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A discussion of Margaret Fuller's Summer on the Lakes

Sharon Stout Brause
Iowa State University

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A discussion of Margaret Fuller's

Summer on the Lakes

by

Sharon Stout Brause

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I. INTRODUCTION

Recent discussions of Margaret Fuller and her accomplishments concentrate on her gradual transition from Transcendental idealism to social activism. David M. Robinson calls Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century the "bridge" between these two ideologies, yet other scholars have cited Fuller's journey to the Great Lakes region and Summer on the Lakes, in 1843, the book that resulted, as the first stage of her "centrifugal career" (Chevigny). I believe an examination of Summer on the Lakes will demonstrate that the latter is a more accurate description of Fuller's evolution. Because Summer has not been more than cursorily examined in this light, this paper's purpose is to analyze Summer on the Lakes as a component of Fuller's waning interests in Transcendentalism as theory and an indication of an increasing commitment to social activism. This paper will also examine Summer on the Lakes as exceptionally valuable evidence of Fuller's skill as a writer.

Of course, the only sure test of the quality of Fuller's prose style in Summer on the Lakes is a careful reading of the work itself. Highly romantic in style and subject, Summer is a travel book that flows smoothly from one delightful or provoking observation to another. Many of these observations are presented as clever metaphors and similes. Never at a loss for enthusiasm, Fuller's style captivates the reader with keen insight into the simple yet intriguing nature of man and woman. And at any time Fuller can deftly switch from a familiar tone to a more formal or lofty one to suit her special purpose. But Fuller did not always have such success with her writing. The controversy over her writing will be addressed in

Chapter II of this paper. Since it is not my primary purpose to directly demonstrate what matters of prose style are being used by Fuller, the excerpts presented in this paper have not been chosen for style as much as for content.

This content, analyzed in Chapter III, falls into four categories: landscape, American Indians, settlers, and the lives of women. Fuller's concern for women and Indians can be seen in the book's many digressions, and these digressions will be discussed in the first section of Chapter III in order to clarify their inclusion in Fuller's book. One of these digressions, "Mariana," is seen as Fuller's catharsis toward self-culture, and all of the digressions are seen as elaborations of Summer's dealings with oppression. The second section of Chapter III examines Fuller's dual role as Transcendentalist and activist. Her observations of the landscape will be seen as Transcendental, but her ideal visions are eventually hampered as she sees the threatening materialism of the advancing settlers. The plight of these settlers, particularly the women, will be covered in this section as Fuller's growing activism is recognized. This section will conclude with Fuller romanticizing the American Indians' past and dreading their future as the settlers continue to displace them. The third section of Chapter III recognizes Fuller's humorous observations in Summer on the Lakes as an especially valuable characteristic of the book.

Fuller's summation of her Western journey is presented in Chapter IV, and her work on Summer on the Lakes is covered in Chapter V. In these chapters, Fuller is seen as an enriched and confident woman eager to

exercise the social activism spawned by her Transcendental and democratic ideals.

To date, little critical work has been done on Fuller's Summer on the Lakes. Many studies on Fuller concern her life and her contributions to the feminist movement, and others examine her relationships with prominent literary figures of her day. A more than adequate review of the research is offered by Robert N. Hudspeth in Joel Myerson's The Transcendentalists, and by Myerson in the introduction to his Critical Essays on Margaret Fuller, in Margaret Fuller: A Descriptive Bibliography, and Margaret Fuller: A Secondary Bibliography.

A critical study of Summer on the Lakes is in Annette Kolodny's, The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontier, 1630-1860. Kolodny's chapter on Fuller and Summer on the Lakes demonstrates the feminist connection of the digressions in Fuller's book. Kolodny is one of the few critics to recognize the impact of Fuller's discussions of women in Summer on the Lakes.

In Bell Gale Chevigny, "To the Edges of Ideology: Margaret Fuller's Centrifugal Evolution," American Quarterly 38 (1986):173-201, Fuller's journey West is cited as the launching of her "evolution." Though Chevigny may not specifically examine Summer on the Lakes, she does not underestimate the significance of Fuller's Western travels as the first stage of Fuller's development as an activist. Margaret V. Allen does examine Summer on the Lakes in The Achievement of Margaret Fuller, where Allen devotes a chapter to Summer as evidence of Fuller as a "significant social thinker and leader" in America. In Allen, "'This Impassioned

Yankee,'" Southwest Review 58 (Spring 1973):162-71, Fuller's writing receives a much needed reevaluation.

Fuller's experiences on her travels are traced in the many biographies of Fuller, some which are cited in this paper's list of "Works Consulted." Madeleine B. Stern's "Introduction" to the B. De Graaf facsimile printing of Summer on the Lakes also provides a biographical study of Fuller, emphasizing her Western travels.

The Letters of Margaret Fuller, edited by Robert N. Hudspeth, contains the valuable correspondence of Fuller, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson's biography of Fuller contains much detail on the printing of Summer on the Lakes.

Summer on the Lakes, in 1843 has received several printings, but some of these alter the book's original text. B. De Graaf's or Haskell House's facsimile printings of the Boston-New York, 1844 edition are the preferred texts. Fuller's brother, Arthur, edited Summer in At Home and Abroad, but he extracted some of the valuable digressions and poems. Three modern printings of Summer provide portions of the book. The Writings of Margaret Fuller, edited by Mason Wade, uses Arthur Fuller's corrupt edition, and Wade alters it further. Margaret Fuller: American Romantic, edited by Perry Miller, uses the Boston, 1844 edition, but he also omits the digressions and other material separate from the main narrative. Margaret Fuller: Essays on American Life and Letters, edited by Joel Myerson, contains one chapter from the Boston, 1844 edition of Summer on the Lakes, and Myerson annotates the text.

A variety of other works mentioning Summer on the Lakes or Fuller's Western travels is listed at the conclusion of this paper in "Works Consulted."

Summer on the Lakes, in 1843 is an exceptionally valuable book not only because it contains some of Margaret Fuller's best literature, but also because it captures with powerful lucidity the beauty of human potential and the ugliness of human oppression. While Fuller's book examines the positive and negative effects of a country's development, this paper traces a vital aspect of Fuller's development as an aspiring social activist.

II. MARGARET FULLER, THE WRITER: FINDING A VOICE IN SUMMER

When Fuller set off on her journey to the Midwest in 1843, she took with her her concerns for women and their status in America; she had just finished "The Great Lawsuit" and was eager to leave it behind. In a May 9, 1843, letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson, she writes:

I am trying to write as hard as these odious east winds will let me. I rise in the morning and feel as happy as the birds and then about eleven comes one of these tormentors, and makes my head ache and spoils the day. But if I get ready to print, as I think will be the case by the middle of next week, I wish to be sure of the first place, because I wish to go away free and not followed by proof sheets to Niagara! (Letters, III 123)

What did follow her to Niagara and the West was the Transcendental idealism of New England; but what she brought back was the need to act within a sphere conducive to the talents of women, a sphere larger than the insular communities of New England could provide.

Fuller also brought back the material for a book warmly praised by many of her contemporaries but generally neglected by modern readers of Fuller. One of the few writers who has recognized that Summer on the Lakes offers some of Fuller's best writing is Margaret V. Allen:

The variety of tone and mood in these writings is striking. She could be whimsical, playful, puzzled, sweetly reasonable, oracular, cryptic. She could also lash out with savage anger, Swiftian contempt, [and] devastating irony (The Achievement of Margaret Fuller 112)

Allen is not alone in her praise of Fuller's writing. Perry Miller, though agreeing with Emerson that Fuller's prose lacked grammatical accuracy, recognizes "the peculiar delight" of Margaret Fuller's writings

as being its "headlong impetuosity" (Transcendentalists 457). Hudspeth, Myerson, and others agree that the time has come to take Fuller's writing seriously.

This interest in her writing is certainly not new. Thomas Wentworth Higginson said, "Margaret Fuller had upon me, through her writings, a more immediate intellectual influence than any one except Emerson, and possibly Parker" (Higginson 2). And George Eliot "praised Fuller for . . . the portrayal of 'the most terribly tragic element . . . the Nemesis lurking in the vices of the oppressed'" (Gilbert and Gubar 481). James Freeman Clarke, who accompanied Fuller for part of her western journey, reviewed Summer on the Lakes, saying "it belongs to a class of which we can rarely find a specimen. It is full of suggestion, rich in matter, to be read and read again, and to appear new with each new reading" (Myerson, Critical Essays 2).

Calling Summer on the Lakes "a remarkable assemblage of sketches," Edgar Allan Poe's 1846 review of Fuller claims that this book and her contributions to the Dial offer "the most favorable estimate of Miss Fuller's genius" (36). Poe elaborates that in spite of her "ignorance of grammar" (described as "willful murders committed by Miss Fuller on the American of President Polk"), her style is unsurpassed. "It is singularly piquant, vivid, terse, bold, luminous--leaving details out of sight, it is everything a style need be" (37).

Horace Greeley so liked Summer on the Lakes that he offered Fuller a job with the New York Daily Tribune. He wrote:

"Summer on the Lakes," which appeared some time after that essay ["The Great Lawsuit"], though before its expansion into a book, struck me as less ambitious in its aim, but more graceful and delicate in its execution; and as one of the clearest and most graphic delineations, ever given, of the Great Lakes, of the Prairies, and of the receding barbarism, and the rapidly advancing, but rude, repulsive semi-civilization which were contending for the possession of those rich lands. I still consider "Summer on the Lakes" unequaled, especially in its pictures of the Prairies and of the sunnier aspects of Pioneer life. (Memoirs 2:152)

But Fuller's writing is more commonly criticized for its failures than complimented for its strengths. Caleb Stetson's 1844 review of Summer, though recognizing the "subjective tendency of the writer as a peculiar excellence," criticizes Fuller for being "too conscious of style--that she writes under the constraint of an artistic view" (4). And Orestes Brownson emphatically stated in his review of Summer:

Her writings we do not like. We dislike them exceedingly. They are sent out in a slipshod style, and have a certain toss of the head about them which offends us. Miss Fuller seems to us to be wholly deficient in a pure, correct taste, and especially in that tidiness we always look for in woman. (5)

Brownson then goes on to say that "her notions are crude, and the materials she has collected lie fermenting in her intellectual stomach, and generate all manner of strange and diseased fancies."

Though not as venomously, Elizabeth Barrett Browning also disparaged her acquaintance's writing: "Her written works are just naught. . . . If I wished anyone to do her justice, I should say, as I indeed have said, 'Never read what she has written'" (Allen, "'This Impassioned Yankee'--Margaret Fuller's Writing Revisited" 163). This was a common sentiment especially among those people who were familiar with Fuller's

Conversations and disappointed that her writing did not have the same appeal.

But the varying opinions of the value of Fuller's writing can not be restricted to one-sided praise or one-sided disparagement. Some critics changed their minds over a period of time and contradicted comments they made earlier. Poe, one time praising her style as unsurpassed, later criticized her diction for its "vulgarity" and "barbarism" (Chevigny, The Woman and the Myth 161). Henry James, Jr., in his biography Hawthorne, said that "some of her writing has extreme beauty, almost all of it has real interest" (Allen, "Yankee" 163). But later James would say, "She left nothing behind her, her written utterance being naught" (163).

Fuller's own comments about her writing only compound the controversy of her skill as a writer. In Gilbert and Gubar's Madwoman in the Attic, Fuller's fantasy letter to Beethoven ("not unlike Dickinson's drafts to a mysterious lover and Bronte's letters to Constantin Heger") is seen as a complaint of her symbolic imprisonment not only in romantic plots but also in the patriarchal structures she knew those plots reflected. Fuller says in this letter,

My lot is accursed, yes, my friend, let me curse it. . . . I have no art, in which to vent the swell of my soul as deep as thine. . . . Is it because, as a woman, I am bound by a physical law, which prevents the soul from manifesting itself?" (606)

Disappointed by the literary options available to her as a woman writer, Fuller was impatient with the lack of alternatives:

How can I ever write with this impatience of detail? I shall never be an artist; I have no love of execution. . . . For all

the tides of life that flow within me, I am dumb and ineffectual, when it comes to casting my thoughts into form. No old one seems to suit me. If I could invent one, it seems to me the pleasure of creation would make it possible for me to write. . . . I love best to be a woman; but womanhood at present is too straitly bounded to give me scope. At hours, I live truly as a woman; at others, I should palsy, when I play the artist. (Memoirs 1:295, 297)

These statements, along with the incongruities of praise and disparagement, leave the modern reader with an interesting dilemma. Is Fuller's writing good? Many readers do not think so. In Woman and the Myth, Chevigny states that many "find the style overblown, the form rambling and repetitious, the tone self-indulgent or arrogant, and the whole effect unremittingly intense" (10). This may be true in some of Fuller's writing, but Summer on the Lakes is refreshingly entertaining and makes for pleasurable reading. Compared to her famous Woman in the Nineteenth Century, Summer stands out as the better literary work because of the appealing clarity and tone of its contents.

Chevigny explains Fuller's occasional "purple style and a form that follows where whimsical thought may lead" as a feature "of the writing of an age which placed a premium on spontaneity and feeling" (The Woman and the Myth 10). She also cites Fuller's "need to feel (and/or convince others) that she was a woman while engaging in the intellectual pursuits of men" as reason for her "vehement and impulsive style rather than one more logical, cool, spare, and cerebral" (10). But while traveling West and recording her thoughts in her journals, Fuller was engaging in the intellectual pursuits of women--namely, Schoolcraft, Kirkland, Grant, Jameson, and Martineau. Because she found travel books to be the literary

form to express a woman's active life, Fuller felt confident in her writing task. The material in Summer may not appear as radical as other Fuller works; however, the obvious message in Fuller's travel book is one of concern for women, immigrants, settlers, Indians, and the land they occupy. Even with this message, the reader enjoying the book can still perceive a style "more logical, cool, spare, and cerebral" than other Fuller works more radical in content and purpose.

One principal reason Summer on the Lakes has been so perfunctorily dealt with by twentieth century critics may be because its author from time to time interrupts the chronological account of her journey to insert material (stories, poems, and anecdotes) that on the surface may seem like digressions. Indeed, those sections of Summer on the Lakes have generally been referred to in just that way, as "digressions" -- as elements of the book that are subordinate to the main narrative. In point of fact, however, these "digressions," so-called, are essential ingredients in the structure of Margaret Fuller's book. But because the term has been so widely used in discussions of Summer on the Lakes, I have retained its use in this paper. In what follows, then, I will use the word "digression" when discussing that crucial material in Summer on the Lakes that momentarily turns away from the main narrative of Fuller's journey.

Arthur Fuller, Perry Miller, and Mason Wade all considered Summer on the Lakes uneven because of those digressions. But they do serve the main narrative and to omit them is to depreciate both. The

oscillation between the two structural principles . . . [of narrative and digressions] is to be found in many literary travelogues of the romantic period as well as among the Transcendentalists. [This] was one of the features of the genre which most perplexed conservative critics. (Buell 198)

Arthur Fuller believed, probably like Wade and Miller, that he could extract the digressions "without in any way marring its unity" (Kolodny 124). But as is pointed out in recent scholarship by writers like Annette Kolodny, the digressions of Summer can be appreciated as an integral part of Fuller's book. And because facsimile printings of the original Summer on the Lakes can be found, the reader can appreciate Fuller at her literary best.

III. A READING OF SUMMER ON THE LAKES

The 1972 B. De Graaf facsimile printing of the original Summer on the Lakes, in 1843, complete with Sarah Clarke's sketches, offers a casual and authentic look at Fuller's more relaxed and controlled intellect. It also offers a valuable and unique piece of literature from a period of American Midwestern history when changes were occurring with incredible rapidity. Fuller's Summer on the Lakes captures some of these changes with such remarkable poignance that to disregard the book's value would significantly postpone a greater understanding of Fuller and her contributions to American literature, history, and culture. Fuller said of her book, "What I got from the journey was the poetic impression of the country at large; it is all I have aimed to communicate" (Stern, "Introduction" XXVII).

A. Summer's Digressions

Summer on the Lakes narrates the 1843 trip Fuller made with James Freeman Clarke, who gave her fifty dollars to help with expenses; his sister Sarah, the artist of the book's sketches; and Caroline Sturgis, who traveled with them as far as Niagara. From Niagara they went by steamboat to Chicago, where William Clarke took James' place and served as guide through northern Illinois. By covered wagon they went from grove to grove on the rolling prairies and met the settlers of the American frontier. After returning to Chicago, they set off again by carriage and traveled through the Wisconsin Territory. From there Fuller went alone to Mackinaw Island and met members of the Chippewa and Ottawa tribes. From Mackinaw, it was back to Chicago where she rejoined the Clarkes and boarded the boat

for Buffalo. In Summer on the Lakes, Margaret Fuller not only includes details of these experiences, but, along the way, she also includes portions of a book she read in Milwaukee, stories she heard while traveling, poems she sent to friends or collected for the book, her semi-autobiography, and material she gathered on Indians.

Perry Miller describes the contents of Summer on the Lakes as a "potpourri of a sort fashionable in the nineteenth century"; and a potpourri it certainly is! Yet Miller withholds further compliment, saying the "brazenly extraneous matter" makes the theme of the trip itself "miserably confused" (American Romantic 116). And if the book is read only for the narrative of Fuller's journey, then this is probably true. But the book is not written as a descriptive narrative of immediate experience alone, nor is it meant to be read as one.

Rather, the "potpourri" of Fuller's book should be read as Transcendental "stream-of-consciousness . . . , a mixture of all the levels of awareness, an unending flow of sensations, thoughts, memories, associations, and reflections" that come to Fuller's attention (Holman 511). Read as such, Fuller's digressions complement rather than detract from her summer experiences. Fuller says of her digressions in Summer on the Lakes: "I wish I had a thread long enough to string on it all these beads that take my fancy" (SL 242).

The common denominator of Summer's stream-of-consciousness, of Fuller's "string" of "beads," is the oppression of people by an alien culture ignorant to their needs. The story of Capt. P.'s alcoholic wife, who had been tossed into a marriage of convenience and misunderstood ever since;

the tale of Mariana, whose demise was partly a result of an unsuccessful marriage; the summary of Kerner's Die Seherin von Prevorst, a book about a woman whose powers had no outlet in the status quo of society; and the lengthy excerpts on Indian legends and mythology are all elaborations of the oppression Fuller witnesses on her travels.

Citing "Mariana" and "Seeress of Prevorst" as examples, Kolodny says these digressions "served Fuller as crucial thematic glosses on her larger understanding of the position of women on the frontier" (125). In "Mariana" Fuller describes the girl as having "a mind whose large impulses are disproportioned to the persons and occasions she meets, and which carry her beyond those reserves which mark the appointed lot of women" (SL 103); and the seeress stands "not for the woman of unusual [mystical] power but for the woman powerless to be understood, or even to survive with her gifts, in the world as it is" (Kolodny 125). Unable to live with the gifts she has, the seeress "became so weak, so devoid of all power in herself, that her life seemed entirely dependent on artificial means and the influence of other men" (SL 139). Taking Kolodny's point one step further, it seems to me that Fuller's digressions reveal that when women are not allowed to exercise their powers freely, they are forced to depend on the group that refuses them the use of those powers.

Combined, Mariana and the seeress are like women of the prairies who "found their labors disproportioned to their strength" (SL 117). According to Kolodny, the

link at which Fuller aimed was the disproportion itself, the poor fit between individual ability and social role. . . . The apparent digressions, the interpolated stories, and the lengthy quotations from other writers, in other words, were all part of a larger narrative process in and through which Fuller sought a clearer picture of what she called "the defect in the position of women." (Kolodny 127)

Kolodny's statements are not incorrect, but the "defect in the position of women" was only a part of Fuller's concern. Anywhere she saw people suffering from the absence of self-culture (as was the case for women), or from the destruction of self-culture (as was the case for the Indians), Fuller digressed to either empathize with their plight (as in "Mariana" and "Seeress") or present a trace of the vanishing culture (as in the excerpts from McKenney, Henry, Carver, and others). With these purposes in mind, the reader will find that Summer on the Lakes indeed has a clear ordering principle.

The digression that interests many readers is the tale of "Mariana," Fuller's thinly disguised semi-autobiography. This story is particularly interesting in that it addresses the regrets and misgivings about Fuller's past so that she can lay it to rest and go on with matters of more contemporary importance. The child Mariana's eccentricities, like Fuller's, included spinning dervishes to stimulate her brain, somnambulism, heavily blushed cheeks, and melodramatic illnesses. But to purge herself of the memory of her awkward past, Fuller separates herself from Mariana more and more as the tale continues.

Justifying her own unrequited love interests and the freedom that resulted, Fuller has Mariana's love affair end miserably in marriage; here,

with romantic eloquence, Fuller protects the sorrowful Mariana from condemnation:

. . . blame no children who thought at arm's length to find the moon. Mariana, with a heart capable of highest Eros, gave it to one who knew love only as a flower or plaything, and bound her heartstrings to one who parted his as lightly as the ripe fruit leaves the bough. (SL 95)

Alas, Mariana succumbs to the restricting bonds of traditional marriage and becomes "the solitary and wretched wife" (97). Eventually "thoughts and presages came too thick for her strength" and she dies. And like Mariana, the Seeress, Capt. P.'s wife, and the Indians are also victims of a traditional white patriarchy that robs them of any chance to exercise their abilities, to develop their potential, to acquire self-culture.

But "Mariana" serves a special purpose for Fuller. With herself as a partial model for Mariana, Fuller is compelled to free herself from traditional nineteenth century expectations by using the story "Mariana" as her catharsis toward self-culture. In other words, the dead Mariana is Fuller's sacrifice for a cleansed, renewed, and thriving self.

Self-culture, as proposed by Transcendentalist forerunner William Ellery Channing, is "a version of human perfectibility centered around a metaphor of the soul as a dynamic organism capable of cultivation to ever-increasing harmonious growth" (Robinson 84). Fuller would later employ this theory thoroughly in Woman in the Nineteenth Century, but it was during her summer on the lakes in 1843 that she observed the barriers that precluded women and Indians from experiencing self-culture for

themselves. This and other Transcendental ideals with which Fuller viewed America would conflict with "the social fact of repression" (Robinson 96) and materialism that Fuller encountered in the West.

B. Fuller: Transcendentalist and Social Activist in America

In many instances in Summer on the Lakes Fuller expresses the flow of sensations, thoughts, memories, associations, and reflections with "rare and remarkable poetic imagination" (Allen, "'Impassioned Yankee'" 167). Quoting Emerson's "Poetry and Imagination" as evidence of Fuller's poetic vision, Allen reveals the mystery of Fuller's poetic style:

The poet contemplates the central identity. . . . Poetry is the perpetual endeavor to express the spirit of the thing, to pass the brute body and search life and reason which causes it to exist;--to see that the object is always flowing away, whilst the spirit or necessity which causes it subsists. (170)

This is precisely what Fuller accomplishes in her descriptions of the landscape. Avoiding the visual image of Niagara Falls, Fuller captures the sensations, "the spirit of the thing":

For here there is no escape from the weight of a perpetual creation; all other forms and motions come and go, the tide rises and recedes, the wind, at its mightiest, moves in gales and gusts, but here is really an incessant, an indefatigable motion. Awake or asleep, there is no escape, still this rushing round you and through you. It is in this way I most felt the grandeur--somewhat eternal, if not infinite. (SL 3, 4)

This same emphasis of spirit over "brute body" commands her view of the surrounding landscape of Oregon, Illinois:

The aspect of this country was to me enchanting, beyond any I have ever seen, from its fullness of expression, its bold and impassioned sweetness. Here the flood of emotion has passed over and marked everywhere its course by a smile. The fragments of rock touch it with a wildness and liberality which give just the needed relief. . . . Here the eye and the heart are filled. (SL 52)

But more than often Fuller's Transcendental appreciation of the western landscape is spoiled by the behavior of the people who occupy this landscape. In the article "Margaret Fuller's Centrifugal Evolution," Chevigny says that "after 1842 Fuller continually reformulated the American revolutionary ideal" and challenged rather than reaffirmed the "national performance" of this ideal (179). Citing Fuller's journey west as the launching of her "centrifugal evolution," Chevigny claims Fuller challenges the performance of the white settlers:

Blind to their opportunity to renew the American project and unresponsive to the resources special to the West, [the settlers] brought with them Yankee habits of narrowmindedness, calculation, and religious dogmatism. (Chevigny 179)

Awed by the beauty and resources unique to the spacious prairies and western cities, Fuller hopes the environment might be used without being marred. But she quickly observes that travelers and settlers are not seeking the fulfillment of the American ideal; rather they are "seeking their fortunes." In a June 16 letter from Chicago, she wrote to Emerson:

I want to see some emigrant with worthy aims using all his gifts and knowledge to some purpose honorable to the land; instead of lowering themselves to the requisitions of the moment as so many of them do. (Letters, III 130)

In Summer she repeats this disappointment in seeing materialism practiced at the expense of Transcendentalism's spiritual growth:

It grieved me to hear these immigrants who were to be the fathers of a new race, all, from the old man down to the little girl, talking not of what they should do, but of what they should get in the new scene. It was to them a prospect, not of the unfolding nobler energies, but of more ease, and larger accumulation. (SL 18)

And with an environmentalist's eye, Fuller realizes the potential damage this materialism, this "prospect," can do to the land. "[The] rude foreigners can so little understand the best interests of the land they seek for bread and shelter" (SL 18, 105).

Besides the materialism which bothers her, Fuller is also disappointed seeing the settlers clinging to ill-suited traditions. Distinguishing the European settlers from the American settlers, she forgives the Europeans for wishing to adhere to bits of old habits and customs if it helps them to "feel that they have not paid too dear for the tormented independence of the new settler's life" (SL 124). Fuller concludes the thought with a pleasant and gentle metaphor suggesting her preference for a new life-style uniquely suited to the wild American plains. "But, generally, damask roses will not thrive in the wood, and a ruder growth, if healthy and pure, we wish rather to see there" (SL 124).

However, as for the American settlers Fuller is less patient. She can envision the ideal American destiny, but it is spoiled by the restrictions of tradition:

American men and women are inexcusable if they do not bring up children so as to be fit for vicissitudes; that is the meaning of our star, that here all men being free and equal, all should be fitted for freedom and an independence by his own resources wherever the changeful wave of our mighty stream may take him.
(SL 124)

In the Illinois community of Oregon, Fuller's concerns for the settlers and their ability or inability to adapt to their resources shifts to the plight of women settlers who are particularly "unresponsive to the resources special to the West" (Chevigny, "Centrifugal Evolution" 179). Fuller's comments on women in Summer on the Lakes are especially remarkable and few critics have dealt with their impact. In an August 4 letter to Emerson, Fuller distinguishes foreign women from American:

These foreign women, however, I rejoice to see do not suffer as our Eastern women do; they have, for the most part, been brought up to work in the open air and have better constitutions.
(Letters, III 138)

Besides noting the difficulty of Eastern women's labors in the West, Fuller recognizes their lack of "resources for pleasure" caused by having a patriarchal culture forced upon them:

When they can leave the housework, they have not learnt to ride, to drive, to row, alone: Their culture has too generally been that given to women to make them "ornaments of society." They can dance, but not draw; talk French, but know nothing of the language of flowers; neither in childhood were allowed to cultivate them, lest they should tan their complexions. Accustomed to the pavement of Broadway, they dare not tread the wildwood paths for fear of rattlesnakes! (SL 62)

Fuller compared these women to their Indian counterparts:

Perhaps [Indian women] suffer less than their white sisters, who have more aspirations and refinement, with little power of self-sustenance. But their [the Indian women's] place is certainly lower, and their share of human inheritance certainly less. (SL 179)

Observing the problems caused by a culture ill-suited to the needs of women, Fuller hopes their daughters would discover the "resources that would fit them to enjoy and refine the western farmer's life" (SL 62). Fuller also challenges the "habits of thought acquired by their mothers," habits that preclude settler women from adjusting to their circumstances. "Everywhere the fatal spirit of imitation, of reference to European standards, penetrates, and threatens to blight whatever of original growth might adorn the soil" (SL 62). And fearing that the Eastern education these mothers want for their daughters will only compound the problem because it would "make them useless and unhappy at home," Fuller recommends schools "planned by persons of sufficient thought to meet the wants of the place and time" instead of schools "ill-suited to the daughter of an Illinois farmer, as satin shoes to climb the Indian mounds" (SL 63).

Fuller's challenging the white settlers' lack of progress toward "the American revolutionary ideal," her challenging their obligation to "the fatal spirit of imitation" has a base not only in William Ellery Channing's idea of self-culture but also Emerson's formulation of this and other Transcendental ideals; his essays "Self-Reliance" and "Circles" present much of the philosophy Fuller absorbs and applies to the condition of the

people of the West. In "Self-Reliance," Emerson criticizes the consistency that Fuller sees the settlers clinging to:

The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loth to disappoint them. . . . It seems to be a rule of wisdom never to rely on your memory alone, scarcely even in acts of pure memory, but to bring the past for judgment into the thousand-eyed present, and live ever new in a day. . . . A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. (Emerson 151-52)

And in "Circles" Emerson again proclaims the value of the present and new over the obligations and limitations of the past:

In nature every moment is new; the past is always swallowed and forgotten; the coming only is sacred. Nothing is secure but life, transition, the energizing spirit. . . . People wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them. (289)

In the same essay, Emerson claims that "the only sin is limitation," for limitation disturbs the flow of continuity. Fuller uses this same theory in Summer when she describes her party traveling over the open prairies of northern Illinois:

I say, that what is limitless is alone divine, that there was neither wall nor road in Eden, that those who walked there lost and found their way just as we did, and that all the gain from the Fall was that we had a wagon to ride in. (SL 65)

With this, Fuller takes Emerson's suggestion that in "transition" and limitlessness is the key to a new spiritual "order" and makes it relevant to the settlers and their environment. By putting American Transcendentalism into action, Fuller provides her social comments with a solid,

spiritual base. Early in her travels, Fuller trusted "by reverent faith to woo the mighty meaning of [emigration], perhaps to foresee the law by which a new order, a new poetry is to be invoked from this chaos . . ." (SL 28). While continual spiritual renewal is Emerson's stated goal, a people's spiritual and physical affinity unique to their rugged environment is Fuller's.

However, this would be a spiritual renewal, a "fantasy realm" (Kolodny 126), that only the men could come close to realizing. In a home that "seemed the very Eden that earth might still afford" (SL 122) (emphasis mine), Fuller saw an injured "master of the house" whose work was being "done by proxy" while his wife worked herself to exhaustion:

He looked as if he could sit there a great while patiently, and live on his own mind, biding his time; she, as if she could bear anything for affection's sake, but would feel the weight of each moment as it passed. (SL 123)

Seeing women like this struggling to overcome the hardships of their condition, Fuller realized it would take more than Transcendental idealism to help them. It would take the education and experience acquired by living a life of free choice, a life suited to one's environment; and Fuller would herself be the prime example of such a life. In Summer on the Lakes, not only do we see Fuller hiking trails, climbing bluffs, sitting with Indians in their lodges, and shooting the rapids, but we also witness her actively proposing more than Transcendental philosophy:

To a girl really skilled to make home beautiful and comfortable, with bodily strength to enjoy plenty of exercise, the woods, the streams, a few studies, music, and the sincere and familiar

intercourse, far more easily to be met here than elsewhere, would afford happiness enough. (SL 63)

Here Fuller reaches beyond the limitations of dogma and offers practical solutions to a defined social problem of Eastern women's maladjustment in the West.

Just as Woman in the Nineteenth Century would later "stand as a translation of transcendental idealism into the social and political realm and as an exemplary bridge between romantic philosophy and social reform" (Robinson 84), so too does Summer on the Lakes stand as a bridge between Fuller's transcendental visions and her desire to make these visions realities by offering advice for the education of pioneer girls and by encouraging social awareness in her readers. However, unlike Woman in the Nineteenth Century, Summer's plea for social change is less vociferous and more implicit because Summer is not a platform for a single cause but an outlet for a variety of educational vignettes and digressions meant to entertain as well as provoke the reader.

Just as provoking as her ideas on women in Summer on the Lakes is Fuller's concern for the Indians displaced by the advancing settlers. Fuller's first instinct is to view the Indians in Illinois and Wisconsin with a Transcendentalist's eye. Applying Emerson's philosophy of poetry to her perception of the Indians, and temporarily setting aside the degradation of the trampled race, Fuller believes "the Indian cannot be looked at truly except by a poetic eye" (SL 31); and with her poetic eye she seeks "what was majestic in the red man."

Fuller begins by representing the Indians, linked to their environment, in the light of a romantic Golden Age. Chevigny concludes that "Fuller appreciated the Indians' relation to nature more than she ever did the Transcendentalists'" ("Centrifugal Evolution" 186). Here this appreciation is evident:

The whole scene suggested to me a Greek splendor, a Greek sweetness, and I can believe that an Indian brave, accustomed to ramble in such paths, and be bathed by such sunbeams, might be mistaken for Apollo, as Apollo was for him by the West. (SL 53)

Describing some purple flowers at Kishwaukie, Fuller again links the Indian and his land to a grander past. "I think it springs from the blood of the Indians, as the hyacinth did from the blood of that of Apollo's darling" (SL 66). And of an ancient Indian village, Fuller writes, "How happy the Indians must have been here. . . . I do believe Rome and Florence are suburbs compared to this capital of nature's art" (53). Finally, pondering the Indians' loss while walking along Black Hawk's trail, she remarks: "How fair the scene through which it led! How could they let themselves be conquered, with such a country to fight for!" (50).

With this sense of loss, Fuller checks her idealism and recognizes that the Indians must also be viewed realistically if any justice is to be delivered to them. Embittered by the whites' refusal to offer the Indians a just inheritance of humanity, she declares: "I scarcely see how they can forbear to shoot the white man where he stands" (115). Romantic images turn to metaphors of anger and contempt: "Wherever the hog comes, the rattlesnake disappears. . . . Even so the white settler pursues the Indian, and is victor in the chase" (47).

Fuller also recognizes the irony of seeing "the first born of the soil" as savages and the whites as Christians:

Yes! slave-drivers and Indian traders are called Christians, and the Indian is to be deemed less like the Son of Mary than they! Wonderful is the deceit of man's heart! (185)

Of the Indians' cruel treatment of their enemies, such as "drinking their blood and eating their hearts," Fuller says:

. . . at a distant day, he will no doubt be considered as having acted the Roman or Carthaginian part of heroic and patriotic self-defense, according to the standard of right and motives prescribed by his religious faith and education.

But of the missionaries she writes:

Worst of all, when they invoke the holy power to mask their inequity. . . . Better their [the Indians'] own dog-feasts and bloody rites than such a mockery of that other faith. (184)

One of Fuller's most socially insightful passages "traces the logic of racist ideology" (Chevigny, "Centrifugal Evolution" 185). She recognizes "the aversion that the white man soon learns to feel for the Indian on whom he encroaches, the aversion of the injurer for him he has degraded" (SL 115). According to Chevigny, Fuller saw

how Christian ideology had legitimized the degradation of the Indian and the usurpation of his land by making the whites at once blind to the culture they were destroying and righteous about destroying it. ("Centrifugal Evolution" 185)

Ultimately, Fuller hopes a remnant of the Indian race might be preserved. With an oratorical enthusiasm that must be similar to her

popular Conversations, she delegates the responsibility of the Indians' condition to all Americans. And in so doing, Fuller boldly reveals how much closer she is getting to social activism and how distant she is getting from New England and its Transcendental cant:

Yet let every man look to himself how far this blood shall be required at his hand. Let the missionary, instead of preaching to the Indian, preach to the trader who ruins him. . . . Let every legislator take the subject to heart, and if he cannot undo the effects of past sin, try for that clear view and right sense that may save us from sinning still more deeply. And let every man and woman, in their private dealings with the subjugated race, avoid all share in embittering by insult or unfeeling prejudice, the captivity of Israel. (SL 235-36)

Finally, Fuller admits to feeling "acquainted with the soul of this race; I read its nobler thought in their defaced figures" (251). Once again linking the Indian to his native land, Fuller asserts that not appreciating the Indians' past precludes the appreciation of the land he occupied. "There was a greatness, unique and precious, which he who does not feel will never duly appreciate the majesty of nature in this American continent" (251). (While Fuller's meaning is clear, her grammar is confusing. But Buell states that Transcendental "highmindedness prevented [writers] from grappling with the technical problems of craftsmanship as effectively as they might have otherwise" (68). This appears to be the case here.)

Just as Fuller's encounters with the women of the West gave her the impetus to apply philosophical dogma to social activism, so does her contact with the Indians bring her closer to a world of action. But rather than belaboring her disappointment in her realization of America's

oppressive and materialistic destiny, Fuller offers humor throughout Summer on the Lakes and, as a result, reveals a seldom-mentioned characteristic of her literature.

C. Summer's Lighter Side

One of the greatest values of Summer on the Lakes is that it offers a glimpse of Fuller's subtle and often barbed humor. Observing a man spit into Niagara Falls after "thinking how he could best appropriate it to his own use," Fuller suggests an age "whose love of utility" prompted the people to use "the bodies of their dead parents in the fields to fertilize them" (SL 6). She facetiously adds: "But these will not, I hope, be seen on the historic page to be truly the age or truly the America."

Fuller performs a clever double-take when she reports about the "'guide to the falls'" who wears his title labeled on his hat. First she scoffs that "one might as soon think of asking for a gentleman usher to point out the moon." But she thinks again: "Yet why should we wonder at such, either, when we have Commentaries on Shakespeare, and Harmonies of the Gospel?" (SL 9, 10). How much Fuller agrees with these "Commentaries" and "Harmonies" is up to the reader, but it is the first statement that will relieve any doubt of her true attitude toward such aids to beauty, literature, and God.

One of the funniest scenes Fuller presents in Summer is from the night her party sleeps in a barroom. The humor presents American patriotism at "English" expense; and the episode can only be fully appreciated in its entirety.

A young lady . . . showed herself to be bathed in the Brittanic fluid [because she tried] accommodating herself to the indecorums of the scene. We ladies were to sleep in the bar-room, from which its drinking visitors could be ejected only at a late hour. The outer door had no fastening to prevent their return. However, our host kindly requested we would call him, if they did, as he had "conquered them for us," and would do so again. We had also rather hard couches; (mine was the supper table,) but we Yankees, born to rove, were altogether too much fatigued to stand upon trifles, and slept as sweetly as we would in the 'bigly bower' of any baroness. But I think England sat up all night, wrapped in her blanket shawl, and with a neat lace cap upon her head; so that she would have looked perfectly the lady, if anyone had come in; shuddering and listening. I know that she was very ill next day, for requital. She watched, as her parent country watches the seas, that nobody may do wrong in any case, and deserved to have met some interruption, she was so well prepared. However, there was none, other than the nearness from some twenty sets of powerful lungs, which would not leave the night to a deadly silence. (SL 41)

Often, Fuller's humor is just simple, quick-witted observation, like the "little boys [on the steamboat] persecuting everybody with their newspapers and pamphlets" (14), or the "ladies singing [on board showboats], (and if not well, there is room to keep out of the way)" (109).

Fuller's writing can also be playful, and this is probably most noticeable in the poem at the conclusion of Summer on the Lakes. In this poem Fuller capitalizes on an "American" idiosyncrasy of many readers, namely picking up a new book and opening it to the end first. And rather than the poem being delivered by Fuller, she allows the book to speak for itself. As for the reader the book was speaking to, Fuller's little joke was probably received with amusement and appreciation. The title of the poem states:

THE BOOK TO THE READER

Who Opens, As American Readers Often Do, At The End

With Doggerel Submission

On the surface the poem is about wild blackberry jam preserved by "your cousin" in the country; yet the jam is not recognized, appreciated, nor even fully tasted by the reader. Symbolically the jam is an analogy of Fuller's book, and, like the fruit, the material for the book "Is to be gathered in the open field."

Finally, Fuller excuses the questionable merits of her book, but still defends its privilege to entertain, inform, and simply exist. The poem concludes:

Thus, such a dish of homely sweets as these
In neither way may chance the taste to please

Yet try a little with the evening bread;
Bring a good needle for the spool of thread;
Take fact with fiction, silver with the lead,
And at the mint, you can get gold instead;
In fine, read me, even as you would be read.

With this quaint verse, Fuller allows Summer on the Lakes, this "dish of homely sweets," to leave the reader satisfied and smiling.

As Higginson recognizes in his biography of Fuller,

the best part of her intellect is action and . . . this was always her especial creed. . . . What she always most desired was not merely self-culture, but a career of mingled thought and action.
(6, 4)

Indeed, her feelings of uselessness, like her anxiety to find a "home" where her drive for self-culture would not be stifled, leads Fuller closer to a life of vibrant social activism.

What Fuller eventually gets out of her western travels is the drive to turn her needs for action and usefulness into reality. Her writing Summer on the Lakes would be the first major step toward this life of action and usefulness. And as a direct result of this book, opportunities opened up for Fuller; she would go from Cambridge to New York to the cities of Europe, actively serving the needs of the poor, the neglected, and the politically oppressed people of the world.

V. PREPARING SUMMER FOR PRINT

One of Fuller's first forms of action after her western journey was to disturb tradition by seeking and receiving permission to be the first woman allowed in the Harvard College Library where she researched material on the Indians of the Midwest. She was also busy rewriting the notes from the journal she kept on her travels, collecting and writing the poetry she wished to incorporate in her book, and refreshing her memories about the settlers. In between her work on Summer on the Lakes, Fuller worked as the Dial critic, prepared and conducted her Conversations, and socialized with her friends in Cambridge (Stern, The Life of Margaret Fuller 308). But for the eight months after her return from the West, Fuller would concentrate most of her efforts on Summer:

Every day, I rose and attended to many little calls which are always on me, and which have been more of late. Then, about eleven, I would sit down to write, at my window, close to which is the apple-tree, lately full of blossoms, and now of yellow birds. Opposite me was Del Sartó's Madonna; behind me Silenus, holding in his arms the infant Pan. I felt very content with my pen, my daily bouquet, and my yellow birds. About five I would go out and walk till dark; then would arrive my proofs, like crabbed old guardians, coming to tea every night. So passed each day. The 23rd of May, my birthday, about one o'clock, I wrote the last line of my little book; then I went to Mount Auburn and walked gently among the graves. (Memoirs 2:120)

At one time Fuller admitted that she doubted her ability to "play the artist," but this passage reveals Fuller confident and "content with my pen." This confidence is obvious, for Summer on the Lakes is one example of Fuller's writing at its best. In Summer, Fuller does not "palsy," the word she used to describe her other attempts at writing. However, the

writing of this book was not without difficulty. Higginson recalls how Fuller corrected

the press during much of the spring of 1844, when the proof-sheets came in every evening. "I expect it at night," she writes, "as one might some old guardian." During this period she had many sleepless nights, as appears by her diary, with such constant headaches that she chronicles not the days when she has them but when she is without them. One day at last she writes, quite exhausted: "I begin to be so tired of my book! It will be through next Thursday, but I'm afraid I shall feel no better then, because dissatisfied with this last part. I ought to rewrite the Indian chapter, were there but time! It will, I fear, seem desultory and ineffectual, when my materials are so rich, owre rich, perhaps, for my mind does not act on them enough to fuse them." (Higginson 194-95)

Fuller sold about seven hundred copies of Summer on the Lakes, "the whole edition of a new book at that day being usually five hundred or a thousand" (200). The "success" of Fuller's book reminded Higginson of Thoreau "carrying up to his garret, as unsold, seven hundred out of the thousand copies of his 'Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers.'" With this in mind, Higginson says "we may feel that Miss Fuller's little book of travels was successful, if it cost her nothing" (199).

Fuller's sole profit from Summer, besides Horace Greeley's offer to work for the New York Daily Tribune, was only "copies to give away" (199). In a May 22, 1845, letter to Emerson, Fuller writes:

Thirteen copies of "Summer on the Lakes" were sent to your address in Boston; five for you, four for Caroline [Sturgis], four to be sent to Sarah Clarke, through James, if you will take the trouble. (199)

And though Summer on the Lakes did not bring Fuller the finances she was hoping for, it was not money she was interested in. The success of Summer was

desirable not so much on account of present profit to be derived, as because it would give me advantage in making future bargains, and open the way to ransom more time for writing. (198)

With Greeley's offer, Fuller received her wish; she was on the way to a life of increasing social activism that had been so strongly prompted by her summer on the lakes.

VI. CONCLUSION

What started out for Margaret Fuller to be a western vacation outside the boundaries of New England quickly turned into the impetus which drove Fuller farther away from Transcendentalism's purer idealism and closer to the concrete realities of society, its problems, and solutions to those problems. Having witnessed the indignities suffered by pioneer women, immigrants, and displaced Indians, Fuller was able to successfully present this suffering subtly and unpretentiously.

In Summer on the Lakes, in 1843 Fuller offers such an interesting portrait of America in transition that it could satisfy almost any reader. The optimist can see a growing nation, the realist can see the losses the nation suffers as a result of this growth. Summer also offers the reader implicitly powerful digressions to accompany the explicitly entertaining main narrative.

But ultimately, Summer on the Lakes provides us with a superb example of Fuller in transition while she hones her literary talents to an intensity and discipline that caused Poe to proclaim the book "the most favorable estimate of Miss Fuller's genius" (Myerson, Critical Essays 36). Poe's estimate of Summer on the Lakes remains valid; practically nowhere else does Margaret Fuller present her ideas and experiences in such scope or with such controlled style. In one "little book," Fuller is the feminist, the Transcendentalist, the humanitarian, the teacher, the sightseer, the humorist, the story-teller, the poet, and the aspiring social activist. And with each persona, Fuller applies a literary style suited to her purpose.

Summer on the Lakes is a historical and literary work that is at once compelling and entertaining. And while Summer's digressions might be read as mere entertainment, they are more significantly compelling for their implicit, universal theme which unifies the book. This theme, that every man and woman should have the education and opportunity to satisfy his or her needs and desires regardless of race, color, or creed, is a theme that extends to the very roots of American democracy. And though Fuller's application of this theme to the lives of women, immigrants, and Indians may have gone unheeded for many years (in fact, in some cases it is unheeded still), one abiding value in Summer on the Lakes resides in its poetic presentations of variations of this American democratic theme. This was the theme that would be Fuller's catalyst into a world of significant action where she would defend the rights of women, support the rights of prisoners, help ex-convicts, examine the condition of the blind and the poor, and, finally, offer her services to the Italian Revolution. Margaret Fuller, who believed that "nothing but the truth will do" (Memoirs 1:303), honors this belief in Summer on the Lakes--her "little book" of a young and growing America.

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