

Three new Fuller letters found in Italy reveal the role of woman in the struggle for freedom.

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Abstract

In his fourth volume about “The Letters of Margaret Fuller,” Robert N. Hudspeth shows a fragmentⁱ of a letter that does not come from the Harvard Houghton Library, where most of her papers are stored: he quotes it from the *People's Journal* that in 1847 published it together with a poem and a postscript from Fuller in favor of the Italian patriot Giuseppe Mazzini, then exiled in London. The original manuscript was believed lost.

Instead it still exists, and I found it in Italy together with a second one from her. The first manuscript appears as a brief note of instruction not for publication that Margaret set above the actual presentation of a poetry, written by the Florentine authoress Isabella Rossi, that Fuller had translated and adapted for the rhyme. With its notes – that Hudspeth does not quote -- it helps us understand where Margaret wished to draw reader's attention along the text. The second manuscript, conceived to be set before the first, is the real letter by which Margaret addresses Linton forwarding him an introduction to the said article.

A third letter I found, is in a way connected with the two manuscripts: during summer 1847, while Mazzini was in Switzerland trying to trace Fuller, she was in Rome afraid of venturing to write to him or his mother, Maria Drago Mazzini, mistrusting the correctness of her own Italian or French. When she finally wrote this letter to Mazzini's mother she had moved to Florence on her journey to the north. I found it published in a collection of correspondence that Maria Drago Mazzini had received, never published by now outside Italy.

Joan von Mehren says that “when Mazzini “finally caught up with her (Fuller, ed.) in December 1847 after his return to London, he did not thank” Margaret for her “well-meaning article on the *People's Journal*”ⁱⁱ. Now, after finding this new Fuller's letter and relevant notes about Maria's reaction to it in that book, I am not so sure Mazzini was so upset: on the contrary I can prove at least his mother's appreciation for Fuller's move, as to cut out her article from the *People's Journal* and store it together with a translation of it from English into Italian.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition, from this source we know that Mazzini himself praised several times the authoress of the poem Fuller published. I must therefore presume that when Fuller forwarded her letter in defense of Mazzini to Linton she must be absolutely sure that, apart the possible rashness of her deed, Mazzini would appreciate the underlying message of Rossi's poem, and consequently the overall spirit of Fuller's move in his defense.

What was it? Fuller conceived an interesting parallel about the role of ancient Woman as "supporter of the hero" and modern Woman as "inspirer of the patriot" – a concept that she had shared with young patriots who followed Mazzini she met in Milan.^{iv} For sure, she would not hazard acting so openly in favor of Mazzini if she had not got tuned with the circles of democratic patriots sympathizing with his ideas.

ⁱ Robert. N. Hudspeth, "The Letters of Margaret Fuller," IV, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-London 1987. Letter No. 683, p.297, from *People's Journal* 4 (1847): 327.

ⁱⁱ Joan von Mehren, “Mineva and the Muse”, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1994, p. 273.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Maria Mazzini ed il suo ultimo carteggio con 79 lettere inedite di Giuseppe Mazzini”, editor Itala Cremona Cozzolino, Genova-Imperia, 1927 p.247n.

^{iv} See my forthcoming: “Margaret Fuller and Anselmo Guerrieri Gonzaga, a forgotten romance”. AMS Press, 2017.