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An American in Rome during the Risorgimento: Reforms and Manifest Destiny in Margaret Fuller's Dispatches from Rome (1847–1849)

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Abstract

This essay aims to offer new insights into the controversial relationship between nineteenth-century women reformers and American exceptionalism by presenting the case of a pioneer of white American reformism, Margaret Fuller, and the dispatches she sent as a journalist from Italy during the 1848 revolutions and the establishment of the Roman Republic in 1849. It will illustrate how Fuller used the revolution in Italy to redefine "the contours of the nation and its shifting borders with the foreign," and to reaffirm the same exceptionalism underlying the creation of the American "Empire of Liberty."

Keywords: American Exceptionalism; Women Reformers; Nineteenth-century Reformism; Margaret Fuller; Italian Risorgimento.

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1 Introduction: American Expansionism, Manifest Destiny and Women Reformers

If, with the Declaration of Independence, the United States had affirmed the interdependence between republican freedom and empire, it was, in particular, between the end of the 1820s and the 1850s that, on the wave of "an exceptional self-representation — constantly invoked, solicited and affirmed,"[1] they strengthened their imperial vocation in an expansionist territorial project that culminated in the forced acquisition of new territories over most of the North American continent. The process of building a continental American empire which, on the one hand, resulted in a war of extermination against the Indians and, on the other, contributed to the expansion of the "peculiar institution" of slavery which the Declaration itself had so ably omitted, "in a dark and threatening silence about the violation of human rights perpetrated by the Americans themselves,"[2] fueled numerous debates within reform movements throughout the country, particularly in the Northern states.

Many intellectuals began to strongly criticize the concept of Manifest Destiny, the American expansionist political project carried out between the 1820s and the 1850s, on the basis of the supposed role assigned by providence to the United States, to lead the world towards a new and better future. By revealing to public opinion the wide fractures that, along the lines of race, class and gender, were lacerating American democracy, they contributed to a reconsideration of their alleged universalistic mission in the public debate. Nevertheless, in many other cases, as Anders Stephanson has pointed out, the criticism of expansionism was carried out "in the name of the very same destinarianism as that of the expansionists."[3] Indeed, the radical reform movements, which spoke out against the process of American territorial expansion, as that for the abolition of slavery, often showed ambiguous and conflicting positions on the existence of a universalistic mission that was specific to the United States. Because of their peculiar condition that has been identified as related to the "separate spheres," a particular analysis deserves the contribution of women reformers, as a part of these movements, to the debate on American exceptionalism during the first half of the nineteenth century. Between the 1820s and the 1830s, the rapid industrial growth and the simultaneous process of democratization that, under Jackson's presidency, expanded suffrage to include almost all white American men, accentuated the division between what historians have defined as "separate spheres" of activity between men and women, each characterized by its own specific gender-based role. On one hand, the public sphere, exclusively dominated by men and, on the other, the private and domestic sphere, assigned to women.[4] The relationship between women and the public sphere was, therefore, mediated by fathers and husbands, who acted as legal guardians because they were considered to be lacking legal capacity, and consisted of a virtual legal and political representation that showed all the ambiguity of their status.[5] However, combining what were considered to be the spheres of female responsibility, such as motherhood and care activities, with leading roles in philanthropic associations, starting from the Revolution,[6] white middle-class women expanded the sphere of domesticity to community activities

1. Mario Del Pero, *Libertà e impero. Gli Stati Uniti e il mondo, 1776–2016*. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2017, VIII, my translation.

2. Tiziano Bonazzi, ed., *La Dichiarazione d'indipendenza degli Stati Uniti d'America. Testo originale a fronte*. Venezia: Marsilio, 1999, 29, my translation.

3. Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995, 32.

4. See, among others, Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly*, 2 (1966): 151-74.

5. The legislative system of the time recognized the system of *coverture*, which in 1765 William Blackstone had illustrated in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, stating that, through marriage, all property, land, money, personal items and even the children of married women became exclusive property of their husbands: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and *cover*, she performs everything and is therefore called … a *feme-covert*." William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1893, 343.

6. For women's roles during the Revolution see, among others, Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988 and Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

and gradually began to act as public subjects.[7]

In this regard, as Amy Kaplan has highlighted, the historians who theorized the ideology of separate spheres had overlooked an important aspect of the analysis: the relationship between women, nationalism and U.S. imperialism, that is, what she has defined as "manifest domesticity."[8] According to Kaplan, the proponents of the separate spheres have ignored the enormous contribution that women, officially excluded from the public world, gave to the construction of a nationalist and exceptionalist narrative of American expansionism in the first half of the nineteenth century: "If domesticity plays a key role in imagining the nation as home, then women, positioned at the center of the home, play a major role in defining the contours of the nation and its shifting borders with the foreign."[9]

Based on the questions raised by Kaplan, this essay aims to offer new insights into the controversial relationship between nineteenth-century women reformers and American exceptionalism by presenting the case of a pioneer of white American reformism, Margaret Fuller, and the dispatches she sent as a journalist from Italy during the 1848 revolutions and the establishment of the Roman Republic in 1849. It will illustrate how Fuller used the revolution in Italy to redefine, to quote Kaplan one more time, "the contours of the nation and its shifting borders with the foreign,"[10] and to reaffirm the same exceptionalism underlying the creation of the American "Empire of Liberty." The focus will be on the imperial role that, according to Fuller, the United States should play in exporting their democratic model to Europe during the 1848 revolutions. Indeed, in her dispatches sent from Rome to the *New-York Tribune* during her stay in Italy, Fuller commented on the revolutionary events that were taking place in the capital of the Papal State, which contributed to influencing public opinion overseas on the need for the establishment of a liberal government in Rome and affirmed her firm belief in the possible export of the American political model across the Atlantic.[11]

2 Margaret Fuller's Dispatches from Rome: The Limits of the United States and American Exceptionalism

When in 1847 Margaret Fuller arrived in Italy as the first woman foreign correspondent for the American newspaper *New-York Tribune*, with the task of informing her fellow countrymen about the revolutionary fervor that was burning throughout the peninsula, she was already a well-known figure throughout the Old Continent. A republican, of libertarian spirit, and author of the first American feminist manifesto, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), she was part of a broad intellectual network that included, among its European exponents, leading figures such as Thomas Carlyle, Harriet Martineau, George Sand, Adam Mickiewicz and Giuseppe Mazzini.

Born in 1810 into a middle-class family in Cambridgeport near Boston, Massachusetts, Fuller experienced the contradictions of being a woman in nineteenth-century America, right from an early

7. See Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *The American Historical Review*, 3 (1984): 620-47; Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1999; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997; Nicole Tonkovich, *Domesticity with a Difference: The Nonfiction of Catharine Beecher, Sarah J. Hale, Fanny Fern, and Margaret Fuller*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997; Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France, and the United States, 1780–1860*. New York: Schocken Books, 1984; Raffaella Baritono, *Il sentimento delle libertà. La dichiarazione di Seneca Falls e il dibattito sui diritti delle donne negli Stati Uniti di metà Ottocento*, Torino: La Rosa, 2001.

8. Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature*, No More Separate Spheres!, 3 (1998): 582; see also Etsuko Taketani, *U.S. Women Writers and the Discourses of Colonialism, 1825–1861*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003; Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity, 1830–1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

9. Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," 582.

10. Ibid.

11. For a study on the relationship between the 1848 European revolutions and the concept of American exceptionalism see Timothy Mason Roberts, *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009.

age. Her father[12] was a republican lawyer, a representative in the United States Congress and a staunch supporter of the Enlightenment ideas coming from Europe. In the name of the universality of reason, he decided to give his daughter a type of education generally reserved for men, and this made her all the more aware of the social and political difficulties of "being of the softer sex."[13] However, when she was only twelve, he withdrew her from school because of her supposed "deficiencies in female propriety, & disposition."[14] Although Timothy Fuller was a firm supporter of women's education, he was convinced, in accordance with the political culture of his time, that the role that women should play in society should be functional to the role of mothers and wives. In 1836 Fuller began her professional career as a teacher[15] at Bronson Alcott's Temple School in Boston and realized that women's education could be the key to reform society in a more egalitarian way. Between 1839 and 1844 in Boston she held what she used to call "Conversations" for women: they were periodic meetings among white middle-class women aimed to compensate for their lack of access to higher education by promoting dialogue and free thinking. Between 1840 e 1842 she worked as the first editor of the transcendentalist journal *The Dial*,[16] before joining the *New-York Tribune*[17] in 1844 and later becoming its first female correspondent in Europe, visiting Italy between 1847 and 1849 during the first war of independence and the establishment of the Roman Republic. In 1845 she published what is considered to be the first American major women's rights book, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Through her life and her works, Fuller encouraged many reforms in society, including women's emancipation, the abolition of slavery, the consideration of Native Americans' rights, and moral and prison reforms.

In her dispatches sent from Italy to the magazine during her two-year stay, Fuller commented on the events taking place in the capital of the Papal States: the election of Pope Pius IX and the reforms he was implementing,[18] which were nourishing hopes for a change in liberal sense within the Papal States and then would disappoint them after the flight of the Pope to Gaeta, the popular uprising, until the subsequent establishment of the Roman Republic and its successive failure. Thanks also to her work as voluntary coordinator of the Fatebenefratelli Hospital, Fuller became a leading informer for the United States on the events of the so-called "Spring of the Nations" or "the Revolutions of 1848," nationalist revolutions[19] that had as their final objective the deposition of the monarchs of the Restoration and their replacement with liberal governments.

12. Timothy Fuller (1778-1835), republican and Unitarian, was part of the group of the Jeffersonian Democrats. During his political career, he stood up against slavery and advocated liberal stances. His commitment to provide his daughter with advanced intellectual training, traditionally reserved for men, derived from his faith in the universality of reason. According to Higginson, the education Margaret Fuller received was nothing peculiar for that time, "except that it was applied to a girl." Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli, American Men of Letters series*, ed. Charles Dudley Warner, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1884, 22.

13. Margaret Fuller, "Letter to unknown," November 3, 1835, in *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*, 6 vols, ed. Robert N. Hudspeth, Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1983–1984, vol. I: 1817–1838, 237.

14. Quoted in Meg McGavran Murray, *Margaret Fuller: Wandering Pilgrim*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008, 48.

15. Fuller became a teacher after her father's death, which occurred in 1835. It was this familiar loss that made her fully aware of all those legislative and cultural restrictions that prevented women from acting as heads of the household. She wrote in a letter: "If I were an eldest son, I could be guardian to my brothers and sister, administer the estate, and really become the head of my family." Fuller, "Letter to unknown," 237.

16. *The Dial, established in 1840, was the only journal published by New England Transcendentalists. For further information, see Joel Myerson,* The New England Transcendentalists and the Dial: A History of the Magazine and Its Contributors*. London-Toronto: Associated University Press, 1980.

17. *The New-York Tribune was a newspaper established in 1841 by Horace Greeley, a committed reformer and supporter of women's rights. For Fuller's dispatches, see Judith Mattson Bean and Joel Myerson, eds.,* Margaret Fuller, Critic: Writings from the New-York Tribune, 1844–1846. *New York: Columbia University Press, 2000; and Margaret Fuller,* These Sad but Glorious Days: Dispatches from Europe, 1846–1850*, ed. Larry J. Reynolds and Susan Belasco Smith, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

18. Pius IX had granted amnesty to all political prisoners in the Papal States, moderate freedom of the press and had also established the State Council, the Civic Guard and the Council of Ministers. See Giuseppe Monsagrati, "Pio IX, lo Stato della Chiesa e l'avvio delle riforme," *Atti del Convegno di Studi su "Le riforme del 1847 negli Stati italiani," Rassegna storica toscana*, 2 (1999).

19. According to Jonathan Sperber, the revolutions of 1848 were not only nationalist in character but were, at the beginning, peasant uprisings that later spread to the cities and the main urban centers. See Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions: 1848–1851*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

For Fuller, Italy provided a threefold opportunity to challenge the boundaries of the separate sphere and enter the political debate on American expansion: by accusing her country of betraying the revolutionary principles contained in the Declaration of Independence; by influencing American public opinion on the need for U.S. intervention in the Old Continent[20] and by reaffirming its leading and model role in the world. Her Italian revolutionary experience was necessary on the one hand to fully understand the limits of real America, which proclaimed itself as the land of freedom but, in fact, had not done enough in terms of reforms and had disappointed all democratic expectations. On the other, it served as a tool to draw the attention of her fellow citizens to the need for a recovery of the founding values of ideal America:

> Yet, oh Eagle, whose early flight showed this clear sight of the Sun, how often dost thou near the ground, how show the vulture in these later days! Thou were to be the advance-guard of Humanity, the herald of all Progress; how often has thou betrayed this high commission! Fain would the tongue in clear triumphant accents draw example from the story, to encourage the hearts of those who almost faint and die beneath the old oppressions. But we must stammer and blush when we speak of many things.[21]

A strong criticism that Fuller brought forward in her dispatches from Italy was directed at what she called "a boundless lust of gain" in her country.[22] In those years the United States were experiencing a real market economy, made possible by a rapid process of industrialization and the resulting transport revolution. In the Rome of Risorgimento, Fuller saw the presence of those values proper to the 1776 revolution, which democratic America had forgotten to embrace a capitalist spirit devoted to profit:

> My country is at present spoiled by prosperity, stupid with the lust of gain, soiled by crime in its willing perpetuation of Slavery, shamed by an unjust war, noble sentiment much forgotten even by individuals, the aims of politicians selfish or petty, the literature frivolous and venal. In Europe, amid the teachings of adversity a nobler spirit its struggling – a spirit which cheers and animates mine. I hear earnest words of pure faith and love. I see deeds of brotherhood. This is what makes *my* America. I do not deeply distrust my country. She is not dead, but in my time she sleepeth, and the spirit of our fathers flames no more, but lies hid beneath grown with gluttony and falsehood.[23]

The main criticism that Fuller brought forward in her dispatches from Italy was addressed to the emerging contradictions of U.S. democracy regarding the enjoyment of citizenship rights. While under Jackson's presidency suffrage had been progressively expanded to include all white males, the American republic had excluded from citizenship African Americans, women and Native Americans. Fuller then used her letters from Rome in an instrumental way to highlight the complex processes of inclusion and exclusion that were affecting the American democratic system, preventing it from becoming the leading country for all the peoples of the world. She pointed out that the arguments that were being put forward to justify slavery in her country were the same that were being called into question in Europe against the liberal uprisings of 1848 for the independence of Italy, Poland and Hungary. It is therefore clear that Fuller intended to have an impact on liberal public opinion overseas regarding the issue of slavery, the expansionist policy of her country and the consequent war with Mexico:

20. For an examination of the relationship between American intellectuals and the first Italian war of independence see Giuseppe Monsagrati, "Gli intellettuali americani e la rivoluzione romana del 1848-49," *Gli americani e la Repubblica romana del 1849*, ed. Sara Antonelli, Daniele Fiorentino and Giuseppe Monsagrati (Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2001, 21-52. See also Giuseppe Monsagrati, "Alle prese con la democrazia. Gran Bretagna e U.S.A. di fronte alla Repubblica romana," *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, Numero speciale per il 150° anniversario della Repubblica romana del 1849, ed. Ester Capuzzo, LXXXVI (1999) and two of Matteo Sanfilippo's essays, "La questione romana negli scritti dei viaggiatori nordamericani (1848-1870)," *Il Veltro*, XXXIII (1994): 185-195 and "Il risorgimento visto dal Canada e dagli Stati Uniti," *Il mito del Risorgimento nell'Italia Unita. Atti del Convegno Milano*, 9-12 November 1993, special issue of *Il Risorgimento*, XLVII (1995): 490-510.

21. Margaret Fuller, "Dispatch 18. New and Old World Democracy," undated, in Fuller, *These Sad But Glorious Days*, 165.

22. Fuller, "Dispatch 18," 165.

23. Margaret Fuller, "Dispatch 24, Noble Sentiment and the Loss of the Pope," April 19, 1848, in Fuller, *These Sad But Glorious Days*, 230.

> Then there is this horrible cancer of Slavery, and this wicked War, that has grown out of it. How dare I speak of these things here? I listen to the same arguments against the emancipation of Italy, that are used against the emancipation of our blacks; the same arguments in favor of the spoliation of Poland as for the conquest of Mexico. I found the cause of tyranny and wrong everywhere the same — and lo! my Country the darkest offender, because with the least excuse, foresworn to the high calling with which she was called, — no champion of the rights of men, but a robber and a jailer; the scourge hid behind her banner; her eyes fixed, not on the stars, but on the possessions of other men.[24]

In her *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* Fuller had affirmed what Paula Baker has defined "political domesticity," that is women's extended interpretation of domesticity to affirm their political roles.[25] According to the thinker, women as moral agents had at the same time the right and the duty to influence politics and, through the organization of meetings in the whole country, to take their stand against the American expansionistic project of slavery: "This cause is your own [...] If you have a power, it is a moral power. The films of interest are not so close around you as around men. If you will but think, you cannot fail to wish to save the country from this disgrace."[26] Fuller had pointed out that until then she had not felt responsible to enter the public debate. Her legitimacy to act by urging other women to challenge the conventional separation of spheres was given by the fact that the issue of slavery was a moral question, and could therefore be included within the scope of women's concern as moral agents:

> Might not we women do something in regard to this Texas Annexation project? I have never felt that I had any call to take part in public affairs before; but this is a great moral question, and we have an obvious right to express our convictions. I should like to convene meetings of the women everywhere and take our stand.[27]

Through her Italian experience, Fuller strengthened her anti-slavery faith, re-evaluated the objectives of the U.S. abolitionist movement and condemned the great burden of slavery and colonization towards the Southwest. Calling for women to respond to the annexation of Texas, she crossed the male-dominated public sphere and contributed to shape a new female public sphere, a grey-zone informed by feminine values and languages of domesticity that involved matters excluded from male party politics.

It was in Italy that Fuller fully understood that the arguments used to justify the deprivation of the fundamental rights of individuals were always the same, whether they concerned women, blacks or people who asserted their right to self-determination, and that tyranny was the same everywhere, and everywhere it used the same instruments of legitimation. The revolutionary events in Rome made Fuller aware that the struggle of the Italians for the creation of a united nation free from foreign interference was part of the same struggle for the emancipation of slaves and women in her country. Exhorting her compatriots to be worthy of the rights they had gained, by sending money and expressing support for the Italian cause, Fuller declared that through the Italian Revolution one could therefore appreciate

> the wonderful combination of events and influences that gave our independence so healthy a birth, and the almost miraculous merits of the men who tended its first motions ... No country has ever had such a good future; no other is so happy as to have a pattern of spotless worth which will remain in her latest day venerable as now.[28]

24. Fuller, "Dispatch 18," 165.

25. Baker, "The Domestication of Politics."

26. Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Larry J. Reynolds, New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., [1845] 1998, 98.

27. James Freeman Clarke, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William Henry Channing, eds., *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, 2 vols., Boston: Phillips, Sampson, 1852, vol. II, 141.

28. Margaret Fuller, "Dispatch 29. Kings, Republicans, and American Artist," March 20, 1849, in Fuller, *These Sad But Glorious Days*, 269.

Bringing with her from America her Enlightenment and liberal education, and her ability to read and interpret the constitutive tensions of the Risorgimento era, Fuller contributed to raising awareness in U.S. public opinion of the need for an American stand on the Italian revolutionary shift and for the establishment of a liberal government in Rome. As early as 1847, at the time of the enthusiasm for the liberal reforms of Pope Pius IX, Fuller's political analyses aroused the minds of American citizens, who expressed their support for the Pope's liberal agenda in all the country's major cities. Therefore, it is possible to consider her journalistic contributions as the engine of that support that the American population gradually showed towards the events taking place in the Peninsula, an enthusiasm, as Howard R. Marraro has shown in his essay on American public opinion and the Italian Risorgimento, for the first time not confined to the most radical intellectual circles but extended to a considerable part of the population of the big cities.[29] Indeed, already in the first dispatch sent from Rome on October 18, 1847, Fuller had suggested, referring to the origins of the foundation of the United States, the existence of American citizens' moral responsibility in supporting the liberation of Italy, America's sister nation, from the Austrian invaders:

> I earnestly hope some expression of sympathy from my country toward Italy. Take a good chance and do something; you have shown much good feeling toward the Old World in its physical difficulties — you ought to do still more in its spiritual endeavor. This cause is OURS, above all others; we ought to show that we feel it to be so. At present there is no likelihood of war, but in case of it I trust the United States would not fail in some noble token of sympathy toward this country, The Soul of our Nation need not wait for its Government; these things are better done by the effort of individuals … Please think of this, some of my friends, who still care for the Eagle, the 4th July, and the old cries of Hope and Honor … Ah! America, with all thy rich boons, thou hast a heavy account to render for the talent given; see in every way that thou be not found wanting.[30]

However, Fuller had not yet directly invoked the need for Washington to take a position, being well aware of the delicate balance that in those years supported American foreign policy and that induced Polk's administration to procrastinate on the appointment of an ambassador to be sent to Rome. As Daniele Fiorentino put it, if on the one hand there was concern about opposing the local Catholic electorate by breaking relations with the Holy See, on the other hand the commitment in the war with Mexico and the expansion towards the West were balanced by the doctrine of non-interference previously formulated by President James Monroe in 1823, on the basis of which the United States had declared their neutrality towards the affairs of the Old Continent. A cautious and prudent attitude, therefore, seemed necessary to the administration in office to avoid drawing Europe's attention to its expansionistic policy on the American continent, which would soon end with the defeat of Mexico and the annexation of Southwest territories.[31]

When, on December 2, 1848, Fuller addressed the U.S. government directly, explicitly asking for "a good Ambassador,"[32] she was not proposing a radical change of direction with respect to the principle of non-interference, but rather a gradual taking of position on what appeared to her to be a necessary renewal of the values contained in the Declaration of Independence of 1776:

29. Howard R. Marraro, *American Public Opinion on the Unification of Italy, 1846–1861*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.

30. Fuller, "Dispatch 17," 160-61.

31. Daniele Fiorentino, "Il governo degli Stati Uniti e la Repubblica romana del 1849," ed. Sara Antonelli, Daniele Fiorentino and Giuseppe Monsagrati, *Gli americani e la Repubblica romana del 1849*, 89-130. For an overview of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Roman Republic see also, by the same author, the chapter "Il Quarantotto, la Repubblica romana e gli Stati Uniti," *Gli Stati Uniti e il Risorgimento d'Italia, 1848–1901*, ed. Daniele Fiorentino (Roma: Gangemi, 2013); Giorgio Spini's essay, "Le relazioni politiche fra l'Italia e gli Stati Uniti durante il Risorgimento e la guerra civile," *Italia e Stati Uniti nell'età del Risorgimento e della guerra civile. Atti del II Symposium di Studi Americani*, Florence, 27-29 May 1966, Firenze: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1969, 121-85, and Howard R. Marraro, *Relazioni fra l'Italia e gli Stati Uniti*. Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1954.

32. Margaret Fuller, "Dispatch 26. Revolution in Rome," December 2, 1848, in Fuller, *These Sad But Glorious Days*, 245.

> It was the spirit of true religion — such, my Country; as welling freshly from some great hearts in thy early hours, won for thee all of value that thou canst call thy own, whose ground-work is the assertion, still sublime though thou hast not been true to it, that all man have equal rights, and that these are *birth*-rights, derived from God alone.[33]

According to Fuller, the Declaration of Independence of 1776, defined as the "statement of the rights, the inborn rights of men" that, coming to light after a struggle that freed America from "what was foreign" and that "gave the nation a glorious start for a worthy goal," "leaves nothing to be desired," if correctly interpreted and applied.[34] Already the pages of her *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* had revealed her firm belief in the absolute goodness of the principles contained in the Declaration, which a few years earlier she had defined as "a golden certainty wherewith to encourage the good, to shame the bad,"[35] and therefore of the American political model and its possible export across the Atlantic. Just as the United States had managed to achieve independence, so its task was to free all its members and all oppressed peoples of the world from subjection. Also between 1845 and 1846, in other articles published in the *New York Tribune*, Fuller had reiterated that the moral responsibility of the United States went necessarily beyond their national borders, describing a glorious future in which "our country will play a ruling part" because "her Eagle will lead the van:"[36]

> The whole history of its discovery and early progress indicates too clearly the purposes of Heaven within regard to it … We too [like the Chosen People of the elder day] have been chosen, and plain indications been given, by a wonderful conjunction of auspicious influences, that the ark of human hopes has been placed for the present in our charge.[37]

In Rome, Fuller depicted America as a country "fated to a grand, independent existence,"[38] guardian of the principles of freedom and equality, chosen by God as the guide of peoples and the partner of all nations that are struggling to emancipate themselves from foreign interference. In this way she welcomed the idea of Manifest Destiny,[39] promoted by the journalist John O' Sullivan and embraced by the Polk administration, according to which the United States has been called by God to unify the entire North American continent under their own flag, as heralds of democracy and progress, and to export their political model throughout the world. Even the last dispatch sent by Fuller before she moved to Italy was imbued with the same rhetoric about America's divine mission in human history:

> I go to behold the wonders of art, and the temples of old religion. But I shall see no forms of beauty and majesty beyond what my country is capable of producing in myriad variety, if she has but the soul to will it; no temple to compare with what she might erect in the ages, if the catchword of the time, a sense of divine order, should become no more a mere word of form, but a deeply-rooted and pregnant idea in her life.[40]

It is for this reason that, when Rome experienced revolutionary fervor and the Republic was established, Fuller used the pages of the *New-York Tribune* to urge the United States to establish diplomatic relations with the new government, send military aid and thus fulfill their role as the leader for all humankind, building on the revolutionary experience of less than a century earlier:

33. Fuller, "Dispatch 17," 158-59.

34. Fuller, "Dispatch 18," 164.

35. Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 13. "It is inevitable that an external freedom, an independence of the encroachments of other men, such as has been achieved for the nation, should be so also for every member of it." Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 14.

36. Margaret Fuller, "First of January, 1846," *New-York Tribune*, *Margaret Fuller, Critic: Writings from the New-York Tribune*, 1844-1846, eds. Judith Mattson Bean and Joel Myerson, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, 332.

37. Margaret Fuller, "New Year's Day," *New-York Tribune*, January 1, 1845, in Fuller, *Critic*, 16-7.

38. Fuller, "Dispatch 18," 162.

39. See the aforementioned Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny*.

40. Margaret Fuller, "Farewell," *New-York Tribune*, August 1, 1846.

> How I wish my country would show some noble sympathy when an experience so like her own is going on. Politically she cannot interfere; but formerly when Greece and Poland were struggling, they were at least aided by private contributions … It would make me proud to have my country show a religious faith in the progress of ideas, and make some small sacrifice of its own great resources in aid of a sister cause, now.[41]

The U.S. government should support the Italian republican project more than any other, because, together with Italy, both are part of a common cause for liberation. On May 27, 1849, Fuller argued in this regard:

> Now, it seems to me the only dignified ground for our Government, the only legitimate ground for any Republican Government, is to recognize for any nation the Government chosen by itself … Some of the lowest people have asked me, 'Is it not true that your country had a war to become free?' — 'Yes.' 'The why do they not feel for us?' Yet even now it is not too late. If America would only hail triumphant, if she would not sustain injured Rome, that would be something … I was born in America, Christianized by the Puritans — America, freed by eight years' patient suffering, poverty and struggle — America, so cheered in dark days by one spark of sympathy from a foreign shore.[42]

Only by supporting the new Republican government in Italy could the United States put into practice the principles contained in the Declaration of Independence, implement new political and social reforms that were inclusive and truly egalitarian, and thus, become by divine will the empire of freedom and model for all countries in the world.

3 Conclusion

The dispatches sent by Margaret Fuller from Italy to the *New-York Tribune* not only show the connection that arose between the American reform movements, in particular the abolitionist and the women's rights movement, and those of national liberation in Europe, and are, therefore, relevant indicators for studying the global circulation of radical ideas between the two sides of the Atlantic. However, they can also be useful tools for understanding the ideological influences that European revolutionary experiences exerted on American political culture in the mid-nineteenth century and on the political thought of its protagonists. On the one hand, the European revolutions offered women reformers like Fuller a safe place where, as moral agents, to cross the boundaries between the separate spheres, express their criticism towards their country's expansionistic project, and show the betrayal of the promises of their own Revolution. On the other hand, the "Spring of the Nations" served them to reflect on the existence of a divine mission of the United States towards the rest of the world, contributing to the strengthening of the same idea of Manifest Destiny supported by the federal government.

Indeed, through Fuller's letters sent to the *New-York Tribune*, Americans were able to see in the Italian events the rekindling of the same revolutionary spark that, less than a century earlier, had allowed the United States to become a free nation, independent of British control and were, therefore, led to face their own political and social identity: "The American in Europe, if a thinking mind, can only become more American."[43] Therefore Fuller, acting as a moral agent, used Europe as a mirror through which to read the constitutive tensions of the American democratic era and interpret their contradictions, to reflect on the founding values of the nation in order to recover those ideal principles of freedom and equality that would make it possible for America to become the bulwark of democracy on a global level.

41. Margaret Fuller, "Dispatch 28. The Uncertain Future," February 20, 1848, in Fuller, *These Sad But Glorious Days*, 259.

42. Margaret Fuller, "Dispatch 31. Between the Heaves of Storm," May 27, 1849, in Fuller, *These Sad But Glorious Days*, 283-284.

43. Margaret Fuller, "Dispatch 18," 161.

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