



MARGARET FULLER SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Fuller Society Meeting at 1994 MLA Convention

The second annual meeting of the Margaret Fuller Society will take place Wednesday, December 28, at 1:45 p.m. in the Torrey Room of the San Diego Marriott Hotel as part of the 1994 Modern Language Association Convention in San Diego, California.

A panel session sponsored by the Fuller Society and chaired by Bell Gale Chevigny will follow the brief meeting. Entitled "Margaret Fuller and the Texts of Transcendentalism," the session will feature the following:

Larry J. Reynolds, "Transcendentalist Text Production: The Face of the Dial."

David M. Robinson, "Margaret Fuller's Letters as Transcendentalist Texts."

Response: Susan Belasco Smith

The proposal for this session, written by Susan Belasco Smith, appears on page 4 of this **Newsletter**.

Election of Officers

At the first annual meeting of the Fuller Society on December 29, 1993, the following individuals were elected officers of the Society:

President: Bell Gale Chevigny

First Vice-President: Robert N. Hudspeth

Second Vice-President: Joel Myerson

Executive Secretary-Treasurer: Larry J. Reynolds

In addition, the following three members of the Society were named to the Advisory Board (the last year of service is indicated in parenthesis):

Susan Belasco Smith (1996)

Jeffrey Steele (1995)

Christina Zwarg (1994)

Current members of the Nominating Committee are Fritz Fleischmann (1996), Allie Perry (1995), and Susan Belasco Smith (Chair) (1994).

Call for Papers

NEASA 1995 Spring Conference at Babson College Margaret Fuller and American Cultural Critique: Her Age and Legacy

The 1995 Annual Meeting of the New England American Studies Association will be held at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, April 29-30. This two-day conference will start with a day of papers and panels, followed by a day of touring historical sites in the Greater Boston area; during the tour, on-site presentations and activities will be scheduled.

Topics for papers and presentations might address Fuller's own work and life, as well as the various areas with which she was concerned--both within her own world and as they have evolved since her death. While this conference has Margaret Fuller at its center, we solicit papers on the whole spectrum of interests to which she was committed and to which her life and works point.

Subject areas could include (but need not be limited to): Romanticism and Transcendentalism; American Renaissance writers; national identity politics; women's education; gender theory and feminist advocacy; women artists and writers; reform and revolutionary movements at home and abroad; race and ethnicity.

Anyone interested in organizing a session, presenting a paper, leading a tour, or chairing a panel should send inquiries, proposals, or abstracts to Fritz Fleischmann, NEASA President, Babson College, Babson Park, MA 02157-0310 (phone (617) 239-4400; fax 239-4312); e-mail "Fleischmann@Babson.edu". The deadline is January 10, 1995.

Proposed By-laws

The following by-laws are hereby submitted to the membership of the Margaret Fuller Society for their approval at the 1994 annual meeting:

I. Name: The Name of the Society is the Margaret Fuller Society.

II. Purpose: The Margaret Fuller Society is a non-profit educational organization founded to stimulate interest in the life and writings of Margaret Fuller and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among Fuller scholars and other interested persons.

III. Membership: The membership of the Society is composed of persons and institutions who shall apply for membership and continue to pay annual dues or subscribe to a lifetime membership in the Society.

IV. Dues: Dues of the Society are as follows:

Regular Member: \$10.00

Independent Scholar: 5.00

Student Member: 5.00

Lifetime Member: 250.00

V. Officers: Officers of the Society are a President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, the immediate past President, and an Advisory Board consisting of six additional members of the Society. The governing body of the Society, composed of all of the persons mentioned above in this article, is referred to hereafter as the Executive Council. All officers are elected to three-year terms by majority vote of the members present at the annual meeting of the Society, with terms of Advisory Board members being staggered, two new members being elected every year.

The President presides at meetings, conducts necessary business throughout the year, convenes a meeting of the Executive Council at the annual meeting of the Society, and oversees the functions of the Society.

The First Vice-President and Second Vice-President assist the President as necessary, and, in respective order, assume the duties of the President in his or her absence.

The Executive Secretary-Treasurer coordinates activities and programs for the Society, appoints program chairs for annual and special meetings, handles general correspondence, maintains a membership list, solicits new members, collects dues, and pays all bills.

The Advisory Board, composed of persons who have made significant contributions to Fuller scholarship, or who have stimulated interest in her life or writings,

provides advice and aid to the officers in carrying on the business of the Society.

VI. Nominating Committee: A three-person Nominating Committee will be responsible for choosing candidates for open posts to be filled on the Executive Council. Members of the Nominating Committee will serve three-year staggered terms, with one new member being elected every year at the annual meeting of the Society. The new member of the Nominating Committee shall be nominated by the President, with other nominations also being accepted from the floor.

VII. Meetings: The Society meets in conjunction with the annual convention of the Modern Language Association. In addition, the Executive Council may arrange Society programs at other times and places, such as meetings of the American Literature Association. All members of the Society shall be encouraged through open calls-for-papers to participate in the Society's programs.

VIII. Newsletter: The **Margaret Fuller Society Newsletter** is the official publication of the Society. The **Newsletter** shall regularly print notices, notes, queries, announcements, reviews, and other material of a brief nature related to Fuller or of interest to the Society. Each member of the Society will receive one free copy of each issue of the **Newsletter**.

IX. Amendments to the By-Laws: These by-laws may be amended at the annual meeting of the Society by a two-thirds majority of the members present (quorum of twenty-five members), or by mail when proposed amendments are distributed to the entire membership of the Society and approved by two-thirds of the members returning ballots. All proposed amendments must be circulated among the entire membership at least one month prior to the annual meeting or the mail ballot deadline.

X. Dissolution of the Society: Upon dissolution of the Society, all assets belonging to the Society after the discharge of any and all outstanding obligations shall become the property of a Fuller-related institution approved by the Executive Council. Such institution must qualify as a tax-exempt institution under the terms of section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as amended. (Especially shall no member or other individual be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the Society's assets on dissolution of the Society.)

Teaching Fuller's Works: A Report

Bell Chevigny

When Susan Belasco Smith invited me to lead a seminar on "Teaching Margaret Fuller's Works" at the American Literature Association meeting on June 2, 1994, I canvassed some Fuller Society members who were not going to San Diego--Walt Herbert, Tom Mitchell, Joel Pfister, Larry Reynolds, Jeffrey Steele, and Tina Zwarg--about their experiences. Of the fourteen people at the ALA discussion, some were seeking teaching tips, but most were old Fuller hands full of ideas. After I returned home, it occurred to me to put together this report for Society members based on my informal survey on the phone and in San Diego (apologies for distortions).

Judging by my survey, the most successful strategies place Fuller in dialogue with other writers. Joel Myerson said that once he identifies a student's interest, he suggests another appropriate writer to pair with Fuller in a paper. Some models of debates created around Fuller feature **Transcendental Reform** as interpreted by Emerson, Thoreau, Douglass, and Fuller (Len Gougeon); **Anglo-American Literary Relations**, exhibited in the "paper wars" of travel literature by Dickens and Fuller (Susan Belasco Smith); **Concord, 1836-1845**, focusing on conversations about love, friendship, and marriage between Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller, and Hawthorne in their essays, letters, fictions and journals (Larry Reynolds); **Hawthorne, James, and Margaret Fuller**, which sets Fuller's literary and personal career in the context of the **Memoirs** and the two men's fictions about utopia, feminism, and Italy (Bell Chevigny).

A problem-centered approach to the American Renaissance is adopted by Jeffrey Steele, who locates Fuller under the headings of "Freedom and Bondage: The Rhetoric of Self-affirmation and Its Revision" and "The Conquest of Nature." Similarly, in his interdisciplinary course on **Domesticity and Gender**, Joel Pfister has led students through Poe, Hawthorne and Melville to Fuller, Fern, Brent, and Alcott. Taking his cue from Emerson's saying about life as a hieroglyph to the questions one would put oneself, Walt Herbert explores the lives (as texts) of Fuller, Thoreau, and Whitman.

Fuller's work is also pivotal in a number of courses

about women writers. Robert Bray and Susan Rosowski use **Summer on the Lakes** in courses respectively on the literature of women pioneers (Eliza Farnham and less-known diary writers are read in the light of Kolodny's **The Land Before Her**) and on western women (Cather, Jean Stafford, and Marilynne Robinson are read in the light of Paula Gunn Allen). Sherry Ceniza and Jeffrey Steele use Fuller and writers like Grimké and Gilman to theorize other writers in courses on nineteenth-century women's writing. In "Women Writers of the Americas," an introductory course mostly concerning the twentieth century, my students compare the emerging thematic with issues identified by Fuller in extracts from her work I circulate at the beginning of the course.

While it was generally conceded that teaching Fuller in a survey course--usually with a selection from **Woman in the Nineteenth Century**--is the least likely approach to succeed, I am happy to report Tom Mitchell's dissent from Laredo, Texas. His sophomores, mostly Hispanic women from the border, are shocked to discover in Fuller's book many questions by no means resolved in their own culture. Many of these students, struggling at home for their rights to education, find resonance in Fuller's thoughts on marriage, human nature's need for growth, and radical dualism of gender. Read aloud, the language presents no more difficulties than other prose of the period, says Tom.

David E. E. Sloane notes that it is useful to ask undergraduates to read aloud some of the most lucid and striking passages from **Woman** before reading the whole. Sam Worley first gives students some of Fuller's more straightforward prose, then makes the difficulty of **Woman** the subject of discussion. Bob Hudspeth tells his students that each Transcendentalist author requires a new strategy of reading. Going further, Tina Zwarg says Fuller has become ever more accessible as students become familiar with shifting senses of agency and with multiplicities of stories. In fact, she finds Fuller a "reading machine" for the rest of nineteenth-century literature. (P.S. Tina is the only one polled who has taught Fuller's translation of **Tasso** without other works to freshmen.)

I hope other members will write about their teaching experiences for the **Newsletter**.

1994 MLA Special Session Proposal: Margaret Fuller and the Texts of Transcendentalism

Susan Belasco Smith

In recent years, Margaret Fuller has been firmly established as a significant figure in American literary history. In fact, past MLA special sessions on Fuller have played a crucial role in establishing Fuller's position in the canon and advancing our understanding of Fuller's role in the American Renaissance. These sessions have focused mainly on the important preliminary issues in Fuller scholarship: biography, the availability of reliable texts, and Fuller's work in relation to other mid-nineteenth-century writers. The purpose of this panel is to suggest a new direction for research: to investigate the general issue of a writer's texts as material objects in a specific and highly localized historical context.

The essential ideas of the American transcendentalist movement have received extensive examination since their first appearance some 150 years ago. Terms such as "organicism," "self-reliance," and "the oversoul" have become familiar topics to all who read and study the works of Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller, and Alcott; however, only slight attention has been given to the concrete methods and means by which such ideas have been textually produced and reproduced, despite the importance of historical particularities to the determination of literary meaning. Concrete details about a text, such as its color, size, typeface, paper, price, place of publication, and publisher, all yield knowledge about its cultural significance that a study of its words alone cannot provide. By focusing on texts as material objects, we can recover some of the meanings that have been lost to us about Transcendentalism in general.

Our panel will begin with an introduction and brief remarks by Bell Gale Chevigny, Professor of English at the State University of New York, College at Purchase, President of the Margaret Fuller Society, and author of *The Woman and the Myth: Margaret Fuller's Life and Writing* (1976; rev. Northeastern University Press, 1994).

In his paper, "Transcendentalist Text Production: The Face of the *Dial*," Larry J. Reynolds, Thomas Franklin Mayo Professor in Liberal Arts at Texas A&M University, author of *European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance* (Yale University Press, 1988), and co-editor of *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History* (Princeton University Press, 1993), examines the *Dial* under the editorship of Fuller and Emerson. More specifically, Pro-

fessor Reynolds assesses the ways in which decisions about the textual "externals" of a journal reflect differences in the editor's temperaments, worldviews, and conceptions of a publishing enterprise. For a number of years, scholars have accepted Fuller's view of the differences between the two *Dial* editors as expressed in a letter she wrote to Emerson in April 1842, in which she declared, "you have always had in view to make a good periodical and represent your own tastes, while I have had in view to let all kinds of people have freedom to say their say, for better, or worse." Despite the accuracy of her observation, early disagreements between Emerson and Fuller about the physical form of the *Dial* suggest other, more radical differences. Fuller, for example felt compelled to fill out the first number to provide the 136 octavo pages promised by the "Prospectus," yet Emerson protested, telling her henceforth to leave out the ballast and not to count pages, for "every dull sentence vulgarizes the book." Objecting to the appearance of the work, he told Fuller, "In the next number pray let them print the word *Dial* in strong black letters that can be seen in the sunshine. It looks very cautious now, pale face, lily liver." Disagreeing, Fuller did not change the title page, but after Emerson became editor two years later, he promptly altered the cover and typography. To Professor Reynolds, the two title pages of the *Dial* suggest that for Emerson the face of the *Dial* was a frightening mask, representing the religious revolution against the established church, which he had begun with *Nature* (1836) and continued with "The Divinity School Address" (1838). On the other hand, Fuller often identified the face of the *Dial* with her own and hoped people would respect the journal for its contents rather than its appearance. This "noteworthy but unattractive periodical," as she called it, was part of her ongoing project to elevate New England culture by featuring the writing and thought of herself and her friends. Decorous cultural reform rather than outrageous religious radicalism informed Fuller's image of the *Dial*.

In addition to viewing their journal, the *Dial*, as a vehicle for public expression of their ideas, the members of the Transcendental Club circulated their ruminations about life and literature privately in the many letters they exchanged with one another. The publication of the more than 1000 extant letters of Fuller's by Robert N. Hudspeth has provided scholars with an invaluable resource. These "texts" produced in private for friends are important to our understanding of the historical context of Transcendentalism: how private communication ordered and reordered the ideas that we have come to associate with the movement as a whole.

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David M. Robinson, Professor of English at Oregon State University and author of **Apostle of Culture: Emerson as Preacher and Lecturer** (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982) and **Emerson and the Conduct of Life: Pragmatism and Ethical Purpose in the Later Work** (Oxford University Press, 1993), takes Fuller's letters as the "texts" for his paper, "Margaret Fuller's Letters as Transcendentalist Texts." "When I look at my papers I feel as if I had never had a thought that was worthy of the attention of any but myself, and some fond friend," Fuller wrote to Emerson in 1840. "And tis only, when, on talking with people, I find I tell them what they did not know, that my confidence at all returns." Fuller's confession suggests the extent to which the Transcendentalist movement was less a public than a private affair, the fundamental energy of which was generated by the intricate network of interrelationships among these ostensibly isolated and self-reliant individualists. In the case of Fuller, the need to make this fact clear is particularly urgent, but among the richest resources for the study of her career are the many letters she wrote to her friends who might be numbered among the Transcendentalists. The letters speak to the details of her friendships as well as to the more public world of literary and philosophical expression, and they do so almost interchangeably. This interplay between the private and the public, between friendship and literature, is the subject of Professor Robinson's paper, which will test the viability and limits of textual analysis in several important letters by Fuller to Emerson, William Henry Channing, and Caroline Sturgis.

Susan Belasco Smith, Associate Professor of English at the University of Tulsa and co-editor of "**These Sad But Glorious Days, Dispatches from Europe, 1846-1850 by Margaret Fuller** (Yale University Press, 1991) and **Social Texts: Nineteenth-Century Literature in Periodical Contexts** (University Press of Virginia, forthcoming), will serve as respondent to the papers. Professor Smith will provide a critical commentary on the papers and raise questions for the discussion to follow.

Stern and Rostenberg Scholarship

An article by Madeleine Stern and Leona Rostenberg entitled "Sarah Clarke's Copy of **Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli: A Double Association**," which appeared in **Manuscripts**, 43 (Fall 1991): 301-315, is scheduled to be reprinted in a book co-written by Stern and Rostenberg entitled **Connections: Our Selves--Our Books**.

Stern is also writing the Fuller entry for Wesley Mott's encyclopedia of Transcendentalism.

Urbanski Book Available

Marie Mitchell Olesen Urbanski has edited a volume of essays, **Margaret Fuller: Visionary of the New Age**, published this year by Northern Lights. A letter from Buckminster Fuller, which sets out his own work's relation to that of his great aunt, introduces the collection. Among the four contributions by Urbanski are new essays on Fuller's letters and on the Seeress of Prevorst. Joan von Mehren offers a biographical essay, Renate Delphendahl discusses Fuller's interpretation and translation of German literature, Margaret A. Lukens writes on Fuller's New York years, and Judith Strong Albert charts Fuller's influence, especially on Peabody, Dall, and Child. Each of these scholars also describes her encounter with Fuller. The Appendix offers Fuller's translations from Goethe: "The New Paris," **Iphigenie auf Tauris**, and **Torquato Tasso**. The book may be obtained only through the publisher: Northern Lights, 493 College Avenue, Orono, Maine 04473. If a check for \$25 is included, postage will be waived.

Bean Essay to Appear

Judith Bean's essay "Texts From Conversation: Margaret Fuller's Influence on Emerson," will appear in **Studies in the American Renaissance, 1994**, edited by Joel Myerson (University Press of Virginia, 1994): 231-48. It forms part of a chapter of her book-length investigation of Fuller's influence and legacy.

Harris Play in New York City

The Italian Cultural Institute sponsored a reading in November, 1993, at New York University of Dina Harris's play **The Risorgimento of Margaret Fuller** based on Joseph Jay Deiss's book **The Roman Years of Margaret Fuller**. The Theater for the New City in Manhattan was planning a full production to open on November 10, 1994, and to run for four weeks; however, due to the recent change in the Italian government, this has been postponed.

James's Recent Work

The author/actress Laurie James recently published a children's book **Outrageous Questions: Legacy of Bronson Alcott and America's One-Room Schools**, illustrated by John Hartnett. The Alcott book (\$16.95) and James's three books on Margaret Fuller--**The Wit and Wisdom of Margaret Fuller** (\$8.50), **Why Margaret Fuller Ossoli is Forgotten** (\$8.50), and **Men, Women and Margaret Fuller** (\$19.95)--may be obtained from Golden Heritage Press Inc., P. O. Box 13, Dix Hills, New York 11746. Phone: (516) 499-1637.

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During 1991-93, James portrayed Fuller in **The American Renaissance Chautauqua** throughout the Great Plains states. In July, 1993, she also appeared in Oregon, Illinois, at **The Margaret Fuller Festival of the Arts**, where she performed her one-person drama **Men, Women and Margaret Fuller**.

Capper Receives Awards

The first volume of Charles Capper's biography **Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life, The Private Years** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) was awarded the 1993 Bancroft Prize for best book of the year in American history.

Capper has also been awarded a 1994 Guggenheim Fellowship to pursue work on his project "The Public Years of Margaret Fuller."

Kolodny Essay Appears

Annette Kolodny recently published a lengthy study of Margaret Fuller's rhetorical strategies in **Woman in the Nineteenth Century**. Entitled "Inventing a Feminist Discourse: Rhetoric and Resistance in Margaret Fuller's **Woman in the Nineteenth Century**," the essay appeared in **New Literary History**, 25 (Spring 1994): 355-382. The essay will also appear under the same title in a collection of

essays on women and rhetoric--the first such study: **Reclaiming Rhetorica**, ed. Andrea Lunsford (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994).

New Myerson Bibliography

Joel Myerson is preparing **Margaret Fuller: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1883-1995** for publication by Greenwood Press in 1997. He welcomes receiving references to or copies of articles and books for inclusion in the work. Please send them to him at the English Department, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208. [New copies of Myerson's **Margaret Fuller: A Descriptive Bibliography** (1978) are still available to members of the Margaret Fuller Society at the discount price of \$25 each (originally \$60). Send orders and checks to the editor of this **Newsletter**.]

Membership

Please enter or renew your membership in the Margaret Fuller Society by sending your dues (\$10 for faculty, and \$5 for students and independent scholars) to Margaret Fuller Society, c/o Larry J. Reynolds, Department of English, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843. The last year for which your dues are paid will appear after your name on the mailing label for this **Newsletter**.

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