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Successful Against All Odds? – Margaret Fuller: The Self-Made Woman in the Nineteenth Century

Margaret Fuller was an American philosopher, writer, journalist and one of the first gender theorists. The article examines Fuller's work and life in the context of 19th century American culture and social determinants influencing women's lives. From a very early age, Fuller perceived her role in society different from the role designed for her as a biological girl by the cultural model of the times she lived in. The article focuses on Fuller's achievements in the context of the self-made man/woman concept.

Key words: Margaret Fuller, self-made man, self-made woman, Benjamin Franklin, Transcendentalism, 19th century America, concept of success

Do not follow where the path may lead.
Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

A quote attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson

One of the key concepts that formed the basis of American exceptionalism and American foundational mythology in the 18th century, apart from religious predestination, political liberty and democracy, was the concept of success. The concept has its roots in Protestantism. Calvinists who "believed that each person had a calling, which entitled fulfilling one's duty to God through day-to-day work in disciplined, rational labor. (…) Salvation entailed rigorous self-discipline, the rational application of one's labor" (Conley 623–624). However, salvation was given only to some, chosen by God and success was considered as one of God's signs. Being successful meant self-disciplined, simple life, concentrated on constant self-improvement and the development of one's character and talents. As a result of these efforts one could get social respect and material prosperity, but according to Calvinist teaching, a rich

person should not be ostentatious in consuming their wealth, should be rich but should not enjoy their success, should seek profit but at the same time be modest, hard-working in order to fulfil the calling. A classic narrative describing American success is the one enclosed in the concept of the self-made man[1] based on the belief that success depends on the determination and dedication of individuals and their hard work. It does not matter which class you come from. If you are working hard enough, you have the chance to achieve fulfillment, prosperity and social respect.

On the one hand, the concept of the self-made man has often been associated with the illusion of a classless society, on the other hand, according to Heike Paul "the mirage of classlessness is often connected with the belief that most Americans belong to the middle class" (368), and are white men. Whereas people of different skin color or women were not entitled to build their successful life based on the same formula. The concept of the self-made man referred to individualism and neither people of different race nor women were perceived and defined by the society as independent individuals and were not expected to follow the model of success designed for white men. As a matter of fact, the status of women in antebellum America also had a religious background. Puritans, formed by Calvinism professed the vision of the world in which women were subjected to men. Governor John Winthrop, the leading figure in founding the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630 claimed: "The women's own choice makes such a man her husband; yet being so chosen, he is her lord, and she is to subject to him, yet in a way of liberty, not of bondage; and a true wife accounts her subjection her honor and freedom…" (Winthrop 134). This vision made the concept of individualism linked to gender, and as a result, as Linda K. Kerber claims "most formulations of individualism in America have made the implicit assumption that the individual was a male" (Kerber 201).

One of the greatest Americans, Benjamin Franklin became an archetype of such an individual, a white man, who thanks to his strong will, hard work and constant self-improvement achieves great social and economic success. His story in a more trivialized and simplified version laid the foundation of one of the most powerful American mythical narratives – from rags to riches, telling the story of a young, poor but hardworking man who due to his determination becomes rich and successful. One of the crucial elements of the self-made man narrative appears in Franklin's biography and that it is some kind of disadvantage the man has to overcome. Being disadvantaged is a crucial condition in the whole self-made man narrative. Benjamin Franklin was a white man but he came from a poor family born as the 10th of 17 sons of a soap and candle maker. By the time he was 12 years old, he was working as a printer for his elder brother James soon becoming a popular columnist writing under a female pseudonym[2]. As a very young man, Ben Franklin established his own printing business in Philadelphia and ran very influential papers in the American colonies. He was also active in public and political life and through his papers shaped the public opinion, himself becoming one of the most important advocates

[1] The term credited to Henry Clay who in 1832 wrote: "In Kentucky, almost every manufactory known to me is in the hands of enterprising self-made men, who have whatever wealth they possess by patient and diligent labor." (Heike 369).

[2] Due to the conflict with his brother young Ben had to hide the authorship of his texts and published them under the name of Silence Dogood.

of American independence. His *Autobiography*, which was published posthumously in 1793 and quickly turned into a bestseller, narrates the story of his success, his rise from a poor son of a candle maker to one of the most eminent and respected citizens in the country. Throughout his story Franklin reminds his readers of how resourceful, self-reliant and hard-working he was. He wrote a lot about self-education and constant self-perfection, providing guidelines to his readers on how to be capable of becoming a better man each day, and how to achieve the perfection of small things. Franklin with his self-promoting life story, aimed at the audience of simple people and provided them with a model of self-development and life narrative which faced the challenges of a new life in a new country. "The new world of America was a land of opportunities, and Franklin demonstrated in his life story how they might be met through diligence and wise management" (Leary vii). Despite his poor background, Ben Franklin managed to climb to the top on the social and economic ladder. His strong character, hard work and individual freedom for the self-development enabled him to become a fulfilled, successful and rich man.

The economic success was an important part of the self-made man concept in this most popular version which was rooted in Franklin's figure and the story of his life. As Paul Heike observes, the term of the self-made man can "be considered as yet another neologism of the early republic that speaks to specifically US-American cultural and economic patterns and is deeply intertwined with various aspects of American exceptionalism" (369). The concept of self-made manhood became the key narrative in describing the lives of many important and famous Americans. American Romanticism, and especially Transcendentalist writers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau interpreted self-made manhood in a fuller, more complex way. They associated "it to an inner-directed way of life rather than to notions of material success and social permeability. Both writers thus critically comment on Franklin's success credo by providing a decidedly anti-materialistic and spiritual perspective on self- culture and self-reliance" (Heike 381). They both emphasized, inspired by European Romanticism, the importance of spiritual and moral development. In his famous essay "Self-Reliance" (1841) Emerson argued that neither economic self-sufficiency nor free political judgment define and create the self-made manhood and one's individualism. The true individualism and full self-reliance emerges out of the loss of the self into something greater, something more spiritual, ideal and divine. In order to become truly autonomous an individual should avoid conformity, socially recommended modes of development and instead should rely on his instincts, aptitudes, ideas and spirituality. Only rejection of social conventions and the courage to build one's life despite social, political and economic constraints and constant development of one's personality can give meaning to life and make it fulfilled and really successful (Emerson, *Self-reliance*… 19–38).

Margaret Fuller, American philosopher, writer, journalist and one of the first gender theorists proved with her life that despite the circumstances very unfriendly to women who in 19th century America were not entitled by social and cultural norms to be independent individuals, achieved "almost inconceivable success, with remarkable poise" (Marshall xx).

"From a very early age I have felt that I was not born to the common womanly lot. I knew I should never find a being who could keep the key of my character; that there would be none on whom I could always lean, from whom I could always learn;

that I should be a pilgrim and sojourner on earth, (…)" (Fuller, *Memoirs* 66) – wrote Margaret Fuller to her friend just before her 30th birthday. These words clearly show Margaret's self-awareness of her uniqueness, extraordinary capabilities, talents and special destiny. In fact, even as a little girl Margaret knew that she was not like other little girls, and therefore she perceived her role in society and her future in very different categories, different from those designed for her as a biological girl by the cultural model of the era she lived in. And the era was very unfavorable to women especially those who were ambitious and expected more from their lives than the society they lived in designed for them. From a very early age Margaret Fuller knew that hard work and constant self-development would lead her to become someone extraordinary, someone who can change the world.

Margaret Fuller was born on May 23, 1810 as Sarah Margaret Fuller in Cambridgeport, Massachusetts, to Timothy Fuller, a lawyer and congressman and Margaret Crane Fuller. From the early years she was educated by her father, a Harvard graduate who knew the value of education and hard work. He was a bit disappointed that his first child was not a boy but still decided to focus his ambitions on Margaret and designed a 'male'education program for her, forcing her to study very hard. In her memoirs Margaret writes about the headaches she suffered from a very early childhood and she claimed the pains were caused by brain overload.

"When Margaret was only six her father started her on Latin. His ambition was to bring his daughter 'as near to perfection as possible giving her education severe though kind" (Marshall 5). At the age of seven her mind was occupied by 'music, art, chronology' (Marshall 5). No doubt Margaret was very talented, learned quickly, had an excellent memory and an extraordinary talent for languages. Apart from homeschooling conducted and executed by her father, at the age of nine Margaret began her formal education at the Port School in Cambridgeport and then attended the elitist Dr. Park's Boston Lyceum. In 1824, she was sent to Miss Prescott's *Young Ladies*' Seminary in Groton (Margaret Fuller Chronology). In one of her letters to a friend she describes her day, she is 15 years old then:

> You keep me to my promise of giving you some sketch of my pursuits. I rise a little before five, walk an hour, and then practice on the piano, till seven, when we breakfast. Next I read French,--Sismondi's Literature of the South of Europe,--till eight, then two or three lectures in Brown's Philosophy. About half-past nine I go to Mr. Perkins's school and study Greek till twelve, when, the school being dismissed, I recite, go home, and practice again till dinner, at two. Sometimes, if the conversation is very agreeable, I lounge for half an hour over the dessert, though rarely so lavish of time. Then, when I can, I read two hours in Italian, but I am often interrupted. At six, I walk, or take a drive. Before going to bed, I play or sing, for half an hour or so, to make all sleepy, and, about eleven, retire to write a little while in my journal, exercises on what I have read, or a series of characteristics which I am filling up according to advice. Thus, you see, I am learning Greek, and making acquaintance with metaphysics, and French and Italian literature (Fuller, *Memoirs* 52–53).

She works so hard every day having in mind her father's words: "To excel in all things should be your constant aim – mediocrity is obscurity" (Marshall 6). These words shaped Fuller's life, making it one of the most remarkable narratives implementing both the traditional religious principles and fashionable romantic scenario for a fully satisfying, valuable and successful life of an individual, despite the fact

that the individual was a woman. Every decision Fuller made in her life was made to confirm her exceptionality, uniqueness and strong personality, which did not follow the beaten paths but set new trails.

Therefore, Margaret Fuller's success, a result of her hard work, constant education and self-development in the areas of the activities which in the first half of the 19th century were reserved for men, has a pioneering dimension. We have to remember that: "Like most women of her day, Fuller grew up in the world in which men and women occupied separate spheres. Three of her five surviving brothers graduated from Harvard, an educational resource not open to her. With the exception of Lloyd, who was mentally handicapped, all of her brothers pursued careers outside of the home – as teachers, a businessman, and a lawyer. (…) In contrast, Margaret – the oldest of seven surviving children – became expert at sewing, housework and child care. Especially after her father was elected to Congress when she was seven, she was expected to play a central role to the daily management of her family" (Steele xi). However, unlike other women of her class and generation Margaret Fuller managed to develop "the ability to balance the demands of domesticity against a professional accomplishment ordinarily expected of men" (Steele xi) and ironically only these achievements: a positions of successful editor, writer, journalist, war correspondent and philosopher made her successful and immortal. In Fuller's whole life traditional domesticity – the women's domain, coexisted with the men's world in which she was not only a pioneer, but a successful pioneer who was much ahead of the outstanding male personalities of her times. It was neither Emerson nor Hawthorne but Margaret Fuller who earned the reputation of the best-read person in New England. It was Fuller, not Poe, who was considered to be the best American literary critic of the era. It is important to realize that this model of a woman's success is still in force in our day and age, and despite the passage of nearly two centuries, women who are considered as successful are those who manage to combine full professionalism with the domestic duties of a daughter, sister, mother or wife. Describing the successful aspects of Fuller's activities we will concentrate exclusively on her professional accomplishments in men's territory which she entered with gusto and on which she wanted to feel like on her own. "When I write, it is into another world, not a better one perhaps, but one with very dissimilar habits of thought to this where I am domesticated." wrote Margaret Fuller in one of her letters of 1840 (Fuller, *The Letters* 125).

As a 20-year-old lady she started her professional career, she became a teacher of Latin, French and German in the experimental Temple School in Boston. Soon she also became one of the most important members and the so-called spiritual muse of the Transcendental Club[3] founded by Ralph Waldo Emerson. At Emerson's invitation Fuller had begun attending meetings of the Club in 1838. Emerson writes that he met Fuller in the winter of 1835–36 through Harriet Martineau. He recalls "that Margaret made a disagreeable first impression on most persons, including those who became afterwards her best friends, to such an extreme that they did not wish to be in the same room with her. This was partly the effect of her manners, which

[3] Transcendental Club, also known as Hedge's Club was established in 1836 by New England intellectuals: Frederic Henry Hedge, Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Ripley, George Putnam, which gave rise to Transcendentalism.

expressed an overweening sense of power, and slight esteem of others, and partly the prejudice of her fame. She had a dangerous reputation for satire, in addition to her great scholarship. The men thought she carried too many guns, and the women did not like one who despised them" (Fuller, *Memoirs* 140–141). This quote clearly shows what position Margaret, then in her twenties, held in this most elitist society of New England. Her reputation of an outstanding mind, almost a genius, assured her the respect of both women and men. Fuller became fascinated with Emerson especially with his theory of 'self-reliance' which gave her an inspiration towards building her independence. At that time she was very much interested in German literature, especially Goethe which resulted in the publication of Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe. Fuller's friendships with Emerson, Thoreau, Amos Bronson Alcott and other outspoken dissidents of Boston and Concord made Fuller one of the most influential personalities of her times. She would spend weeks visiting Emerson's home, teaching him German and holding philosophical debates.

The position she reached and the self-reliance she achieved encouraged her to go further. In the fall of 1839, she initiated a series of seminars for Boston elite women, which she called 'Conversations'. It was an innovative, experimental form of alternative education "designed to encourage women in self-expression and independent thinking" (Von Mehren 114). The participants held discussions on philosophy and literature not about etiquette and needlework and were encouraged to express their views and take part in discussions. For Fuller the classes of 'Conversations' were a source of financial support. The participants paid a significant amount of money[4] for the opportunity to listen to Margaret's talks and to be allowed to express themselves on topics not included in traditional women's curriculum. In this pioneering and successful enterprise Fuller proved that women's minds are as sharp and open as men's and that philosophy, history and abstract thinking can also be their domain.

In autumn 1839 Emerson offered Fuller a very honorable but completely unprofitable job of editor-in-chief of the first periodical publishing texts of the Transcendentalists, whose articles were refused for publication by influential journals such as e.g. *The North American Review*. *The Dial* published by the members of the Transcendental Club, was planned as a platform of a new thought and new spirit, a revolutionary publication that would bring new quality to the readers. In one of the letters to Margaret Fuller, Emerson introduced his idealistic vision of the journal: "I wish we might make a Journal so broad & great in its survey that it should lead the opinion of this generation on every great interest & read the law on property, government, education, as well as on art, letters, & religion. A great Journal people must read. And it does not seem worth our while to work with any other than sovereign aims. So I wish we might court some of the good fanatics and publish chapters on every head in the whole Art of Living (…)" (Emerson, *Emerson's Prose…* 549). The beginnings of *The Dial* were difficult and after all, due to the very modern, too progressive content of the journal the Transcendentalists managed to

[4] Fuller charged $10 for the first series of her energetic two-hour sessions, making about $200 in the first week. The amount doubled in the second season as attendance grew. As a result, Fuller was able to make as much money as she earned as a full-time teacher in Providence schools. She supported herself in this fashion for five years (Von Mehren 118).

keep it in publication only until 1844. Fuller as the first editor-in-chief, despite many controversies and obstacles she had to face, succeeded in establishing the reputation and recognizability of the legendary journal. She published some of her essays and criticism in *The Dial* and almost all of them were widely discussed and praised. This includes Fuller's most important text, which according to Megan Marshall was the magazine's "most enduring contribution to American thought" (Marshall 210).

In July 1843 Fuller published "The Great Lawsuit. Man versus Men. Woman versus Women", an essay which was a harbinger of her later expanded book titled *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* published in 1845. Fuller's book presented the first in America analysis of women's role in history and society and advocated an idea considered very radical at that time – women's equality. Her most radical concept of civic androgyny, understood as the equality of the sexes is based on the conviction that "men and women possess both masculine and feminine traits" (Steele xii). She claims that both men and women are "as children of one spirit, perpetual learners of the word and doers thereof, not hearers only" (Fuller, *Woman…* 107). According to Fuller: "Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another. Fluid hardens to solid, solid rushes to fluid. There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman" (Fuller, *Woman…* 108). This very innovative and radical notion of bigender humanity was inspired by 'hermetic thought from the Neo-Platonists to Swedenborg, eventually flowing into early German as well as later French social Romanticism. (…) However, no American writer had ever exploited the idea, and certainly, not as German and French Romantics often did, as an argument for women's rights" (Capper 118). Fuller questioned the concept of separate spheres, claiming that the soul is sexless and humanity means masculine and feminine mutually intertwined and complementary. "By Man I mean both man and woman; these are the two halves of one thought. I lay no special stress on the welfare of either. I believe that the development of the one cannot be effected without that of the other. My highest wish is that this truth should be distinctly and rationally apprehended, and the conditions of life and freedom recognized as the same for the daughters and the sons of time; twin exponents of a divine thought" (Fuller, *Woman…* 1845: vi). Following the thought of European Romanticism Fuller claimed that the androgynous personality was an ideal being, able to live in unity and harmony differently than the gender-typified individuals. Women with male characteristics are sensitive and understanding, but also strong and independent, which results in greater self-esteem and better coping with everyday life situations. On the other hand, men who are independent and self-reliant, but have considerable layers of sensitivity, are better perceived by society than classical alpha males, aggressive and unreflective.

It is worth noticing that these views bring us to the contemporary concept of gender and although in antebellum America neither the term gender nor feminism were used, Fuller's treatise on the position of American women in 19th century is no doubt a pioneering, very progressive or even radical text on concepts which will enter the public debate several decades later. American psychiatrist Robert Stroller introduced the term 'gender in the 1960s using it for description of sociocultural functions of masculinity and femininity. Opposite to sex, regarded as a biologically determined trait, gender was a social construct for him, created through social interaction – involving the things we do and say with other people. According to Theresa

Nicolay Margaret Fuller already in the 1840s recognized femininity and masculinity to be social constructs (Nicolay 91), and although she never used the term gender, she diagnosed and described it in the right way. No doubt the content of *Women in the Nineteenth Century* is still inspiring for scholars and intellectuals dealing with feminism and gender studies.

The unconventional and very modern ideas which Fuller introduced in her most important work were not only theoretical considerations. It should be emphasized once again that Fuller's success resulted from her active engagement in many activities belonging to the men's domain. Women's writing and literary interests were allowed by both education and cultural norms in Fuller's times, but her erudition and the areas she discussed were not considered feminine. However, the most important element of the extraordinary character of Margaret Fuller was her active incorporation in her own life of the notion of the androgynous personality, her constant crossing of the boundaries of culture-designated separate spheres.

Again she crossed the borderline in 1843 when she managed to persuade the Harvard College authorities to make the College library collections available to her. In the summer of 1843, at the age of 33 she traveled to Niagara Falls, Chicago, Milwaukee. During her peregrination she interacted with several Native Americans. She described her impressions in a book called *Summer on the Lakes* published in 1844. Fuller used the Harvard College library to do research on the Great Lakes Region becoming the first woman allowed to use the Harvard's Library for research. However, her spectacular intellectual success and prominent position she had within the Boston elites was not enough for her. Fuller had the feeling of being different, outstanding, unique, and convinced that she was born to do great things and introduce big changes. This was probably one of the reasons why she decided to take the position of a front-page columnist in Horace Greeley's *New York Daily Tribune*, one of the most important New York dailies in the Penny Press Era. The decision was not easy. She had to move to New York, leave her elitist friends, the respect and esteem she had in Boston, profitable 'Conversations' incomes and start a totally new life as the first woman journalist writing for a big city daily and at the same time the first full-time book reviewer in American journalism and a rival of Edgar Allan Poe. She reviewed American and foreign literature, concerts, lectures, and art exhibitions (von Mehren 215) earning an opinion of the most influential critic in New York. Soon, however, social issues became Fuller's major interests, and she regularly covered topics on New York's poverty and city institutions. She appealed for changes and improvements regarding the organization and operation of orphanages, insane asylums and penitentiaries in hopes of transforming New York into a model society. She called for the introduction of a satisfactory sewerage systems in New York. In her texts she tried to persuade the city authorities to support the idea of shelter homes for women prisoners released from jail. In her journalistic career, while working for *The Tribune* Fuller crossed another borderline, the borderline of her class. Women's issues were still very important for her, but she concentrated on the underprivileged groups: working class women, prostitutes[5], prisoners, patients of mental hospitals.

[5] In *Women in the Nineteenth Century* Fuller discusses the problem of prostitution and fallen women, perceiving them as victims of the system.

However, not only the social exclusion of women worried her, but all manifestations of social injustice. Even before she joined *The Tribune* she had written about social injustice. In *Summer in the Lakes* she described and analyzed the situation of Native Americans. In the summer of 1843 she visited the Chippewa and Ottawa Indians at Mackinac Island and apart from "descriptions of their life with narratives cited from numerous texts" (Steele xxix), she provides a critical analysis of American imperialistic civilization, sexism and racism propagated by American ideology. Inspired by her father and then by Transcendentalists, Fuller opposed slavery and in her texts supported the abolitionist movement.

Her views and attitudes became even more radical when she worked for Greeley's paper. While staying in New York, Fuller witnessed "the vicissitudes of life in the metropolis. What she saw shocked her. Her visits (…) brought her face to face with an urban underclass that had fallen below the threshold of respectability" (Steele xxxviii). At the same time she became fascinated with the ideology of socialism which she called 'the great Idea of the Age" (Mitchell, and Urbanski 37). She hoped socialism would change the American society and started to publish texts in which she educated *The Tribune* readers on the new ideology and its values. She became very critical towards her own country, which, as she claimed, betrayed the ideals of the American Revolution. The events she observed such as the annexation of Texas, and the extension of slavery disappointed her even more. At the same time she went through an emotional breakdown due to a failed relationship with a man. As a consequence when Greeley offered her the position of a foreign correspondent in Europe, she willingly accepted the proposal. She needed a change in her personal life but also hoped to find the democratic idealism she lacked in her own country in Europe.

That is how Fuller became the first woman foreign correspondent and set a new career trail for women. For four years starting in 1846 she provided *The Tribune's* readers with thirty-six dispatches from Great Britain, France and Italy. Greeley published them on the front page under the heading *Things and Thoughts in Europe* (Steele xli). Fuller met the most famous and influential people of the times and even interviewed some of them. She entered the elites again, the group of Europeans who established trends in literature, music and politics: Thomas Carlyle, George Sand, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Adam Mickiewicz, Giuseppe Mazzini. She considered her relocation to Europe a challenge and opportunity to develop and educate herself. Fuller knew European culture and literature very well. She had been reading, translating and reviewing European writing since the beginning of her career. She followed the new publications, knew the life and work of the people she was meeting; so she felt very much at home. In one of her letters she wrote: "It was no false instinct that said I might here find an atmosphere needed to develop me in ways I need" (*The Letters* 239). On the other hand European intellectuals respected and admired her. The most important Romantic Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, with whom she was in a very close but probably only spiritual friendship, saw a superior woman in her, who could lead other women to their political and sexual liberation. According to him, historical progress depended on a few God-chosen, superior people leading lesser beings to a state of moral perfection. For Mickiewicz, Fuller was such a supernatural being with an enormous mind and both the will and power to alter the course of human history (McGavran Murray 307).

When she moved to Italy for both personal[6] and professional reasons, she found herself in the very center of historical events – the Italian revolution of 1848. Fuller again became fully engaged and strongly supported the Italian people's struggle for the unification of their country. Giuseppe Mazzini, whom she knew and admired, led the Risorgimento, a social and political movement aimed at the unification of the Italian Peninsula. In the dispatches she still sent to *The Tribune,* Fuller tried to explain readers the reasons of the Italian revolution and to justify the activities of the Italian people who, as she put it, were fighting for freedom and "genuine Democracy" to the American (McGavran Murray 370). She viewed the Italian Revolution as similar to the American Revolution of 1776.

Her correspondence was slowly losing the perspective of an American tourist, an intellectual travelling across Europe and acquired the viewpoint of a participant of this political and social upheaval. When in 1849, her husband Giovanni Ossoli and his people actively engaged in fighting in the besieged city of Rome, Fuller, leaving her new-born child in the care of a nurse, joined him in Rome. She worked in a hospital taking care of wounded soldiers and sent harrowing reports from the besieged city to America, thereby setting standards for future journalistic war correspondents: eyewitness accounts. Her emotions and thoughts provided American readers with a shocking image of the Italian events. In this way Fuller became the first professional war correspondent. She set standards for war coverage, and it has to be said that the standards were very high – her texts were written in excellent language which captured the excitement of the history and dramatic experience of the people.

Margaret Fuller died on July 19, 1850. She was returning home from Europe with her husband and 2 year old Angelino. They all died in a shipwreck off Fire Island, only 50 yards from the shore (Dickenson 210).

According to our modern understanding of success, Margaret Fuller was a highly successful woman – educated, independent, free to travel, financially self-reliant[7]. But in her times she was perceived as a freak – her interests and professional activities were considered unusual for a young woman. Education, independence, professionalism were basic factors of being successful – but at that time it was man's exclusive territory. Margaret entered the male path and followed the highly valued in American culture model of success – the self-made man. The appellation "self-made man" or "self-made woman" describes a person who was born disadvantaged, but who achieved great success – economic, social, professional only thanks to their own

[6] Fuller had a love affair with a follower of Giuseppe Mazzini, Italian aristocrat and revolutionary Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, who had been disinherited by his family because he supported the revolution (Dickenson 188). Ossoli was the father of her son Angelo Ossoli born in September 1848.

[7] After her father's death, according to American law her two uncles gained control of the family property and finances. Margaret, her mother and younger siblings had to rely on the uncles' for support – Margaret found it humiliating and she started to work as a teacher getting an unusually high salary of $1000 per year. As we remember, she was very well paid for her 'Conversations' didactics. As a journalist in NY Tribune she was paid $500 (Mitchel 37). In these difficult times for women Margaret supported her family and was able to send her 3 younger brothers to Harvard. She was the one who put the helmet on after her father's death and became a fighter.

hard work and ingenuity. The concept of the self-made man was deeply rooted in American culture. Benjamin Franklin created the archetype of someone of low origins, who, against all odds, breaks out of his inherited social position, climbs up the social ladder and creates a new identity for himself. Key factors in this rise are hard work and a solid moral foundation. Franklin also stresses the significance of education for self-improvement. In the 19th century America women, even if they were born in the privileged class, had their self-development possibilities very limited by the social roles imposed upon them.

In constructing her own feminine identity, Margaret Fuller was one of the first women who rejected her assigned social role and fought for her right to self-realization, independence, freedom, and, most of all, right to being perceived and judged as an autonomous individual.

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