

Forty Years with Margaret Fuller

Bell Gale Chevigny

Mutual interpretation – one of Margaret Fuller’s signature values – has marked the history of her reception ever since her revival in the 1970s. In these forty years, Fuller scholarship has kept pace with – or led – emerging trends in feminism, literary theory, and ways of delineating fields of study.

Privately I sometimes fancy that she and I are a double helix spiraling around these lively years. This period has dynamically altered the figure Fuller cuts and has changed my political and intellectual life as well. My forty-years’ love affair with Margaret Fuller has often been broken off, but it fires up again as she reappears – or I seek her – in new guise.

At Wellesley College in the mid-fifties, a thirsting provincial from Staten Island, I excelled at close reading, the reigning pedagogical approach of the time. Of course, the New Criticism did not require that we know political or social history or biography. Even curiosity about these contexts was not encouraged. My meager preparation in these areas was no handicap. Now some of us believe that this detachment from context was a prudent and clever response to the McCarthy period. Ambiguity, ambivalence, and irony suited an intellectual temper fearful of social criticism and left-leaning commitments.¹

In a Yale graduate seminar in 1958 – during the prehistory of my generation’s feminism – I first ran across Fuller; more accurately, I backed into her. It was an inauspicious beginning. Preparing a lecture on Hawthorne’s *Blithedale Romance* for the seminar, I read that two

of Hawthorne's female characters had been in some way influenced by Margaret Fuller who some critics characterized as a slightly ridiculous blue stocking or a self-deceived sex-starved spinster. In the narrow New Critical spirit, I took no interest in biography or social issues but explored the generic tension between realism and romance, the ambivalence of the unreliable narrator, and the ambiguous imagery. I considered the female figures, Zenobia and Priscilla, only as they served these themes. My lecture was an unqualified success.

New York city, where twenty months have presented me with a richer and more varied exercise for thought and life, than twenty years could in any other part of these United States. (Fuller, *New-York Tribune*, WM 348)

As soon as I settled in New York and began teaching at Queens College in 1961, my political education began. My Queens students and some friends in Manhattan taught me the politics of opposition. We marched against bomb-shelters and nuclear testing.

The murder of four children in Birmingham thrust me overnight into the civil rights movement – first doing community organizing with Downtown CORE, then with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's voter registration drive in Mississippi. My life shifted course. But there seemed no way to integrate my new passion with my work. Even teaching my most exciting class on European modernism, I felt divided. Then, after leaving Queens for Sarah Lawrence, I began teaching ex-felons, mostly black, at night. Later still, my classes in both an experimental ghetto college and the Westchester County Penitentiary were gratifying, and they taught me how much I had to learn about black history and literature. Despite my training chiefly in British literature, I reinvented myself as an Americanist. My own crash course bore fruit in my Sarah Lawrence

course, Racism and the American Imagination. Meanwhile I published pieces in the *Village Voice* on civil rights, anti-war activists, and imprisoned students.

In the late sixties, friends began to ask why, with the women's movement emerging, I was so preoccupied with race. What about women, they asked, women like yourself? You can only fight for others? I was dismayed by friends who thought sexism was more fundamental than racism. I still resist that judgment. But I formed a women's consciousness-raising group with friends. And some memory of that ridiculous bluestocking Fuller drove me to pick up Joseph Jay Deiss's new biography, *The Roman Years of Margaret Fuller*.

This portrait of a courageous, inquiring, sensual activist, entirely unlike the caricature I'd encountered a decade earlier, moved me more decisively toward feminism than anything in my direct experience had done. Margaret Fuller emerged as the woman that we needed now – or that I needed – an intellectual woman seeking the fullest personal experience, the richest participation in the important reforms of her time, ultimately a social and political revolutionary. Her remarkable self-consciousness, her zeal to learn from setbacks and to analyze things in terms we would now call feminist, the cumulative use she made of her experience, and her willed participation in shaping her fate – all seemed in this moment of the incipient second wave of feminism stunning and invaluable. Her story moved me as much as her work, enlarging my belief that feminism infused us with a tendency to take nothing for granted, to ask ever more various questions about received wisdom – about gender, race, our nation's alleged classlessness, the democratic ideal, American exceptionalism, and foreign policy.

Margaret Fuller's life held uncanny resonance for me. Despite the great gap between our intellectual training and power, I indulged myself in fancying that my trajectory mirrored hers. My education, quietism, and the narrow view of the world I held in New England was similar to

hers; New York City marked my turning point – engagement with radicals and revolutionary ideas – as it had hers. We Mississippi battlers against disenfranchisement were likened to the abolitionists, whom Fuller came to so admire. Her opposition to the Mexican war, which she labeled imperialist, prefigured ours to Vietnam. Her enthusiasm for the prostitutes at the women’s prison at Sing-Sing supported my commitment to imprisoned students. Our nineteenth-century predecessors had helped fugitive slaves find the underground railway; one of my draft-counseling comrades smuggled young men to Canada. Her *Conversations* preceded our conscious-raising groups. Fuller investigated all the socialisms of her time and was probably the first in the U.S. to mention Marx and Engels in print (WM 294); with a few friends I was making my way through *Das Kapital*. The rebellion epidemic of 1968 echoed the string of fireworks lacing Europe in 1848. We both cherished Italy. My extremist comrades conspired and planted bombs; Fuller wrote joyously to her gentle mother about the assassination of the Pope’s minister Rossi. Her rapid leaps, the links she discerned between diverse policies, her cumulative understanding and widening questions helped me to trust my own. And her spirit, her openness to worlds not her own, her hunger for new pursuits, and her risk-taking moved me inexpressibly.

How can you describe a Force? How can you write the
life of Margaret? (Samuel Gray Ward, Emerson,
Notebook on Fuller, WM 34)

In his book, Deiss referred often to the *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* – the sprawling compendium of testimonials and her letters and journals that her friends James Freeman Clarke, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William Henry Channing compiled. It was rushed into print shortly after her tragic death in 1850 to quiet rumors about her “socialist marriage.” The material in it is invaluable – almost all biographers cited the *Memoirs* – but

Fuller's texts, said Deiss, were abused in it. After reading the *Memoirs*, I went to Massachusetts to examine Fuller's original manuscripts at Harvard's Houghton Library and the Boston Public Library.

Around this time, Grace Paley invited me to join the Board of Resist, an organization of women and men who were not eligible for the draft but committed to support those who resisted it. Resist granted seed money to groups who were organizing their communities to resist illegitimate authority. When the group gathered in Boston, I often came directly from perusing Fuller's letters. Serendipitously, our board included Paul Lauter and Florence Howe, who had just launched the Feminist Press. At Resist meetings, we three began to talk about a collection of Fuller's writing: not only her published, but also her barely touched letters and journals. The conversation ended with a book contract.

Paul Lauter was interested because there wasn't much out there by or about Fuller. Perry Miller's 1963 *Margaret Fuller, An American Romantic* was the liveliest that I found. Miller honored her intelligence. After citing Emerson's evidence of Fuller's "mountainous Me" – "I now know all the people worth knowing in America and I find no intellect comparable to my own" – Miller remarked, "Her observation may, in fact, be the simple truth." But he could not sustain his gallantry, noting a few pages later that "she cannot be dissociated from the hyperbolically female intellectualism of the period, the slightest invocation of which invites our laughter" (x, xvii). And Miller's anthology used texts published in the *Memoirs* even where the originals existed in the Houghton Library.

Working with manuscripts was new to me – but unexpectedly thrilling. It was shocking to find that many passages in her letters had been scrawled over by purple crayon or even excised by the scissors of Clarke, Emerson, and especially Channing. This damage showed their lack of respect for their irreplaceable friend; they assumed no one else would care about her papers. Then, comparison of some manuscripts with their rendering in the *Memoirs* revealed that the editors, in a perverse labor of love, had literally shaved her

papers and deodorized and perfumed her prose.² They had tempered even her feeling (from “terrible” to “sad,” for example), and supplied references to her “husband” and to God where they saw fit. Her dispatches from Europe and her passionate engagement with the Italian struggle were almost ignored.

Indignation and ardor to rescue her words gave way to an exciting insight. The aggressive editing of these men, despite their unorthodoxy, revealed the social norms that Fuller was up against in the project of becoming herself. How great it would be to print both what she actually wrote next to the genteel revision and, more broadly, to juxtapose the judgments of her peers that fed the Fuller myth with her own related work. Like the *Memoirs* editors, her other friends set down their evolving responses to her, which often took the same shape – *I used to think x, but now I see y* – reinforcing the dynamic feeling she and her life evoked. Reactions to Fuller were volatile: the warm feelings of Harriet Martineau and Hawthorne became vitriolic; by contrast, James Russell Lowell’s caustic wit gave way to sympathy. (I imagined that more ink had been spilled over Margaret Fuller than over any woman writing in the nineteenth century, except Harriet Beecher Stowe). A book that offered an experience in Fuller’s and her contemporaries’ own idiom would recreate the peculiar sensibility of her world more directly than a biography.

Three challenges emerged: how to select and order Fuller’s writing, how to include her contemporaries’ words, how to shape the whole. A chronological presentation made more sense than a generic or topical one, because Fuller was always on a quest for the different and more fulfilling place and activity. Her life and work fell roughly into phases and roles, which she – her own dramatic biographer from childhood on – self-consciously defined. In her years of schooling, reading, and reflecting, she established strong relationships; she was so frank, sympathetic, and insightful that W.H. Channing declared, “She was, indeed, The Friend. This was her vocation” (WM 84). Then her friend Emerson drew her into the Transcendentalist circle and work on *The*

Dial. These engagements fed her growing commitment to an expansive American literary culture, which, without imitating, would welcome European achievements. As a Transcendentalist, Fuller sought to nurture self-development in women; hence the *Conversations* (which provided needed income for her family) and the first proto-feminist book in the U.S., *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. When she traveled west, she developed a broader social critique – of western expansion, white settlers' narrow perception of Native Americans and their fatal disregard for our potential mutual relation to nature. *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843* and his wife's enthusiasm for the *Conversations* prompted Horace Greeley to offer her well-paid work as literary and social critic on the *New-York Tribune*. Finally travel to Europe as a foreign correspondent propelled her further leftward, and she became a radical in Italy. My thinking was stimulated by Sheila Rowbotham's brilliant seminal work, *Women, Resistance and Revolution: A History of Women and Revolution in the Modern World* (1972).³

Then, Perry Miller's quotation of Poe's amazing remark that humanity can be divided into three classes "men, women, and Margaret Fuller" (Miller 192), struck me as the key to both the challenges of incorporating her contemporaries and shaping the whole. In an opening section "The Problem of Identity and Vocation," Poe's line could be the first of passages by other contemporaries, many of whom saw her as anomaly, an intellectual woman with aspirations to significant action. They reflected with verve on the conflict between her "masculine" and her "feminine" manners. And Fuller was a dilemma to herself: "How is it that I seem to be this Margaret Fuller? What does it mean? What shall I do about it?" she asked herself. "Will there never be a being who combines a man's mind and woman's heart, and who yet finds life too rich to weep over?" (WM 58). The problem of identity, she saw early, was also a problem of vocation. She tried by turns to correct or to embrace her hybrid nature, and to deny divisive categories. To heal the breach, she sought a model who would help her discover how to act and to find a task that engaged her diverse energies. (I am grateful that I did

not discover for decades that Poe's bon mot had almost certainly been invented by Miller.)

In the end it was the Margaret Fuller I found so compelling who dictated the form of *The Woman and the Myth*. Structural questions resolved themselves organically. The book would unfold as a series of experiments Fuller undertook to provide her large, contradictory self with a vocation. A problem-centered book, it would track her enduring quest to reframe the gender issue. In each of her phases: Friend, Transcendentalist, Feminist, Social Critic, and Radical in Italy, she tried to forge a more capacious identity. A short contextualizing essay would introduce each section.

Into this form, a wealth of charged and intriguing texts fell naturally. Composing it was mosaic-making. A multivocal anthology seemed perfectly suited to my objective: to lead the reader to understand Fuller, her writing, and her world. Although I offered my interpretation, the texts left others free to construct their own sense of this woman and her work. I felt so strongly about this form that I had no interest in the kind query from the Library of America about editing a Fuller volume. And had I felt differently, I would have found only a fraction of her writing which has since been brought to light.

In the early 1970s, when people heard that I was working on Margaret Fuller, they almost all wisecracked: "Isn't she the one who accepted the universe? And Carlyle, what did he reply?" "By Gad she'd better," I'd answer dispiritedly. Alger Hiss was a stellar exception. When he was clerking for Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., the Justice told him that his father and friends met to talk at their Saturday Club in the years after Fuller's drowning and complained about her. "She stuck in their craw," Hiss quoted the Justice as saying. Hiss handed me a gem. The phrase resonated with Carlyle's about her appetite: "a predetermination to eat this big universe as her oyster or her egg" (WM 308). Even after her death, Fuller was still not digested. She was a provocation to every sated (and complacent) mind. My task was to make her not easily swallowed, but irresistibly appetizing.

Bell Gale Chevigny, "Forty Years with Margaret Fuller"

In the present crisis, the preference is given to Minerva.
(Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*)

In the 1970s, U.S. feminism was breaking from a unitary movement into what we termed "radical" and "cultural" feminism. Radical, or political, feminists insisted that women were equal to men and should have as much power and recognition. Cultural feminists believed that women were essentially different from men. Characterizing women as both the responsive Muse and the intellectual, combative Minerva, Fuller anticipated both strands. She wanted access, on a footing equal to that of men, to knowledge, experience, and action, but she cherished the "receptive" qualities in women. She wanted to transcend harsh sexual distinctions but also to help women nurture our special nature. Although she sometimes saw herself as unique among women, just as often she felt she represented women seeking to become independent agents. The timeless, essentialist myth-making of cultural feminism did not draw me. While acknowledging Fuller's "Muse" dimension, *The Woman and the Myth* is a work of radical feminism, celebrating "Minerva" as an intellectually independent, historical actor.

Sometimes I had Houghton's beautiful paneled room almost to myself. My aloneness with Fuller seemed telling and appropriate to my growing feminism. We kept close company. The day I found a letter to Italy from her close friends at home, urging her not to return, I groaned aloud; they were patently nervous about receiving her. There were little dramas: one afternoon at home in New York, studying photocopies of letters of her unknown correspondents, I figured out that her seductive mysterious "Dear Youth" letter must have been written to the American painter in Rome, Thomas Hicks (WM 423-25). I had no one to tell but the bewildered babysitter.

One Saturday, I'd arrived at the Houghton as it opened to settle in with Volume IX of Fuller's papers, which contained her letters. A woman's whisper at my ear startled me: "Excuse me. Will you be finished with that volume soon?" She was Liana Borghi, who taught

American literature in Pisa. She had just arrived from Italy, she explained, and didn't have much time. Neither did I. But we squandered a little to go outside to talk, and when the library closed, we fell into a nearby restaurant. Sharing our discoveries that one half of a given letter was in the Boston Public Library and the other in the Houghton, we became friends. Both of us were preoccupied with Fuller's shifting political commitments. We debated how radical Brook Farm was, how advanced Fourier and the French socialists she met were, how to compare Mazzini's revolutionary thought with her growing class awareness and support of labor.

Fuller must have read the *Communist Manifesto*, Liana insisted. I wasn't sure. In the *New-York Tribune* archives I'd found that as early as 1845, she'd mentioned Engels and Marx in a report on German newspapers (WM 294). As Liana had eminent Communists and anarchists in her immediate family, she vowed to ferret out the possibility of a Marx-Fuller encounter. We ultimately found no evidence of a meeting, but Fuller's eclectic socialism, her criticism of both economic conditions and domestic relations, seemed marvelously relevant to our moment.

I was then a member of an exciting new group of women called MF3; we were the third Marxist-feminist discussion group to be founded in New York or Chicago. We lamented Marxism's failure to really address the needs and strengths of women, and some of us felt that most feminists were complacently bourgeois, without a "class analysis." If we Marxist-feminists could solve what we called the "problem of the hyphen," both Marxism and feminism would become more inclusive and compelling. In our meetings of MF3, we developed a new mode of consciousness-raising, talking in turn about our family histories of class and work.⁴ Could my heroine, MF, address the inquiries of MF3? My approach to Fuller was partly governed by a wish to square feminism with some kind of socialism as well as with racial equality. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* explicitly linked what we called racism and sexism. And her journalism revealed a growing concern for the working class.

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In the spring of 1975, my husband Paul traveled every week to Buffalo to work with the Attica Defense Committee, leaving me to tend our young daughters, while teaching. Every night after tucking them in, I turned to Fuller with a galvanizing passion; she excited such energy that I worked late into the night. About completing *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* Fuller had written, "the last day it kept spinning out of my hand." Like her, "I felt a delightful glow, as if I had put a good deal of my true life in it" (WM 217).

My manuscript grew richer and longer as she approached Italy to find her whole self. Although I dreaded the end, when her death drew near, I hurried to finish before the anniversary of her drowning at forty years of age. I was thirty-nine.

"My family called her 'crazy Aunt Margaret.'"
(Buckminster Fuller, private conversation)

One of the first impulses of second-wave feminism was to examine the depiction of women in literature and the sex-roles they were made to play. Another was to recover texts by women, which had been disparaged, distorted, neglected, censored, repressed or lost. Once my book was done, I turned to the censorship of Fuller that had motivated me at the outset. In "The Long Arm of Censorship: Myth-making in Margaret Fuller's Time and Our Own," I addressed the paradox of her friends' damage and distortion in the interest of protection, and their need in the aftermath of her scandalous union with Ossoli to honor and mourn her, even if they had to invent her. I detailed the omissions and additions to her papers made by these gallant gentlemen. The worst offender was the most radical and the one in whom she most confided from Italy: William Henry Channing. More than thirty years later, learning that Higginson was writing a book on Fuller, Channing wrote Higginson almost hysterically, insisting that he convey her "all-pervading, all-refining religiousness," adding "my estimation of this noble person was juster, truer, purer, truer, loftier, than

has ever been given elsewhere.” Channing was my cautionary model of the possessive biographer.⁵

Fuller scholars argue to this day about the legal status of Fuller’s union with Giovanni Angelo Ossoli. Upon learning that Buckminster Fuller was her great-nephew, I phoned him to ask for his view of their union. He said something to this effect: In the eyes of that great spirit we inadequately call God, they were married.

In 1971, I met this enthusiastic descendant at Fuller’s childhood home. 71 Cherry Street was named the Fuller House in 1902, when, as part of the settlement house movement, it was designed to create an outpost of education and culture in the slums and to reduce the mutual suspicion and ignorance between classes. Now the building was being renamed the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House, still committed to serving the community.⁶

Buckminster told me that his family had occasionally mentioned “crazy Aunt Margaret.” It wasn’t until his interest in notions of time had led him to read Goethe that he discovered that Margaret had been our country’s best interpreter and advocate of Goethe in the 1840s. Studying her, he found great commonality in their work. I told him I had uncovered a document asserting that a captain had found Fuller’s and Ossoli’s bodies, carried them by boat to New York harbor, and called on Greeley to identify Fuller. Greeley would have nothing to do with him, so the dismayed captain took the bodies to Coney Island and buried them in the dead of night.⁷

After I had sent Buckminster Fuller a copy of my essay on this matter, he wrote a letter saluting me as Margaret’s “most faithful friend alive.” He proposed that one day we “walk the sands of Coney Island together.” Thrilled, I would later submit this tribute with my application for full professorship. (I have since learned that Buckminster Fuller celebrated another Fullerite with similar extravagance.) I have always regretted not taking him up on the offer and, more, not asking him what he considered the great kinship between his work and his crazy Aunt Margaret’s.

Bell Gale Chevigny, "Forty Years with Margaret Fuller"

Here are things before my eyes worth recording, and if I
cannot help this work, I would gladly be its historian.
(Fuller, WM 451)

"History" is an honorific term in Ann Douglas's controversial book, *The Feminization of American Culture*, published a year after mine. Douglas paired Fuller with Melville as revolutionary iconoclasts and bold exceptions to the sentimental literary norm of their times.⁸ Douglas noted that Fuller disavowed sentimental fiction-writers' construction of heroines and plots. Rejecting "feminine" fantasy for "masculine" reality, Douglas argued, Fuller moved from fiction to history and rhetoric (Douglas 262). I admired Douglas's sharp observations, especially on the endlessly stimulating relation between Fuller and Emerson. "The essence of Fuller's challenge to Emerson," she writes, "was her demand to know whether or not he meant what he said" (Douglas 267). Douglas is severe about Fuller's love-lorn laments: "Rejection can be experienced as the ultimate ritual of narcissism: one is left alone with oneself, too good for the world" (Douglas, 276). If self-involvement worked as "therapy and inspiration" for Emerson, it "spelled dangerous self-inflation for Fuller" (Douglas, 278). In Italy, Douglas notes, "history" explicitly replaces "art" in her pantheon.

Douglas's thesis is announced in her long subtitle: "The Victorian alliance between women and the clergy, and the popular fiction to which that alliance gave birth, fostered a sentimental society and the beginnings of modern mass culture." Applauded by many male scholars, this thesis gave birth to the schism in women's literary studies between Fuller and the sentimental novelists, "scribbling women" as Hawthorne had called them. Fuller seemed to resist being charted in the same tradition as her female peers – they shared little literary or religious culture. Douglas's dismissal of female novelists dismayed and angered feminists who were recuperating these women's neglected works and seeking their recognition. Jane Tompkins would take on such dismissal a decade later in *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-*

1860, calling into question canon-formation and the notion of a “classic.” Assailing our conventional ideas of literary valuation, she argues for the ideological and formal complexity of sentimental novels. Tompkins’ call was answered by scores of scholars. It is striking, however, that teachers of those novels have found it difficult to incorporate Margaret Fuller in their courses.

It is so true that a woman may be in love with a woman... (Fuller, WM 112)

Around this time, a response developed to our need for more complex discussion of how women are made. The word sexual had been stretched too far; discussion of “sex roles” was inadequate to cover the depth and width of social construction. We agreed with de Beauvoir that a woman is not born, but made, that is, molded by culture and society, but “gender,” as a critical term, did not emerge until the late 1970s.⁹

“Gender.” We fell upon this word and devoured it. How had we done without it? Feminism experienced a growth spurt. “Gender” helped us to understand the social construction of woman and the centrality of lesbianism to feminism, and to debate nature and nurture.

I wondered anew about Fuller’s intense friendships with women like Caroline Sturgis and Anna Barker. Was Fuller a closeted lesbian? Writing my book in the early seventies and aspiring to waken interest in this forgotten woman, I had been reluctant to dwell on her sapphic propensities. I had chosen not to publish a patently manipulative letter to Caroline Sturgis (designed to make Caroline jealous and penitent) fearing my readers’ scorn or homophobia. Times changed sharply. Heartily repenting of my censorious protectiveness, I made sure to include the letter in the revised edition.¹⁰

About her passionate correspondence and her recall of her love for Anna Barker I had speculated: that as “the cult of true womanhood

insisted that women alone possessed purity and spirituality [...] Women could safely vent amorous feelings without needing to examine them. A side effect of the cult of true womanhood was thus an elaborate system of permitted passion" (WM 70-71). I stand by this analysis, though I suspected even then that it was incomplete.¹¹

In 1977, a quite different same-sex issue baffled me. Aileen Ward had invited me to join an NYU seminar of biographers. If memory serves, she and I were the only women in the group. The issues the men discussed seemed to me inconsequential. One day I nerved myself to ask, "What do you do when you have insights into your subject because you feel a strong identification with the person?" One man warmly condescended: "Well, we're professional biographers and we're commissioned to write our books. And in any case, we all have to be objective." Some dozen years later, a group of women in that biography seminar bolted to found their own very supportive and stimulating seminar, Women Writing Women's Lives, now at CUNY graduate school.

The issue of identification continued to nag at me.

Daughters' Writing

In 1978, some of us feminists experienced a paradigm shift by reading psychologist Nancy Chodorow's analysis of the mother-child bond in the pre-Oedipal period. Drawing on the British object relations school in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Chodorow argued that in the conventional (white, middle-class, mid-twentieth century) nuclear family, mother-daughter intimacy was marked by porous boundaries, fostering in girls a relatively stronger capacity for feeling and relatedness, and less capacity for autonomy and abstraction than boys developed.

Chodorow's argument enabled us to think more penetratingly about the psychological roots and socio-cultural effects of women's intimacies; it also reminded me of one of Fuller's arresting manuscript fictions, in

which she casts herself as a boy who suffers the early death of his unfulfilled mother and dreams of how he might have saved her by nourishing her heart and mind. In my book I'd offered a psychosocial reading (WM 50-51), but the passage still haunted me. Chodorow's work made me return to the Houghton, where I learned that as a child Fuller had longed to be closer to her mother and that their bond grew intense after she told her mother about her own child.

At the same time I was troubled by the question of identification: in my passion to rescue Fuller from her respectable friends, had I damaged her anew by making her serve my needs, as some of her friends had disturbingly done? Once I was asked to tell her story informally in an old farmhouse at an artists' residency (Cummington Community of the Arts). The room might have been at Brook Farm – it was dimly lit, a breeze from the meadow wafted in the open doors, sympathetic friends lounged in all corners. I put aside notes and books and described, quoted, paraphrased and even imitated Fuller as well as I could. It was stimulating and pleasant; everyone seemed interested and curious and some remarked on how much I loved Fuller and had brought her to life. But I began to feel intolerably agitated as the evening wore on, as if I'd done something tawdry. I fell asleep, only to find myself bolt upright, awakened by my own accusation: "You're as bad as Channing! You think that you alone understand her." I knew that such shudders were quaint, or overly fastidious. But the notion of claiming Fuller had become deeply obnoxious to me. And as I'd usurped her, she'd taken over some of my identity. The "third person" in the room, the hybrid of us two, continued to provoke me. Did we feminist biographers freshly distort our subjects by projecting our actual, latent, or ideal experience onto them?

Exploring some of Chodorow's influences, Melanie Klein's theory of reparations and D.W. Winnicott's account of maternal mirroring, I realized that my two puzzles – Fuller's fiction and my authorial self-doubts – were connected; in fact, each held the key to the other. The manuscript fiction might spring both from a reparative fantasy – to

make her mother a freer woman – and from Fuller's balked desire for a freer mother to affirm the unprecedented woman. With the *Conversations for Women*, Fuller was fulfilling the fantasy, helping other women to emerge as independent, articulate, inquiring public beings. In like manner, we daughters of women who had not struggled for autonomy might be tempted to similar reparative ventures in writing about a bold foremother, thus creating our own mirroring sanctions and precedents.

In "Daughters Writing: Toward a Theory of Women's Biography," I speculated more broadly that women writing about women – especially foremothers – are likely to be drawn to a subject who symbolically reflects their internalized relations with their mothers and offers them an opportunity to re-create those relations. A feminist biographer might make use of her intuitive understanding, so long as she considered also the historical differences between her situation and her subject's. She should also strive to recognize and take account of her personal stake in her project. My stake, for instance, had drawn me more to Fuller the writer and activist than to that woman sometimes absorbed by mysticism. Imagining a feminist response to the subjective-objective debate, I suggested that "there might be a way of engaging our identification with our subjects with so little qualification or inhibition that one would emerge at the far side of the experience with a greater clarity than usually accompanies 'objectivity.'"¹² In the decade after this essay was published, many biographers told me that they had very similar experiences and thanked me for suggesting ways to handle them.

Between Women

In the dawn of the 1970s, prowling rare book rooms, a few of us women would spot one another across the male landscape. Strangers, we would sometimes exchange conspiratorial smiles, as if we shared a secret

mission. At that time, there were so few feminist books that we fancied one could read them all. But a decade later our numbers had swelled exponentially. Interest was growing in the collateral revelations of our work, the mutual discovery of subject and writer, and our necessary invention of new ways to explore women's lives. Sara Ruddick, Louise DeSalvo, and Carol Ascher responded with *Between Women: Biographers, Novelists, Critics, Teachers and Artists Write about their Work on Women*.

This landmark book is one of several in women's history, in which we reach a plateau, look around, and discover that we have been part of a collective project with novel practices. (It re-published my "Daughters Writing" essay.) Not only did the essayists bring a fresh approach to our subjects, but also, as the editors put it, we attested to "the self-knowledge their work has given them, the moral strength they have earned and hope to share, and the political insight that continues to challenge them." In addition to external obstacles, "doubts about their own worth become mixed with doubts about the worth of their subject." Hampered by what some call "masculinist conceptions of work," some contributors urged that work be "less compulsive, aggressive, lonely, competitive; more communal, caring, and integrated with love and politics." Writing about women, the editors found, offers "something like the transference in psychoanalysis." Some "speak of individuation and separation, of learning to distinguish their own needs from those of their subjects. Others describe relinquishing idealization so they can see 'the conflicted, realistic sister of our common past.'" The work of women on women represents "the creation of a tradition that can sustain women personally and give them a rich and lively social world," and "our essayists want the past they are creating to be sturdy and this means they must be responsible interpreters" (Introduction xx-xiv).

Inspired afresh, I dreamed of "creating" more of our "past." Enough Fuller! Willa Cather, her adventurous life and incomparable work, especially concerning the Anasazi dwellings of the southwest, tempted

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me. I took my family to Arizona, coaxing them to read *The Song of the Lark*, so that, by lying in the cliff dwellings of Walnut Canyon, we could imagine ourselves in the novel's "Panther Canyon." In Colorado we could stand on the rim of Mesa Verde and imagine Cather standing there before us, herself imagining the two cowboys, Richard Wetherell and Charles Mason, who had chased their cattle into the canyon below and discovered this golden Anasazi city in the cliff. Fictionalizing the story, Cather bestowed it on Tom Outland in *The Professor's House*. That was fun, but others were writing about Cather; and my passion for this appealing figure never had the power of my Fuller romance. Evidently, I was a one-woman woman.

This is what makes my America. (Fuller, "On the Pope's
retreat from revolution," WM 452)

While working on *The Woman and the Myth*, I began to read Latin American literature, first in translation and then in Spanish. I learned as much as I could about contexts, through reading and traveling in Mexico; I recalled that Fuller had written sympathetically about Mexico in her *Tribune* pieces. If Fuller were alive, she too would have wanted to witness the social and cultural effects of the Nicaraguan and Cuban revolutions. When I accompanied my husband Paul to study police abuses in Brazil and Argentina for Human Rights Watch, I thought how she too would have been moved by interviews with the victims. Latin America might have come to seem to her, as it had to me, more compelling and less understood by our compatriots than Europe.

For political and cultural, as well as literary, reasons, I wanted to know how U.S. and Latin American literature influenced one another and how contrasting them might cast fresh light on our cultures and politics. With Gari Laguardia, a colleague at SUNY-Purchase, I organized a conference in 1980 on comparative literature of the Americas (inviting

all we could find of the very few scholars who compared literature north and south). Eventually we edited a collection of essays, *Reinventing the Americas: Comparative Literatures of the U.S. and Spanish America*. We explored such questions as how the Dutch/Anglo and the Spanish settlers, respectively, were influenced by Protestant and Catholic ideologies to eliminate or partly accommodate the indigenous peoples they encountered; how the diverse topographies of their boundless territories led one people to build roads, the other plazas; how variously they handled their African slave populations; how their battles for independence produced different polities. We tried, in our writing, to substitute *U.S.* for *America* and *American*. Less euphonious, *U.S.* also was more accurate and less imperialist than *America*.

Sometimes my efforts struck me as continuations of Fuller's various endeavors: to make her readers complicate the contrast between themselves and Native Americans; to foster in her native land a culture that embraced foreign literatures and immigrant writings as well as nascent U.S. literature; and to question American exceptionalism by demonstration that the U.S. was one among many emerging democratic republics. During this period I taught a course on Fuller and Hawthorne ("Meg and Nat"). But I'd really had enough Fuller. The fuss over the 500th anniversary of Columbus' muddled voyage pulled me away to develop a course on the Caribbean.

To you, people of America, it may be given to look on and learn in time for a preventive wisdom. [...] You may learn in time to reverence, learn to guard, the true aristocracy of a nation, the only true nobles, – the LABORING CLASSES. (Fuller, *New-York Tribune*, WM 446)

In part my thinking about the Americas was a questioning of my nation's ideological commitment to American exceptionalism and its

unquestioned scorn for, domination and ignorance of Latin America. In the 1980s, books like Frederic Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* prompted many U.S. critics to consider the ideology implicit in our literary fields. Stimulated to consider Fuller from this angle, I began by urging that we "consider all known aspects of her life as representation or text and to attend not only to what she said and wrote, what she did and purportedly aspired to do, but also to the 'formal' dimension or shape of that action" ("To the Edges of Ideology" 174). Her movements from the Boston area to the Great Lakes region, then to New York, then to Europe suggest a crude spiral, a centrifugal trajectory, which could not be reversed. The widening spiral "form" of Fuller's text testifies to both the largeness of her curiosity and the limitations of what she found.

My essay argued that the text of her life provided a lens through which to discover the otherwise obscure workings of aspects of U.S. ideology. Jameson describes ideology as a "strategy of containment," which "allows what can be thought to seem internally coherent in its own terms, while repressing the unthinkable [...] which lies beyond its boundaries" (Jameson 283). When coherence fails, when contradictions become too glaring, the work of ideology becomes more imperative; it narrows the range of the thinkable. In effect, it becomes centripetal.

Two texts – registering her responses to the 1842 Dorr rebellion in Providence and the 1848 assassination of Pope Pius IX's foreign minister, Pellegrino Rossi in Rome – marked her ideological shift from the center to the borders of the system in which she was formed.

In her youth, for example, American women lived at the intersection of two ideological constructs. One, based on faith in individualism and the nation's exceptional destiny, posited the classlessness of American society; the other posited the distinct nature of women, which permitted their subjugation. The ideology of gender concealed its basis in social inequality and contradicted the ideology of class, even as it was used to support it. For only by insisting on their essential differences in gender could men pursue the supposedly universal values of economic freedom and individual growth. I argued that Fuller's actual texts (private and published), her shifts

in consciousness (what she termed “the text of my inward life”), and the “text” offered by the centrifugal shape of her life contributed progressively to the deconstruction of these ideological systems.

In New York she argued that national policies betrayed the U.S. democratic ideal; abroad she reported on its rebirth in France and Italy. With her comparison of the Parisian working class with nobility, she stopped short of asserting the inevitability of class struggle. Positioning herself on the border between ideologies of class and classlessness, she sought to reconcile them. In other passages she clearly wished to enlarge the American revolutionary project, to include elements many thought antithetical to it.

That does it, I told myself when I sent the piece off. With “Daughters Writing” I’d Freudened her and now I’ve Marxed her. It’s time to move on.

I think I will try whether I have the will to paint, as well
as the eye to see. (Fuller, *On Writing Fiction*, WM 57)

I moved on by trying fiction. A letter to an old friend, reflecting on our long relationship, turned into a story. A long story. It kept widening out, incorporating other friendships with women. I was still thinking novella when I realized I was writing a novel. I kept at it, fancying it a response to Woolf’s expressed desire, in *A Room of One’s Own*, to read a new kind of novel, one that explored how women saw themselves and one another, a book beginning, “Chloe liked Olivia.” These became the opening words of my *Chloe and Olivia*. The novel was made of intermittent but vivid conversations between two women, modeled on amazing exchanges I had with other women in the 1970s, conversations that now embraced public issues and social changes as well as the private life.¹³ My own desire to read such a novel kept me going. For three years Fuller was a presence in my study, prompting me to update the dialogues so central to her thinking and to engage the erotic dimension of straight

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women's friendship. So I had both cut Fuller loose and gone deeper into romantic friendship territory.

Extraordinary generous seeking. (Fuller's inscription in a notebook she gave James Freeman Clarke)

By 1991, *The Woman and the Myth* was almost out of print. For the second edition, I planned simply to write a Foreword about Fuller studies of the past fifteen years and add a few newly-available texts by and about Fuller. But the PMLA and Joel Myerson's exhaustive bibliographies revealed a surprisingly rapid expansion of primary and secondary work. Then Pat Valenti, a colleague in our CUNY seminar, "Women Writing Women's Lives," urged me to go to Concord for the annual Hawthorne Society meeting, especially to talk with Larry Reynolds, whose graduate student "says that Hawthorne was in love with Fuller."

Tom Mitchell was not in Concord.¹⁴ But I was delighted to meet Larry Reynolds, whose important study, *European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance*, had deepened my admiration of Fuller's dispatches from Italy. Adopting the project of the new historicists to examine canonical works in the broad historical context of the European revolutions of 1848, he notes that Fuller alone among the great U.S. writers of the time was not cautious or temporizing in her support and was far better informed. Larry and his wife had just been rowing up the Concord River toward Fairhaven, following the route of Fuller and Hawthorne.

The paper Larry read for the Society took me by surprise. Citing Dan Quayle's recent speech on "family values," Larry implied that Fuller in her Concord visits had shown little regard for them, luring Nathaniel off on long boat trips and moonlight rambles, while Sophia was nursing Ellen Fuller's baby as well as her own. Over lunch with Larry and his wife, I insisted that Hawthorne would hardly let himself be dragged off; the responsibility for Sophia's feelings was chiefly his. Larry remarked that I had taken a much more nuanced view in my book. How would I have felt in Sophia's shoes? he

wanted to know. And so on. The vigor with which we scholars can assume, defend, even exaggerate the point of view of our subjects struck me.

Over dinner I marveled that Hawthornians had so much fun. Larry proposed that I create a Fuller Society. He wasn't kidding. That meant that I'd have to rejoin the MLA, I protested, but the idea had strong appeal. The very creation of such a group seemed like a gesture of homage to Fuller herself, who sought always to supplement reading and writing with presence, contact, and, above all, talk. A Society might draw together the proliferating new scholars, ideally in Fuller's spirit of "extraordinary generous seeking." On condition that he found it with me, I agreed.

Hoping to chair a lively first meeting of the Fuller Society at the MLA, I asked a woman to act as a shill. After welcoming the group, I asked, "What is life? Let us define, each in turn, our idea of living. I don't believe that any of you have a distinct idea of life. We all talk about it. We all have some thought now. Let us tell it. Caroline – what is life?"

My accomplice replied, "It is to laugh or cry, according to our organizations."

"Good," said I, as Fuller had in one of her Conversations, "but not grave enough."¹⁵ More than 16 years had passed since *The Woman and the Myth* had been published. With the massive retrieval of primary texts¹⁶ and shelves of new scholarly studies, Margaret Fuller had come of age. I regarded myself as a friend of her youth. She'd moved from the shadowy periphery into the light.¹⁷ She ran with a new crowd now. To catch up with her, I'd have to take them on.

In order to publish my book as soon as possible, I left the Feminist Press for Northeastern. The revised and considerably expanded edition¹⁸ was printed just in time for the 1993 MLA. But it did not sell as well as hoped. A friend who knew both editions remarked tactfully, "Maybe your book has already done its work."

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George Sand smokes, wears male attire, wishes to be addressed as "Mon frère." (Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, WM 256)

While working on my new edition at Cummington Community of the Arts in western Massachusetts, I came to know another resident, Diane Torr, a performance artist who conducted cross-dressing workshops, one for men, one for women. Still puzzling over Fuller's experimental romantic friendships and her interest in cross-dressing, and craving a new angle for insight, I signed up for Torr's female-to-male workshop. After slicking back our hair, painting on mustaches, practicing not smiling or touching our faces, walking and sitting with all the territorial aplomb of male chauvinists, we apprentice males managed to resemble the members of a seedy out-of-town band. When we tried to pass in a strip club, the patrons' response to us was ambiguous, chiefly bored. I'd hoped to discover whether drag made me feel more powerful, but what I most felt was fear of exposure.

But I had material now, not for an essay on Fuller, but for a short fiction. "Research: A Love Story" is about two straight women who together see some late nineteenth-century photos by Alice Austen of herself and two other women in drag. One woman says they are "lesbians"; the other maintains that Alice was simply exploring political questions about gender. The stage is set: sex or gender? The two make a bet and take a cross-dressing workshop together. During the course of the evening, the woman who bet that transvestism is about sex comes to believe it confers power, while the other is erotically aroused. In short, each proves the other right; they're both right. Because the whole experiment had sprung from questions about Fuller, I called my protagonist Corinne (the *improvisatrice* of de Staël's eponymous novel, often compared to Fuller), and the protector of Alice Austen's work is named Miss Birdseye (after Henry James' caricature of Elizabeth Peabody in *The Bostonians*).¹⁹

Cheat me on by no illusion. (Fuller, 1844 journal)

By 1995 Fuller had more nearly come into what she called “my own inheritance” than ever before. With her canon vastly expanded, and a swiftly growing body of critical and biographical work she had advanced from the margin to the center of a number of discourses. Developments in critical theory had made possible some of this new work; at the same time Fuller’s own critique was extraordinarily seminal and anticipated and helped shape those very critical perspectives. She had, in effect, helped to forge the spectacles by which we now could read her.

When Fritz Fleischmann organized a long-overdue conference on Margaret Fuller’s Cultural Critique at Babson that year, I seized on his invitation to give the keynote address. “Give me truth, cheat me [on] by no illusion,” Fuller had prayed as a girl – addressing experience and herself. I took this line for my title. One dimension of her critique was to expose the cheating illusions of her culture; thus, for example, she deconstructed pat phrases about women and noted the historical contingency of language. In another dimension she seeks truth by developing critical language – or principles and practices that would foster a more inclusive culture. Her project of self-knowledge, I argued, had four facets: self-examination, listening to the soul, performing the self, and knowing herself in relation with another. Her other critical practices grew organically from these: know the other in his/her own terms, cultivate dialogue and conversation, experiment, embrace mutuality, celebrate social diversity and cosmopolitanism.²⁰

Italy receives me as a long-lost child, and I feel myself at home here. (Fuller, to Elizabeth Hoar, September, 1847, *Letters*, IV: 293)

On the second day of the Babson conference, we Fullerati traveled together to Concord. My colleagues were incredulous that I had not done

research there. It hadn't occurred to me. I had not been writing a biography. But now I was eager to trace the walk from the Emersons to the Hawthornes, and in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery try to find the place where Nathaniel and Waldo had found Fuller lying in the grass, reading.

Joan von Mehren brought her new book, *Minerva and the Muse: A Life of Margaret Fuller*, to Babson. She also distributed Fuller's favorite carbuncle stones to her sister Fullerati. The carbuncles epitomized von Mehren's interest in the material things and customs and settings of Fuller's life. Her book had emerged in the same year as Robert Hudspeth's edition of her *Letters*, and – in her emphasis on the social web and the network of families, homes, places – it fleshed out the *Letters*. Von Mehren also lays greater stress on the constraints "circumstances" placed on Fuller's life.

My recent pleasure in ferreting out Cather's places prompted me to urge Joan to undertake a joint expedition to Nahant to seek the places Fuller had climbed the rocks with Sturgis and tried in vain to elicit a declaration of love from her. Alone in Lenox, I walked around Tanglewood, the "cottage" Sturgis and her husband Lewis Tappan had built in the late 1840s. Roaming further, I came upon a stunning house beautifully set on a slope above the lake. When I learned that it was Highgate, the elegant home of Sam Ward and Anna Barker, the thought of Fuller penniless in Italy and apprehensive that her stylish friends would receive her coolly, made me cry out, "Why didn't you help her? Why didn't you send her money?" Though I later learned that Sam had sent her some money, the scene of serene beauty left me bitter on her behalf.

Fuller's love for her places in Italy made them especially alluring, and I had the good fortune to travel to Italy several times to search for them. Living in Rome in my misspent youth (writing my Joseph Conrad dissertation), I had been oblivious of her. Meanwhile Rome had become infinitely more prosperous and festive, preparing for its Jubilee. In 1998, when the Hawthorne Society, meeting in Rome, invited me to join a Margaret Fuller panel, my husband Paul and I stayed at the American Academy in Rome, flush against the wall the reactionary French

breached in 1849. We were cordially invited to attend an exquisite concert of Rome Prize winners in the newly renovated Villa Giulia. It was strange to sit in a lovely high room overlooking the city, knowing that Garibaldi's men had holed up there until the French entered and shot them one by one.

We went to the Piazza della Trinita di Pellegrini in Trastevere to see the building where Fuller had first helped care for wounded soldiers, and to the Fate Bene Fratelli hospital, later put in her charge, on the boat-shaped Tiber Island, gleaming white.

Driving to beautiful L'Aquila in the Abruzzi, Paul and I passed fields drenched in the red of the poppies Fuller had celebrated in the spring of 1848. We went on, as she had done, to Rieti, now a bedroom community of Rome. We located two old houses with galleries hanging over the willow-lined river (Fuller's house had a gallery) and a view of the bridge and the Via Salaria on which Ossoli rode up from Rome. They matched her description of the lodgings where she had borne Angelino. In this quiet retreat I felt her presence most strongly. Her lodging in her Florentine exile, Piazza Santa Maria Novella #1, evoked little, but we were amused to note that catty-corner was a Hotel called Minerva.

The next year in Rome I looked up Professor Giuliana Limiti, the proud white-haired president of the Mazzini Society.²¹ Under the leadership of Gaetano Salvemini and Max Ascoli, she explained, the Society had been created in 1940 to teach Italian-Americans that Mazzini's Italy, not Mussolini's, was the real thing. Later I was invited to a meeting of the Society, held in an unheated garage, where members described their plans to recognize Fuller's contribution to the Risorgimento. (The Viale Margarita Fuller, a steep overgrown path in the Villa Schiarra, did not do the job.) They wanted to have plaques erected on the Janiculo hill, next to the statue of Anita Garibaldi (cradling her baby and brandishing a sword while riding a horse) and on the house, Piazza Barberini 60, which she occupied during the Republic. Here lay a difficulty: no #60 remained.

Joan von Mehren and I went to work. Having analyzed Fuller's several descriptions, we surmised that she had lived in the yellow house

facing the Triton fountain, now numbered Piazza Barberini 2. Besides, Joan had learned that Fuller had claimed in 1849 that Hans Christian Anderson had described her house in "The Improvisatore," which had been published with an illustration of this building. The research of Roberto Colzi, a Roman archivist, into Roman address changes bore us out. To test our hypothesis about which were her rooms, I left a message for the resident of the third floor, a Dr. Andrea Basili, asking him to call. In the belief that that spirits of the dead continue to haunt their dwellings, Dr. Basili invited me to visit his rooms. It was raining when I rang his bell, but the sun broke through dramatically as I entered the apartment. Though cut up and renovated, the corner room still commands a view up the Via Quattro Fontane toward the gates of the Barberini palace, just as Fuller described it.

In 2000, the 150th anniversary of Fuller's death, Giuliana Limiti gave an address while an official plaque was placed on the Barberini house amid great fanfare. This ceremony was the closing event in an international conference called "Margaret Fuller: tra Europa e Stati Uniti d'America," hosted by the American Academy in Rome and organized by Charles Capper and Cristina Giorcelli. The conference papers enriched Capper's thesis that Fuller was "transnational" or "transatlantic."²² In the new fields of transnational/transatlantic studies, Fuller seems again to have been in the vanguard, if not to have invented the field. A transatlantic from childhood on, in her thought, her imagination, her commitments, and finally in her residency, her life and work lend great substance to this new critical field.

In the second volume of his biography, *An American Romantic Life: The Public Years*, Capper demonstrates how Fuller's extraordinary preparation in private life had made possible the stunning final decade of her life. If the task for Fuller biographers has been finding a framework capacious enough for her largeness and complexity, the many facets of her brilliance, and her meteoric rise into a constellation of experiences, Capper has risen to the challenge. In considering romanticism in its largest terms to account for Fuller's public achievements, he

simultaneously offers the reader a new historical entity, an American avant-garde intelligentsia, which in turn reframes our reading of the Transcendentalists and the New York democratic liberals.

After the conference in Rome, Liana Borghi and I traveled to Rieti to pursue our search for Fuller's apartment, to try to flesh out her life there, and look for whatever documents might address the question of her marriage. Ingenious and persuasive, Liana elicited information and research from many archivists. We came to believe that she lived on Via della Verdura in the building with a loggia over the river. With the help of Colzi, Joan continued her research on the Ossoli family and her search for documentation that pointed to the actuality of Fuller's marriage.²³ Although Joan never found a marriage certificate, her analysis, more extensive than any preceding, makes a strong case for the probability of marriage. Her findings have been widely accepted, but, in my view, they depend on believing that Margaret and Giovanni and those around her never told an expedient lie. Liana's and my findings were more ambiguous, and I remain persuaded that the only truth we can establish is that this remarkable woman would have had enormously complex feelings about the issue.²⁴

My never-completed project of advancing a new interpretation of Fuller's romantic friendships that takes into account her theatrical/mystical experiments with Sam Ward and Caroline Sturgis, her exploring the possibilities of intimacy both spiritual and physical, and her indifference to the charge of sublimating a sexual drive, gained support very recently. In *A Vindication of Love: Reclaiming Romance for the Twenty-first Century*, Cristina Nehring comes at Fuller's unusual passion from another direction. In an effort to rescue contemporary love from its domestication, Nehring celebrates lovers who love with intensity, without measure, without counting the cost, those who find passion its own reward and even the experience of failure rich. Margaret Fuller is one of her exemplary figures. Despite their powerful attraction to Fuller, Nehring notes, men and women came to find her too much for them. And however ardent her desire,

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Fuller gracefully lets them go. She reclaims them as friends. Fuller never loses self-respect in her frank pursuit of her objects, nor does she lose the esteem of those who refuse her.

This is persuasive. And it helps me understand why I have never completely let her go.

Purchase College, State University of New York, Emerita

Notes

WM refers to the 1994 revised edition of *The Woman and the Myth: Margaret Fuller's Life and Writings*.

¹ See Kampf and Lauter.

² See Chevigny, "The Long Arm of Censorship."

³ Rowbotham's comparison of Fuller, Wollstonecraft, and Flora Tristan is compelling.

⁴ MF3 studied the abuse of sterilization in Puerto Rico and self-published a manual on the subject.

⁵ See Chevigny, "The Long Arm of Censorship," 453.

⁶ So supportive of intelligent institutions, Fuller would have been delighted to learn that her first home now brings together working and middle-class women on useful projects and hosts meetings for the New England Kurdish association. See the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House (MFNH) web-site.

⁷ See "Long Arm." Charles Capper has found the sea-captain's document spurious (*Margaret Fuller, An American Romantic Life: The Private Years* 514).

⁸ Douglas was not the first or last to link Fuller only to male writers; the majority of Fuller's critics had been men.

⁹ The Wikipedia's entry on gender notes that in the 1974 edition of Janet Saltzman Chafetz's *Masculine, Feminine or Human*, the author uses "innate gender" and "learned sex roles" (52), but in the 1978 edition, the use of sex and gender is reversed (53). See Chafetz's *Masculine/Feminine or Human? An Overview of the Sociology of Sex Roles* (1974) and her *Masculine, Feminine or Human? An Overview of the Sociology of the Gender Roles* (1978).

¹⁰ In the index of my revised edition of 1994, I added the entry “gender,” though the pages there numbered never breathed the word: they were simply all about gender issues.

¹¹ Carroll Smith Rosenberg’s essay, “The Female World of Love and Ritual,” would support my interpretation. Later, Adrienne Rich’s nuanced notion of a “lesbian continuum,” in “Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Continuum,” was also useful. And Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* complicated the issue even more fruitfully.

¹² See Chevigny, “Daughters Writing.”

¹³ Once when Sally Ruddick and I were having an animated conversation at a party, her husband asked what we were talking about. “Oh, war and capital punishment,” we said. “Girl talk.”

¹⁴ Tom Mitchell’s provocative book, *Hawthorne’s Fuller Mystery*, was published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 1998. My own view is that Fuller so provoked Hawthorne that he returned all his life to the wrenching dilemma she posed. He believed that women should have the freedom men had to question, explore, create, and grow; but he also needed for them to be essentially pure and unconditionally loving, in order to save men from evil. His noble spirit celebrated the intelligence and courage of Rappaccini’s Beatrice, Zenobia, and Miriam, and their destruction indicted the men who betrayed them. But his fear of such women led him to create Young Goodman’s Faith and Aylmer’s Elizabeth in “The Birthmark,” who sought to rescue their destructive doubters, and Priscilla and Hilda, who sheltered their broken men. Polarized female characters embodied Hawthorne’s conflict between his own Faustian desire to transcend time and his desire to affirm the transience of life.

¹⁵ See Elizabeth Peabody’s notes on the Conversations of the second winter (WM 225-26). Others who have served as presidents of the Society are Robert Hudspeth, Joel Myerson, Jeffrey Steele, Brigitte Bailey, Joan von Mehren, Larry Reynolds, and Phyllis Cole.

¹⁶ Listing these is beyond the scope of this essay, but I wish to single out Joel Myerson for his invaluable bibliographies and publication of primary documents in *Studies in the American Renaissance*.

¹⁷ David Robinson would soon revise our sense of the Transcendentalists; he cited Emerson who had seen as mistaken the general belief that "there was some concert of doctrinaires to establish certain opinions, & inaugurate some movement in literature, philosophy & religion. [...]. There was no concert, & only here and there, two or three men or women who read & wrote, each alone, with unusual vivacity ... Margaret with her radiant genius & fiery heart was perhaps the real center that drew so many and so various individuals to a seeming union." Robinson read this paper at the 1994 session of the Margaret Fuller Society.

¹⁸ I am indebted to Larry Reynolds and Joel Pfister for their suggestions.

¹⁹ See Chevigny, "Research: A Love Story."

²⁰ See Chevigny, "'Cheat me [on] by no illusion.'"

²¹ Living in a sixteenth century building, Limiti explained that the risers of the stairs were short so that donkeys could climb them.

²² Many of the papers delivered in Rome have reappeared as essays in Capper and Giorcelli's *Margaret Fuller: Transatlantic Crossings in a Revolutionary Age*.

²³ *Margaret Fuller Society Newsletter* (Winter 2001).

²⁴ Capper and Meg MacGavran Murray, in their recent books, keep the question alive. In my review of them, I found Murray's case against marriage more persuasive.

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