

**MARGARET FULLER;
A PSYCHOLOGICAL
BIOGRAPHY**

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Margaret Fuller; A Psychological Biography by Katharine Anthony

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KATHARINE ANTHONY

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MARGARET FULLER

From the *Century Magazine*, April, 1893

MARGARET FULLER

A PSYCHOLOGICAL BIOGRAPHY

BY
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IN GERMANY AND SCANDINAVIA"



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PREFACE

THE life of Margaret Fuller has been the happy hunting-ground of imaginative biographers. The Bacchante, the Sybil, the Pythoness,—these were the usual clarifying terms in which she was explained to the generations which succeeded her. After this Margaret myth had been current for more than thirty years, Mr. Thomas Wentworth Higginson sought to inject some realism into the picture. In his excellent biography, he politely denounced the romantic legend and represented Margaret as the woman of action which she really was. But he was chiefly concerned with the literary pioneer, and Margaret was, after all, more interesting as a personality than as a writer. About the same time, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe composed another life, emphasizing Margaret's pioneer work for the emancipation of women and also eliminating the "Pythian disguise," the "virginian aspect," and all the rest of the inflamed rhetoric which had contributed so largely to Margaret's previous reputation. But Mrs. Howe was so magnificently impersonal, that she leaves us more in the dark than ever as to what manner of woman this really was who was so startling and upsetting to her own generation. Finally, Margaret's *Love Letters* were published, scrupulously edited and

pruned by one knows not how many censors. A realistic interpretation of her life and character has not only not been attempted but has rather been positively avoided. A mood of evasion has marked almost all that has been written about her. The following study tries to arrive at the realities of Margaret's personality and career, chiefly by means of modern psychological analysis.

My purpose has been to apply a new method to old matter. I have not tried to unearth fresh material or discover unpublished evidence. The sources from which the facts are drawn are well-known volumes given in the bibliography at the end. But the following pages are less concerned with a chronology of facts than with the phases of a complex personality and a manifold life. It is an attempt to analyze the emotional values of an individual existence, the motivation of a career, the social transformation of a woman's energies.

In order to give direct representation, Margaret's writings are liberally quoted. Her books are now forgotten and neglected, the only editions in existence being so out of date that few libraries are old enough to possess them. Yet she wrote much good criticism, good feminism, and good psychology, which deserve to be rescued from the dusty attic and classed with some of our newest wisdom.

Many circumstances combine to lend a special interest to Margaret Fuller at this time. Seventy years ago, she stood at the beginning of two great movements which have reached their culmination in our day. She saw the inception of the woman movement in America and the revolutionary movement in Europe. Her life, with all its inward and outward struggles, was peculiarly identified with both. Her ideals have recently renewed their vitality for us. For instance, now that suffrage is out of the way, there is a great need for the broader kind of feminism that Margaret Fuller represented. And, similarly, her relation to the European crisis of 1848 gives her also a relation to the second chapter of those revolutionary processes through which we are living today.

In short, Margaret was a modern woman who died in 1850. The legend she left cannot be truth. It was created mainly by unemancipated men; Chivalry and Puritanism combined to distort the picture. For this reason, her life demands a vindication from certain quarters which too long have failed her. *Feminisme oblige*. Her story needed to be told by some one who could sympathize with her struggles and affirm her ideals. Therefore, while striving for realism and impartiality, the following study does not pretend to avoid the warmth of the advocate.

K. A.

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