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Mending the Gaps:
Margaret Fuller's Transnational Identity and the Cultivation of a World Order

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Before embarking on her journey to Europe in 1846, Margaret Fuller published a “Farewell” article in the *New York Tribune* to explain her intentions for leaving a relatively peaceful America and seeking an unstable and revolutionary Europe. Fuller would continue to communicate with her American readers for the next four years, but “Farewell” marks her departure from the United States on a physical, political, and social level. She writes that she “hope[s] for good results from observation with [her] own eyes of Life in the Old World, and to bring home some packages of seed for Life in the New” (*Essential* 404). Although she could not have known how deeply her long awaited trip to Europe would affect her, Fuller’s perspicacity is apparent in the brief “Farewell.” Even before personally experiencing Europe, Margaret Fuller understood the value of the “Old World” and that “observation” of it was necessary for the progress of the “New.” What Fuller soon realized once she arrived in Europe was that the reform measures instituted in countries throughout Europe entitled them to reputations of innovation. Although many Americans at the time assumed that “The United States ... was characterized by progressive change,” and Europe was bound by stifling and antiquated convention (Roberts 49), Fuller’s perception of the worth of the “Old World” was ironically contingent upon Europe’s progressive attitudes and earnest desire for change. Therefore, while friends such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning indifferently referred to Fuller’s dispatches as “sketches, thrown out in haste and for the means of subsistence” (*Letters of EBB*), critical pursuits of these papers uncover a complex personal account not only of Europe’s changes but also of Fuller’s. Because the final written version of her account of the Italian Revolutions, which she intended to be the culmination of her experiences abroad, was never recovered from the shipwreck in which she and her family died,

Fuller's series of dispatches from Europe possess a greater significance, both as mementos of history and as signs of future change. The distinction between the beginning and end of her European life has been the subject of much analysis, and while the details of her private experiences may never be disclosed in their entirety, she accomplishes through her dispatches a draft of what she would eventually mold into her unfinished, and undiscovered, history of the Italian Revolution, a single "package of seed" to benefit not only her compatriots but all "citizen[s] of the world" (*Correspondence* 407).

Fuller's intentions for her dispatches were influenced by her tendency to accept and reject her various positions in society. She is often identified as a Transcendentalist, travel writer, and female author; however, these broad terms provide only a general and stereotypical account of her character. Fuller understood that people often associated her with these labels, and she actively recreated the identities forced upon her by undermining the power of these stereotypes and their connection to her. Through her ability to create a strong sense of self, Fuller was able to come to a conclusion about how to fortify national and global identities. The process of reform narrated in *At Home and Abroad: Things and Thoughts in America and Europe* is the product of her personal struggle to attain self knowledge, which began in America, with texts such as *Summer on the Lakes*, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, and *Papers on Literature and Art*, and climaxed with her Dispatches. While in Europe, Fuller discussed a universal process of reform, the evolution of which mirrors her personal development and which is marked first by discourse in England and then by action in Italy. For Fuller, identity is developed through stages of thought and action. Fuller's own identity is multifaceted because she

had to balance her feminine qualities with her masculine, her American self with her cosmopolitan, and her domestic life with her professional. Her sympathy for those who endeavor to establish their individuality ultimately translates into a text dedicated to the discovery of a global community that accepts diversity in an attempt to create personal identity. Fuller's partiality for an individual's welfare, despite country, race, gender, or rank, is the effect of her thorough education, personal experiences, literary influences, and profession as a writer.

Her voyage to Europe in 1846 was not the first international journey she intended to take. As a result of her father's untimely death, Fuller was forced to cancel her original trip in 1836. Of her decision to remain in America, she wrote, "staying behind will be such a pretty trial to my fortitude and quite finish my moral education – Indeed at the expense of my intellectual but this last is quite a secondary affair – 'tis said" (*My Heart* 48). At this juncture in her life, Fuller was torn between her family's need of her support and her personal need to match her education with experience. The countries she had read about in books and heard about from friends continued to be subject to her imagination for ten years before she actually had the opportunity to experience their rich cultures. In 1846, when she once again had the opportunity to travel, Fuller claimed "I do not look forward to seeing Europe now as so very important to me. My mind and character are too much formed. I shall not modify them much but only add to my stores of knowledge. Still, even in this sense, I wish much to go... But it must be in the capacity of a journalist, and for that I need this new field of observation" (*My Heart* 233). Although she claimed the delay was detrimental, in that time she accomplished much that may never have come to fruition had she left America. The ten year

postponement allowed her time to meet several literary companions, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, develop her career as a teacher, become editor for the *Dial*, begin her “Conversations” series, from which *Woman in the Nineteenth-Century* was eventually born, and travel through the United States to develop a personal connection with parts of her own country, with which she had previously been unacquainted. Without these events in her life, or literary endeavors, her insights as presented in *Dispatches* would be less mature, perceptive, and prescient. Through these events, Fuller formed her reputation as a writer, which provided her with the company of foreign intellectuals, such as Thomas Carlyle, and cultivated her philosophy of the woman’s role in society, which predates and preconceives feminist thought and serves as a point of origin for her multicultural ideology.

Before she developed a cosmopolitan reputation abroad, Fuller established her place as an American writer. Although she was a friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and while this association benefited her on many levels, she also had to challenge his influence over her, specifically in relation to her purported association with Transcendentalism. Her conflicting attitudes towards budding Transcendentalist theories are apparent; she adopted certain ideas of Transcendentalism, such as an appreciation for nature and the individual spirit, but she also exhibited the reason of a realist and avoided referring to herself as a Transcendentalist writer. In a letter to Caroline Sturgis, Fuller criticizes the “nonsense” spoken by people who associate her ideas with transcendentalism and claims, “if it is meant that I cherish any opinions which interfere with domestic duties, cheerful courage and judgment in the practical affairs of life, I challenge any or all in the little world which knows me to prove such deficiency from any

acts of mine since I came to woman's estate" (*Letters* 73). At this moment, Fuller acknowledges how people view her and redefines her place under the Transcendentalist label. Fuller's personal and professional sacrifices for the wellbeing of her family following the death of her father, as well as her later financial struggles, heightened her prudence and ability to function in response to the "practical affairs of life." Although she understood the theories of Transcendentalism and believed in the divinity of Man, she was not one to confront reality solely with intangible philosophies. Moreover, she did not want to be limited by a label that oversimplified the complex ideas of a diverse group of intellectuals. She understood that her conceptions might change and her writing in Europe was the product of this self awareness; she left America with the belief that her "mind and character" could not be "modif[ied]" (*My Heart* 233) by travels abroad, but only a few months after her arrival in England she writes, "I find how true for me was the lure that always drew me towards Europe. It was no false instinct that said I might here find an atmosphere needed to develop me in ways I need" (240). Since she wrote for an audience in her dispatches, enthusiasm was expected; however, even in the intimate space of her letters, Fuller exposed the drastic, invigorating effect that the "atmosphere" of Europe had on her mind. She was unashamed of her fluctuating opinions, which express a multitude of ideas, observations, and insights into her past.

Although Fuller and Emerson maintained a mutual respect for one another, they did not hesitate to acknowledge their ideological discrepancies. In addition to conflicting opinions regarding Transcendentalism, the pair also voiced distinct views as to the purpose of translation, a topic of particular importance to Fuller, who was known for her translations of several texts. In "Margaret Fuller's American Translation," Colleen

Glenney Boggs reveals how Fuller's background as a translator influenced her understanding of America as an innately multicultural country. She explains that Fuller's attempt to "figur[e] out what it meant to write an American literature that would be viably multilingual and global in its appeal, significance, and circulation raised challenging questions about the nation's relation to a collective world culture and the individual's relation to national and international collectives" (Boggs 33). The act of translation was Fuller's method of connecting separate worlds and molding identity by connecting foreign elements. Fuller's appreciation for cultures outside of her own can be juxtaposed to Emerson's rejection of influences unrelated to his immediate American surroundings (Boggs 41). While both Emerson and Fuller recognized America's budding literary identity, they differed in their understanding of how to cultivate that identity. In his speech "The American Scholar," which echoes the issues of national erudition explored in Fuller's "American Literature," Emerson identifies that America's "day of dependence, [its] long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions, that around us are rushing into life, cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests" (1609). He perceives the identity of the American scholar to be contingent upon the student's detachment from authorities of European thought. Perhaps Fuller's explicit departure from Emerson's understanding of identity formation is in part the motive behind his comment that "her culture belongs rather to Europe than to America" (*Correspondence* 243). Fuller exemplifies the multiculturalism she promotes, both through her translations and her actions abroad. Although Boggs specifically discusses Fuller's translation in relation to work she produced in America, her analysis is especially relevant to Fuller's European dispatches. Early in her career, Fuller

recognized the connection between the individual and the group, the local and the universal. In her dispatches, this idea is crucial to discovering a union of global characters rather than a strictly American identity.

In “American Literature,” which was written prior to her trip abroad, Fuller confronts the complications of creating an American literary identity, which she believes depends on submission to absolute truth. Fuller remarks that “no man can be absolutely true to himself, eschewing cant, compromise, servile imitation, and complaisance, without becoming original, for there is in every creature a fountain of life which ... will create a fresh atmosphere, and bring to life fresh beauty. And it is the same with the nation as with the individual man” (“American Literature” 125). Her reactions to the problem of producing a distinctively American literature seem to agree with Emerson’s support of individual truth, of the importance of self realization; however, unlike Emerson, she understands that this “truth” is fortified by “winds from all quarters of the globe” that “bring seed enough” to help nurture national thought (“American Literature” 125). She was only beginning to realize that the foundation of these new thoughts could be accomplished through an analysis of America through a global lens, which she eventually provides through her dispatches. In order for America to define itself through literature natural to the country, it must first honestly realize its own democratic roots and accept itself as a part of an international society. Eventually, Fuller reaches this realization and the nineteenth-century’s pursuit of a distinctly American literature is accomplished in her European dispatches. She presents her readers with the unpopular truth that America cannot maintain its democratic reputation without significant social reform and a reconsideration of its revolutionary goals. *Things and Thoughts* adheres to

her definition of what constitutes the formation of identity by expressing an “original” idea about America that both remains “true” to her individual beliefs and helps “bring to life” the “beauty” of mankind. Throughout *Dispatches*, the narration of her private identity is bound to that of a universal society, the establishment and preservation of which is her life’s purpose and inspiration.

The rhetoric Fuller practices in her dispatches reflects a mind teeming with insights, and while they may seem incoherent at certain moments, they are the products of a multifaceted woman attempting to express herself in the limited space of a newspaper column. She moves quickly between various topics and mentions many different subjects in a single dispatch; her compact writing style reflects her mental state as she has procured comprehensive historical, political, and literary knowledge and developed philosophies from her experiences as a professional woman, domestic caretaker, and proponent of democratic American principles. The nineteenth-century marked a period of time in which women began to use travel writing as a means of public discourse (Schriber 2), and Fuller was a product of her generation. Her text has been identified by many critics as “writing travel-as-politics, urging others towards public positions and acts” (Schriber 137). She began to hone her style of travel writing while composing *Summer on the Lakes*, an account of her experiences traveling across the United States, during which time she witnessed the injustices committed on Native Americans. This enhanced Fuller’s sensitivity to the oppression of innocent people by avaricious forces, a feeling which was again tested during her stay in Rome. Like her dispatches, *Summer on the Lakes* is a compilation of political and personal observations. Heidi Kolk argues that during *Summer on the Lakes* Fuller began to form her identity as a

“prodigal child” (Kolk 383), and continued to narrate the prodigal’s journey in her European dispatches. At first, she did not fulfill the complete prodigal myth as she was financially bound to the travel writing genre, since the *Tribune’s* editor, Horace Greeley, paid her for her dispatches, which were her only source of income. Eventually, however, this relationship and, as a result, her financial status, deteriorated and Fuller was able “to see the prodigal myth from the actual view of the wayward child who has lost nearly everything” (Kolk 393). One of Fuller’s strongest ties to America was its financial support of her, and with such a connection broken, she detached herself from the tourist label and inserted herself into the Italian landscape. What Kolk realizes is that Fuller did not strictly adhere to the style of her contemporaries and was by no means typical of the average nineteenth-century female travel writer, in part because evidence of her extensive education permeates her text, and because her particular brand of “travel-as-politics” composition focused on evolving ideas and admonitions, which are exemplary of a mind in mid-development. As Annamaria Formichella Elsdén suggests, Greeley paid Fuller for current reports, in part so that her American readers could experience Europe with the writer. This process promotes “an imagined nationalism that temporarily [binds] foreign correspondent to the domestic reader,” and “fuel[s] Fuller’s calls for immediate political reform” (29). Part of Fuller’s appeal is based on her ability to create an intimate space for her public readers. Fuller’s awareness of her connection to the reader, albeit one sided, enhanced her sense of authority as a voice that American readers needed to hear.

Elsden is not the only critic to argue that Fuller’s dispatches, specifically those pertaining to the Italian revolution, expose her national sympathies for a particular country. Paola Gemme is particularly adamant in her assertion that Fuller used her public

voice to express purely nationalistic sentiments. In “An American Jeremiah in Rome,” Gemme states that one of the purposes of Fuller’s dispatches was “to paint such a bleak picture of republicanism in America as to induce its citizens to take action and redress the situation“ (109). It is clear that Fuller advocated abolition and women’s rights in America, not only from a perusal of her dispatches but also based on her past texts. According to Gemme, Fuller’s particular method of criticism is “celebration rather than censure“ (109), just as her statements urging American progress are assertions of America’s potential power and an example of her innate belief in United States exceptionalism (116). Although these ideas are correct in identifying Fuller’s moments of American patriotism and affirming her desire for change, they do not take into account the source of her inspiration for writing. She was aware of American ideologies and cultural symbols and discussed them in her dispatches since she knew she was writing to a diverse American audience; however, her own view was not limited to such biased ideas and objects. Fuller’s faith was not in a single country, but in Man, who she believed to be the creator of heaven on earth, and the only possible authority of an ideal humanity that does not limit itself to national borders, but defines itself in transnational terms.

Fuller’s clear disapproval of what she perceived to be American moral apathy in correlation with her observation of Europe’s numerous endeavors to institute social reform measures is her way of extolling the Old World. Ellen DuBois recognizes that Fuller’s dispatches relate the superiority of Europe to America, and claims that Fuller “grew steadily more radical“ (DuBois 297) during her trip abroad, instead of more nationalistic as Gemme suggests. DuBois attributes Fuller’s radicalism to her physical

location, as “For women ... travel beyond the bounds of the familiar can be liberating ... It was not that the women of Europe were freer than those of America, but that their constraints and possibilities were different, and seeing these variations was profoundly illuminating” (289). Fuller’s European persona released her from the domestic constraints that governed her existence in America and allowed her to actuate the independence from gender that she theorized about in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Although women in Europe were not exempt from the general gender stereotypes that permeated the western world, Fuller was distant from certain domestic constraints caused by such stereotypes, such as her stifling responsibility as her family’s caretaker after the death of her father. By finally traveling to Europe, she came nearer to achieving her definition of an ideal gender balance.

Timothy Roberts provides a more thorough analysis of the relationship between Fuller’s commentaries on gender issues and her observations of the Italian revolutions. He claims that obstacles unique to Fuller’s position as a female professional influenced her judgments of international issues. She used her familiarity with the burden of inequality as a woman to relate to the various injustices experienced by others. This is particularly apparent in her support for Italy’s attempt to free itself from characteristically patriarchal European powers, such as Austria. Roberts suggests, “Fuller’s perception of a feminized martyrdom in Italy prodded her to see American slavery and European despotism as emanating from the same system of transatlantic oppression” (54). Roberts understands that the common cause of many of the struggles with which Fuller concerns herself is the “transatlantic” source of a worldwide oppression. Ignorance and greed primarily hinder the healthy development, not only of individuals such as Fuller, but of

nations. For example, Americans in general did not support Italy's revolution because they "had their own stereotype that Italians were a lazy, cowardly, ignorant, and superstitious people incapable of achieving a democratic polity" (Capper 380). She speaks against America's tendency to separate itself from the struggles of Europe; she is well aware that the United States suffers from similar evils, such as slavery and American expansion into Mexico, and directly attacks these crimes against humanity in her dispatches and uses them as evidence that America is not the faultless epitome of democracy it projects itself to be. Roberts states that in her unconventional commentary in support of military action used to defend Italy's freedom, Fuller "perhaps betray[s] her American background" (53), and yet it seems that in her radical advocacy of a cause she does not "betray" American tradition as much as revive its dormant spirit. Fuller encourages any attempt to acquire freedom, because it is essential to originality, and, according to her claims in "American Literature," identity.

Fuller's position in atmospheres of rapid political and social change from 1846 to 1850 encouraged her personal development, and her personal narrative is a subtext of a much larger commentary on human nature. While most criticism on Fuller suggests, to some degree, that her positive portrayal of Europe demonstrates her desire to change the fate of her own country by considering the ills and insights of others, such commentary does not recognize that she did not write for or against a particular country; rather, she wrote for humanity and against inhumanity as a universal ideal. Her dispatches reveal a maturation process for personal, national, and global identities, all of which are inextricably bound to the gender theories she presents in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* and necessary to the realization of her ultimate objective, which is the emotional,

intellectual, and financial enrichment of humanity through freedom from stereotypes, restrictive dichotomies, and unworthy and oppressive powers. She traveled the world to study how others live in order to determine how best to live herself and, more importantly, what method of reform to advocate to an American audience. Not only did she alter her preconceived notions in relation to identity but she also sought to reform people's perceptions of themselves; she wanted people to see beyond their small, individual universes and into a global society. Interaction and interdependence between individuals and separate nations, in addition to an individual's understanding of his or her place as a citizen of a country and a nation's acceptance of its position as an equal member of a world order, is a standard of progress that Fuller perceived to be necessary to her ambitions.

Fuller's sense of herself as an international citizen stemmed from her fortunate displacement in a global community. She wrote herself in front of a backdrop of many different locations because she was unwilling to permanently fix herself in any one place until her arrival in Italy, and even at that point, she did not always remain in the same city state. A factor that affected her feeling of destabilization was not only her travels across national borders but her fluctuation between distinct periods of time in the histories of the nations she visits. She leaves Renaissance America for Victorian England and eventually revolutionary Italy. Through Fuller's brief glimpses of the state of each nation, the reader realizes that America was politically in between the struggles of Italy and England. As she traveled, she first witnessed the social reforms of England and France, which America was on the verge of accomplishing for itself, and then Italy's attempt to gain independence from tyrannical foreign powers, which America had already faced during

the Revolutionary War. Each of these countries has a place in the development of another; Fuller specifically mentioned England's colonization of America, France's subordination of Italy, and America's ability to support Italy. Fuller realized that it is natural for nations to connect, but only if their intentions are benevolent. If countries aided each other as much as they abused each other, the human race would prosper. Although the countries' differences abound, her concern was with eternal needs and not shifting time periods. The constant Fuller identified in every location she visited was the need to educate and elevate the people.

In order to understand another significant motivation behind and connection between the seemingly disparate ideas expressed in her dispatches, it is important to consider her philosophy as articulated in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Fuller's ideas about identity are linked to her philosophy of gender and her rejection of male and female labels. In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, Fuller does not simply lament the repression of women. Instead, she immediately destabilizes the dichotomy of gender in the "Preface" by referring to man and woman as "the two halves of the one thought" and stating that "the development of the one cannot be effected without that of the other" (*Essential* 245). By complicating the definitions of "man" and "woman" and providing them with equal influence over one another, Fuller undermined the biases that pervaded the terms. A female figure is not simply feminine or obediently subordinate; it contains a distinct masculinity and power, and both "halves" cannot be viewed as extremes. This is particularly clear in her discussion of Miranda, a woman whose childhood education resembled Fuller's, and who functioned as "([Fuller] privately acknowledged) a thinly veiled self portrait" (Capper 114). Miranda credits her extensive knowledge to her father,

who, like Fuller's father, "cherished no sentimental reverence for Woman, but a firm belief in the equality of the sexes" ("Woman" 124). As a result of this early influence, Miranda developed into a woman unfettered by the constraints typically impeding the intellectual development of her sex. Despite her academic acceptance among male scholars, Miranda insists that she has

high respect for those who 'cook something good,' who create and preserve fair order in houses and prepare therein the shining raiment for worthy inmates, worthy guests. Only these 'functions' must not be a drudgery or enforced necessity, but a part of life. Let Ulysses drive the beeves home, while Penelope there piles up the fragrant loaves; they are both well employed if these be done in thought and love, willingly. But Penelope is no more meant for a baker or weaver solely, than Ulysses for a cattle-herd. (*Essential* 129)

Miranda resists defined gender lines and instead acknowledges that works should only be a product of personal choice. If Miranda is Fuller's autobiographical caricature, this gender ideal reflects Fuller's biography. In her past, Fuller accepted the duty of a daughter by supporting her family and remaining at home, "piling up the fragrant loaves;" however, she later forged a place for herself, like Ulysses, working outside of the domestic sphere. Although she claimed partiality to her academic and professional life, her responsibility for "preserve[ing] fair order in houses" was willingly accepted in her New England past, and later in Italy, where she became a wife and mother. Through her depiction of Miranda, Fuller creatively practiced her method of revision; she redefined the gender label with which she was associated and produced a fresh personal

identity, and subsequently prepared herself for rebuilding the national identities for countries in crises.

Both *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* and *Things and Thoughts* expose the interdependence of seemingly disparate notions. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* contemplates the inability of gender labels to identify a person's actual abilities, since a person should be identified by thought and action, rather than sex. It also recognizes that although "male" and "female" are tired and inaccurate designations, they are prevalent throughout popular discourse and must be actively opposed. *Things and Thoughts* continues Fuller's exploration of individual development and it expresses personal identity as essential to accomplishing national ideals. This idea is the source of the concept of identity generated in her dispatches. In order to create identity, whether it is on an individual, national, or global scale, a person must realize that extremes are irrelevant and a blending of seemingly opposite forces is necessary. Identity for Fuller was based on an immeasurable combination of weakness and strength, dependence and independence, the foreign and the native, and the divine and the real. She was progressive in her thinking and although her vocation as a writer allowed her to theorize about social issues, she actually wanted to move people to act. After spending four years in Europe writing about the actions of others, she participated in the revolutionary efforts of Italy, working as a nurse in the hospital Fate Bene Fratelli (Capper 438), which heightens the irony of her claim that foreign travel could not change her beliefs. Consideration of her personal history in Italy demonstrates her gradual transition from woman of thought to woman of action; she began as a correspondent and American

tourist, but became a self-proclaimed “historian” and adamant defender of the Roman Republic.

Fuller’s dispatches from England offer a review of the literary and cultural landscapes and it often seems as though she lists people and places with which she has become acquainted. Much of her focus is on the people she meets and she uses her impressions of certain intellectuals and public figures to strengthen her notion of the individual. Through her impressions of certain people, Fuller indirectly developed her character and provided her readers with a foundation on which to base her later actions. This is particularly apparent in relation to her review of Thomas Carlyle and William Wordsworth, of whom she spends a significant amount of print space discussing. The two writers were certainly known to her readers and they were subjects of personal interest to Fuller. Before meeting her in England, Thomas Carlyle was aware of Fuller’s trip abroad through his correspondence with Emerson, who proclaimed that Carlyle “must not fail to give a good and faithful interview to this wise, sincere, accomplished, and most entertaining of women” (*Correspondence* 403-404). Fuller met Carlyle twice during her trip, and in a private letter to Emerson claimed that she “bid Carlyle farewell with feelings of the warmest friendship and admiration,” as one “cannot feel otherwise to a great and noble nature, whether it harmonize with our own or not” (*The Letters* 249). Such ambiguity is reiterated in her *Dispatches*, in which Fuller again seems unable to articulate a conclusive opinion of Carlyle’s nature, and describes him as both “arrogant and overbearing” (Fuller 184), and “original, rich, and strong enough to afford a thousand faults” (185), including those she attributes to him. In both her private letters and her publications, Fuller praises his ability to contest the “wall of shams and conventions”

(183) that hinders man's ability to face reality. The one error he tends to make, according to Fuller, that seems to most directly resist her interests, is that he is "of a might rather to destroy evil than legislate for good" (185), whereas Fuller generally concerns herself with both the destruction of "evil" forces and the welfare of the public. Although these particular elements of their political ideologies differ, Carlyle attracted Fuller because of his strong sense of purpose and his focus on generating progressive thought and national reform.

While her commentary on Carlyle is laced with various objections, when she discusses William Wordsworth she is almost entirely reverential. As an ardent scholar, Fuller originally knew Wordsworth through her study of his work. In "Modern British Poets," from *Papers on Literature and Art*, which was published a few days prior to her departure from the United States, she articulates her appreciation for him and explains that he is "superior in originality and philosophic unity of thought" (91), in part for his ability to unearth "enough beauty in the real present world" (90). According to this earlier text, which Fuller bases on her knowledge of his literature, Wordsworth has a singular ability to penetrate reality and detect truth, an object Fuller constantly pursues in her writing. This previous praise is dampened by Wordsworth's detachment from the reality of social injustice as a result of his secluded habitation, which lacks the "poverty, vice, or misery" (*Things and Thoughts* 133) needed to understand the lamentations caused by a cruel world. Upon meeting the author, Fuller finds him overly concerned with his private sphere, to the detriment of his distinguished position in a country increasingly involved with issues affecting the public's interests. Perhaps Fuller was more considerate towards Wordsworth and gentler in her criticism of him because of her

esteem for him as a poet and literary elder. Her meeting with him and realization of his socially disconnected lifestyle seem to undermine her earlier reverence for his ability to capture the “real present world.” She emphasized her impression of his receding grandeur through their meeting with a boy who she “feared would be disappointed“ in realizing that Wordsworth is “no Apollo, flaming with youthful glory, laurel-crowned and lyre in hand, but, instead, a reverent old man clothed in black, and walking with cautious step” (*Things and Thoughts* 132). This remark is an indirect relation of her feeling of disappointment both with Wordsworth, who, contrary to her prior beliefs, was not the great hero she once perceived him to be, and with reality, for extinguishing her impression of a literary idol. In the end, the boy, like Fuller herself, appeared to admire Wordsworth for the “spirit” of his past works rather than his current state. Despite Fuller’s attraction to Wordsworth as a figure of literary history, he is unable to fulfill the sense of impending change she has been building since her first dispatch. Carlyle is more aware of this change, and her fervent reaction to him is evidence of her particular interest in the issues he discusses, even if their opinions do not wholly concur.

In addition to her impressions of public leaders, Fuller relates accounts of her private experiences. One of her criticisms of Carlyle upon their meeting was that “to interrupt him is a physical impossibility” (*The Letters* 248). Fuller was not one to be lectured at without taking the initiative to respond, so her writing functions as both a financial necessity and a method of self expression. In her dispatches, she is a figure of authority and has the opportunity to respond to Carlyle, and many other issues pertinent to the social concerns of her time. Her creation of herself as a figure to behold is exemplified during a pivotal moment in her journey to Scotland, where she was lost in

the wilderness overnight after being separated from her guides. While the event certainly did occur, her recreation of it in her dispatches serves as an allegory for her changing identity through an acceptance of the unfamiliar and her realization of the necessity of fully immersing herself in the foreign in order to develop an intimate relationship with it. She explains her initial panic at the thought of the physical anguish she could suffer from such a predicament, but soon settles into her position and describes the atmosphere paradoxically as “sublime indeed, - a never-to-be-forgotten presentation of stern, serene realities” (Fuller 155). She conveyed the divineness of truly connecting to the “realities” of a place through forced isolation and familiarity with nature. Her feeling of alarm was further tempered by calm, almost appreciative reflection. She thanked the “no less than twenty men with their dogs” (Fuller 155) who searched for her, and expressed her gratitude publicly through her writing. Upon revisiting the site of her crisis, Fuller refers to it in the possessive as “my prison” (Fuller 156).

From this point on she is no longer an objective observer and foreign diplomat; she has forged more intimate connections with another continent and its people, and will continue to cultivate those connections in her future travels. Almost a year after the incident in Scotland, Fuller wrote in a letter to Caroline Sturgis that “people may write and prate as much as they like about Rome, they cannot convey thus a portion of its spirit. It must be inhaled wholly with the yielding of the whole heart. It is really something transcendent[*sic*], both spirit and body” (“*My Heart*” 248). Here she provides a more direct expression of the feeling of immersion she endures during her adventure in Scotland. In both passages, Fuller identifies a cohesion between the “spirit and body,” or the “sublime” and “realities.” Her references to the enigmatic nature of reality imply that

it is a rare, or sacred, occasion when something is truly known. Completely engaging oneself in the foreign is an accomplishment and recognizing its value is an uncommon feat for even the most learned traveler, who so often concerns himself with the surfaces of such culturally rich countries, or the most patriotic citizen, who may allow his national loyalty to color his perception of social realities.

The past stood as another “foreign” element which nineteenth-century Americans and Europeans, regardless of class and national sympathies, had to negotiate. As Fuller’s commentary demonstrates, the perceived distance between Europe’s past and present was misleading. Her interaction with Wordsworth was the first, but not the last, moment in which Fuller noted the importance of accepting the past. Once in Rome, Fuller resided in a city teeming with rebellion against outdated and despotic government systems, but spiritually and morally dependent upon a Catholic tradition. In her criticism of Fuller’s religious commentary, Paola Gemme claims that her discourses about Italy reveal a radical anti-Catholic and pro-Protestant sentiment, as “Catholicism was deemed the religion of political slaves and Protestantism that of free citizens” (“Fuller and Catholics” 138). To suggest that Fuller criticized Catholicism and advocated Protestantism is to associate her with the ignorant foreign intrusion she despised. It would be more accurate to say that Fuller’s opinions about religion fluctuated based on its affects on the people, who are her primary concern. When she first arrived in Rome, Pope Pius IX appeared to be “a man of noble and good aspect, who ... has set his heart upon doing something solid for the benefit of man” (224), because he publicly supported Italy’s desire for independence. This high opinion of the Pope continues and Fuller goes so far as to refer to him as one of the “kings of men” (264). Even when his faith in the people and their

objectives seemed to waver, she admitted that she still considered him to be an “excellent man,” although she felt “disappointed that his good heart has not carried him on a little farther” (291). As the revolution climaxed, the cowardly actions of the Pope continued and eventually exposed his unworthiness as a leader of Rome, and Fuller referred to his admonitions against revolution as “silliness, bigotry, and ungenerous [n] tone” (353), essentially retracting her original praise. Fuller believed that the Pope reacted in such a way for his own security and she was especially vocal in her criticism of those who use their power at the expense of an innocent public. She began to upbraid the Pope and Catholicism in her writing when she realized that his actions and words were harmful to Roman morale and the cause of independence. Fuller would never try to change Italy’s orthodoxy, because she recognized Catholicism’s roots in Rome and its spiritual importance to the city’s citizens. Fuller repeatedly expressed her surprise and respect for a people so devoted to their religion, and she gradually arrived at a balance between Rome’s new political aspirations and old religious convictions. For the Romans, Catholicism was not wholly detrimental and irrelevant to contemporary political causes, but rather a method of maintaining faith during the hardships of revolution, and of maintaining the “sublime“ while enduring “stern, serene realities“ (15).

In order to emphasize the worth of foreign influences, whether religious, political, or artistic, when building national identities, Fuller posed a question common to her contemporaries. While discussing American art, she inquired, “Then why should the American landscape painter come to Italy? ask many” (Fuller 370). This query should be read as applicable not only to the landscape painter, but to the American artist in general, especially the writer. Fuller’s answer provides readers with insight into her view of her

purpose in Italy; the landscape painter is Fuller's artistic parallel, as travel writing is essentially landscape writing. She depicts what she observes with her pen and not a brush, but the effect is similar. Both forms of art are representational, and although they may inspire, they will never capture the original scene. By relating herself to the landscape painter, Fuller narrates her shift from foreign correspondent to artist, interested in the details and spirit of the country she illustrates. One of the "men" to whom Fuller refers is her friend, mentor, and sometime foe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who believed Americans should remain on their own soil to cultivate their minds and emotions. As noted by Elsdon, Fuller's cosmopolitan existence stood in opposition to Emerson's personal philosophy as articulated in *Self-Reliance* (Elsden 35), in which he argues that "the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude" (*Self-Reliance* 1625). Fuller was a person who embraced "the crowd" and used it to help structure her personal identity. Evidence of this idea can be seen as Fuller marked her clear departure from her New England, Transcendentalist roots during her reflections on the "landscape painter," who in Italy can access "a main secret of art," which is the "union" between the "vegetation and the heavens" (Fuller 370). Fuller's repetition of the connection between heaven and earth parallels her quest for a human identity. Her awareness of the "secret" implies that she had a deeper sense of the truth behind her own identity because of her relationship with the ideals and attitudes of foreign countries, namely Italy.

In order to achieve this knowledge of identity, Fuller must continue to connect seemingly disparate ideas. The interaction between the godly and the worldly is one aspect of a more complicated definition of identity that is not necessarily fixed but

contingent upon the relationship between strength and weakness. The countries on which Fuller reports each had distinct flaws, but perfection was not something she sought. Instead, she was interested in the way each country's disadvantages could be relieved by another's capabilities. The interdependence of nations can be seen through her comments on various subjects, such as the tourist, who received Fuller's censure and appreciation, and is one of the many themes present in her dispatches throughout the years. She criticized certain "species" of American travelers, who she labeled the "servile American" (250) and the "conceited American" (251). These two types of tourist are either driven by superficial motivations or critical of Italian culture, the value of which they cannot comprehend. Although Fuller prominently decries the ignorance of the tourist through her account of the "servile" and "conceited American," she accepts what she refers to as "the thinking American, - a man who, recognizing the immense advantage of being born to a new world and on a virgin soil, yet does not wish one seed from the past to be lost" (Fuller 252). Fuller undeniably associated herself with this version of the American traveler, as she understood, even before leaving America, that it was her duty to "bring home some packages of seed" (*Essential* 404) from Europe to educate American citizens. This persona also acknowledges the benefits of the past despite interests that are set firmly in the present. If every tourist could be created in the mold of the "thinking American," nations would reciprocally benefit from various cultural, social, and political insights, and the foreign would have the opportunity to blossom naturally in a tourist's native land. Although such a scenario would be ideal, even without such model travelers, Fuller notes that tourism is a financial necessity. Fuller consistently related her awareness of economic concerns, and despite her earlier criticism of ignorant

travelers, her later realization that Rome was “empty of foreigners” (Fuller 337) during the revolution was disturbing to her, as a “large part of the population which lives by the visits of foreigners was suffering very much, - trade, industry, for every reason, stagnant” (337). Italy must accept foreign travelers in order to maintain its financial stability and reputation as a cultural center, which is not valid without the support of the travelers who visit for her sights.

Similarly, just as individuals are essential to the survival of major cities, entire countries must also be willing to aid other nations when necessary. Many critics have commented upon Fuller’s praise of Italy’s cultural and social strengths as examples for American reform. She was equally aware of the fact that Italy was in need of America’s help, which, during such dire circumstances was what Fuller refers to as “aid which seems to descend from a higher sphere” (387). She claimed that if Italy failed to establish a unified republic, the blame will be on “foreign oppression” (386). In one of her final dispatch, Fuller made another attempt to ask Americans to “send money, send cheer” (421); this simple phrase dictated the capability of every American to support Italy in some way, either financially or morally. Further exploration of the details of her dispatches demonstrates that the dichotomy between the oppressed and the oppressor is too simplistic. There is an intermingling between the powerful and weak that determines identity. This change in perspective emphasizes her freedom from binaries and established thought to an extent even greater than is shown in her American writings.

As an individual, Fuller strove to distance herself from dichotomies of power by always questioning her fate. She departed for America distressed over the state of a nation she had come to love, but content with her son, who was a source of constant joy.

In a letter to Thomas Carlyle, Emerson explains that Fuller died “at a happy hour for herself. Her health was much exhausted. Her marriage would have taken her away from us all, and there was a subsistence yet to be secured, and diminished powers, and old age” (*Correspondence* 462). Emerson identifies the various personal scandals with which Fuller was associated at the end of her life, but his judgment of the fortuitousness of her death can be seen as a grave misreading of her character. Although she dealt with various issues that may have made her seem weak, these obstacles actually fortified her position as a revolutionary and an independent woman in the nineteenth-century. She lived based on the standards of freedom that she established in her written works. As an individual she constructed a balance between her family and professional life that she was unable to achieve in America; by taking a husband, she negotiated between her past as a daughter of New England, who was expected to marry but would be shunned for her choice of spouse, an impoverished and intellectually inferior Italian, and her changed identity as a “citizen of the world” (*Correspondence* 407), accountable to no particular social order. Fuller’s ability to maintain her initial goal of bringing home “packages of seed” for the good of the public readership despite her private anxieties speaks to the strength of her disposition.

In his “Introductory” to Fuller’s biography, Thomas Wentworth Higginson made it clear that during his research he had considered *Memoirs*, published by Fuller’s friends James Freeman Clarke, William Henry Channing, and Emerson, but ultimately perceived the necessity of giving an account of Fuller’s life and writings through the “judgment of an impartial posterity” (Higginson 2) by using only primary texts. Higginson alludes to the fact that despite her prodigious nature, Margaret Fuller has been so often rewritten; it

is as if in an effort to come to terms with her radical personal and professional beliefs, her New England peers revised her expression of them. This may be one of the reasons why her work has not generated the public appeal associated with other American Renaissance authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson or Henry David Thoreau. In a more recent Introduction to Higginson's biography of Fuller, Barbara Miller Solomon notes that "Margaret Fuller's greatness was not obvious to most of her contemporaries" (xxv), which is in part because her worldly ideology, which was deeply invested in the unrecognized future of an active, multicultural social order, was a concept unappreciated by many American Romantics. Moreover, for the last four years of her life, Fuller was emotionally and physically distant from her family and friends in New England. Because of her hiatus from New England society, her relations had no option but to conjecture about her fate, and a "list of legends ... later grew up around Fuller's death" (Capper 514). After futile attempts to discover her body, the bodies of her son and husband, the secrets of her final hours aboard the *Elizabeth*, her manuscript of the Italian Revolutions, and her personal effects, Fuller's loved ones constructed their own beliefs of what she was and what she may have become. Although Fuller's history of the Roman Revolutions was never found, it holds the reputation of being "her maturest work" (Higginson 282). Much focus has been given to this history and as a result, her contemporaries seem to not have fully appreciated the power of her surviving works. Even her brother, Arthur B. Fuller, who was one of the primary people responsible for her memory, negligently omitted certain passages from his compilation of her dispatches, *Things and Thoughts in America and Europe*, so as to maintain what he perceived to be an acceptable reputation for his sister. If he believed he was protecting her from social

backlash, he clearly did not understand Margaret Ossoli, who was more obliged to the discovery of truth than social conventions. In both of the dispatches that were excluded from Arthur B. Fuller's publication, Margaret Fuller completely denounces the Pope and displays her unwavering support for the Italian people. A few of her specific statements, such as her extreme exclamation that "the Roman Catholic religion must go" and "every man who assumes an arbitrary lordship over fellow man, must be driven out" (*These Sad* 321), may be considered excessively radical; however, other declarations clearly represent her humanity. She speaks of hope when she begins the final paragraph of her final dispatch with the proclamation, "Joy to those, born in this day: In America is open to them the easy chance of a noble, peaceful growth, in Europe of a combat grand in its motives, and in its extent beyond what the world ever before so much has dreamed. Joy to them" (*These Sad* 322-323). This optimism emanates from Fuller's experiences, which were priceless, not only to her but to entire nations, particularly America and Italy. The final letter from Rome is important because it is the last piece of writing intended for a public audience. To exclude it from a collection of her work is to prematurely check the breadth of her thought. Although Fuller grieved, publicly and privately, for the state of democracy in Italy, her sorrow was ultimately met with anticipation which is succinctly expressed in the last line, in which she prophesies that "peace and love from man to man is become the bond of life" (323).

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