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# Margaret Fuller's Abolitionist Border Crossings and the Columns of the New-York Daily Tribune

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## Abstract

Between 26–27 July 1850, updates on the Elizabeth's shipwreck off the coast of Fire Island appear side-by-side in the pages of the New-York Daily Tribune with reports of the Congressional debates that led to the 1850 Compromise and the Fugitive Slave Law. Had Fuller lived to see this compromise and this law enacted, she would have been horrified: they reinscribed North/South divides and, at the same time, precluded abolitionists from protecting free blacks or fugitive slaves seeking freedom. The fact that we read news of Fuller's death-obituaries, elegies, the search for bodies but also for that bust of John Calhoun that she described soon after arriving in Florence-in newspaper columns adjacent to reports of these Congressional debates should draw our attention to the transatlantic circulation of her own abolitionist rallying cries. Fuller published abolitionist pieces in the New-York Daily Tribune before traveling to Europe-an article on Frederick Douglass in 1845, Independence Day in 1845, Cassius Clay in 1846-and, as Albert von Frank recently revealed, in *The Liberty Bell*. Yet Fuller's 1847–1849 experiences in Italy changed the abolitionist appeals she makes to an American readership recovering from the 1846–1848 Mexican War. At one point, she expresses her disappointment in the Pope's uncertain support for the Roman Republic by invoking her own fractured country. "And my country," Fuller writes, "what does she? You have chosen a new President from a Slave State, representative of the Mexican War." My goal in reading Fuller's references to the Mexican War and North/South divides is not to compare the Italian Revolution to a Civil War still a decade away. Instead, it's to study how Fuller's dispatches treat abolitionist borderlines-within and across nations-differently than articles she'd published in the same newspaper just three/four years earlier. Italy transformed the very ways she mapped difficult borderlines and their relationships to domestic reform.

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