

TRANSCENDENT
A MUSIC-THEATRE PROJECT

Libretto by Helen E. Richardson

A story of the life and times of



MARGARET FULLER (1810-1850)

TRANSCENDENT

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CONCEPT: *Transcendent* is a music-theatre piece that brings to light the 19th century American Transcendentalist, radical feminist, revolutionary, international journalist and celebrity Margaret Fuller, who embraced the turbulent personal and political passions of the Romantic era. The story focuses on Fuller’s journey from a child prodigy growing up in Cambridge, Massachusetts—a community shaking off its Puritan heritage—to her fame as an international journalist, and untimely death in a shipwreck off the coast of Fire Island, NY. Following an epic structure, in which a chorus keeps the audience up to date on what is happening in the US and in Europe, we follow Margaret Fuller’s life story, starting with the radical progressive education she received through her father and how her unorthodox upbringing alienated her from her peers and potential suitors. Included are her intense infatuations with men and women; her conflicted involvement with Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalists; her inspired leadership conducting group “conversations” for women denied a higher education; her emergence as a woman journalist, reformer, and revolutionary; and her sexual liberation through her acquaintance with French novelist, George Sand, and the Polish revolutionary poet, Adam Mickiewicz, culminating in her relationship with Ossoli, an impoverished Italian count and fellow revolutionary ten years her junior, with whom she has a child. In order to view Fuller and her times through a contemporary lens, the work combines familiar TV news media devices of today and contemporary music with 19th century popular theatre and music.

Fuller became a household name in the 1840s as a radical feminist thinker, publishing her book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* with the encouragement of the *New York Tribune* newspaper founder, Horace Greeley, who also hired her as a reporter. The ideas she promoted in her work are in many ways still challenging and timely today. Though internationally renowned during her lifetime, she was all but forgotten during most of the twentieth century due to her untimely death. The mixed reminiscences of her male colleagues, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, published along with her redacted writings, did more to obscure and, in some cases, damage her reputation than to immortalize her. As well, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s son Julian, when publishing his father’s posthumous papers, included negative passages in which Fuller is described as a “humbug,” “defective and evil,” even though it is commonly accepted that Fuller served as inspiration for many of the female protagonists in Hawthorne’s writings, from Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter* to Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance* and Miriam in *The Marble Faun*; female characters that broke the norms of society.

The narrative of *Transcendent*, beginning shortly after Fuller’s death, follows a news reporter determined to uncover, beneath the gossip, the “real woman” that was Margaret Fuller, through interviews and revisiting moments in her life. De Tocqueville, the French observer of 19th century American culture and author of *Democracy in America*, accompanies the reporter, offering an outsider’s view of events. Scenes of Fuller’s intimate life are interspersed with major news events of

her time, which impacted Fuller, including Abolitionism, the Underground Railway, the Second Great Awakening, the Indian Removal Act, Jacksonian Democracy, New York City ethnic riots, the Women’s Rights Movement, and the European Revolutions of 1848. Fuller’s complexities: her heroics, visionary impulses, intellectual ideas, and Romantic emotional vulnerability are all explored.

The piece is rhymed throughout. Scenes can be treated like interviews in some cases or reality TV when in more domestic situations. Cameras with live feeds—as if scenes were being recorded and broadcast in real time—are present, though never supplanting the live performance, rather offering a secondary perspective through close-ups projected on a rear screen. Reporters employ a vocal cadence reminiscent of newscasts. There is one character that stands out amongst the camera people – she is a young woman, clearly of our time, who perceives Fuller more intimately. Though she never speaks, this Camerawoman captures the private Fuller, with close-ups and unexpected visual angles as she begins to experience a more personal identification.

While taking a contemporary look at the 19th century, the piece has the possibility of using the popular forms of the 19th century such as melodrama, circus, pantomime, music hall, opera, animal acts, the waltz and ballet to evoke Fuller’s time, i.e. De Tocqueville is not only part narrator but also embodies the circus ringmaster upon occasion. Choral movements, when reporting current events in the context of the play, should have a mixture of a contemporary attitude—reminiscent of a music video—while representing the formality of 19th century Boston Brahmin decorum or the theatricality of melodrama and opera. Fuller’s movements should also be a mix of 19th century formality and the attitude of a 21st century pop diva, magnifying her “queenly” demeanor, which made her notable in her time and also vilified by those in the establishment who found her too radical and assertive.

ACT I focuses on Fuller’s unrequited flirtation with Romanticism and the fledgling American nation’s self-aggrandizement through its own romanticizing of Manifest Destiny. In ACT II, Fuller matures into womanhood, social reform and revolution as she finds her place in the new political reality of human rights and women’s equality. Traveling on assignment to Europe she finally finds her ideological soulmates and is able to fully manifest her revolutionary passion. Fuller’s life was in many ways as tumultuous, if not more, than our lives today, confronted by a rapidly changing society, moving from a Puritan and agricultural society to an industrial power. *Transcendent* hopes to invoke Margaret Fuller’s life as a platform for considering our current challenges.

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CHARACTERS In order of Appearance

(*TRANSCENDENT* is an ENSEMBLE piece that can be performed with 11 actors, with all but the actor playing MARGARET FULLER and the actor playing the CAMERAWOMAN, doubling/tripling as other characters. The cast can be fulfilled by 5 WOMEN and 6 MEN, with several of the women playing men at different points and at least two actors also doubling as puppeteers. However, the gender of the actor playing either male or female does not need to be fixed and can be fluid. All cast members are part of the CHORUS except those moments when performing as an individual character in a scene.)

MARGARET FULLER, *Romantic, Women’s Right’s Advocate, Journalist*
CAMERAWOMAN, *running actual live feed, intimately drawn to observing Fuller*
CHORUS, *playing various roles including mourners, narrator, reporters, etc.*
REPORTER, *investigating the life of Margaret Fuller*
CAMERAPEOPLE, *running live feed*
REPORTERS 1-5+, *part of the CHORUS, reporting on the news*
DE TOCQUEVILLE, *author of Democracy in America and a commentator*
MAZZINI (brief appearance), *Italian Revolutionary and friend of Margaret Fuller*
MARGARET “MOTHER FULLER,” *mother of Margaret Fuller*
THOREAU (brief), *Transcendentalist friend of Margaret Fuller*
LONGFELLOW (brief), *poet, and critic of Margaret Fuller*
RALPH WALDO EMERSON, *Transcendentalist friend and colleague of Margaret Fuller*
LIDIAN EMERSON, *wife of Ralph Waldo Emerson, infirm, a user of laudanum*
THE SNAKE (puppet), *representative of the original US revolutionary motto symbolized by a rattlesnake: “Don’t tread on me” and also of the “life force.”*
SARAH “MARGARET FULLER,” *child prodigy, played by same actor playing the teen-age and adult Margaret Fuller*
TIMOTHY “FATHER FULLER,” *father of Margaret Fuller, US Congressman and influenced by ideas of the Enlightenment*
DR. PARKS (brief), *Headmaster of Dr. Park’s School attended by Margaret Fuller*
MISS PRESCOTT, *Head Mistress of Miss Prescott’s Finishing School*
HARVARD DIVINITY STUDENTS 1 & 2 (brief), *Divinity students at a party with Margaret Fuller*
GEORGE P. FARREN (brief), *theatre manager, abolitionist, actor, and Englishman*
SAM WARD, *Harvard student, romantic interest of Margaret Fuller who marries Anna Barker*
TWO LADIES WALTZING (brief), *commenting on Margaret Fuller’s love life*
ANNA BARKER, *admirer and student of Margaret Fuller who marries Sam Ward*
AMOS BRONSON ALCOTT (brief), *educator and father of Louisa May Alcott*
STUDENTS: TOBIAS, EMILY, JAMES, ROSE, THOMAS, ELIZABETH, *private school students of Margaret Fuller*
JAMES NATHAN (silent brief), *businessman and romantic interest of Margaret Fuller*
JOSIE, the DOG (puppet-brief), *dog of James Nathan, left with Margaret Fuller*

RUFUS GRISWOLD, *critic of Margaret Fuller’s Women in the Nineteenth Century in debate with Fuller*
GEORGE SAND, *French Romantic novelist admired by Margaret Fuller*
ADAM MICKIEWICZ, *Polish revolutionary and poet, friend of Margaret Fuller*
CHOPIN (*heard offstage*), *the great Polish composer, lover of George Sand*
COUNT OSSOLI, *Italian revolutionary and lover of Margaret Fuller*
VISITING AMERICAN (*brief*), *gossip, expat, living in Rome, visiting Nathaniel Hawthorne and spouting fake news about Margaret Fuller*

Possible Casting: 5 women, 6 men

Actor 1: CAMERAWOMAN

Actor 2: MARGARET FULLER, CHORUS

Actor 3: REPORTER, CHORUS

Actor 4: DE TOCQUEVILLE, CHORUS, CAMERAMAN, JAMES NATHAN

Actor 5: REPORTER 1, MOTHER FULLER, LADY WALTZING I, CHORUS, EMILY,

Actor 6: REPORTER 2, THOREAU, DIVINITY STUDENT 1, SAM WARD, PUPPETEER (SNAKE, JOSIE), CHORUS, JAMES, ADAM MICKIEWICZ, CAMERAMAN

Actor 7: MAZZINI, TIMOTHY “FATHER” FULLER, ALCOTT, THOMAS, PUPPETEER (SNAKE, JOSIE the DOG), CHOPIN, CHORUS, CAMERAMAN

Actor 8: LONGFELLOW, EMERSON, GEORGE P. FARREN, TOBIAS, RUFUS GRISWOLD, VISITING AMERICAN, CHORUS, CAMERAMAN

Actor 9: REPORTER 3, MISS PRESCOTT, ANNA BARKER, ROSE, PUPPETEER (SNAKE, JOSIE the DOG), CHORUS

Actor 10: REPORTER 4, MR. PARKS, DIVINITY STUDENT 2, OSSOLI, PUPPETEER (SNAKE, JOSIE the DOG), CHORUS, CAMERAMAN

Actor 11: REPORTER 5, LIDIAN, LADY WALTZING 2, ELIZABETH, GEORGE SAND, CHORUS

SCENE BREAKDOWN

Act 1

OVERTURE: STORM AT SEA – Margaret Fuller’s drowning.

SCENE 1: BREAKING NEWS – News of the day reported, including Fuller’s Death.

SCENE 2: EULOGIES – Reporters highlight international response to the news of Fuller’s Death.

SCENE 3: THE EMERSON’S AT HOME – Ralph Waldo and Lidian Emerson share their divergent memories of Fuller with Reporter.

SCENE 4: DE TOCQUEVILLE ON DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA – De Tocqueville comments on the American Spirit: “My way or the highway!”

SCENE 5: CHILD OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT – States rights, King Cotton, and the Seminole war. “Father Fuller,” tests Margaret on her studies. “Mother Fuller” protests the late hour.

SCENE 6: DR. PARK'S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS – Fuller vs her schoolmates.

SCENE 7: CAMBRIDGE 1823 – “Mother Fuller” worries about Margaret Fuller’s independence as she goes off to Harvard parties.

SCENE 8: MISS PRESCOTT'S FINISHING SCHOOL – Miss Prescott counsels Fuller to veil her accomplishments after she is shamed by her classmates.

SCENE 9: MISS FULLER ENTERS SOCIETY – Andrew Jackson, King Mob and the Trail of Tears. Fuller challenges traditional religious beliefs.

SCENE 10: LOVE – Bowery Race Riots, the waltz comes to America. Fuller introduces her new romantic interest Sam Ward to her acolyte Anna Barker.

SCENE 11: GETTING RELIGION – The Second Awakening, Emerson resigns as a Minister in the Unitarian Church, Fuller meets the Emersons.

SCENE 12: NATURE – Emerson shares his essay *Nature* with Fuller.

SCENE 13: LATER THAT NIGHT... – Fuller and the Emersons, impassioned, can't sleep.

SCENE 14: FRIENDSHIP – Fuller and Emerson cement their friendship and Fuller discovers its limits.

SCENE 15: A LESSON – Fuller becomes a teacher to support her family after her father dies. Sam Ward informs Margaret Fuller, much to her dismay, that he is marrying Anna Barker.

SCENE 16: CONVERSATIONS – Margaret Fuller holds a seminar for women: What were we born to do? How shall we our natural birthrights pursue?

Act II

SCENE 17: JOURNEY INTO THE HEARTLAND – UTOPIA? – Utopian communities proliferate across the nation; Margaret travels the Midwest, learns about the condition of Native Americans and writes *Summer on the Lakes*.

SCENE 18: AUTHOR, REFORMER, CELEBRITY – *Summer on the Lakes* is a best seller; Fuller writes *Woman in the 19th Century*, another best seller; Horace Greeley, Editor of the NY Tribune, hires Margaret Fuller. She visits women prisoners in Sing Sing, upstate NY.

SCENE 19: DEBATE – Rufus Wilmot Griswold argues against Fuller and her book *Woman in the 19th Century*.

SCENE 20: PERSONAL AFFAIRS – Fuller meets James Nathan, a German businessman. Love letters are exchanged. He makes a move. Fuller refuses his advances, holding out for marriage. Nathan goes to Europe on business.

SCENE 21: VOYAGE TO THE CONTINENT – Thoreau goes to jail refusing to pay taxes in protest of Mexican-American war and slavery. Fuller goes to Europe as a foreign correspondent and an au pair to supplement her meager income.

SCENE 22: LONDON – Brontë sisters, Sweeney Todd, and the Industrial Revolution. Fuller witnesses dire poverty; meets the British literati and the Italian revolutionary Mazzini; a letter arrives from James Nathan informing Fuller he is recently married. Fuller, distraught, loses her way on a mountain in Scotland.

SCENE 23: PARIS – Fuller meets George Sand, Chopin, and the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz: Revolution is in the air!

SCENE 24: ROME AT LAST – Anesthetics, Elizabeth Blackwell, first woman accepted into medical school in a US. Fuller meets revolutionary Count Ossoli at St. Peter's – he is 11 years younger; they fall in love; Ossoli proposes; Margaret refuses.

SCENE 25: EROS – Fuller and Ossoli become lovers.

SCENE 26: LIBERTY, EQUALITY, MATERNITY – Women's Suffrage, Marx and Engels, 1848 Revolutions. Fuller gives birth to a boy, Angelino; Ossoli and Fuller fight for the Independence of the Roman Republic; the fight is lost.

SCENE 27: NATURE UNLEASHED – 1850 – Sinking of the Adelaide filled with Irish immigrants, off the coast of Kent. Fuller prepares to return to America with Ossoli and baby Angelino.

SCENE 28: TEMPEST – Fuller, Ossoli and Angelino perish in a shipwreck off the coast of Fire Island, NY, scavengers on the beach look on.

CODA: Chorus invokes women's self-determination.

ACT 1

OVERTURE: Storm at Sea

(A CAMERAWOMAN comes on stage and positions herself. The actor playing MARGARET FULLER comes on stage and gets into position, aided by other actors who tie her to a mast with a scarf. Wind begins to blow—perhaps we see the machinery creating the wind from the side of the stage. The scarf flies while her torn dress and her hair whip in the wind. Behind her is a projection that begins as if a helicopter is filming from overhead then cross fades to close-up of large crashing waves. CAMERAWOMAN zooms in for a close-up of MARGARET surrounded by the waves as she looks out into the tempest. It can have the epic feel of melodrama with the actor as MARGARET standing before the video somewhat in silhouette – a tableau vivant. The CHORUS enters wearing black. They evoke the force of the sea and wind.)

CHORUS:

Fierce winds, wild waves,
The merciless sea.
Margaret Fuller,
A blazing light: cast into eternity.
Her final breath swept away.
Her bold life; battles waged.
Her fight cut short,
Lost in the dark of eternal night.

Fierce winds, wild waves,
The merciless sea.
Margaret Fuller,
A bold life; battles waged.
A blazing light
Swept away

Women's evolution
Revolution
Facing dissolution
Resurrection the only solution.

Women warriors
Disappeared by history
Written by men
Their lives forgotten
Dismissed
Treated as a mystery.

What do they want, he asked?
Their destined to be breeders of men.
Men, the real makers of history.

Women honored by motherhood
Isn't it enough to have our gratitude?

Time to share the glory
Time to tell her story
Of a woman with attitude
Born ahead of her time
Denied her rights
Some say it's cause she was so hard to like.

Not beautiful, not humble enough,
Her ideas too rough
For men's sensibilities
She wanted to rewrite our history.

Said, lived, wrote:
"Women no longer a footnote.
It's time they had the vote.
Captains of their own ship.
Men, women through love
Working together,
Equals in partnership."

Fierce winds, wild waves,
The merciless sea.
Margaret Fuller,
A bold life; battles waged.
A blazing light
Swept away
Her fight cut short,
Lost to eternal night.

(A final wave overcomes MARGARET and the video slow motions into a still of an all-encompassing wave.)

SCENE 1: Breaking News

(Lights up on the CHORUS, hawking copies of the New-York Tribune through the audience. Image of wave replaced by an environment reminiscent of a CNN studio with TV screens projecting images of 1850 New York City. A headline news crawl, corresponding to the news covered by the CHORUS and more, moves across an upstage scrim. Images on the multiple screens change to reflect various historical figures/events mentioned.)

NEWS HAWKER CHORUS 1 & 2:

News! News!
None of it fake!
Our future's at stake!
New York Herald's
Breaking stories:
Political strife
In all its glory,
Natural disasters,
Financial advice
Uplifting poems,
Gossip and spite.
Cultural reviews,
Scandals, corruption,
Murder, depravity, crime and destruction.
All there is to know
To keep up with the times!
All you need to know
And it costs just a dime.

NEWS HAWKER CHORUS 1:

1850.
History made.
Fistfights,
Guns cocked,
Fierce debates,
California to be free
Or a slave state?
Congress votes
Slavery denied!
California free
A beacon for our times!

NEWS HAWKER CHORUS 2:

People hold your applause!
A Faustian bargain made;
In trade for free states,
The Fugitive Slave Act

Ratified!
Protecting men
Marketing in humankind.
People be advised:
Help a runaway slave,
You'll pay a hefty fine.

NEWS HAWKER CHORUS 1:

More breaking news!
It's a fact.
Abolitionists double their attacks.
Ms. Harriet Tubman, the new "Moses,"
She's on track
Forging an underground railway!
Spiriting fugitive slaves
North, through secret routes,
Forests and hidden ports.
Free our brothers, our sisters
Freedom for all
Freedom at any cost
Break our chains
Or all is lost.

REPORTER (*mic in hand, to audience, melodramatic, coming through the audience*):

Just in:
It grieves us to report!
Margaret Fuller,
First lady-International journalist,
(*to an audience member*)
What? You've never heard of her?
Early 19th century
Radical feminist revolutionary?
Literary critic, Romantic,
Bonafide luminary,
Warrior for women's rights.
Leading the fight.
Taking a young Italian lover
Refusing wedding rites!
A son born out of wedlock
Family and friends in total shock!
Margaret Fuller
Was one of our best,
Impossible to deny,
A writer for all times!

She's met a terrible fate.
A vicious tempest,
The ship goes down.
Fuller, her Italian lover,
The Count Ossoli,
Both pitifully drowned.
Her final act:
She gives up her baby boy,
(*aside-gossipy*) Out of wedlock born.
She hands him to the last remaining sailor,
Begs him please to not fail her;
To save her Angelino;
Her darling boy.
The source of her deepest love and joy.

SCENE 2: Eulogies

(REPORTERS played by the CHORUS disperse with mics to capture the comments of the various people. Projections of locations c. 1850.)

CHORUS:

Condolences on the
News of Margaret Fuller's Death:
Condolences from
London, Paris, Rome, Concord, Mass..
De Tocqueville,
French aristocrat, diplomat,
Author of American Democracy, decries:

DE TOCQUEVILLE *(French accent):*

The loss of this magnifique woman,
Merveilleuse representative of your
Great democracy!
Swept away by rapacious waves
Of a jealous sea.
Quelle tragédie!

CHORUS MEMBER REPORTER 1:

Mazzini—
Friend, leader of the great Italian revolution,
Rails 'gainst...

MAZZINI: (Italian accent)

Nature's gruesome intrusion.
Denying her fight
In service to human evolution.
Ma Donna!! Che perdita!!

CHORUS MEMBER REPORTER 2:

Not to be outdone, British author
Par excellence, Mr. Charles Dickens,
Praises Fuller's...

DICKENS:

Untiring energy
Undoubted genius.
Her unbearable conceits
Left me speechless.

PROSPECTIVE REVIEW REVIEWER (*waxing poetically*):

Prospective Review,
A British journal
Responds to the news
Proclaims.
Margaret Fuller,
Held misguided aims.
French novelist George Sand,
She defended.
Don't be fooled by the name,
George was a dame
A shocking Bluestocking,
Miss Fuller was trouble
Women, as we all know,
Are meant to be humble
But, once married,
leaving spinsterhood behind,
Margaret Fuller
Now under the firm hand
Of a man,
And the demands
Of nature's role:
Motherhood so sublime,
As Mrs. Margaret Ossoli
Leaves radical opinions behind
Now thoroughly dutiful,
So beautiful,
She blooms and softens.
Blooms and softens
Plays her part
Speaks only from the heart
No longer a wild exotic flower
She submits to cultivation,
Embraces domestication.

MARGARET (as ghost flies in):

What are you saying
That's a total lie
I deny I would ever
Leave my beliefs in the dust.
Equal rights for women
An absolute must.

PROSPECTIVE REVIEW REVIEWER:

Sadly, her life cut short.
According to the latest reports.

(REVIEWER bows with great flourish while they try to drag Fuller off the stage).

CHORUS MEMBER REPORTER 3:

Closer to home,
Cambridge, Mass.
Fuller's dear mother
Was the most to suffer.

MOTHER FULLER:

Our dear Margaret,
My precious child's drowned.
Her sweet baby Angelino
Washed ashore.
His lifeless body
Will it be buried in sacred ground?
What will the priests say?
Will they hesitate to pray?
For a bastard child lost in unforgiving waves?
Of her husband, Ossoli,
A jacket all that was found.

CHORUS MEMBER REPORTER 4:

Mr. Henry David Thoreau,
The first friend to arrive,
Was most distressed:
Scavengers on the beach
Having taken all her effects.

THOREAU:

Scrambling for the cargo washed ashore,
A greedy hoard 'gnored the desperate cries,
Of those left aboard.

CHORUS:

"Bloody hell!
We'd done much more
If we'd known a celebrity was trapped aboard!
There'd been a handsome ransom
For a dame such as she.
(*mock grief*) For whom we heartily grieve."

CHORUS MEMBER REPORTER 5:

Have you heard?
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,
American poet of fame,
Comments on Miss Fuller's passing away.

LONGFELLOW:

That harpy,
Margaret Fuller!
Former critic of the
NY Tribune
Damn her deviant soul!
Slandered me?
Me!—Known to all as
One of the great poets
Of our time—.
What did Fuller know about rhyme?
Called me artificial! Imitative!
Hollow and second-hand!

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Fuller was prescient.
She wrote what others dared not say
His rhyme juvenile, sterile.
Considered a minor poet today,

LONGFELLOW:

Ha! You defend that witch!
Monsieur De Tocqueville, tant pis!
Or as we say in the USA, tough!
She's finally met her match,
The bitch!
The Atlantic sea,
Devoured her.
And now Miss Fuller's deceased.
Her witticisms, critiques—
Her over-zealous dismissal
Of my masterpieces will have to cease.
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

CHORUS:

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!
Ha! Ha! Ha!

LONGFELLOW:

What a relief!
That vile vixen's life
Mercifully brief!

CHORUS:

(each of the following lines said in turn by one member of the CHORUS):
Harpy, ambitious guide.
Reluctant bride.

Attitudinal, insightful, imperial, witty,
Contentious visionary.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

A free woman's avatar!
A Super-Star!

CHORUS:

Full of herself.
Irritatingly, transcendently wise.
Progressive... (*disdainful*) woman... (*mock sorrow*) is gone.
She'll be easily forgot.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Emerson and Hawthorne to blame:
Her legacy clouded by their dubious acclaim.
Margaret Fuller,
Undone by colleagues who loved her most.

CHORUS:

Her reputation...toast!

(The ghost of *MARGARET* suddenly appears in wind tattered clothes.)

MARGARET (to AUDIENCE):

Women, women, women...
And enlightened men.
Oh bloody bloody hell,
It's the ghost of me,
Margaret Fuller,
Come back from what's called heaven,
But seems like hell.
Not much to tell.
A sleepy haven
Of harps,
Fluttering angels,
Blissfully unaware
Of earthly dangers.
But here's a warning to all who care!
We ghosts wander about
Unable to make a difference
Condemned to watch the living helplessly
Mired in indifference,
In fear and impotence.
Women's rights ignored
Think about what the future

Has in store.
Will women truly have their say?
Emerson has taken my essays
Published them empty of all
I fought to proclaim.
Left only that which he thinks a
Proper woman should be allowed to display
My mission miserably betrayed!

(The CHORUS lifts her up and sweeps her away).

MARGARET (to CHORUS):
Stop! What are you doing?

CHORUS:
We're taking you back to Heaven
So we can exalt you!

MARGARET:
Really? I'd rather stay!
Forget exaltation,
Change comes from action,
Memorials can be a damn,
Pardon me, distraction!
And heaven's not all it's cracked up to be.
There's still lots to be done
Till the oppressed are set free.

(CHORUS disappears carrying the protesting MARGARET aloft).

SCENE 3: The Emersons at Home

(Staged like a CNN interview. Cameras move in on the EMERSON residence while EMERSON receives last touches of make-up. Music plays: a newscast theme merging contemporary newscast style music with 19th century Romanticism.)

REPORTER:

In Concord, Mass.
Interviewing Ralph Waldo Emerson,
America's illustrious sage.
He's all the rage.
I'm such a fan of his essays.
Mr. Emerson,
About Margaret Fuller
Who passed just yesterday
Mr. Emerson—
Pre-eminent Essayist, poet,
Philosopher of Transcendence—
You knew Margaret Fuller,
As friend and muse...
Was she *really* a nobleman's wife?
The public demands to know:
A yankee snob, a fraud?
A "genius" of note?
Or simply odd?
Outrageously demanding the
Right to vote?

EMERSON:

Miss Fuller, of strong temperament,
Usually to her detriment.
A reputation for satire,
Making me laugh more than I liked:
Ethics, solitude, self-reliance my preferred delights.

REPORTER:

You wrote each other many a letter.
If so irksome, why befriend her?

EMERSON:

Her good opinion of me.
Her wish to please.
Soon we found ourselves thoroughly at ease.
Her strong moods and powers,
Made for fascinating conversations
Over many an hour.

(LIDIAN, EMERSON's wife, enters. She is high on laudanum and a bit frayed. Carrying a cup and pot of tea.)

LIDIAN:

I've something to convey...

EMERSON *(pained, apologetic, with an attempt at a sweet smile):*

My wife, Lidian, will have her say.

LIDIAN *(moves in her own private dance):*

Margaret had courage hard to resist.

EMERSON:

Eccentric ideas, like a strange fever,
Infected her more credulous believers:
Her Romantic imagination a notable defect.

LIDIAN:

Ready to climb mountains,
To cross the vast ocean.
Fighting social injustice,
Always in motion.

(LIDIAN is clearly high. She does a dreamy pirouette. Throughout she moves, dances, dreamily.)

EMERSON *(embarrassed):*

I prefer stillness and higher devotions.

LIDIAN:

Shamelessly self-reliant.

EMERSON:

We all found her just a bit too defiant.

LIDIAN:

Would you like some tea?

REPORTER:

If you please.

(REPORTER takes a sip of tea, the taste is unexpected.)

What an interesting taste!

LIDIAN:

My special mixture.

A marvelous tincture.
A divine escape.
I call it God's Grace...
It's laced with...

(A look of alarm crosses EMERSON'S face. He coughs vigorously. LIDIAN stops herself.)

...Margaret saw beauty
Where others saw nothing.

EMERSON:

The news so crushing.
In her, I have lost my greatest,
Most attentive audience.

LIDIAN:

We loved her deeply,
And miss her very much.

(LIDIAN wanders off.)

REPORTER:

Mr. Emerson.
People claim
Margaret Fuller was only Marquise Ossoli
In name: to her family's shame.
Never blessed, in fact,
By the sanctity of an official seal.
What *good* society calls the real deal?

EMERSON:

Your suggestion an insult to all that is genteel.
And marriage is greatly overrated, I feel.
This interview has opened up a wound
Won't easily heal.
Pardon me, it's time I took my evening meal.

(EMERSON rises and exits. REPORTER finishes his tea, clearly high, and wanders off.)

SCENE 4: De Tocqueville on American Democracy

REPORTER *(to audience):*

Continuing this in-depth investigation.

(DE TOCQUEVILLE runs in. A consummate showman, perhaps he executes a twirl.)

Mr. de Tocqueville,
You were among those
Margaret Fuller most admired.
Your *Democracy in America* quite inspired.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

(DE TOCQUEVILLE speaks with a French accent. His innate enthusiasm and rapid-fire speech, his focus on the audience, will lead to an ongoing competition between the REPORTER and DE TOCQUEVILLE for the public's attention.)

Good to hear,
The magnifique Margaret Fuller
Endorsed my little essay.
(to audience) Easily purchased, by the way,
In the entrance by the lobby display.

It's about your experiment in radical democracy,
The United States of the peoples' sovereignty,
Where many declaim,
Without hesitation, without dismay—
It's my way or the highway!

(a RATTLESNAKE appears, traditional symbol of US independence.)

Mlle. Fuller embodied this unfettered force;
Free people taking their own unique course...
She was a woman.
Actions in a man,
Seen as noble
His God-given right.
Seen in Mlle. Fuller
As coarse and a terrible blight.
Men oohlala!
Frightened by a woman's might,
And her merveilleuse insights.

REPORTER:

(attempting to get a word in)

Mr. de Tocqueville, you confirm my source.
They say she was wild, often reviled!

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Ah Monsieur! Pas de panique!
Let us consider the facts.

(MARGARET comes running onto stage having escaped the CHORUS)

MARGARET *(to AUDIENCE):*

Yes, let's.
Finally, I'll have my say!
I'll try to do my best
To relive my life.
Considering my ghostly state.
Apparently, this clairvoyant audience
Sensible and first rate,
Can still see my aching soul;
Self-realization my goal.
Time mustn't erase our rights
Till all women are free,
I can't rest,
Can't forsake this fight.

(DE TOCQUEVILLE escorts MARGARET FULLER—played by the adult actress who will play FULLER throughout the performance—to center stage set up as a TV studio, and beckons for the CHORUS to begin. While the CHORUS is providing the historical context, MARGARET CHILD is quickly readied for the camera: touches of child-clothes put on and make-up for the camera applied.)

SCENE 5: Child of the Enlightenment

(Projections of images related to the events mentioned by the CHORUS: King Cotton, Seminole Wars, etc.)

CHORUS:

1818—
America's gonna be rich!
Huzzah!!
King Cotton, slavery,
Manifest Destiny.
Gold rush
Free land as far as the eyes can see.
America's gonna be rich!
God Bless our free-wheeling economy.
America's gonna be rich!
Well, to be more real.
The deal is
There's a hitch
Some Americans are gonna get very rich.
The rest of us
Well, you'll get your democratic rights
You'll get to vote for the super-rich.
Ain't that a delight?

REPORTER:

The latest on the native Seminole war:
General Andrew Jackson takes up the cause,

JACKSON:

Invading Spanish Florida,
Capturing escaped slaves.
Grabbing 24 million acres
Of Seminole land on the way
A hero of the people,
President in the making!
Land for the taking!
White men celebrate
My victory!
Letting out a cheer!

CHORUS:

In exchange,
Indigenous Americans
Handed a trail of tears!

REPORTER:

But not to distract you from our mission,
Let's check out little Sarah Margaret Fuller's
Domestic situation.
Miss Fuller is eight.
That's forty-two years younger than the United States.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Precocious Sarah Margaret Fuller,
Sits in her backyard
Reading works in Latin and Greek,
History, epics of poetry, and rhetoric.
Under the Tree of Enlightenment
Her father espoused,
A refuge for wild butterflies and flowers,
Of wisdom and ancient powers.

REPORTER:

Her father believes women should be educated.
How dubiously innovative.
What's this strange child reading?
Is it educational?
Aberrational?
Too sensational
For a female child?
A life destined to be
Obedient and mild.

Let's listen in up-close and personal.

(We see MARGARET CHILD reading while absentmindedly petting the snake that rests at her side. A live-feed video close-up is projected onto the background screen. MARGARET CHILD's costume can be a mix of contemporary elements with a flare that suggests the early 19th century. Perhaps we see a bit of what MARGARET CHILD is reading projected. CAMERAWOMAN handles close-ups—lingering on MARGARET CHILD and what she is reading.)

MARGARET CHILD *(to AUDIENCE, intimately – a child sharing a secret):*

Stories of empires,
Love and war.

(FULLER rises ecstatically to her feet, extending the flower in her hand as if a sword, her voice deepens, imitating the posture of a man-at-arms. SNAKE rears up watching – perhaps slightly swaying in rhythm to the song.)

Brave men at arms,
Sail shore to shore.
We champion our queen!

Honor bold women from sea to sea!
Fight to be free!
Fight to be free!
No more:
Scrub the floor,
Brew the tea,
Read your Bible,
Sort the washing please.
I'll be your knight.
A warrior princess,
A wise queen.
A poet,
A president,
A sea captain,
A daring adventurer.
Holy priestess,
Defender of all,
Living and unseen.
Freedom to dream.
Stories of freedom!
Souvenirs of battles won,
Wild words flashing
In the bright sun.
Time to dream.
Become a knight,
A warrior queen.
Let me be free,
Free to dream!

(MARGARET CHILD runs around making battle cries and fighting off invisible enemies.)

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Here comes the father,
Back from Washington
A congressman of note.
Defender of the Seminole nation
In his votes.
Slavery he loathes.

FATHER FULLER *(from offstage):*

Sarah, Sarah, Sarah!
Darling child!

(MARGARET CHILD grabs a book and sits down demurely pretending to read. SNAKE retreats.)

Reading the poet Virgil in Latin?

Or the philosopher Plato
In the ancient Greek?...

(MARGARET CHILD remains silent)

I expect you're hard at work,
And that's why you decline to speak?
Sarah, Sarah, answer me my child.
Don't make me angry
It's your father you must mind.

MARGARET CHILD:

I can't answer, Father,
Till you use my chosen name.
Margaret!
Margaret's, a gallant name.
We live all our lives answering.
To one's designation
Shouldn't we have a choice as
To our classification.

FATHER FULLER *(grabbing her book):*

Sarah,
You read too much Shakespeare, my dear.
Too many novels of fantasy and romance,
Leading to emotional excess, unruly defiance.
Here,

(offering MARGARET two other books)

Read your Euclid and essentials of Algebra...
Or Ferguson's history of Civil Society,
Source of all that makes a woman enlightened.
Not defiant.

(MARGARET CHILD opens the Fergusson book to the illustration of Queen Elizabeth and displays it to her father and audience.)

MARGARET CHILD:

Look, it's the queen
Surrounded by her men in all their livery.
She looks like a Margaret, don't you think?

FATHER FULLER *(grabs the book in frustration):*

Let go of these childish, girlish tendencies.

(MARGARET CHILD holds her hands over her ears.)

After all you're nine,
It's certainly time
To read books
Intellectually superior, refined.
Now take up this book here,

(handing MARGARET a Latin text)

Translate please.

(Projection of the text.)

MARGARET CHILD *(with ease):*

Disce quasi semper victurus;

Vive quasi cras moriturus.

(sigh)

Learn as if you're going to live forever;

Live as if tomorrow you're going to die.

(MARGARET pretends to impale herself and die.)

FATHER FULLER *(lifting MARGARET up):*

That's my good little Sarah,

My dear dear child...

MARGARET CHILD:

I will be a queen.

A hunter,

A sculptor,

A cobbler,

A skipper.

A rover.

A huckster

A writer,

A tinker.

A drummer,

An actor,

Carpenter,

Keeper of the tower.

A burglar (*Chorus gasps!*),

Carriage driver,

Town crier,

A prowler.

A Boxer (*Chorus members become unsteady, deer in headlights*),

Doctor,

Fishmonger,

Iron monger.

I'll be whatever I please
Margaret is my name
My claim to fame.
And I will have many lovers.

(FATHER FULLER gets lost in a book. MARGARET CHILD stomps off to the side and pretends to read. SNAKE joins her.)

MARGARET CHILD *(to AUDIENCE):*

What's this child thinking?
You're wondering indeed.
Well, here it is: unadulterated, uncensored.
If you please.
"Papa don't tell me what to do.
I am not your plaything,
N'or the heel of your shoe,
To dance upon
To imprint your ideas on.
I am not your toy,
Your little boy.
Don't want to be in your band,
Singing sweet tunes,
Curtsying to the rude.
You make me read the works of the great,
Then wonder why I've chosen an epic fate.
I want to be wild:
A fabulous child,
Rolling naked through the grass. *(Members of Chorus faint.)*
To be known in the future
As a genuine hardass.
Riding rough through the countryside
Spouting words of wisdom far and wide
Quoting Goethe, Homer, Keats,
Filled with pride.
Like the boys down the street
Valued for their daring deeds.
I want to swim the river
Of agony and conceits,
On the way to glory
In victory or defeat!
Papa don't tell me what to do.
You made me love freedom
Why so surprised,
if I don't follow the rules?"

(MARGARET CHILD returns to her reading)

MARGARET CHILD *(to her father):*

It's Margaret I intend to be,
If you wish to address

The authentic me.

(MARGARET CHILD stomps off. SNAKE following behind.)

MOTHER FULLER *(enters alarmed):*

It's late.
It's past her bedtime.
She's but a child.
Only eight,
She should be in bed.
Asleep, at peace.
Since you keep her up so late,
She's tormented by fearful dreams.
Blood, from sticks and ancient stones,
Flow into bloody streams.

FATHER FULLER:

Margaret, dear wife,
Mary Wollstonecraft
Both sensible and just.
In her Vindication
Of the Rights of Women,
Says in women's abilities
We must trust.
Women, masters of domesticity
And classical learning,
Should be.

(accompanied by a fifties style video projection of woman cooking dinner, while at the same time conducting scientific experiments.)

Adept in the kitchen—
The mysteries of making
Bread, pudding and pies—
While contemplating
The wonders of geometry,
History, science.

(cozying up to MOTHER FULLER)

By the way,
Dear Margaret,
Sarah so loves you
She requests to be called by your name.

MOTHER FULLER

For shame Mr. Fuller
Must she always get her way?

SCENE 6: Dr. Park's School for Girls

(background - images of exterior of a 19th century private school—in this case a large white wood house in the simple rectangular box style of the Federalist period—interspersed with images of the US population and slavery, with statues of slaves as pillars propping up the entrance to the house)

CHORUS:

1821, US Population: 9,638,453
1,538,022 are slaves.

REPORTER:

The latest in!
Sarah Margaret goes to private school.
For young women that's rarely the rule.

(MARGARET stands surrounded by gossiping parents.)

ADULT CHORUS I:

Have you heard?
An exceptional child
At Dr. Park's School for Girls.

ADULT CHORUS II:

Only twelve,
She speaks pure mathematics,
Has no religion, poor churl.

ADULT CHORUS I:

How sad, to be trained like a boy.

ADULT CHORUS II:

It's said her father rules her education,
When it's her mother should see to her
Domestication.

(DR. PARKS takes MARGARET'S hand and brings her center stage as if introducing her to the AUDIENCE.)

DR. PARKS:

Margaret Fuller,
My strongest student yet.
You never cease to amaze.
A thoroughbred of learning
Off to the race.
Championing all the prizes,
Setting the pace.

SCENE 7: CAMBRIDGE 1823 (*The Fuller's Cambridge residence.*)

MOTHER FULLER (*writing a letter*):

Dear Husband,
Little Sarah Margaret!
Though only thirteen,
She passes for eighteen.
Off to Harvard dances.
She gains a reputation for speaking her mind.
My infinite patience sorely tried.
Stays out till three,
What kind of wife will she ever be?

FATHER FULLER (*writing a letter*):

Dear Sarah Margaret,
It is our estimation you should
To Miss Prescott's finishing school go,
Continuing your education
With greater refinement:
Discretion, modesty, tact your goals!

MARGARET YOUTH (*standing between her parents*):

Dear Papa,
Have you stopped loving me?
Miss Prescott's school for domesticated fools,
Following society's slavish rules.
Far from Cambridge.
No dances, no parties.
No serious studies.
Just the empty code of timid asides,
I'd rather live a life of crime!

MISS PRESCOTT:

Miss Prescott's school for elegant young girls
Decorum, manners, civilization's pearls.
Preparing those of marriageable age.
Ready to meet your match on society's stage.

SCENE 8: MISS PRESCOTT'S FINISHING SCHOOL

(CHORUS portrays SCHOOLGIRLS. One steps forward while the others curtsy.)

GIRL 1:

Good-day Miss Sarah Margaret Fuller.
Good-day.

MARGARET:

It's Margaret, I prefer to be called.
Very pleased to meet one and all.

(MARGARET writes a letter.)

Dear Papa,
I'm barely alive.
Impossible to survive
In this remote location
Dedicated solely to our domestication.
Nothing but etiquette, dances,
And social grace.
Thinking, questioning
Cruelly constrained.
But as your dutiful daughter,
I work to keep all enthralled.
Even as my studies in languages
Die a slow death.
Breathing their last breath.
In drama, at least, I am accorded all the best parts,
Allowed to adorn my face,
Express the deepest emotions of the heart.
Treated by many as a friend
A confidante.
It's off to breakfast,
I'll write more anon.

SCHOOLGIRLS:

Good Morning
Miss Margaret Fuller!

GIRL 1:

Here, dear Margaret,
Take this special place,
As someone of your specialness,
Clearly rates.

(MARGARET takes her place in the middle of the group. The girls all turn to her - their faces rouged up, maintaining queenly airs – could be masks.)

SCHOOLGIRLS:

And what,
Dear Margaret Fullerness,
Is on your itinerary today?
As you sweep through our humble hamlet,
On your way to becoming so great.

(MARGARET is clearly distressed)

Margaret Fuller! Margaret Fuller!
Regal you may want to be.
A queen of the smart
And righteous nobility.
Leave leading to men.
Swallow your pride.
Lucky you'll be,
Should you ever be a bride.

(MARGARET runs downstage where she has a fit - a wild dance as if possessed. SNAKE joins her. CAMERAWOMAN captures tight close-ups creating a video in the background that is chaotic, a blur of emotion. Suddenly MARGARET stops mid her fit.)

MARGARET *(to AUDIENCE as if she is talking to a best friend, mic in hand):*

I'm a bad bad bad girl!
I know it!
What should I do?
Fires of passion
Burn in my heart.
Crying for release
From iron bars of
False femininity,
Unjust demands
Of a smothering society,
A bouquet of withered flowers
My destiny.

They wont give me their time
Don't want me to shine
Learning, reading, writing:
My infirmity.
They tell me I'm imbalanced,
Crazy to want to know
What makes humans tick.
If only I could be fixed.
Made to heel!
Forget everything I know.

Sit demurely,
Wrapped in a satin pink bow.
I'm a bad bad very bad girl
Scarred,
Destined to drown in obscurity.
Bad, bad girl.

MISS PRESCOTT:

Miss Fuller.
Miss Fuller?
You have had
A most prestigious fit.
No matter,
No need to be ashamed.
It was just a minor prank.
It won't diminish your good name.

MARGARET:

I wish I were dead.

MISS PRESCOTT (*Tenderly putting MARGARET's hair back in place*):

That would be for us most dreadful
To lose a young woman
Of such profound potential.

Dear child,
I understand your deep-felt pain.
I once was also the victim
Of much disdain.
Your gifts are many,
Like hidden treasures,
Close to your heart they must be kept.
Don't expect the same kind of respect
Afforded to men.
On the mask of humility our futures depend.

Hold fast to your talents.
Keep them veiled.
And in your pursuits, you cannot fail.
Veil your intelligence,
Veil your pride,
Veil your knowledge,
Aspire to be a bride.
Veil your desire for notable attainments.
Wear the mask of devotion.
Demonstrate only the most modest emotions.

(MARGARET lays her head on MISS PRESCOTT'S lap, takes a deep breath of MISS PRESCOTT's dress and smiles.)

There, there Margaret,
Embrace the will of society.
Shelter your will 'neath the cloak of piety.
Let your soul be free.
Let your soul be free.

MARGARET:

Whatever you say Miss Prescott.
(to herself) I love you so!

SCENE 9: Miss Fuller Enters Society

(The CHORUS divides in half.)

REPORTER:

The latest in:
Margaret Fuller's
Formal schooling finished.
Her chances to excel
Appropriately diminished.

(Interior of Fuller House.)

CHORUS:

No longer a teen.
Years rush by,
No husband on the scene.
College you can't attain,
Nor any fame.
Men alone can stake that claim.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Intelligence no one can deny.
Harvard's Library gives you,
The first woman of their times,
Access.

MARGARET:

Reading, my escape, my alibi!

CHORUS:

Stay home.
Teach your younger brothers
To write and read.
Learn to serve another's needs.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Books, your guiding light.
Party-going, a sweet delight.
Time to escape into the night,

SCENE 10: LOVE

(Announcements, from the era, protesting slavery and images of the Bowery in flames with looters in the foreground.)

CHORUS *(outraged):*

1834,
For the latest news in disasters,
We turn to city matters.
A riot begins.
New York:
Theatre manager,
Abolitionist, Actor,
And Englishman,
George P. Farren,
Insults all Americans!
Calling Yankees...

GEORGE P. FARREN *(in a proper British accent, demurely):*
Jackasses.

CHORUS I:

A brutal excuse
For the disenfranchised masses
To let loose.
Venting their rage:
Hunting escaped,
Freed slaves.
Making blacks the scapegoat
For all they're denied
Respect, a living,
A life of pride.

(CHORUS I splits into CHORUS II and III)

CHORUS II & III *(confronting each other, representing battling groups):*

They take what's ours.
Undercut our daily wage.
Take food from our mouths,
Clothes off our backs.

CHORUS I *(merging into a single chorus):*

Beating up Blacks
And Englishmen.

(CHORUS II & III merging back into CHORUS I)

Burning tenement houses
Chopping off ears.
Poking out eyes
Stirring up fear.
Raping and pillaging
To cries and tears.
Destroying their fellow poor
The rich unassailable
Their mansions, their wealth
Protected, unattainable
The suffering of the destitute inevitable.

REPORTER:

Just in...
A scandal of tremendous proportions.
At Mrs. Otis' Beacon Hill mansion
In Boston,
Lorenzo Papanti,
Italian dance instructor par excellence,

(PAPANTI sweeps around the room waltzing)

Does a demonstration
Of that "indecorous" dance,
The Waltz.
So intimate, so full of shame.
Those radical Europeans are to blame.

(CHORUS sweeps around the room waltzing. They sing rapturously...)

CHORUS:

The Waltz.
So intimate,
So full of shame.

(Harvard student, SAM WARD, waltzing with MARGARET. A projection of colors suggesting a close-up of the paint strokes of a Turner painting, creating a Romantic sweep.)

SAM WARD:

Dear Miss Fuller,
You're my heartfelt muse.
Your words embolden
The blues, the golds and reds
Of my heart's desire.
A great painter
Is to what I aspire.

To render the soul
Of others till I expire.

MARGARET:

Mr. Ward,
Our hearts must conspire.

MARGARET / SAM:

Let's fly towards freedom.
Spread our loving wings
Towards shared visions:
An eternal spring.

MARGARET *(to AUDIENCE):*

How Romantic we are.
It's the 1830s after all.

WOMAN I:

What can Sam Ward
See in Margaret Fuller?
He's seven years younger.
This wayward romance
Will no doubt disappear.

WOMAN II:

Her exaggerated passions,
And brainy critiques,
Will soon instill in him
A desperate fear.
Hastily, he'll descend
This ridiculous peak.

WOMAN I / WOMAN II:

(to Audience) Distancing himself
From that free-thinking freak!

SAM:

Dear Miss Fuller,
Let's off to Europe
To see the sights.
My patrons, the Farrars,
Your devoted friends,
Would like to invite us
To join the trend
For Americans to travel.
A chance to see great art,
And marvel.

MARGARET:

To travel abroad
My soul's desire.
To bathe in the world
Of those I admire.
Goethe, Georges Sand,
And the great Byron,
They are my muses,
Europe, my Mt. Zion.

(ANNA BARKER, New York socialite and renowned for her charm and beauty, enters.)

ANNA *(interrupting):*

Miss Margaret Fuller,
Anna Barker, an admirer.
May I have this dance?
You never cease to enchant.
Your wit and intelligence
Are what I seek.

(ANNA and MARGARET begin to dance.)

MARGARET:

Miss Anna Barker,
A pleasure to again meet.
Such exquisite beauty
A demeanor so sweet.

ANNA:

Truth-speaking power
Is what I require.
Facing foolish customs,
You set them on fire.

MARGARET:

I'll stand with you
Whatever you desire

ANNA:

Your all-knowing eyes,
Like a sudden shock,
Undo everyone's disguise.
I aspire to be your friend
Till the end of time.

(SAM approaches.)

MARGARET:

Darling Samuel Ward,
Dearest Anna Barker,
Learn to know and appreciate
One another.
Be to each other as sister and brother.

SAM:

Miss Anna Barker
May I have this dance?

(ANNA and SAM dance off.)

MARGARET *(intimately to AUDIENCE):*

A woman may love a woman.
A man love a man.
Hand to hand,
Soul to soul,
The wise seek the strong,
The tender heart, the clever.

Anna, dear Anna,
Let our hearts together beat.
Together, all limits
We shall defeat.
Hand to hand,
Soul to soul,
Arm in Arm, my sweet.
Anna, dear Anna,
Let our hearts
Together beat.
Together,
All wisdom we shall esteem.
Rare wonders we can achieve.
All limits we shall defeat.
Hand to hand,
Arm in Arm,
My sweet.

(Suddenly MARGARET'S FATHER appears.)

MARGARET:

Papa, what brings you here?

FATHER FULLER:

I've left politics,
Bought a farm far away.

The family must pack.
Moving sans delay.
To live a peaceful,
Meditative life.
Writing my memoirs
With family close by.

MARGARET:

But Papa,
I've plans to go away.

FATHER FULLER:

Don't delay.
It's your father you must obey.

MARGARET:

I'll move to this remote farm
So terribly far away.
As always, he'll have his way.

(to AUDIENCE) Bloody hell!
I must have committed
A terrible crime
In another life
Why else have I deserved freedoms
So often denied?

CHORUS:

1830s,
Cholera holds sway.
Ten percent of the population
Passes away.

FATHER FULLER:

Sarah....Margaret...
Why so pale?

MARGARET:

I feel so ill.
I'm wasting away.

FATHER FULLER:

I will nurse you,
Hold you till my dying day.
I love you so dearly.
Don't leave my side,

My dearest daughter,
My greatest pride.

MARGARET:

Your love
Makes me brave.
But should it now end,
I'll rest in peace.
My life complete.

(FATHER FULLER looking unsteady)

Papa why so pale?

FATHER FULLER:

My time draws near.
Regain your life.
You are the oldest,
The most wise.
Your mother,
Brothers and sisters,
Can't survive,
Without your care.
Promise me,
Stay by their side.

CHORUS:

Father Fuller dies
Cholera the culprit.
Margaret survives
To fight another day.
Her trip to Europe
Hopelessly delayed.

SCENE 11: Getting Religion

(Projection – Inside of a New England Church)

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

1830s,
The Second Great Awakening
Takes the country by storm.
American religion faces profound reform.
God's elect, the Calvinists,
Claiming to be
Destined for Heaven.
Are forced to make room,
Through democratization,
For those upstart evangelists
And their wild congregations.

CHORUS:

Now everyone,
Not only the rich,
Have a shot at Paradise.
Repent and pray,
And you'll be saved!

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Unitarian preacher,
Ralph Waldo Emerson awakes
In great agitation,
Leaves his congregation,
Abandons prayer
For nature and meditation:
Becomes a Transcendentalist
Forgoing religion for self-reliance.

REPORTER:

Breaking news!
Margaret Fuller,
Bereft of her father,
Recently deceased,
Now seeks a guide,
Secures an invitation
From Emerson and Lidian,
His newly minted bride.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Mr. Emerson mourns his first wife:
His second not nearly the antidote

For which he had hoped.
Through self-reliance
He's learned to cope.

MARGARET:

Good-day Mr. and Mrs. Emerson,
An honor and a pleasure.

EMERSON:

My friends say
You are an exquisite treasure.

LIDIAN:

Your visit much anticipated.
A friendly face in this quiet place.

MARGARET:

Which you have furnished
With consummate grace.

LIDIAN:

Do me the pleasure of an
Afternoon walk,
Indulging in some womanly talk.

EMERSON:

Dear Lidian,
Margaret is not free.
She promised me
A walk and time to read
My latest essay on Nature.
A walk and time to read
Of transcendence and
The soul's ecstasy.
Remember you need your rest.

LIDIAN:

Alright,
If you must hoard our guest.

EMERSON / LIDIAN:

Thinking only of your/my health
And what's best.

MARGARET:

Dear Ms. Emerson
You seem distraught?

LIDIAN:

These tears mean naught
Just dust and life's duties.
No time for such as me
To celebrate nature's beauty.
Pardon me Miss Fuller
I must take my leave
I must attend to the pantry
And the sugar
It's just past three
And time to take my tea
It provides such relief
From pain and other griefs.
Enjoy your walk.
Your transcendental talk.

(LIDIAN exits)

SCENE 12: Nature

(EMERSON and MARGARET are walking by a stream and he is reading to her from his essay on Nature— soon to be published. The sun is setting. Hudson River School style painting as projection, i.e. Durand's "In the Woods.")

MARGARET:

Read to me Mr. Emerson,
Share your deepest thoughts.
Your insights a balm for me.
Ideas my soul's ecstasy.

EMERSON:

Here is my latest effort.
My modest little effort.
Soon to be published,
An essay on Nature.

(EMERSON reads.)

Few see nature.
Few see the sun.
Gracing our lives,
Lighting men's eyes,
Shining most bright
In the heart of a child.

MARGARET (to AUDIENCE):

The child, the sun,
The heart of man.
Where in all this do I,
A woman, stand?

EMERSON:

Facing sorrows, facing trials,
Nature sustains the man
Promising him –
"With you, I shall stand."

MARGARET (to AUDIENCE):

Exiled to nature,
A family's demands.
What can I,
A woman, command?
I'm for the city
Its boundless diversity
Conversations glowing so brilliantly.

EMERSON:

In the woods,
No calamities Nature cannot repair.
Head bathed by blissful air,
All life's vainglorious whims disappear.

MARGARET *(to Emerson):*

Alone with nature
Thoughts appear.
Ideas become poems,
Poems desires.
Then to sweet action
Our hearts are inspired.

EMERSON:

I become all transparent.
Through me the universe moves.
I become one with God.
I am nothing, I see all.

MARGARET *(to herself):*

Where in all this do I, a woman, fall?

EMERSON:

Dearest friends gone,
Our lives providential.
Brothers departed,
Life brief, accidental.
Nature bestows immortal beauty,
Dearer than family.
Greater than duties.

MARGARET *(to AUDIENCE):*

What to say?
Women's thoughts
So often condemned
To leave no trace.
This blessed place
Embracing conversations
Liberation of the mind
Revelations divine.
(to EMERSON)
Mr. Emerson,
There is much beauty
In what you portray.
Let's begin a correspondence

Without delay.

(EMERSON and MARGARET return to the house – it's dark out and time to sleep.)

EMERSON:

Goodnight, dear Margaret.

What an exquisite day!

MARGARET:

It was indeed.

There's so much more to say.

(EMERSON joins LIDIAN in bed)

EMERSON:

Goodnight, dear Lidian

Did you have a fruitful day?

LIDIAN:

Goodnight, dear Waldo

There's not much to say.

I slept most of the day away.

SCENE 13: Later that night...

(EMERSON, MARGARET, and LIDIAN each share their private yearnings with the AUDIENCE)

EMERSON:

(getting up and leaving LIDIAN alone)

Sleep, sleep,
My God, grant me sleep.
Wild fantasies,
Passion-filled destinies,
Shatter my lonely, cold peace.
Enchanted by her transparency,
Her intensity
I'm losing my self-reliance;
I will remain defiant.
Master of my own fate.

MARGARET *(in a guest room next to the library):*

Sleep, Sleep, I cannot sleep,
My God, grant me sleep.
Ideas conspire,
Set my mind on fire,
Enflaming my deepest desires.
Conquered by his ingenuity,
Hold fast
This bold alliance,
Embracing self-reliance,
Master of my own fate.

LIDIAN:

Sleep, sleep, I cannot sleep.
Must I lose my sleep?
Their philosophies,
Their ecstasies,
Scorn my pain, my frailties.
Their haughty laws float above my head,
Flood my soul with heavy dread.
Give me peace, my love, my mate,
Laudanum my sweet fate.

(Each in her/his private space, EMERSON, FULLER and LIDIAN sing together.)

EMERSON / MARGARET / LIDIAN:

Transcendence, transcendence, transcendent-

EMERSON:

-release.

EMERSON / MARGARET / LIDIAN:

Transcendence, transcendence, transcendent-

LIDIAN:

-grief.

Desires cease.

MARGARET:

Sublimely free.

EMERSON:

Divine relief.

EMERSON / MARGARET / LIDIAN:

Sleep.

SCENE 14: Friendship

REPORTER:

Miss Fuller had a lengthy stay,
Of several weeks
And several more days:
A correspondence begins.

MARGARET (*writing a letter to EMERSON*):

Dear Waldo,
Goethe says:
“Good without the bad
Cannot be sustained.
They enlighten each other
Guiding our way.”

EMERSON (*writing in his journal*):

She weaves a mystic trance.
An alluring dance.
Makes other friendships pale.

MARGARET (*continuing letter to EMERSON*):

Your newest book received by mail.
An inner life now breathes in me.
Words arrived from dear Anna,
My sweet.
She sends greetings from sunny Italy.

EMERSON (*writing a letter to MARGARET*):

Greetings to Anna, human divinity.
But, dear friend, come visit with me.
I've new essays to share
Desperate for your scrutiny.

LIDIAN:

Margaret gave passion,
Waldo's work took flight.
Margaret sought warmth,
Sought to overthrow a certain demeanor,
That left her cold.

MARGARET:

Your letters, so bold,
Promise what you fear to give.
When together, only your thoughts
Are allowed to live.

My fiery spirit tightly chained.
Engaged as a mirror,
Reflecting your glance.

EMERSON:

You seek power,
And sentimental Romance.

FULLER:

I seek honest friendships,
Equality in thought.
I need to be recognized.
Must this be a fault?

EMERSON:

All associations, a compromise.
The very flower of our natures
So different,
Their aromas vanish
When we draw near.
Desire for union only smothers
What we hold most dear.

FULLER:

For you solitude is best.
Apparently noble thoughts
United with actions
Only leads to distress.
Your cell of Transcendent truth,
Protects 'gainst that which you fear:
The wilderness of Humanity,
Which I hold so dear.
I yearn for attainment.
The hot tongue of passion's
Enveloping radiance.
True wisdom is gained
By the clear light of day.
In struggles and pain.
In feelings we often disdain.

LIDIAN (to AUDIENCE):

Margaret had spoke to no avail.
I knew she would fail.
His passion resides in his pen alone.
His heart as silent as ancient stone.

SCENE 15: A Lesson (*Image of a 19th century classroom*)

REPORTER:

Her father deceased,
Miss Fuller's financial role
In the family significantly increased.
A journey to the continent out of reach.

She's off to teach.
First at Bronson Alcott's
Radical Temple School...

ALCOTT:

No lectures, no drills,
No corporal punishment:
Just self-reflection, analytic skills.

CHORUS I:

Six-year olds disputing texts in the Bible?

CHORUS II:

Blasphemy and libel!

CHORUS I:

Enrollment of a mulatto girl?

CHORUS II:

The final straw.
Children immediately withdrawn.

REPORTER:

Fuller summoned to teach
At the fashionable Girls and Boys School
On Greene Street
Providence, Rhode Island.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Her pay significantly increased.
She's able to put her three brothers
Through Harvard.
That's no mean feat.

MARGARET:

(MARGARET is before her class of girls and boys at Greene St. School in Providence, RI)

Repeat after me:
Our capacities are infinite.
We may be what we will be.

CHORUS: *(singing in a round)*

Our capacities are infinite.
We may be what we will be.

MARGARET:

Now for our lesson in history...
Inspired by Monsieur De Tocqueville's
American Democracy.
His understanding of Americans and democracy profound.
On the need to abolish the cult of slavery,
His comments resound.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Over half your nation
Arrived indentured.
Seeking liberty.
Forging a new adventure.

MARGARET:

What changes did we see?

(TOBIAS raises his hand effusively making little "ooh, ooh, ooh" sounds. MARGARET points to him.)

Tobias.

TOBIAS *(proudly):*

The landed white male gentry finally vote!

(Emily raises her hand. MARGARET points to her.)

MARGARET:

Emily?

EMILY *(soberly):*

94% of God's creation—
Women, the poor, and slaves—
Their inalienable rights notably delayed.

MARGARET:

James?

JAMES:

Cheap labor profits our nation.
Wealth forged on other's backs -

ROSE:

But without our father's mills,
This school wouldn't last!

FULLER:

Quite true, dear Rose,
Girls of the mills are the benefactors of this school.
Though not the beneficiaries as a rule.
Working from dawn to dusk,
Six days a week.
Ear-splitting noise from the machinery.
No ventilation to ease the air of flying threads.

EMILY:

Given a choice, I'd rather be dead.

ELIZABETH:

What would you say to better working conditions,
And higher pay, instead?

THOMAS:

Freeing slaves bent over in the hot sun,
They deserve compensation.
Without their labor,
The cotton we wear could not be spun.

TOBIAS:

I think it says, somewhere in the Bible,
Slavery's their salvation.

MARGARET:

For your homework, dear Tobias,
Please bring in that curious citation.

CHORUS OF STUDENTS:

(TOBIAS and ROSE notably silent, exchanging dissenting glances.)

Our Black friends,
Men, women, children cruelly displayed.
Enduring barbaric, inhuman trade.

JAMES:

No rights of family, no freedom, no pay.

ELIZABETH:

Women...

TOBIAS:

Meant to serve husband and family,

EMILY:

Barely ever any praise,
Little or no pay.
Their husbands fallen on drink.

(gasps from the students)

Least that's what they say.

JAMES:

We forgot our country's first inhabitants.
Their land the émigrés coveted.

ROSE:

God ordained 'twas the white man's destiny
To "discover" it.

EMILY:

Fencing in by force another's land,
As far as the eye can see:
A violation of human rights and basic liberties.

ELIZABETH *(the minister's daughter, with fervor):*

We go to church every Sunday
Where our ministers tell us
That the Eternal Being made us all the same,
Gave us the duty to help one another...

EMILY:

As long as they happen to look like your brother.

ROSE / TOBIAS:

What's wrong with that?
Family is where it's at.
White belong with White, Black with Black.

EMILY:

And where would you put the Semite, Christ?

(long silence)

ELIZABETH:

In Heaven where all good people go,
No matter their surname,

No matter their status or lack of gold.

THOMAS:

My pa says, "There's no heaven or hell.
Just the sweat of our brow keeps us out of jail."

ELIZABETH:

No Heaven or Hell!!
Where do God and Satan dwell?

THOMAS:

In your imagination!

(CHORUS OF STUDENTS gasp.)

TOBIAS:

You're gonna roast in Hell!

(THOMAS lunges at TOBIAS and a fist fight ensues. EMILY takes off her jacket flailing it at TOBIAS.)

CHORUS OF STUDENTS:

Roast in Hell! Roast in Hell!
Roast in Hell! Roast in Hell!

MARGARET:

(firmly) Cease and desist!

(CHILDREN freeze.)

MARGARET & DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Is war so difficult to resist?
Nothing more wonderful
Than the art of being free,
But nothing harder to practice
Than true democracy!

MARGARET:

Form a line and face our public,
At attention please!
Witnesses to our lapse in decorum,
No doubt they're shocked...displeased.
Yes, nothing so hard to practice
Than our precious democracy.
Everyone at ease!
Repeat after me:
Our capacities are infinite;

We may be what we will be,
As long as we are truly free.

CHORUS:

(sing in a round)

Our capacities are infinite;
We may be what we will be,
As long as we are truly free.

(THOMAS pushes TOBIAS. TOBIAS pushes back. The fight is about to resume...)

REPORTER:

Newsflash!
We interrupt this lesson in human civility.

(CHILDREN come to attention.)

Sam Ward returns from abroad,
Full of awe at what he saw.
Margaret is filled with jubilation,
Which soon turns to disputation,
Once she understands the object
Of Sam's infatuation.

(SAM and MARGARET waltz. The dashes of colorful brush strokes that were the background in the first waltz scene are now in black and white.)

MARGARET:

My dearest Sam,
My dearest Rafaello,
I missed you so.
What did you learn?
What did you see?
Show me your art.
Let me be enthralled.

WARD:

There was much art,
By the greats, to see,
But my thoughts were drawn
To the greatest of beauties.
And soon the art seemed a mere distraction,
Leading to restlessness, deep dissatisfaction.
I must have the object of my desire.
I must have Anna's hand, or else catch fire.
Her father relented,
Heeding my desperate cries.

Of course, I had to give up art,
And all that implies.
Make adjustments to my professional rank.
Fortunately, her father gave me a job at his bank.

MARGARET:

Have I misheard?
The beauty of nature, the beauty of art,
That once brought us together,
Now ripped apart?
Our shared aspirations turned to sand?

WARD:

That dream we did share,
Like a son to his mother.
That love will never be torn asunder.

MARGARET:

You sell out your talents:
That is the greatest upset!
You're no son of mine,
That's the truth my pet.
Sam, you've played me miserably.

(MARGARET is poised to slap SAM, then in despair she reaches out to him and holds him close.)

Oh, my dear boy,
Has love made me mad?
It's just my heart's broken.
You were my shrine,
You've taken sweet Anna.
I'm solitary again...
Please let's make amends.

(MARGARET collapses to her knees, SAM raises MARGARET up and takes her hands, kisses them and leaves.)

MARGARET:

Anna, dear Anna,
My sweet,
My sweet,
My sweet.

SCENE 16: Conversations

(Projection : Elizabeth Peabody bookstore interior..)

REPORTER (*CHORUS of WOMEN enters chattering, books and writing utensils in hand.*):

Newsflash!

DETOCQUEVILLE (*interrupts*):

Fuller turns her attention

To women denied a higher education.

Finds new hope promoting their aspirations.

CHORUS (*of women*):

Offering inspired conversations.

Held at the Boston bookstore

Of the eminent Elizabeth Peabody,

A Transcendentalist beehive

Of weighty interrogations.

WOMAN 1:

Margaret asks:

What were we born to do?

How shall we our natural birthrights pursue?

WOMAN 2:

Tomorrow I must back to New York go

Her words charge my soul.

I love her so.

WOMAN 3:

In my notes I read she had no infancy

But sprang full-armed,

What a prodigy!

WOMAN 1:

She was speaking

Of the goddess Minerva!

Not herself silly!

WOMAN 3:

I speak in metaphor,

Not literally!

She first learned Latin to read,

And Bacchus ruled her earliest creed.

WOMAN 1:

She says wisdom stings like a serpent.

WOMAN 2:

Nothing worth knowing
Does not have some penalty.

WOMAN 1:

We pay it the more willingly
As we grow wise.

WOMAN 2:

Here she comes,
In all her radiance!
Ready to inspire!

MARGARET:

Good afternoon, dear friends
Shall we begin.

WOMAN 1:

Miss Fuller.
You said in your last lecture
Man gained more than he lost by his sinful fall.
Evil can serve for good
In the grand scheme of all.

WOMAN 3:

Mr. Emerson says
'Tis a man's privilege to resist evil,
To strive triumphantly.
To recognize evil never.
Endeavoring always to be better!

MARGARET:

Can humankind learn from its errors?
Or is it best to live in terror.
Fearful of life's challenges,
Avoiding life's achievements
Life's pleasures?
What think you?

WOMAN 3:

Me?

MARGARET:

Yes. All of you.
What think you?
Let us all dare to think.

To find our own truth.

WOMAN 3:

My father and brothers
Claim thinking the way of men.
The way of woman:
Motherhood, the care of men.

MARGARET:

Cannot woman-man
Find themselves in many ways?
Daring to journey across the world?
Seeking the other, caring for all?

Will you follow me unto the precipice?
Face the storm of the world's resistance?
Reach for the hope,
A beacon of hope shining in the distance?

Can you find your true self in impossibilities?
Dare to leap into the deep of adversities?
Battling waves of imposed inequalities?
Overcoming tides of doubt and rigidity?
Steering relentlessly towards your goal,
The captain of your own soul.

Discover islands of profound engagement.
A paradise of rapturous fulfillment.
Can you taste the sweet fruit of freedom?
The satisfaction of knowledge and wisdom
Soothing parched lips, hungry for experience.
Promising new worlds
Breaking the bonds of fear and enslavement.
Honor and wisdom our foremost attainment.

Can you see through the mist?
Can you see through the mist of time?
See the women who came before you?
Through the mist of time they become history.
Those who chose to cross eternity,
Offering testament of hope to our kind.

Honored by poets and prophets alike.

Pure and tender Sita
Of the Ramayana,
Egyptian Isis,
Goddess of eternal life.
Ceres of abundance,
Minerva of wisdom,
Eve of all origins,
Mary of all resurrections.
Isabelle and Elizabeth
Who ruled the seas,
And Catherine
Who ruled men,
Their lives provide the key
To understanding
That which makes us free.
Women, women, women.

A wave of anticipation
Embraces me.
Hold fast to your ship,
Captains of your destiny!
I see them all,
The pantheon of womanhood
Calling to us from the future.

CHORUS:

Sita...

Isis...

Ceres...

Minerva...

Eve...

Marv...

Sita, Isis, Ceres,
Minerva, Eve, Mary...

Sita, Isis, Ceres,
Minerva, Eve, Mary...

(A wild bacchanal dance by the CHORUS, embracing their notebooks as MARGARET, Dionysus-like, leads them off. Followed by SNAKE.)

INTERMISSION

ACT II

SCENE 17: Journey into the Heartland – Is it UTOPIA?

(Projection: THE DIAL, then Drawings from SUMMER ON THE LAKES)

CHORUS:

1840, Emerson asks Fuller to edit the Dial.

REPORTER:

A journal, claims the opposition,
Full of dubious utopian ambition
God knows what they do
In those communes?
Dancing to music
Badly out of tune.

CHORUS:

1843,
New England's new Transcendentalist celebrity,
Margaret Fuller travels through Niagara Falls,
On to Chicago, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois too.
By boat and coach, running rapids in a canoe.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Visits Native Americans.
Calls them the first citizens of our beloved nation.
Sitting midst the Chippewa, the Ottawa,
She makes this disturbing observation...

MARGARET:

Slave drivers,
Indian traders populate our nation.
"Christians"
Claiming to be divinely endorsed agents.
Practice the cruel art of human exploitation!
Wonderful, the deceit hidden in man's heart!

Returning home to friends and relations,
My heart is filled with trepidation.
What I have, nobody wants.
Most prefer pleasant observations.
Nevertheless, I write and write,
I travel and write.

SCENE 18: Author, Reformer, Celebrity

De TOCQUEVILLE:

The story of her travels,
Summer on the Lakes, published.
Miss Fuller becomes a star,
Read by folks afar.

REPORTER:

Critics bemoan
The book's subjective tone.

MARGARET:

A plea for consideration of our native brothers,
The true founders of our illustrious nation.
Next will be my paeon to gender equality
Woman in the 19th Century:

CHORUS:

It will be a best seller of its time,
Controversial, yet sublime.
Having her say!

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Abolitionist Horace Greeley,
Editor of the NY Tribune,
Believes women deserve equal pay.
As to the woman's vote, however,
That's Democracy gone astray.
He invites dear Margaret
To come his way.
"To write for our newspaper,
Have your say."

MARGARET (to AUDIENCE):

If I'm to have my say,
Must rowdy, uncouth NY,
Be the place to stake my claim?
I made a stop at Ossining, NY.
To Sing-Sing,
Where Women in prison are put away,
Because men's desires must have their way.

CHORUS OF FALLEN WOMEN:

Society forbids us our desperate wage.
Born goodly souls, poverty, no education

Robs us of an honest pay.

MARGARET *(to audience)*:

Finally, I see what true poverty entails.
The promise of a desperate life
No end in sight,
Resorting to a life of crime
Followed by years condemned to jail.
Rich women—
I'm referring to you of the 19th century, of course—
Though loyal to husbands,
You earn your keep by similar means.
Providing your men domestic satisfaction,
Where the act is seen as holy,
Rather than an infraction.

CHORUS OF FALLEN WOMEN:

Women,
Take up the cause of your sisters in pain.
All women, treated solely as objects of sex,
Are denied what is their right to expect:
Love, care, and simple human respect.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Embracing the political,
Gaining a voice for the times,
A new satisfaction.
Mlle. Fuller calls for action.
Women in the 19th Century, a hit.
Selling out in the first week,
She's become *(arm action usually seen when achieving a touchdown)* legit.
Having her say!
She continues to write,
Bringing the dark night of the soul into the light.

MARGARET:

Prison reform,
Renouncing bigotry,
Promoting literature,
Extolling equality.
Condemning slums,
Breeders of criminality.
Welcoming immigrants,
The Irish and the Jews,
Calling on society
To free the slaves.

Decrying their poverty.
Paving the way
For the dispossessed
To have their say.
My words joining the fight
For literary excellence and human rights.
I write! Having my say all day,
And through the night.

SCENE 19: Debate

REPORTER:

Woman in the 19th Century,
A critic calls it “a crime.”

(A debate format ensues like the presidential debates of 2016 on CNN with GRISWOLD stalking MARGARET about the stage.)

Rufus Wilmot Griswold opines...

RUFUS *(who stands in for all critics):*

This book is most disagreeable.
The tone unbearable.
Ideas that should not be spoken.
Their character most ignoble.
An affront to femininity,
And a woman’s innate dignity.

Read our poets.
You’ll find women are already
A divinity and adored,
As long as they mind their husbands,
Fulfill their conjugal duties,
Tend to their chores.

You would take my wife away
From the cradle and the kitchen
To vote in her own way?
Preaching from a pulpit?
Trying to hold sway?
How will she attend to her duties?
What you suggest is utter mutiny.
Besides, she’s more than satisfied,
Having more leisure time than I!

MARGARET:

Are these her words or thine?

RUFUS *(stalking MARGARET from behind):*

She prefers I speak for her.
Like a good little kitten, she purrs.
Content with what makes me happy.
Wisely keeping within the sphere of family.

Imagine the chaos:
Ladies in hysterics at the polls

Inhabiting disreputable roles.
Mothers entering politics.
Speaking to issues beyond their limits.
Senate chambers filled with cradles.
The government irreparably disabled.

MARGARET:

You think politics, government
Beyond woman's endurance?
Yet, never worry
About the work of slaves.
Women, even in pregnancy,
Enduring back breaking duties.
Taking care of Society's needs
In fields and factories.
Repaid by a life of poverty.

RUFUS:

Women are to be Saints of Domesticity.
Obedient, full of piety and purity.
Serving at their husband's behest.
As man, I know best.
I am the head and she the heart.

MARGARET:

Does the heart with the head consent?
Or become bitter with regrets?
You may repent:
Devaluing women upon whom you depend.
Women have proven themselves capable leaders
Of many a great nation once they are
Provided a sound education.
Treating them as a precious pet,
A mere gadget to satisfy your needs
A marionette, whose strings you pull
Denying them their right to great deeds.
Is foolish,
A squandering of human potential.
The realization of that which is universal.
Open your eyes:
Man, Woman are two sides of a duality,
Passing into each other perpetually.
There is no wholly masculine man,
No wholly feminine woman,
Rather sharing each other's qualities,
Striving for communion,

Equals in union.

RUFUS:

Clearly no man would seek you as wife.
Who would assent to a home full of strife?

MARGARET:

If it be so.
Rather than terrorize any poor man's life,
I will undergo to be my own priest, pupil,
Parent, child, husband, and wife.

RUFUS:

You are an aberration,
Which society must fight.

MARGARET:

I am nature's child:
Celebrating diversity,
One of its great delights.
Evolution's tool:
Striving for progress,
Transforming the rules.

Why is it men, women fear
Those who seek liberty,
In this land of the free,
Lovers of our sacred democracy?

(TO AUDIENCE more intimately than)

Back in my study I
Ponder this possibility:
Bloody, bloody hell!
If only I was a man,
Made of manly parts.
I could do whatever I want.
Lord it over all!
Instead of a bitch,
I'd be the man raising hell,
Coming out at the bell!
Shouting bugger it all!
Bloody, bloody hell!
Gold, guns, mortals I would sell.
No limits to my domain.
Medals, money, and honor
Showering my glorious name:
Manfred Fuller would I be,

Making my claim to fame.
Waging war!
Chugging down whisky at the bar.
Hurling epithets that would jar the mouths
Of the best of men.
Shouting bugger it all!
(CHORUS joins) Bloody, bloody
And another bloody hell!

(MARGARET slumps down on the floor and sighs. Then picks herself up.)

Thank the lord I am woman!
With a manly strength.
It takes humility to honor others,
To honor the feminine in us all.
It takes determination
To work for equality and peace!
Represented by female goddesses I might add.
Pax, Guan Yin, Amaterasu, Eirene.
Nurturing, providing love and tenderness
When we are all,
Both men and women, at our best.
Free of abuse
The right for all life
To be given a world
In which to thrive.
Is that what some men fear
The truth beneath our tears?

SCENE 20: Personal Affairs

(News office, switching to boarding house room)

REPORTER:

In NY, finally,
Worthy gossip,
Floating 'round
The newspaper office.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Delicious news.
Cupid is on the move.
Fuller meets James Nathan,
Acquaintance of Horace Greeley,
A businessman from Germany.
Shared admiration for Goethe
Arouses philosophical foreplay
Serenades of music by Nathan
Inspire that delicious dance
Mutual romance.
Margaret wonders
Is this too good to be true?
A man who values her for herself
She can't help but be moved
Love letters exchanged.
Walks in nature entertained
Words of desire fashioned
Is this the prelude to physical passion?

CHORUS:

Mr. Nathan makes an advance,

(NATHAN puts his hands around MARGARET'S waist and tries to kiss her.)

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Mon Dieu! Much to Margaret's dismay.

(MARGARET slaps NATHAN)

Mr. Nathan finds,
That Ms. Fuller is of that society
Where hands must stay
Modestly displayed,
Till marriage vows are
Appropriately exchanged.
For Mlle. Fuller love is sacred
Not casually consummated.

Mr. Nathan leaves for Europe on business.
Leaves Josie, the dog, in Margaret's care.
A reminder of absent love,
Which the pooch and Margaret share.

(MARGARET reads her love letter to JOSIE.)

MARGARET:

What think you Josie dear?
About your master who seems to have disappeared?
I've a letter writ to our absent Nathan,
Which to you I submit.
And hope you'll not find it unfit.
Here 'tis:
Dear Love,
If you were only here.
This summer is without peer.
Softness, splendor, sweep of breeze,
Whispers every human has a destiny.

(remembering JOSIE, crossing out human)

Every creature has a destiny.
(adds to the letter)
In some few...
Of humankind,
The meaning of our times is writ within.
And a feeling comes to mind
That I am one,
Enlisted among women
To ignite a deeper consideration
Of the human condition.
Of woman's need for education,
And the ultimate liberation
Of the oppressed in our nation.
Your absence forces me back upon myself.
Like a child bereft of her dear father.
Just Josie and me.
And she seems to agree
There's no escape from this
Overpowering sense of destiny.
And in closing,
She demands indication of when
She might again kiss your sweet hand.

(MARGARET puts Josie's paw print at the end as a signature.)

SCENE 21: Voyage to the Continent

(Projections: Neptune, Boarding house room. SNAKE and JOSIE seen cavorting.)

CHORUS:

Summer 1846
Henry David Thoreau jailed
Refusing to pay his taxes:
Protesting slavery
And the Mexican-American war,
Which he thought took
American Manifest Destiny too far.

REPORTER:

News alert!
Miss Fuller,
Invited to travel to the continent,
Serves as the NY Herald's
Foreign correspondent,
And tutor to the Spring's
Charming son Eddie.
Their ample fortune
Supports the journey.

SCENE 22: LONDON (*Projections: London workhouses.*)

CHORUS:

1846, London.
The Bronte sisters assume male identities.
The only way to publish their poetry.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

On the stage,
Melodrama comes of age:
That penny dreadful,
The String of Pearls, premiers.
Featuring a villain so odd,
The Demon Barber, Sweeney Todd.
Murderer,
Procurer for sweet meat pies,
Begins a life of brutal crimes:
(CHORUS joins in):
The Industrial Revolution has arrived!

MARGARET:

London,
Terribly overcrowded streets,
Filled with poverty and disease.
Sullen workhouses everywhere appear,
Brutal conditions devised by profiteers.
The city grows,
As does crime and exploitation,
Discontent breeds,
Spreading to many a nation.
My articles to the Herald
Full of reflections on the poor.
Their misery contrasting with
The pleasure of the tour:
Beautiful landscapes full of allure.

REPORTER:

This just in.
A letter arrives from Miss Fuller's beloved Nathan.
An announcement that he has recently taken
A wife.

MARGARET (*to AUDIENCE*):

Alone,
I climb a mountain in Scotland fair.
The evening grows foggy,

I'm lost in despair.
Deserted, alone, cast away.
A frigid night.
I coldly contemplate
This horrible slight.
Should I die so soon?
Shrouded by a freezing mountain dew.
Watched over by the baleful eye
Of an uncaring moon?
I survive.
Descending the next day,
I declare in a letter:
Nathan you cad return my love letters
As soon as you can.

REPORTER:

He politely refuses,
Keeping them by his side.
His family,
Publishing them after he dies.

DE TOCQUEVILLE (*muscling in*):

There's more of interest to report today.
Though clearly steeped in bitter dismay
Over this petite affair,
This Nathan, she must foreswear,
Mlle. Fuller is seen visiting
Many a well-known celebrity.

MARGARET:

The visionary Carlyle,
That sublime poet Wordsworth,
And the fascinating Opium-Eater, De Quincy.
Plus, that noble Italian revolutionary in Exile,
Giuseppe Mazzini.
Now,
Steeped in the political cause of the times,
Witness to brutal poverty and crime,
I somberly declare myself to socialism aligned.
And the overthrow of oppressive sovereigns inclined.

CHORUS:

How "un-American" wealthy readers say:
"To force us to share our profits:
Workers are lucky to be paid.
Charity takes care of the poor in any case.

MARGARET *(to AUDIENCE)*:
Bloody, bloody, and more bloody hell!
Is charity really enough to save the day?
Is that poor humankind's only hope?
Must the drive for ever increasing profits
Hold sway?
How are the poor to cope?
Their invaluable labor met with meager pay?
Slaving away,
So that the few can have their parties,
Their latest fashions,
The best education, enormous mansions?
Really is this our legacy?
The flower of our precious democracy?
Bloody, bloody, bloody, bloody, bloody hell!

SCENE 23: PARIS (*Projections Paris*)

MARGARET:

It's off to Paris on this grand tour,
Where I observe just as many poor.
No clean water anywhere.
Suffering, inequality, endless despair.
My soul saved by cultures diverse.
The sublime Mlle. Rachel,
A great actress,
A master of verse.
An audience with George Sand,
Whom I find quite grand.
Chopin,
Sand's dying lover,
Consumption his cross to bear,
Offers a private recital:
In his music the spirit of rebellion so vital.

(in the drawing room of GEORGE SAND, CHOPIN is playing in an adjoining room.)

Madame Sand,
To your novels I am most devoted.

SAND (*French accent*):

Your admiration duly noted.
Can such admiration be sustained?
Reverence in friendship so difficult to maintain.

MARGARET:

I like you very much.
Your directness,
What a rush!
I have never liked anyone better.
Between us,
Reverence and friendship must join together.

SAND:

How romantic.
How wonderfully naïve.
How optimistic.
How spiritually inclined.
Your French, not bad,
I'm happy to opine.
Your vocabulary extensive.
Your accent, Mademoiselle,
Marvelously defective.

MARGARET:

Your accent charming,
Utterly disarming.

(MARGARET pulls out her notebook and goes into journalist mode)

Madame Sand,
What have you to say
About women's rights?

SAND:

For me,
It is the right to love and be loved.
No matter how poor.
No matter how obscure.
In the city or the countryside,
Freedom to love is nature's right.
And you Mademoiselle,
In how many lovers
Have you found delight?

MARGARET *(caught off guard):*

Ah, um, ah...
Monsieur Chopin's music does excite
A world of strife.
As if the revolution might unfold tonight!

SAND:

Indeed!

(calling to Chopin in the other room)

Frederic,
You must your music cease.

(music stops)

L'Americaine suddenly fears the chaos
It might release.
Fervent passions arising from the deep.
But, Mlle. Fuller,
Your book,
Woman in the 19th century,
A serpentine of thoughts.
Many beginnings.
Where will they end?

MARGARET:

Infinite paths are ours to seek,
Inspiring hearts and minds
To speak truly,
Thus, woman and man become complete.

SAND:

(holding and patting MARGARET'S hand as if to reassure her – amused by MARGARET'S effusiveness)

Agreed.
A new way to live.
Infinite paths...
To each his own.

MARGARET:

A community of Individualities
Building unity.

SAND:

But how to proceed?

FULLER:

In deep conversations,
Moving freely through life,
And we must write!

SAND:

Write!

FULLER:

Write!

FULLER / SAND:

Yes, write!
The pen our sword in this “ancienne” fight,
Like the three Mousquetaires.
Like our noble predecessors:
Sappho,
Hildegard,
Murasaki,
Li Qingzhao.
Heloise,
Isabella Andreini,
Frances Burney,
Madame de Staël.
Aphra Behn,
Jane Austen,

Mary Shelley,
Mary Wollstonecraft.

SAND:
So many.
I'm out of breath.

MARGARET *(almost ecstatic):*
All for one!
One for all!

MARGARET / SAND:
All for one!
One for all!
Duelling for justice.
Words, our blades
Steeped in ink,
Fighting for our rights.
Free to think!
All for one!
One for all!
One for all!
All for one!

(MARGARET and SAND pretend they are dueling an imaginary enemy with pens, which they soon conquer. The music crescendos – MICKIEWICZ enters. They collapse.)

SAND:
Ah dear Adam, quelle surprise!
Je te presente Mademoiselle Margaret Fuller.

MICKIEWICZ / FULLER:
Enchanté!

SAND:
Miss Fuller,
Adam Mickiewicz.
A good friend of our dear Chopin.
Adam is Poland's' greatest poet,
In exile,
In protest,
Hails Poland's need to be free.

MICKIEWICZ *(Polish accent):*
But what an unexpected encounter.
Mlle. Fuller,
I have read your book,

Women in the 19th century.
It filled me with unbearable fury!

(MARGARET alarmed, expecting condemnation.)

You are a Prophet for the New Woman.
You must continue to take a stand.
You are a revolutionary!
But I wonder
At your attachment to virginity?
As a form of self-reliance.
Denying a woman's full emancipation:
Her powers of social defiance.
Through love making deep alliances.
Do not veil,
What is yours to set free.
Passion and love,
A foundation of liberty.

MARGARET *(not used to being around people more effusive than herself)*
I am at loss for words.

(tenderly and passionately, taking MARGARET's hand in his)

MICKIEWICZ:
Your eyes tell me all.

(MICKIEWICZ calls to Chopin in the other room)

Frédéric, my friend,
If you please some music.
I feel a poem arriving like a wave,
Seeking release.

(MICKIEWICZ continues to hold MARGARET's hands, looking at her intently.)

They call me cold.
I hide away my fears
Behind my indifferent gaze,
Disguising the inner flame
Of my emotions.
Only in the dark of night
Can I lay the storms of my heart
Upon your heart,
Quietly pouring out my tears.
(CHOPIN takes over with music that builds to a crescendo.)

Mlle. Fuller,
Follow your passions.
Follow your love.
Embracing what is yours.
Be free.

SAND:

Yes to love,
Yes to liberty.
Do you hear the world unfold?
Music, music.
Enchantment of melody.
Miracle of harmony.
Poetry, surpassing words,
Creating an e'erlasting yes.

MICKIEWICZ:

Music's pulse breaks our chains.
A beautiful dissonance celebrates change.

SAND:

The wild spirit of our times must sing,
Whose soul is love,
Human divinity.

SAND / MICKIEWICZ

An e'erlasting yes,
Ours to seize.
Yes to love!
Yes to liberty!

MARGARET:

Veiling music in gloomy draperies,
We fear its power, its resolute sting.
Deny its transforming measure,
Closing ourselves to its sacred treasures.

SAND / MICKIEWICZ / FULLER:

An e'erlasting yes,
Bursting with strength,
Seizes deep emotions:
Humankind's fiercest devotions.

FULLER:

Music, music.
Can we truly meet bitter music so sweet?

Full of precious, cruel assaults.
Forging melodies, stirring revolt.

MICKIEWICZ:

I say an e'erlasting yes!

MARGARET / SAND / MICKIEWICZ:

No longer willing to deny,
Life's urgent cry.
An e'erlasting yes!
Give us music, music,
Divine, ruthless, unrelenting,
Resolute music.
All for one! One for all!
Give us life,
Give us love,
Give us liberty for all.

MARGARET:

(overcome by enthusiasm, jumping onto SAND's armchair – MICKIEWICZ supporting her)
Breaking news!
Europe is aflame.
Revolution is everywhere proclaimed.

SAND *(realizing that MARGARET is on her armchair):*
Ooh la la! Mademoiselle, Attention!

(SAND helps her get down. They embrace.)

MARGARET *(to the AUDIENCE):*

Dear Friends!
Can you feel the joy?
Can you feel the change?
Can you feel the Revolution lifting us?
We will grow as we must.
Let's say "together," and not "apart."
Together there's hope for us all!
Vive l'evolution!
Long live our march
Towards true emancipation!
True justice.
True security for one and all!

SCENE 24: Rome at Last (*Projections: Images related to News*)

CHORUS (*split CHORUS*):

Breaking news!
Scottish obstetrician James Simpson,
Using anesthesia in childbirth is much maligned.

CHURCHMEN CHORUS:

Say the men of the church:
God intended women to suffer during birth.
Easing their pain is a crime against the divine.

CHORUS:

Queen Victoria proves them wrong.
Requesting the drug,
Her painful birth pangs are soon gone.

REPORTER

Back in the USA,
An milestone is made.
Elizabeth Blackwell,
A woman, is accepted
To Medical School
By mistake.

The school administration
Full of trepidation,
Concerning
Miss Blackwell's
Unexpected application
Gave the decision up
To a student vote.
The students
Thinking it a hoax,
Admitted her as
A silly little joke!

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

(*projection of Rome – S. Peter's c. 1850*)

Ah les Americains,
Such comedians.
How else is progress made?
Merci à Dieu!
But let us return to the continent.
Mademoiselle Fuller moves on to Rome,
Finding herself finally at home.
Quite content, she visits St. Peter's,

Is separated from her friends.
Makes observations concerning his Holiness,
The Pope's extravagant administration.

MARGARET (*to AUDIENCE*):

St. Peter's Basilica.
Seat of luxury,
Power and serenity.
Exuding force and virility.
Fortress 'gainst free thinking,
Spiritual dissent.

Lost, I'm lost.
Nowhere to go.
Searching for a path,
Letting go of the past,
Reaching for my wildest dreams.
Lost, I'm lost.
Cut off from family.
Alone, without a guide.
No one to chart my course by.
Dante found his Virgil.
Odysseus his Athena.
Magellan his North Star.
Jesus his Mary Magdalene
Goethe his Charlotte, his inspiration...
Buddha his meditation.
Mohammad his Khadijah.
Shakespeare his Dark Lady.
Benjamin Franklin his Kite.
Washington his soldiers
Waiting through the night.
Huddled together
At the Delaware,
Anticipating the great fight...
Lost. Lost.
Emerson writes I've gone astray.
Become a lost soul, a castaway.
His words ringing in my mind:
"Let go Margaret, come home.
Leave your dreams behind."

OSSOLI (*Italian accent*):

Signora, mi scusi
Mi scusi, bella Signora.
You are lost it seems?

Can I be your guide?
Signora, mi scusi
Mi scusi, bella Signora,
Let me show you the sights.

MARGARET:

Gentile Signore,
Gentile Signore,
I have indeed lost my way.
My party seems to have disappeared.
So nice of you to appear.

OSSOLI:

Marquis Giovanni Ossoli.

MARGARET:

Margaret Fuller here.

(Projections- scenes of Rome)

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

And so it is with destiny:
Finally, a true love appears.
A noble count, a revolutionary,
Fighting in the rebel military.
Dedicated to the new Roman Republic,
Which readily endears him to Margaret.
He seems ideal.
He's handsome,
Though not philosophical,
Mon Dieu!
Yet, a dedicated lover,
It will soon be revealed.
No matter, he is 27
She's 37. Would the powers to be
Care in heaven?
He exudes tenderness, admiration, respect
A worthy combination.
Of exceptional appeal.
Let's be real.
For you out there
Who would rather she remained pure.
Alone, without a lover's embrace.
Sorry to disappoint.
Ossoli is a man for our times.
Modern,
Like Margaret, open to the sublime

Man-Woman resides in us all
In different degrees.
Mlle. Fuller has decreed.
She's butch, he's fey
They are made for each other,
I would say!
A marvelous legacy after all
Of that biblical incident,
We celebrate as the great Fall!
Or as we French call it La Petite Morte!
It is the Romantic Era after all.

REPORTER:

But challenging to Margaret's peers.
He's ten years younger.
No doubt, he's cavalier.

OSSOLI:

Ti amo appassionatamente
Saggia donna, bella donna
Adorabile, amabile.
Passare il resto della tua vita con me.
Sposa mi till death do us part
Heart to heart.

MARGARET:

To wed?

REPORTER:

Is he out of his mind?
He's a youth,
What's worse, a Catholic.
Your love would be cruelly ostracized.

MARGARET:

Yet still, he's kind.
Ten years younger,
Would my family really mind?

REPORTER:

Cambridge, Mass.,
Likely to be horrified.

MARGARET:

Yet, he's so lovely,
So caring,

So easy to like.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

A hero for our times.
Service towards others,
A faith that unifies.

MARGARET:

A source of comfort
To my weary mind.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

A chance at happiness,
Passion sublime.

MARGARET:

I must say no.

REPORTER:

It would be a crime.

MARGARET:

Loving one so young,
His love will soon fade.
Unraveled for sure,
By age and time.

Desolato
Mi caro.
Mi caro,
Desolato.

OSSOLI:

Perchè amore mio?
(to AUDIENCE)
She is a Protestant, yet still noble.
Perhaps she is wise to gently decline.
My family will never agree to our betrothal.
In service to our Pope,
Tradition will be their reproach.
The only choice to secretly elope.

SCENE 25: EROS (*projection: paintings of Mars and Venus by Titian, etc..*
MARGARET struggles between De Tocqueville and Reporter as they fight for her attention.)

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

The Count and Margaret continue as close friends,
Visiting museums, savoring art trends.
Italian paintings, sculptures entreat:
Celebrating nude lovers and naked putti;
Empowering a lover's greatest deeds.

REPORTER:

Puritan constraint ordains restraint.
Her love remains that of a virginal saint.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

He, of warmer climes, bides his time,
Attends her every needs:
Consummation his design.
Mlle. Fuller's Roman friends
Note in their American friend:

CHORUS:

A newfound unexpected beauty.
Is it the Roman air
That's made her so fair?
Are she and this young man
Really a pair?

MARGARET (*to AUDIENCE*):

By post, my friend, Mickiewicz,
Emboldens my needs.
Eventually, he says, I must concede.
(*MARGARET strokes Ossoli's face.*)
His face is soft, his eyes so kind.
Who cares what his religion is?
His years?
He's so gentle, so refined!
(*to audience*) I doubt if God would actually mind.

MICKIEWICZ:

Heat, heat, bodies tremble,
Fear and passion gently mingle.
Secret vows your intimate right.

MARGARET (*to AUDIENCE*):

Illusive sacred wedding night,

No longer imagined.
Exit the virgin queen,
Enter a citizen of love's delights.

MICKIEWICZ:

Blessed you'll be by desires divine.
Sacred lovers till the end of time.

MARGARET (to OSSOLI):

The Italian air opens my heart.
Unlocks a secret region,
A realm consumed by affections
No mortal can deny.

MICKIEWICZ:

Loving whispers, merciful gestures
Pulling you into a realm of desire.

MARGARET:

Yes, yes lover,
My dearest, hand to hand.
Hesitations surpassed.
Consumed by desire,
Sweet angels guard our celestial fire.

OSSOLI:

Bella amore mio, love of my life,
Come my darling be mine tonight.

MARGARET / OSSOLI:

Caressing hearts inflamed by desire,
Encircled by sweet love,
Gentle doves, alone together
We cannot be denied.
A realm of desire.
Our thoughts on fire.
Consumed by feelings we cannot deny.

(DE TOCQUEVILLE draws the curtain.)

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Finally! About time!
Let's not deny her
Her conjugal rights!

SCENE 26: LIBERTY, EQUALITY, MATERNITY

(projection: photo Seneca Falls convention, followed by Revolutions in Europe.)

REPORTER:

1848,
A year whose meaning we cannot overate.
In the US,
Women's suffrage is in the air.
Seneca Falls NY,
The 1st Women's Right's convention is quite an affair.
The leading ladies of the land take a stand,
Wishing Margaret Fuller could be on hand.

DE TOCQUEVILLE *(Communist Manifesto in hand):*

The *Communist Manifesto* is in print
Marx and Engels, by the way,
International Correspondents for the Tribune,
Predict:
Capitalism will soon be dismissed,
Replaced by communal ownership.
Across Europe and Latin America,
The disillusionment of the masses,
The poor no longer willing to remain
The lower classes.
Revolutions break out.
Independence from monarchs advances,
Then retreats.
Wealthy royal houses align:
The Rebels face defeat.

*(Variation on Verdi's Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves plays underneath the text.
Projections of Rome Revolution 1848)*

CHORU

A Roman Republic has begun.
Margaret and Ossoli fight on
Till she begins to show a mother's glow.

CHORUS MEMBER:

Off to the countryside she must go.
You see, no one is to know.
Little Angelino is born:
Black hair, dark eyes, red cheeks;
A gentle smile so sweet.

MARGARET *(to Audience):*

1849,

The Revolution in full swing,
To Rome I must flee.
Angelino to stay with the Nursemaid
While I go to Rome's aid.
Supervising a hospital for rebel Soldiers,
Bearing the weight of the revolution
Upon our shoulders.

CHORUS:

Humankind at stake.
Fight for freedom
For our children's sake.
Fight for the glory of all,
No matter how weak,
No matter how small.
Stand tall in solidarity
With courage,
We face our mortal enemies:
Heralds of tyranny,
Lies, and enslavement,
Fight for the truth, for liberty,
For equality.
Bombs, gunfire light up the sky.
We fight through the lonely night.
Soldiers, women, and children,
Brutally maimed,
Shoulder to shoulder
Courage gained
Victory attained.
Liberty must not be denied
We stand together.
Citizens unite!

MARGARET:

Of my beloved Ossoli,
And my darling son's, well-being
I dare not think.
The Revolution now won,
Now lost,
On the brink of despair and fear.
Our hopes sink.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Missing her dear son, she goes for a visit.
Discovers the nurse to the boy's health
Is indifferent

The Nurse's brother's,
Impassioned by their differences
Draw knives to settle their quarrels.
Time to leave, baby in arms,
Shielding him from harm.
And as her love for him grows,
The revolution comes sadly to a close.

CHORUS:

Our losses too great.
Wealthy monarchs with endless mercenaries
Impossible to defeat.
Liberty repealed; tyranny unleashed.
We fought for our future and lost.

MARGARET:

(Lullaby to her son)

Forgive our loss, my sweet.
Angelino darling, my sweet.
A miracle, a dream, dear boy,
Bringer of joy, sleep.
Bringer of peace.
Your smile so sweet.
My life complete.
Sleep my dear Angelino, my sweet.

SCENE 27: NATURE UNLEASHED – 1850

(projection: the wreck of the Royal Adelaide)

CHORUS:

11 PM, Saturday March 30, 1850.
The Royal Adelaide sinks rapidly
Off the coast of Kent.
All on board, two hundred fifty at least,
Mostly Irish, fleeing the Potato famine,
Lost at sea.
Family and friends sorely aggrieved.
Shipwreck's a common cause of fatality.
The wild sea and human error ending in catastrophe.

MARGARET / OSSOLI:

The Roman Republic defeated,
Seeking peace,
We live a few months in blissful solitude.
Romantic, the mood.
Happy parents enjoying our young son
Frolicking in the sun.
Holding off reality,
Soon we must flee:
Rebels in exile our destiny.

REPORTER:

Just in...
The great American scribe,
Mr. Nathaniel Hawthorne:
His novel, *The Scarlet A*,
Published this day.
Reminiscent of Miss Fuller—
A former acquaintance and muse—
In many ways:
Hester Prynne, an unwed woman with child;
Of independent thought and ties,
Stained by actions society deems unwise.

More novels he will write,
Reminiscent of Miss Fuller's type.
Obsessed with Margaret.
Irritated by her celebrity and acclaim.
His son, Julian, proclaims,
In a future not yet attained.
His father had utter disdain
For this difficult unapologetic dame,
Margaret Fuller,

Whom he found a great humbug,
Full of talent without authenticity.
Harping on woman's apparent nobility!

REPORTER:

This tale confided to Mr. Hawthorne
By a visiting American from Italy...

VISITING AMERICAN:

Miss Fuller, a celebrity, fallen from grace.
Maternity with a common laborer of no account,
He's got no culture nor intellectual integrity.

REPORTER:

The visitor's fabrications meant to entertain.
His voice choked with distain.
Making the claim...

VISITING AMERICAN:

Fuller no different than many a woman:
Foolhardy in love, susceptible to disgrace.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

Malheureusement!
Such lies will help to efface
Miss Fuller's popular base.
A valorous reputation soon defaced.
Her reputation condemned to expire
By the very men she inspired.

MARGARET *(to Audience):*

Full of foreboding, I book a ship.
America, our destination:
A fateful trip.
Haunted by tragic dreams.
Fearing loss at sea.
Fearing rejection, Emerson's dismay,
Condemned by a hostile society.
Should I return to family?
What is my destiny?

Rome,
My home, my rock,
Unlocked wisdom,
Which like a serpent stings.
That true liberty demands strength

And honesty.
All knowledge worth knowing,
Exacts a penalty.

Time to face our destiny,
Whatever it may be.

DE TOCQUEVILLE:

She pens letters of farewell.
Gives them to a friend in France
For safe keeping,
Should, perchance,
There be no future circumstance,
For meetings between family and friends,
Fearing an unwelcome end.

MARGARET:

Mother dear,
Your letter responding to my news
Of husband and child,
So generous, your love so tender.
My sweet husband Ossoli,
Like you, wholly without vanity,
No hothouse intellectual he.
Harmonious,
His poetry natural,
His affections profound.
Ready to serve humanity,
In him your kindness resounds.

Angelino, our fount of joy,
Whom we call Nino,
Is almost two.
He sends sweet kisses,
Sweet kisses to you.

Know you remain dear to my heart.
That I am aware, better than ever,
Of your patience, your care, so rare,
Bestowed upon me.
A balm in times of despair.
Allowing me to dare,
Even in the face of fear.
Eternally your loving child, Margaret.

SCENE 28: TEMPEST

(Projections of the sea. Then the moon shining over the sea followed by a storm at sea.)

MARGARET / OSSOLI *(to AUDIENCE):*

The journey begins.
The weather is tame.
The captain falls ill.
Smallpox to blame.
He passes away.
Our baby Angelino exposed,
Almost does the same.
In total dismay, our love is frayed.

OSSOLI:

Are you to blame?
You should never have visited the captain when ill.

MARGARET:

It's me you blame?
Having nursed so many,
I couldn't help but care for the captain so ill.

MARGARET / OSSOLI *(to AUDIENCE):*

Angelino recovers,
Saves the day.
We passionately embrace,
Our love regained.
All seems well.
The moon shines brightly,
So kindly on our love.
Then the sea begins to swell.
A hurricane impels the ship off-course.
The Ensign, now Captain,
Not used to storms,
Runs unexpectedly aground.
Shore can be seen
Beyond the wind's cruel sounds.
All but a few lifeboats destroyed
By the pitiless sea.
Women and children first.
Margaret refuses to leave.
Her love for Giovanni Angelo Ossoli
Greater than fear of the relentless sea
The ship breaks up.
The crew concedes,
The only way out
Is for all to take heed.

Everyone swim for your lives
With all due speed.

REPORTER:

Fuller, Ossoli, little Angelino—
Faced with certain death,
Should they plunge into the turbulent sea—
Look to shore with hope for relief.
People gather on the beach.

CHORUS:

Our goal to scavenge
The spoils of the sea.
Unwilling to risk our lives
Without guarantees.
Guarding our rowboats,
Scanning for debris,
For treasures of the shipwrecked,
Damned by the sea.

REPORTER:

The Storm suddenly assails.
Hungry winds strip the sails,
Emitting a harsh wail.
A wild vortex of sea
Consumes the mast.
Ossoli, embracing Margaret,
Loses his grasp.
The whirling waves embrace him.
He breathes his last.
Her dearly beloved baby boy,
She gives up to the remaining sailor,
To swim to shore,
To save her darling,
The source of her inner most joy.

MARGARET:

Angelino,
My darling boy, my sweet.
Giovanni, my lover, my heart,
Taken by the tempestuous sea.
Dashing hopes, tearing love apart.
The Ship sounds its final bell,
Through the waves Death calls me.

Angelino, fly across the seas.

Reach the comfort of safe harbors.
Grow to be a man,
Aspire to great deeds.
Remember me, your loving mother.
The Ship sounds its final bell.
Through the waves Death calls me.

Premonitions of this final destiny,
Alone, facing journey's end.
Forces denying the embrace of family,
Forbidding the company of dear friends.
The Ship sounds its final bell.
Through the waves Death calls me.

CHORUS:

Marg'ret,
Margaret Fuller be content
Your blazing light will soon be extinguished,
Waves casting you into eternity.

MARGARET:

Angelino,
Swim swift like the dolphins.
Gods of mercy,
Save my darling sweet boy.
Let him know his home,
Filled with the future:
Land of promised freedoms,
Offering joy.

CHORUS:

Marg'ret,
Margaret Fuller be content.
Your blazing light will soon be extinguished,
Waves casting you into eternity.

MARGARET:

Sands of time,
Disappearing through my hands.
Life's precious goals lost to destiny.

CHORUS:

Marg'ret,
Margaret Fuller be content.
Your blazing light will soon be extinguished,
Waves casting you into eternity.

(A final wave, pulls MARGARET back and down into the sea, the sea disappears into the dark, lights fade to focus on the CHORUS.)

CODA

(CHORUS, MARGARET FULLER in the center.)

CHORUS:

Transcendent lives,
Transcendent destiny.
See the women who came before you
Making history.
A testament of hope to that which makes us free.
Stand strong.
Dare to right those wrongs.
Oppressing our sisters and brothers
Yearning for justice and liberty.
Stand strong.
Continue the fight
To make us free.
Women, women, women.
Hold fast to your ship
Captains of your destiny!
Captains of your destiny...
Transcendent.
Free.

THE END