

A New Manifestation

Like many of her friends and fellow Transcendentalists, Margaret Fuller applied her political idealism to the task of improving society. Social conditions for Native Americans, slaves, women, immigrants, the poor, and the incarcerated cried out for "a new manifestation" of the principles on which the nation was established: "While any one is base, none can be entirely free and noble." Entrenched customs and "commercial fever" have debased our institutions and vulgarized the thought of the nation. "The wrongs, woes, and errors of the world yet unredressed," led Fuller to advocate education and action in light of conscience and a higher moral law. The extent of this new manifestation she called for was continually enlarged as her own sphere of involvement widened, from the parlors of Boston to the streets of New York and, finally, to the barricades of Rome.

Yet, no doubt, a new manifestation is at hand, a new hour in the day of man. We cannot expect to see any one sample of completed being, when the mass of men still lie engaged in the sod, or use the freedom of their limbs only with wolfish energy. The tree cannot come to flower till its root be free from the cankering worm, and its whole growth open to air and light. While any one is base, none can be entirely free and noble. Yet something new shall presently be shown of the life of man, for hearts crave, if minds do not know how to ask it.

WOMAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

