criticism that has been written in the last fifty years —"irony," "ambiguity," "originality," "the poetic imagination," and so many others—were pioneered by the Romantics, as were modern hermeneutics, the insistence that poetic genres must be studied historically rather than as timeless givens, the insistence that poems must be considered as wholes rather than as anthologies of "beautiful passages," and so on. The infamous "unities" are as dead as doornails, and the buttons you see through the transparent ghosts of the New Criticism were made by the Romantics. But to demonstrate all this would require another long article. Suffice it to say, then, that if Greene "helplessly" asks me where I have been in the last fifty years, the answer is "not where he was"; and I hope I was in a place where I learned better manners.

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Margaret Fuller

To the Editor:

It is a pleasure for me to see the burgeoning interest in Margaret Fuller, especially in her masterpiece, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. In his essay "Margaret Fuller and the Transcendental Ethos: *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*" (*PMLA* 97[1982]:83–98), David M. Robinson acknowledges the obstacles faced by nineteenth-century women who sought self-actualization. His conclusion that *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* is a call for concerted social action is certainly valid.

There are, however, weaknesses in Robinson's essay that make it appear tentative. He cites Fuller's analogy between slavery and the woman's role as an example of her "striking rhetorical power" (91), apparently unaware that this metaphor had been a literary convention among feminists ever since Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published in 1792. Although Robinson's subject is Margaret Fuller and the transcendental ethos, any scholar analyzing Fuller's feminist treatise should be familiar with earlier feminist writers.

Moreover, a scholar needs to work with original manuscripts. The surviving manuscripts from which the *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* (1852) was compiled by its editors were mutilated, changed, censured. Ralph Waldo Emerson, the chief editor, created in the *Memoirs* a feminist archetype, an unpleasant, egotistic, emotional woman who, he wrote, "willingly" was "confined to the usual circles and methods of female talent" (*Memoirs* 1:322)—an obvious absurdity. Also implausible is Emerson's judgment, which Robinson quotes, that Fuller's pen was "a non-conductor." Robinson cites the *Memoirs* as his authority twenty times, even though Joseph Jay Deiss in *The Roman Years of Margaret Fuller* (1969) and I in *Margaret Fuller's* Woman in the Nineteenth Century*: A Literary Study of Form and Content, of Sources and Influence* (1980) depict the ways Emerson and other influential writers distorted Fuller's reputation. Although the *Memoirs* has been discredited as a source, it has followed Fuller like a judgmental nemesis.

Instead of noting this distortion, Robinson wonders why Fuller scholarship has stressed "her life over her work" (83). He overlooks the historical fact that patriarchal critics usually attacked a woman for her sexuality, her appearance, her personality, or her writing ability rather than deal directly with her ideas. Fuller's ideas were too great a threat to the patriarchal power structure that Emerson embraced. Since Robinson has chosen to devote much of his essay to the Fuller-Emerson relationship, he should develop his discussion to this logical conclusion.

In addition to Emerson's sexist bias, another reason for his denigration of Fuller was his strong ambivalent feelings for her. Robinson hedges on this issue, after quoting the journal passage in which Emerson delineates Fuller and his "cold-warm" conversations and admits he "sometimes" loves her. In "The Visit," one of his poems about Fuller, Emerson reiterates this theme: "If love his moment overstay / Hatred's swift repulsions play." Robinson concludes that their "ideal of friendship" was unrealizable and that ultimately it was more disappointing to Fuller than to Emerson. In an age that has no heroes and indeed lauds the antihero, it is strange that Robinson is loath to recognize that Emerson was strongly attracted to Fuller, especially since Emerson persisted in his attempts to see her long after she had become emotionally involved with other men. During the winter of 1847–48, when Emerson was in England and Paris, he wrote to her in Italy imploring her to join him in Paris and come home with him to Concord. At news of her death, he wrote several journal entries, saying in one, "I have lost in her my audience," and associating her with Cleopatra in another. In a state of outrage because, as he wrote Carlyle after her death, Ossoli had "taken her away" from him, he compiled the *Memoirs*. In his emotional state, Emerson lacked the necessary scholarly objectivity to assess Fuller as a writer.

Robinson's second ambivalent source that I question is Perry Miller's *Margaret Fuller: American Romantic*. In his introduction to this anthology,

Miller reveals his antifeminism by making fun of "the hyperbolically female intellectualism of the period, the slightest invocation of which invites our laughter," and asserts that Fuller was ridiculous and "monumentally homely."

I have long sought to encourage others to read Fuller's writing instead of using biased sources as authority for their studies. Fuller's writing style merits careful examination. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* is written in the transcendentalists' characteristic organic form, which, as a member of the club, she helped to shape. Her structural pattern is circular, soaring from the prosaic problems of women to the sublime world of the spirit. In conversational speech patterns, her subjective style unites her experience with that of all women. With remarkable erudition Fuller combed countless sources—history, mythology, poetry—for female archetypes and the feminine principle. Of all the feminist writing, Fuller's is the most spiritual. Through her wellspring of truth—the divine intuition—she makes her case that it is in the interest of men as well as of women that women be set free. Fuller's work is hortatory and based on her belief that principles of right and wrong do exist.

In essence what I am suggesting is that lack of objectivity in the past about Fuller's writing must be acknowledged directly. When the same attention is given to her masterpiece, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, that is given to other complex works of genius, the receptive reader is as inspired as were the early feminists who wrote that she had vindicated a woman's "right to think."

Marie Olesen Urbanski
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Mr. Robinson replies:

I appreciate Marie Olesen Urbanski's response and, like Urbanski, take pleasure in the growing recognition, long overdue, of Margaret Fuller. I am sure my essay would have benefited greatly if I had had access to her monograph while preparing my own work. While we do not agree in all respects, I think our areas of agreement far outweigh our points of difference. But let me take up those differences as she outlined them.

She is right to link Fuller's analogy between woman and slave to a convention in feminist discourse. Conventions, however, can sometimes be enlivened by historical circumstances, and this is what happened when Fuller used the analogy while the abolitionist movement was gaining momentum. My point was to call attention to Fuller's sense of the close relation between abolitionism and feminism and to her skillful direction of the moral fervor of abolitionism toward women's causes.

Urbanski also objects to my use of what she feels are biased sources—the Fuller *Memoirs* and Perry Miller's *Margaret Fuller: American Romantic*. These charges would be easier to respond to had she specified more fully which of the quotations from the *Memoirs* distort the truth, and how. In most of my quotations from the *Memoirs*, it is Fuller herself who speaks, and despite the untrustworthy editing, the *Memoirs* remains the best published source for many of her letters and journals. The one example that Urbanski specifies as biased—Emerson's remark that her pen was "a non-conductor"—I cite in order to refute, and I devote the fourth section of my essay largely to a discussion of the power of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Because the *Memoirs* is the most direct contemporary appraisal of Fuller by three influential transcendentalist friends, it would have been irresponsible of me not to have used it in an essay on Fuller's place in the transcendentalist movement. An edition of Fuller's letters by Robert Hudspeth, now in progress, will make a major contribution to transcendentalist historiography. I hope, as I am sure Urbanski does, that an edition of Fuller's surviving journals and papers will also be edited by modern standards. And before we condemn Perry Miller, we should remember that he begins his work by quoting Fuller's claim, "I now know all the people worth knowing in America, and I find no intellect comparable to my own," and then adds, "her observation may, in fact, be the simple truth" (ix–x).

Finally, there is the question of Emerson's "sexist bias" and his relation with Fuller. Emerson did have, in good measure, the limitations of his age, and to a modern reader, these limits show clearly enough. But he was by no means a hardened conservative on the issue of women's rights. "Let the laws be purged of every barbarous remainder, every barbarous impediment to women," he wrote in an 1855 address to a Woman's Rights Convention in Boston. Fuller's ideas were indeed a challenge to him, as Urbanski indicates, but he did respond genuinely, though not completely, to them. Moreover, he befriended Fuller, and he supported her and worked with her when she edited the *Dial*. I did not wish to imply that Emerson was not "strongly attracted to Fuller," and in fact I noted their genuine attempt at intimacy. But I will stand by my statement that the failure of the relation disappointed Fuller more than it did Emerson. This imbalance perhaps reflects more negatively on Emerson, whose coldness even he recognized. When their relation was perhaps at its height, Emerson