; they emerge in large part from her inner turmoil as she discovered that the Western frontier, far from being her hoped-for cradle of a greater equality than America had previously witnessed, was likely to become the scene of still greater oppression; and perhaps most importantly, they are the work of a mind and a life that were no strangers to frequent and shattering disruptions. In addition to all of this, I suggest that Fuller's fragmented text is the result of her meditations on the unstable nature of consciousness and the discontinuities of the self.

Margaret Fuller scorned limitation. Her writings are replete with passages in which she declares her intention to resist confinement and to forever pass beyond whatever defines the current perimeters of her character and her achievements. She was not yet twenty when she told her early romantic interest George T. Davis, "I believe in Eternal Progression. I believe in a God, a Beauty and Perfection to which I am to strive all my life for assimilation."² Nevertheless, when Fuller first expressed herself in an original full-length book, her narration was haunted by a consciousness that knowledge and pleasure come at a price, that language is inadequate to the tasks to which we set it, and that she who sets forth to discover the world may find it prematurely spent, dried, and exhausted. Margaret Fuller's 1843 excursion to the Great Lakes – her first foray beyond the borders of New England – should have been a journey of exhilaration. To the contrary, however, her story of that trip begins with veiled confessions of inadequacy and forebodings that its author, despite her hopes of renewal in a new and different place, would still find herself a misfit.

Rather appropriately for a first book (I discount for the moment Fuller's German translations), *Summer on the Lakes* implicitly explores anxiety of writing, a theme that arises with intermittent regularity in its pages. Even the eponymous poem that begins *Summer on the Lakes*

confesses trepidation at the task of the author. Its initial phrases express contradiction and regret, telling of “busy leisure,/ Long summer days of dear-bought pleasure.” In the poem, Fuller intimates that, were she able to relate all that her travels to the Midwest had taught her, she would possess the sorcery to cause “winter nights [to] quickly pass,/ Gazing on the magic glass.” Yet, she confesses, this magic is beyond her. She has no power of incantation, but only “dull words, with a poor reed/ Breaking at each time of need” (Fuller, *Summer*, 70). The besetting worry in these lines is that of a woman being called upon, after years of preparation and bright auguries as to her verbal powers, at last to prove her mettle as an author – not only to fulfill her personal potential but to demonstrate the capacities of her gender. At the moment when she most requires words to come at her bidding, they prove lifeless and unobliging. Were these matters Fuller’s sole concerns in *Summer on the Lakes*, her burden would be great enough. However, her anxieties also have a greater object in what might be called the great cultural misgiving of her age: that the natural grandeur of her nation might at last prove too great, either for the power of American poets to capture and immortalize, or for the ethical natures of her countrymen to respect and comprehend. Like many of her generation, Fuller found in the quiet majesties of the frontier a call to greatness, both moral and artistic, that she feared she would leave unanswered.

The second poem that precedes the text of *Summer on the Lakes* echoes this trepidation with its pathetic litany of souvenirs brought back from the journey: some tufts of dried prairie grass; a “muscle-shell”; a rack of discarded antlers; and, most poignantly, “an eagle’s feather which adorned a Brave,/ Well-nigh the last of his despairing band” (70). One fully appreciates the pathos of these apparently random mementos when one considers the disposition of transcendentalism toward fragments in general. For the transcendentalists, the problem of what kind of truth one should be seeking was never a small one. As espousers of Kantian reason and as devotees of the reality that they believed to exist beyond the realm of physical substance, they did not trust the assumption, so comforting to the foregoing generation or two, that the patient accumulation of facts and

specimens would lead to ever more dependable inductive conclusions and a surer knowledge of the world.³ To the Romantic eye, fragments could offer a strong, though superficial appeal. Indeed, what could more powerfully stimulate an early nineteenth-century imagination than a picturesque ruin? Nevertheless, the Emersonian generation was seldom satisfied with individual facts and artifacts. They wanted large unities and encompassing verities, and the observation of the world's fragments sometimes suggested the unpleasant possibility that those fragments might not add up to a rounded totality. As Emerson observed in *Nature*, "Nothing is quite beautiful alone; nothing but is beautiful in the whole" (Emerson, *Nature*, 18). Emerson feared that the world's shattered condition was a symptom of a corresponding fragmentation of the human spirit of his time, a disunity that he deeply regretted: "The reason why the world lacks unity and lies broken and in heaps, is because man is disunited with himself" (Emerson, *Nature*, 47). The objects that Fuller mentions in her poem, however, are ominously conspicuous in their incompleteness. The grass is without its roots; the animal that inhabited the shell has decomposed; and the antlers and the feather are both the lifeless castoffs of larger organisms. Even Fuller's alternate spelling of mussel-shell as "muscle-shell" points to a loss of strength and energy. In contrast to the tremendous vitality of the natural scenes she beheld on her trip, the nature she presents in her poem is broken, spent, and skeletal. The supreme cohesion that the transcendental imagination would seek to discover is distressingly absent. Again, though, the key allusion is to language. At the outset of her narrative, Fuller figures herself as the traveler who returns from the presence of astonishing sights and sounds bearing only paltry trinkets to share with her friends as the insufficient evidence of her journey. The shell, antlers, grass, and feather are analogous to what she knows will be her inadequate descriptions – the "slight gifts" of one who proposes to "give you what I can, not what I would" (70). For long pages to come, Fuller's sense of her inadequacy to the authorial task she has set herself will hang over her narrative like the oppressive clouds that greet her at the end of her journey's first leg, Niagara Falls.

By the time Fuller's prose voice first takes center stage in *Summer on the Lakes*, the reader has already been prepared for the tension between different ways of seeing and responding to nature that forms a *Leitmotif* for her travelogue. In one of the earliest phases of her self-education, Fuller had immersed herself in the empiricism of John Locke and had imbibed, if only temporarily, an empirical, Newtonian vision of the physical world as a piece of soulless machinery. That concept had been unsettled in short order by the more romantic, sympathetic view of the cosmos that had found its way to New England from Germany via Coleridge and Carlyle, a *Weltanschauung* that imagined the world as animated by an abiding spirit, of which the visible sphere was merely the symbol.⁴ In *Nature*, Fuller's great friend and mentor Emerson had elaborated the idea of the natural world as a kind of universal metaphor, every aspect of which mirrored and called forth a corresponding phenomenon in the soul. Surprisingly, however, *Summer on the Lakes* begins with an encounter with sublime nature in the form of Niagara Falls that conspicuously fails to inspire a majestic, transcendental homily on the power of nature to reflect and express the glories of the spirit. Far from invigorating Fuller's soul, the continuous roar and movement of the falls oppress and strain her nerves. Somewhat peevishly, she complains, "Awake or asleep, there is no escape, still this rushing around you and through you" (71). Emerson notwithstanding, Fuller is inspired to no new metaphor or poetic turn to embellish the action of the falls. She discovers, with at least a hint of embarrassment, that the falls are already sufficient to themselves, requiring no rhetoric from her to augment their grandeur. Indeed, Fuller observes that language, far from evoking a more vivid sense of what she beholds, stands stubbornly *between* her and a fresh understanding of her experience. Whereas she has expected to be swept up by unprecedented feelings of "wonder and awe," she is able to think "only of comparing the effect on my mind with what I had read and heard" (76). This early disappointment announces one of the recurring problems of *Summer on the Lakes*: the persistent tendency of Fuller's history as a reader to stand in the way of her current, living perceptions. Christina

Zwarg interestingly argues that Fuller's reading had "inadequately [...] prepared her for her experience at the rim of Western culture" (Zwarg 102). One might argue with equal force that her reading had *over*prepared her. The same training that had given her the erudition she required to respond to the Falls had ironically stolen the equally needful spontaneity. She could not react to Niagara; she could only read it. Repeatedly, as Fuller approaches a subject of vital interest on her travels, be it the Native Americans, the city of Chicago, or her ideas about the spirit world, she will interpose extended commentary from or on someone else's text. An incisive early review of the book observes, "She seems to be afraid of the simple utterance of a first impression" (Stetson 76). *Summer on the Lakes* confirms Fuller as an apostle of the word, not the eye and ear.⁵

Pressing onward and down with determined, unselfconscious force, the cataract of Niagara poses an ironic contrast to Fuller's own authorial mood. In the first sentence of her opening chapter, she refers to her journey as "the summer's wanderings." The noun stirs vague misgivings. The wandering journey forebodes a wandering text, and the perceptive reader may query – with some justification, as it turns out – whether Fuller's narrative will acquire the purpose and direction that her travels confessedly lack. When one finds in the same sentence Fuller's comment that she "should not be quite silent," the nervousness slightly deepens (71). One feels the diffidence in Fuller's tone, a sense that her writing is an obligation, reluctantly accepted. For a work with so much to say, Fuller's appears oddly reticent, and this reticence remains a keynote for much of the text that follows.

Yet, despite its intimations of meandering and reluctance, Fuller's opening chapter also subtly announces some themes that will supply a tensile structure throughout the work. Fuller writes that the "secondary music" of the falls is such as to cause "the ear and soul [to be] roused by a *double vibration*" (71, emphasis added). The phrase calls to mind the dualistic idea of psychological structure that the Transcendentalists borrowed from Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* – i.e., that human consciousness consists of both an Understanding, fueled and driven by

sensory data, and a Reason, whose perceptions are ideal and *a priori*. Fuller's balancing of the two vibrations, one physical and the other metaphysical, heralds one of the great binary conflicts of her text: will it be the sensory, concrete aspect of human nature, or its idealistic, spiritual valence that will finally govern the development of the individual and, in a greater sense, that of the American continent? Parallel to Fuller's introduction of these two vibrations is her anecdote of the expectorating man – perhaps the most durable image of the entire text. As Fuller sits at Table Rock, overlooking the falls and losing “all separate consciousness” in the absorbing tumult of the scene, she sees “a man [who] came to take his first look. He walked close up to the fall, and, after looking at it a moment, with an air as if thinking how he could best appropriate it to his own use, he spat into it” (72). The incident inspires Fuller to rail against her age's love of utility and to hope that such narrowness will not prove to be “truly the America” (73). The question of whether America will finally become a place of spiritual sustenance or of crass commodity is never far from Fuller's focus.

The elemental foundation of *Summer on the Lakes* is, rather obviously, water. The narrative begins with a visit to Niagara and proceeds to follow the author on a long, waterborne excursion. Although Fuller's travels include ventures across the flat expanses beyond Chicago, it is, after all, a summer on the lakes, not the prairie, that she advertises. Nevertheless, Fuller lets us know early on that she is constitutionally out of sympathy with the element that is to dominate her travels. She commences her second chapter with a passage of dialogue that, we are to understand, passed among her and her two traveling companions, Sarah and James Freeman Clarke, as their boat made its circuitous way from the eastern reaches of Lake Erie toward the southern tip of Lake Michigan. As a heavy rain falls upon the deck above the three travelers, Fuller herself begins the conversation with a banal reference to Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*: “Water, water everywhere. After Niagara one would like a dry strip of existence. And at any rate it is quite enough for me to have it under foot without having it over head in this way” (77). Anyone

familiar with Fuller's love of allusiveness would not find it at all surprising for her to start a conversation with a quotation. What is surprising is her choice of quotation – quite likely the most hackneyed, overused phrase in all of Romantic literature. There no glint of cleverness here, none of Fuller's customarily playful fire – only the played-out, dejected lassitude of a rainy day, from which a scrap of well-worn poetry offers no relief.

The Clarkes, however, take up Fuller's wan opening, developing it into a discourse on the four ancient elements. James is quick to imagine himself as a Triton, fully at ease in the flow of what he terms "the gentle element," and he further imagines Margaret, in keeping with her fiery intellect, as a mythic salamander, safe within enfolding flames. Yet Fuller resists her friend's typecasting of her, preferring instead to become an earthbound gnome. Shocked and provoked by Fuller's apparently facetious choice, which, he believes, "savors of the pride that apes humility," James pounces on the rare opportunity to win an easy argument with her (77). He swiftly points out that water is peculiarly linked to poetry and that, whereas a nexus to earth entails meanness, plodding, and groping, all things are made picturesque by a connection to water, which renders objects, like water itself, "forcible, but clear." Sarah sides with her brother, adding that water is "the great artist," turning all that approaches it into pictures (79, 78). Fuller barely returns fire, displaying a reticence that seems odd only until one considers the broader reason for which she recites the dialogue in the first place. Her point, though not her only one, is that, in accepting the task of writing her travel narrative, she herself is, in a variety of ways, *out of her element* – not only physically uncomfortable with water but also evidently unsure of her ability to embody the natural poetry that her friends observe in water. How, she implicitly asks, will she be able to manifest the forcible clarity of water and match the naturally poetic quality of her book's subject with a verbal fluidity of her own?

The textual development that follows all of Fuller's prefatory statements of misgiving is supremely difficult to characterize and evaluate. No critical consensus can be reached as to whether *Summer on the Lakes*

is essentially formless, a victim of the overreaching ambitions and technical deficiencies of its author, or, as one reader has argued, “purposely flexible, digressive, and encyclopedic,” and striving toward “a deep unity beneath the surface disjointedness” (Adams 251). The best theory of the text, I would argue, follows a middle course. Fuller’s text is neither expertly controlled nor wholly chaotic. And while its digressions are largely intentional, this fact by no means implies that Fuller was seeking to discover a “deep unity.” To the contrary, the desire on the part of critics to find unity in *Summer on the Lakes* thwarts and disregards her more fascinating purpose, which was to represent the self, the nation, and the text deliberately *as fragments*, in accordance with her perception that consciousness, country, and narrated experience are, of their nature, disconnected, only partially coherent things, which can be honestly depicted only in terms of their natural contradictions. In so constructing her narrative, Fuller introduced a new concept of narrative to American prose.

A key to Fuller’s intention may be found in a perceptive essay by her longtime friend Frederic Henry Hedge. Educated in Germany and, for a time, enchanted to the point of intoxication by the liberating possibilities presented by German Romanticism, Hedge saw in the Romantics of that country an idea of prose writing that both rejected and transcended mere storytelling. In an 1834 essay on Schiller, Hedge had sagely observed:

Possessed with the love of philosophizing peculiar to their countrymen, the writers of fiction in [German] have ever some other object in view than the regular and harmonious development of the subject before them. The progress of a story, the interest of a plot, are with them matters of secondary importance; it is the exhibition of the variety of human nature, or some form of human life; the exercise of the imagination, the indulgence of personal or general satire, or the illustration of some philosophical truth, which chiefly occupies them. The story is nothing more than pretense for bringing these things before the

public. [...] the reader [...] is placed in a labyrinth of striking thoughts and beautiful illustrations, having no necessary connexion or dependence, through which he is left to find his way as he can.⁶

Hedge advised that the last thing an English-speaking reader should attempt to do with a German Romantic text was to impose the kind of literalness and linearity that one might more reasonably expect from an English novel. Rather, he proposed, one should bear in mind the peculiar bent of the German imagination, which proudly shunned "that contractile power which is necessary to concentrate the interest of a work around a single point."⁷

Fuller herself had little use for the "contractile power" to which Hedge alluded. English literature, she was later to complain in her column in the *New-York Tribune*, possessed "a far larger mixture [than German literature] of what is merely conventional, mere phrases, the barren civilities and tactics of literature." The stock literature of England and America, she added, was "amazingly conventional; so much so that you can predict paragraphs and chapters" (Fuller, "Study of the German Language," 294). Stephen Adams accurately suggests that, as a child of the Romantic era, Fuller had an almost obligatory desire to liberate literature from the deadening effects of forms and conventions (Adams 247-64). Fuller's anti-formal impulse may have had a more precisely identifiable inspiration in the work of her literary idol, Goethe. In Johann Peter Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe*, a translation of which Fuller had published in 1839, Goethe had noted that, in their then-current literary revolution, the French had begun by seeking only a freer form of writing. He predicted, however, that they would not stop until they had rejected the traditional contents along with the form. While he found much to deplore in this extremist trend, Goethe presaged a happy outcome. The extremes and excrescences he foresaw would "gradually disappear; but at last this great advantage will remain – besides a freer form, richer and more diversified subjects will have been attained, and no object of the broadest world and the most manifold life will be any longer excluded as

unpoetical” (Goethe 252). Goethe compared the current literary epoch to a purgative fever, perhaps not desirable in itself, but leading to an overall improvement in health. Goethe thus postulated that eras of error and excess were to be expected as literary movements and tastes evolved. Fuller, who plainly understood that American writing had a long, uncertain road to travel on its way toward independence from its European antecedents, may well have seen *Summer on the Lakes* as part of the kind of process of experimentation and diversification that Goethe viewed as both natural and necessary to an evolving national literature. Regarded as a pathway rather than as an end in itself, *Summer on the Lakes* becomes more comprehensible as a work of art.

Fuller is likely also to have gathered inspiration from one of Goethe’s own literary experiments, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*. An initially unnerving concoction of short stories, poems, and aphorisms, conjoined by a structure akin to an epistolary novel, the *Wanderjahre* delighted in its own whimsical interpolations and shiftings of perspective and, in so doing, thoroughly baffled its initial readers. “Nobody,” Eckermann observes in the *Conversations*, “knew what to make of it. The progress of the romance was seen to be interrupted by a number of enigmatical sayings, the explanation of which could be expected only from men of certain departments – such as artists, *literati*, and scientists – and which greatly annoyed all other readers” (Goethe 396). Yet Goethe’s unruly, meandering *Wanderjahre*, in its very absence of structure, is mimetic of the state of the wanderer, both insofar as travel leads us physically in unexpected, serendipitous directions, and as the mind of the traveler is likely to drift into errant digression. Its many-voiced narrative leads us to reflect on the chaotic polyphony that comprises the lived experience of humankind. As Martin Swales has put it, “In a sense the *Wanderjahre* believes in the human community as an aggregation of stories, of attempts to convert experience into discursivity of various kinds” (Swales 145). Fuller numbered the *Wanderjahre* among her favorite books.⁸ It should further be noted that Fuller’s visit to the West, which, as we have seen, she described as a “wandering,” was, quite literally, an abbreviated

Wanderjahr, that is, a time of travel and personal metamorphosis between life stages.⁹ In pursuing her western travels, and in recounting them in the restless, shifting text of *Summer on the Lakes*, Fuller expressed in her own fashion Goethe's love of metamorphosis and his enthusiasm for a world that enacted itself as a theater of "ongoing transformation, in which ever-new forms came into being" (Schöpp 33). As Joseph C. Schöpp has keenly noted, "Fuller would take on shape after shape and transform herself into figure after figure," beginning with Mariana in *Summer on the Lakes* and passing through a series of (coincidentally) M-initialed identities, from Minerva to Muse to Madonna (Schöpp, 33-34). While Schöpp observes this development over the entire arc of Fuller's career, the same trajectory exists in miniature in *Summer on the Lakes*. The book is a travelogue of the mind and soul as well as the body, in which Fuller explores and sympathetically inhabits myriad identities and frames of mind. Such a journey, on which a reflective and impressionable mind is met at every turn by challenges to its prior understanding, necessarily embroils one's thoughts in turbulence and contradiction. To narrate such an experience as one of smooth continuities is to falsify it, and Fuller insisted upon spiritual truth. One might do worse than to read *Summer on the Lakes* as Fuller's nonfiction *Wanderjahre*.

Even on casual reading, however, it is evident that Fuller wanted *Summer on the Lakes* to be much more than either an homage to Goethe or a conventional travelogue. Indeed, the truly remarkable ambitions that motivated her to write the book have not always been seen at their full value. Far from merely describing the physical frontiers of her nation in a German Romantic idiom, Fuller hoped to discover and demarcate a new realm for poetic discourse – not the polite versifications of Boston studies and Cambridge libraries, but a lusty, broad-shouldered genre, informed not by classical models but by toil and sinew. On the docks of Chicago and in the fields of Illinois, she intuited the possibility of a new creative language, inclusive enough to encompass the crass but energetic man of business, the dispirited but striving frontier wife, and the noble but fated Native American. Her desire to tell as many stories as her volume could contain

and incorporate as many genres as taste would allow had both a literary and political purpose. She was seeking both an untried pan-textual poetics and a virgin physical space for the development of the American mind and spirit. If these aspirations sound more than a trifle Whitmanesque, one should not shrink from the comparison. Amongst the works of Whitman's contemporaries, perhaps only *Mardi* and *Moby-Dick* surpass the effort of *Summer on the Lakes* to "contain multitudes."

So why, then, did *Summer on the Lakes* fall short of becoming the elder sister in prose to *Leaves of Grass*? More than one answer presents itself. To begin with, as he set forth to craft a distinctly American poetics, Whitman already felt himself to be fully American. One of Fuller's primary difficulties in pursuing a similar mission was that she did not yet feel that she had truly Americanized *herself*. To Albert H. Tracy, who had served with her father in Congress, she privately complained of a strange sense of her own foreignness, "both from constitution and a premature and excessive culture in the thoughts of Europe, which I have had slowly to undo or transmute to live in my own place and with my own people."¹⁰ One could not easily become the bard of a land in which one felt oneself so peculiarly Other, and one suspects that Fuller traveled West not only to look for some idealized external concept of America, but also for something that would help her to better discover the American in herself. She seems not quite to have succeeded; her letter to Tracy dates from a few months *after* her return from the West.

There is another reason why *Summer on the Lakes* is not the precursor to *Leaves of Grass* that it might have been. Whitman's healthy-mindedness, as William James was to call it, enabled him to assemble the glorious cacophony of existence into a convincing unity. By contrast, *Summer on the Lakes* is the work of an author whose earlier life had schooled her in disruption. Her more natural elements were skepticism and multiplicity. Whereas Fuller's scholarly temperament led her to prefer circumstances that allowed her to pursue uninterrupted study, abrupt changes in situation had continually uprooted her from her routine and had made steady development and progression either difficult or impossible.

Her unwilling banishment as a child to Miss Prescott's boarding school, her father's sudden removal of the family to Groton, and his even more precipitous death all were events that forced retrenchments in Margaret's emotional and intellectual lives. Add to these her periodic and painful romantic disappointments, and one begins to understand that Fuller was a woman who experienced life as a series of discontinuities and suspensions, in which efforts to impose order were both artificial and unavailing. It was a life in which frequent and tumultuous change, not harmonious flow, supplied the tenuous logic of events.

These outer circumstances were matched by an equally uncontrollable adversary within. Fuller, who took pleasure in observing the functions of her own brain, also had a reason to live in suppressed dread of them. As her devotees well know, Fuller was besieged from an early age by "spectral illusions, nightmare, and somnambulism," as well as "continual headache, weakness and nervous affections, of all kinds" – the byproducts, she believed, of the overly severe and taxing educational régime imposed on her by her father. At the same time that Timothy Fuller helped to make his daughter's brain into a thing of effervescent glory, he also contorted it into an organ that gave "undue force to every thought and every feeling" in a fashion that "wasted" his daughter's constitution. When she reflected on the havoc that her too vigorous mental development had inflicted on her physical state, she firmly expected to proceed "to a premature grave" (Fuller, "[Autobiographical Romance]" 145). Fuller claimed that, with maturity, she had learned to understand and regulate her morbid temperament. Nevertheless, the fatigue, the headaches and the occasional melancholia persisted. The "constant irritation in [her] head" caused innumerable interruptions in her creative work, leaving her at the end of each task, "quite exhausted, feel[ing] as if I could not go a step further." Only months after returning from her excursion to the West, Fuller told her friend Anna Barker Ward that her "many years of forced exertions and complex cares under almost constant bodily suffering" had deprived her of almost all of her once prodigious vital energy, adding, "my mind refuses to sustain me at times." As a result, she found it "inevitable

that I should suffer a good deal of sadness.”¹¹ Fuller confided to Emerson that she went through periods of days at a stretch when she could not write a word without pain.¹²

The year before her trip to the West, Fuller wrote to Elizabeth Hoar that her headaches and nervous condition were “a subject of great interest to me as connected with my mental life,” and rightly so.¹³ Illness creates fissures in consciousness, perhaps never more so than in persons of prodigious mental energy whose bodies are unable to keep pace. Fuller was well acquainted with Descartes’ presumed dichotomy between mind and body, and her sense of her own cerebral and physical dualism was further tinged by feelings of frustration and antagonism. Her states of euphoria often came side-by-side with bouts of physical suffering.¹⁴ Her relationship with the physical, whether it concerned her own body or the world around her, was never completely trusting. A hint as to Fuller’s divided self-perception may perhaps be read in a pair of sentences she quotes in her translation of Kerner’s work on the Seeress of Prevorst: “She was often in situations when one who had, like her, the power of discerning spirits, would have seen her own [spirit] free from the body, which at all times enveloped it only as a light veil. She saw herself often out of the body; saw herself double” (159). There is no reason to believe that Fuller, like the Seeress, experienced actual out-of-body sensations. Nevertheless, it is evident that Fuller did regard herself with a dual awareness: she drew a distinction between the somatic Margaret of sensory awareness, difficult nerves, and physical infirmity, and the intellectual Margaret of the capacious, incandescent mind. The limitless thinker was forever held back by the constraining body. Again, Goethe’s *Wanderjahre* supplies an intriguing link. In describing the Seeress as “one of those persons who are compensated for bodily infirmity by a more concentrated and acute state of mind, and consequent accesses of wisdom,” Fuller compares her with Macaria, a mystically intuitive character in Goethe’s novel (164). It is only too evident that Fuller felt a commonality with both figures. As with the Seeress, the two valences of Fuller’s being defied efforts to bring them into harmony. Whereas Emerson could comfortably posit a reassuring

system of correspondence between the realms of thing and idea, Fuller found it harder to build the bridge.

While Fuller acknowledged the importance of maintaining a balanced conceptual relation between mind and body, she appears to have regarded achieving a true unity between the two as highly problematic, if not impossible. Indeed, her own experience had led her to believe that, as the mind strove upward and the body experienced illness and disease, the disharmony between the two was more likely to increase than diminish. Fuller wrote in *Summer on the Lakes*, "As man has two natures – one, like that of the plants and animals, adapted to the uses and enjoyments of this planet, another, which presages and demands a higher sphere – he is constantly breaking bounds, in proportion as the mental gets the better of the mere instinctive existence." She observed this divergence, not only in the lives of individual human beings, but also in different human populations. She continued, "As yet, [man] loses in harmony of being what he gains in height and extension; the civilized man is a larger mind, but a more imperfect nature than the savage" (205). On the side of the human condition that she perceived as higher, Fuller perceived urbanity and education, but she also found enervation and disease. The other side, the side of the body, was ignorant and savage, but it was also healthy, attuned to nature, and, paradoxically, less "imperfect" than the cerebral self. The East, erudition, and the virtues and maladies of whiteness stared at the West, unlettered energy, and the mysteries of the savage, as if on the opposite sides of a great chasm. Given that Fuller approached her work with such deep suppositions as to the divided self, a divided nation, and a divided species, it is small wonder indeed that she produced a fragmented text.

I have said much about Fuller's sense of her own mental and physical duality as a source of disruption in *Summer on the Lakes*. The idea helps to point the way to a still greater cause of the dissonances and eccentricities that give the book its extraordinary flavor: the polyphonous and grotesque nature of Fuller's mind and writing. Other readers have noted the grotesquerie of *Summer on the Lakes*, none more aptly than Cheryl J. Fish,

who sees the book as “complicat[ing] the picturesque travel tradition with a discourse of the grotesque” (Fish 97). In Fish’s view, Fuller willfully “deforms” that tradition to advance a feminist critique of the picturesque, a concept that had been largely defined by men. My invocation of the grotesque is, I think, somewhat different. What I mean by grotesque is not at all the popular meaning of ugly, distorted, or monstrous. I am thinking instead solely of the word’s original etymology, which refers to something from a grotto or cave. One of the earliest reviews of *Summer on the Lakes* made a similar observation. Writing for the *Christian Examiner* in 1844, Caleb Stetson detected in Fuller’s writing “things connected by no apparent link of association with the objects which seem to fill her eye and mind [...] except for the fact that they occurred in the course of her reading or were called up from the depths by some mysterious association.” The reviewer later referred again to Fuller’s “underground associations, unintelligible to those who are not in the secret of her thoughts” (Stetson 275).¹⁵ Stetson’s description of Fuller’s associations as “underground” and arising “from the depths” touch upon a profound truth about *Summer on the Lakes*. It is, indeed, a subterranean text – the upward emanation of a consciousness that could remain beneath the surface for only so long. Stetson’s words, indeed, call us back to the exchange early in the book between Fuller and James Freeman Clarke, in which Fuller rejects efforts to identify her spirit with either fire or water. The element she claims, it will be remembered, is the earth, and she compares herself with a gnome – “the most important,” she insists, “of all the elemental tribes.” At the point in the narrative when she makes this identification, it seems merely perverse: who would expect Margaret to be so anti-Romantic? Moreover, her explanation of her choice – that it is the gnomes “who make the money” – must have seemed doubly puzzling to Clarke, who, as he was swift to remind her, had produced from his own pocket some of the funds for Fuller’s passage and who surely knew that money making was hardly his friend’s most reliable talent. Accustomed to imagining gnomes as “dark, mean, [and] scoffing,” Clarke is unable or unwilling to absorb his companion’s deeper meaning when she replies, “My people work in the

secret, and their works praise them in the open light; they remain in the dark because only there such marvels could be bred." In *Summer on the Lakes*, Fuller writes not with the shimmering flow of water or the blaze of fire. Rather, she seeks to venture below, into the darker precincts of human motivation and the grottoes of her own consciousness, hoping to bring into view "the hidden light of the earth," which, Fuller knows, is "very different from what she shows on the surface"(77-78).

In *Summer on the Lakes* Fuller sought to bring to the surface more than just the life of the West that so many of her readers would never have glimpsed. She aspired also to delve into the workings of her mind, which functioned in a way that could never have been reduced to a solid, certain unity. As much as any writer who ever lived, Fuller mentally inhabited a web of allusions and references. Prodigiously well read and phenomenally retentive, she perceived the world with an irresistible urge to contextualize. It seems at times as if she needed to fit everything she saw into the framework of her vast literary experience. Michaela Bruckner Cooper has rightly recognized Fuller's almost compulsive invocations of romantic and classical texts and images in *Summer on the Lakes*. Cooper gives a sociological explanation for Fuller's cultural allusiveness, plausibly arguing that Fuller was relying on her reading to insulate herself against the sadness of witnessing the decline of the Indians and the desecration of the so-recently pristine landscape – in Cooper's words, "to keep at bay a narrative of pain" (Cooper 181). But Fuller's allusiveness proceeds both from her unusually erudite mental habits and, I would argue, a particular understanding of consciousness that placed her considerably ahead of her time. Her structuring of *Summer on the Lakes* as a forum for a multiplicity of competing genres suggests an awareness that the processes of the mind are themselves nonlinear and multilateral. She did not wish for either her subject matter or her spirit to be hemmed in by a single mode of storytelling. In Chapter Five of her book, speaking through the persona of Free Hope, Fuller writes:

Subject to the sudden revelations, the breaks in habitual
existence caused by the aspect of death, the touch of love,

the flood of music, I [have] never lived, that I remember, what you call a common natural day. All my days are touched by the supernatural, for I feel the pressure of hidden causes, and the presence, sometimes the communion, of unseen powers. (147)

Having never lived a common day, Fuller could write nothing other than an uncommon text.

Fuller wrote the preceding passage three-quarters of a century before another woman who felt “that odd whirr of wings in the head” offered some very similar thoughts on the nature of consciousness (Woolf, *Diary*, 287). Virginia Woolf thought of awareness as being formed by “myriad impressions,” assailing the mind like “an incessant shower of innumerable atoms.” Woolf wrote the following lines on the subject of modern fiction: “Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display [...]?” (Woolf, “Modern Fiction,” 287-88). One might justly argue that, with her awareness that thought was a polyphony rather than a solo performance and her knowledge that the continual “breaks in habitual existence” were forever transmuting the ordinary into the astonishing, Fuller had an impressive head start on the modernists. Fuller, of course, was never to be a novelist. However, she knew that, every bit as much as a novel, *Summer on the Lakes* ought to represent life, and that life could be a travelogue, a poem, a dialogue, and a romance all at the same time. Fuller writes in her fifth chapter, “The language we habitually use is so broken and so hackneyed by ages of conventional use, that, in all deep states of being, we crave one more or less simple and primitive in its stead” (164). Nevertheless, Fuller’s actual inclination throughout *Summer on the Lakes* is in the contrary direction; she is forever seeking out brokenness and complexity, knowing that this is the real state of our being. Fuller also understood her own mind not as a monolithic, quantifiable thing. She was closer to regarding it as a confluence of countless influences, an active and ever-changing mediator among all the impressions she had ever received

from reading, seeing, hearing, and being. As Christina Zwarg has shown, Fuller employed strategies of reading and writing that both redefined her culture's idea of the literary and unsettled established ways of thinking about both art and gender, pointing the way both toward a broader range of American aesthetic thinking and toward a social ideology that we can now regard as feminist (Zwarg 8-12). But Fuller's first crucial liberation was less visible; it lay in loosing the free flow of her own exuberant consciousness:

I would beat with the living heart of the world, and
understand all the moods, even the fancies or fantasies, of
nature. I dare trust to the interpreting spirit to bring me out
all right at last – to establish truth through error. [...] Let
me stand in my age with all its waters flowing round me.
If they sometimes subdue, they must finally upbear me,
for I seek the universal – and that must be the best. (150)

In Chapter One, the sense of Niagara's waters rushing around and through her had borne almost intolerably upon Fuller's nerves. The metaphorical currents of being, however, now pose no such terrors. In her desire to understand all of nature's moods and to place herself amid the flow of all the currents of her time, Fuller embraces a spectrum of possibilities that could not possibly be subsumed within a unitary perspective. Fragmentation becomes for her something very different from the dejected sense of brokenness with which *Summer on the Lakes* appears to begin. Very much to the contrary, fragmentation supplies the stylistic freedom that enables her, at least intermittently, to escape the limits of a single subjectivity. The disjunctions that make her narrative such an exasperating text also contribute forcefully to making it a living one.

Fuller's text is perhaps at its most pleasing when its digressions, which seem to pop up illogically in the text, are themselves interconnected by a logic of their own. The supreme example of this logical illogicality is the triptych of interpolated stories of Captain P.'s wife, Mariana, and the Seeress of Prevorst. Efforts to explain the presence of these stories have tended to fare poorly. At least one critic has foregrounded their

inexplicability, stating that Fuller's *Leitmotif* of "nature, civilization, and their interaction [...] does not appear to encompass such important 'digressions' as the stories of Captain P., Mariana, or the Seeress of Prevorst" (Adams 252). To the emphatic contrary, there is no opposition more central to these stories than the clash between nature and civilization; each concerns a figure whose natural impulse and inclinations civilization is at a loss to comprehend or govern. In each, the ordering principles of society are challenged and subverted by a woman who does not conform to ordinary codes of behavior. But the three stories, taken together, do more than reiterate this theme. The fact that these stories, which continually restate the motif of the woman who resists societal convention, appear at such odd and unanticipated moments is perhaps the most compelling instance of the subterranean quality of *Summer on the Lakes*. In a world that circumscribed both the political and aesthetic expression of women, repression was a given condition of female existence. However, that repression functioned imperfectly. Just as the social narrative of orderly inequality was continually perforated by the deeds of non-conforming women, so, too, does Fuller introduce feminine disruptions into her narrative to convey, in appropriately staccato fashion, the omnipresent possibility of female resistance. Moreover, the ordering of the three tales establishes an intriguing crescendo. Not only is each of the stories longer than the last, but their progression illustrates a steady spiritual evolution. Of the three female protagonists, Captain P.'s wife is by far the crudest and most shocking. Her identity is the least humanized – she is known only as the wife of P., whose own name is all but elided – and her character seems to function solely on the level of base, animal impulse. Her only ecstasy derives from alcohol. Grossly material, devoid of higher yearnings, she is a personified id before the letter.¹⁶

Mariana is given both the further dignity of a full first name and a more appealing ecstatic dimension. Supremely "rich in energy and coloring," Mariana engages in "wild dances and sudden song" and, dervish-like, spins her way to a state of exhilaration (118, 119). Her excitements, it seems, emanate from a place midway between the spirit

and the body, and her spirit also occupies an unresolved state between extremes. Following her cruel humiliation at the hands of her boarding-school classmates, we learn that "Mariana, born for love, now hated all the world" (122). To the extent that her injuries excuse her retaliations, Mariana is never wholly bad. However, she is also never quite transcendently good. Although her experiences of suffering and chastisement bestow on her a benign dignity and she appears, for a time, ripe for earthly sainthood, she remains a failed being, subdued at last by weakness that she might have conquered, Fuller tells us, "had she known more of God and the universe." When Fuller speculates that, through death, Mariana "perhaps, has entered into a larger freedom," that freedom is not, as one might guess, heaven, but knowledge (129). Even to the last, Mariana is a creature of the middle kingdom.

Mariana prepares us, however, for the last and most fully identified of Fuller's uncanny, outlaw women: Frederica Hauffe, the "almost disembodied" Seeress of Prevorst (158). Poised on the cusp between life and death, and evidently gifted with simultaneous sight into both realms, the Seeress, like a good Transcendentalist, seems to experience nature as if its metaphors were realities. Her reactions to plants and minerals consistently correspond to the ancient superstitions surrounding them. As in Greek legend, for example, laurel exerts a magnetic effect associated with sleep and dreaming. Diamonds, long regarded as a talisman against evil spirits, also have an "enduring, bright, and pure" influence on her spirits (165). For the Seeress, the symbolic connotations of a thing are more powerfully real than its visible attributes. She stands at the outer bound of physical reality, likely to dissolve each moment into a state of pure spirit. Yet Fuller finds the Seeress's condition more lamentable than glorious. Her otherworldly knowledge has come at the price of animal life. No less than Mrs. P.'s, hers is a pitiable, cautionary tale.¹⁷

The developmental arc that links Mrs. P., Mariana, and the Seeress reinforces Fuller's belief in eternal progression, her conviction that "the fashioning spirit, working upwards from the clod to man," arrives at last at a being "whose life is idea, the crown of nature, the platform from which

spirit takes wing” (167). However, just as the vulgarities of Mrs. P. argue the necessity of upward striving, the early dissolution of the Seeress points toward the importance of not transforming oneself into a creature made solely of mind and spirit. Fuller cautions that the logic of creation “did not mean by [...] drawing man onward to the next state of existence [...] to destroy his sympathies with the mineral, vegetable, and animal realms, of whose components he is in great part composed” (167). With her three stories of misfit women, Fuller outlines the discontents of all states of existence: the animal, the ethereal, and the broad middle zone that most of us fitfully inhabit. Fuller, too, placed herself in this medial space; in her correspondence, she confesses an autobiographical link to Mariana. Taken together, as Cheryl Fish has insightfully shown, Fuller’s “narrative accounts of Mariana, Fanny P. [and] the Seeress [...] reflect her yearning to travel out of bounds, into that wild zone where women make direct contact with nature and truth” (Fish 109). Yet Fuller’s text also cautions powerfully against the snares and excesses of that zone; it is, after all, a place where all the outlaw women of *Summer on the Lakes* encounter madness and destruction. In counseling that one should cultivate a nature in equipoise between the natural and the spiritual, Fuller argues for a species of unity. That her vehicle for doing so is three disconnected tales is one of the more delicious ironies of *Summer on the Lakes*. When Arthur Fuller deleted the last two tales from *At Home and Abroad*, he actually destroyed one of the strongest unifying arcs of his sister’s book – a greater irony still.

This essay has not intended to ascribe more intentionality than is due to the discontinuities and unresolved tensions that characterize *Summer on the Lakes*. Even literary conjecture must occasionally bow to facts, and the facts as we know them establish that some of the book’s fragmentary nature arose from circumstances rather than authorial intention. We know, for instance, that Fuller took fewer notes on her tour than could easily support a book-length narrative. The supposition raised by Stephen Adams that a good deal of the material she sought out in the Harvard library was at least partly intended to “pad out” the volume is hard to gainsay (Adams

248). Then, too, there were Fuller's limitations as a writer, which, though her modesty compelled her to exaggerate them, were far from imaginary. Emerson only repeated the general verdict when he observed, "Her pen was a non-conductor" (Ossoli, *Memoirs*, 1:291). Fuller herself lamented her seeming inability to mold her inspiration into a polished, completed whole: "How can I ever write with this impatience of detail? I shall never be an artist; I have no patient love of execution; I am delighted with my sketch, but if I try to finish it, I am chilled" (Ossoli, *Memoirs*, 2:295). One suspects that she would have been amused at any effort to demonstrate that *Summer on the Lakes* was a book with no structural weaknesses. Often in her narrative, Fuller herself expresses sincere doubt as to the adequacy of her voice to the task she has given it. She admits a "want [of] talent" to record the tales of an Illinois farmer (221), and she confesses her belief that it is not she, but Sir Walter Scott, who would have been best suited to immortalize the "gipsy charm" of the Indian gathering at Mackinaw (221, 176).

Nevertheless, one reaches the end of Fuller's narrative with a sense that her gnome did not descend into the depths in vain. She ends, as she began, with poetry. Whereas her introductory poems were concerned with dead fragments and the fear of her own authorial inadequacy, her closing verses present an optimistic contrast. The controlling metaphor of the verse is a prospective blackberry hunt, whose would-be participants are warned that the thorny vines will tear at their dresses and hands as they try to pluck the well-guarded fruit. Still, we are told, the hard-won berries, "gathered in the open field," are superior to a housewife's safe, domesticated blackberry jam, sweetened with "foreign sugar" (226). The poem is Fuller's unapologetic assertion that she has written a tangled, prickly, but earnestly *American* narrative, capable of drawing blood and perhaps better approached in rough gloves and overalls than in fashionable finery. Her poem, though, is not so much an apology for having written a difficult book, but a challenge to readers to make themselves as deliberately unrefined as Fuller has made herself, to venture as boldly into the traps and wonders of her text as Fuller has explored the environs of Lake Michigan. The poem is addressed specifically to American readers, who, Fuller claims, are wont to open their

books at the end. In this way (and by cutting off her narrative before her return home), Fuller manages to write a book with no real conclusion but, instead, two beginnings. Instead of the dead relics of her introductory poems, we are left with the image of a living, fruitful vine and the idea of a story without end. Significantly, in the last stanza of her closing poem, Fuller returns to the mineral metaphors that bedecked her dialogue with James Clarke at the beginning of her second chapter. She invites her reader to “Take fact with fiction, silver with the lead,/ And, at the mint, you can get gold instead” (227). In *Summer on the Lakes*, Fuller’s gnome has brought up from the darkness of the grotto both base and precious metal. As she promised Clarke, she has finally paid for her passage, “and in gold, not in shells or pebbles” (78).

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Notes

¹ Arthur B. Fuller, “Preface,” Margaret Fuller Ossoli, *At Home and Abroad*, ix-x.

² Fuller, “[To George T. Davis],” [c. winter] 1829-1830, *Letters* 1:159.

³ Perhaps the best discussion of the Romantic elevation of the whole over its parts remains Chapter 8 of M.H. Abrams’ *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Although Abrams’ critique deals specifically with British Romanticism and with Coleridge in particular, Coleridge’s emphasis on the power of genius to observe totality was largely adopted by the American Transcendentalist movement.

⁴ Along with her friend James Freeman Clarke, Fuller immersed herself in the Romantic thought of Coleridge and Carlyle in her late teens and early twenties. Charles Capper gives a luxuriant summary of Fuller’s formative reading in *Margaret Fuller, An American Romantic Life: The Private Years*.

⁵ A provocative interpretation of Fuller’s visit to Niagara, though quite a bit at odds with my own, is set forth in Elizabeth McKinsey’s *Niagara Falls*, 215-23.

⁶ Frederic Henry Hedge, "Schiller," *The Christian Examiner* XVI (July 1834), 365-92.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Fuller, *Letters* 3:68, n. 2.

⁹ In connection with *Summer on the Lakes*, it is worthy of note that in Chapter Seven of Goethe's *Wanderjahre*, one of the characters tells of having been born in the United States but having returned to his family's ancestral home in Germany after deciding that it is better to submit to monarchy than to be forced to fight or deceive the Native Americans. While Fuller might well have wished for more Euro-Americans to have made a similar choice, it is likely only a coincidence that *Summer on the Lakes* contains seven chapters.

¹⁰ Fuller, "To Albert H. Tracy," 6 November 1843, *Letters* 3:156.

¹¹ Fuller, "To Anna Barker Ward," 26 December 1843, *Letters* 3:164.

¹² Fuller, "To Ralph Waldo Emerson," 28 January 1844, *Letters* 3:179.

¹³ Fuller, "To Elizabeth Hoar," 20 March 1842, *Letters* 3:55.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Charles Capper, *Margaret Fuller, An American Romantic Life: The Public Years*, 40-41.

¹⁵ Jeffrey Steele's discussion of the subterranean as it relates to Fuller's surreal short story "Leila" and to her reading of Goethe and Novalis merits great praise and very close attention (87-89).

¹⁶ See also John Matteson, "'Woes of Which We Know Nothing': Fuller and the Problem of Feminine Virtue," in *Margaret Fuller and Her Circles*, 32-51.

¹⁷ It is of interest that the woes of Fuller's three women are all augmented by the failure of men to know how to respond to them. Mr. P. can only endure and apologize for his wife's waywardness. Mariana's husband Sylvain, a man lacking in thought and delicacy, has no interest in understanding the sources of her nature, and his invincible obtuseness hastens her death. As for the Seeress, her physician Kerner at first resolves "to take no notice of her magnetic states and directions." His

indifference causes “increasing marks of weakness and decay” until he reconsiders and starts following her own suggestions for her care, whereupon she improves. The fairly clear message is that women’s feelings and discernments must be heeded.

¹⁸ Fuller, “To William H. Channing,” June [?] 1844, *Letters* 3:198-99.

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