

Introduction

Men of Poetry, Politics, and Power: A Series of Fortunate Events

In December of 1868 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, lauded for capturing ideals of American individualism, patriotism, and public sentiment in his poetry, arrived in Rome to a series of grand celebrations. Americans and Italians alike admired this fireside poet and esteemed Harvard professor. Children memorized his verses and well-educated adults praised his translation of Dante. This visit, Longfellow's celebrated second sojourn on the peninsula, differed notably from his first—as a little-known young scholar of languages in the late 1820s. Now the events celebrating the poet dotted the international news. One of these accounts was by New Yorker Emily Bliss Gould, then an expatriate in Rome. Gould wrote for Bret Harte's *Overland Monthly*, a California periodical similar to the *Alta California* where Mark Twain's columns on travel—soon to become *Innocents Abroad* (1869)—had begun a year earlier. Gould penned what Harte labeled his “Gossip Abroad” column. Often more political news than commentary on social life, Gould's correspondence that January reported on the affairs surrounding Longfellow's stay in Rome, as well as on events at St. Peter's, preparations for the Vatican Council, battles elsewhere in Europe, and activities of the royal families. Among the winter festivities for the “number of American residents” wintering there, Gould explained, Pennsylvania painter and poet Thomas Buchanan Read had hosted “dinner and . . . evening entertainment” in order “to greet Professor Longfellow.”²

The “season in Rome” was short that year. The brevity was not because ice briefly glazed Bernini's many fountains, surprising locals and sending them scurrying through the slippery streets rather than sauntering on their

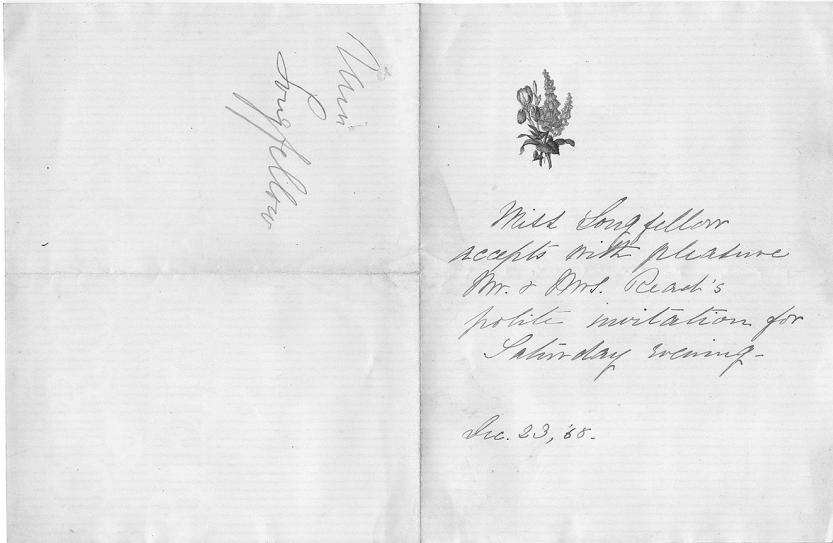


Figure I.1. Note from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's daughter, accepting the Thomas Buchanan Read family's invitation for dinner and entertainment. Credit: The Library Company of Philadelphia.

evening strolls. Instead, Lent, marking the end of the festivities, fell early. As a result, expatriates were “almost wild with the engagements that more than fill our days and nights,” Gould explained. These affairs no longer bore “the simplicity which [previously] marked the entertainments given at Rome.” That simple mode was “vanishing” as the decadent “habits of New York and Boston . . . resumed under the shadow of St. Peter’s and the Coliseum.” One dinner, for example, included peacock served with “brilliant tail and all.”³ Longfellow’s arrival merited such occasions for lavish social performances, according to Gould: “We who have been armed at his hand, and strengthened at his armory for the battle of life, delight to do him what honor we may. Dinners and balls, breakfasts and suppers, receptions and concerts, follow each other in quick succession.” His admirers abroad fought to be part of the affairs, she suggested in conclusion: “if to the usual social charm of Roman gatherings is added that of his society, we esteem ourselves happy indeed.”⁴

Another Longfellow event that winter, also an elaborate dinner party, was detailed by Gould’s neighbor near Rome’s Spanish Steps, Anne Hampton Brewster. “The Longfellow receptions and dinners are numerous—many of

them brilliant,” she wrote. “Mr. and Mrs. Childs entertainment last week was superb.” Brewster’s introduction to George W. Childs—publisher of Philadelphia’s *Public Ledger*—and his wife emerged through the Read family, with whom she had lived since her arrival in Rome in early November. The introduction enabled her to send letters to the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* and the *Boston Daily Advertiser*. This publishing agreement began after the evening with Longfellow—for Brewster a fortunate event that fostered her goals as a writer abroad. At the time of the Childs dinner, she had written only one account, of “American Artists in Rome,” focused on Read and the sculptor Joseph Mozier. Brewster’s detailed notes of the Longfellow dinner, recorded privately in her journal, suggest that she anticipated writing another article for the American press. She wrote of the dinner, “Flowers, lights, table decorations, dinner, every detail was perfect. Monsignor Nardi said he had never seen anything of the kind so beautiful.” Brewster’s journal entry continued, spilling onto several pages in dialogue form, capturing the lively conversation she conducted with the Monsignor Nardi.⁵

Who was this “Monsignor Nardi,” who raved about the dinner décor? And why would Brewster expound at length upon his comments and their conversation? Brewster knew Ernesto Francesco Nardi was a key political figure, controversial in his stature as a leader among the pope’s inner circle and in his international relations. During this period of political upheaval, in which questions of papal authority and the future of the Kingdom of Italy abounded, many labeled Nardi *nero*—literally translated black, but also designating evil—and at the time signifying association with nobility who supported the pope. He has been described recently by David Kertzer as “one of the most notorious of the *zelanti*,” among the zealous supporters of the pope’s continued temporal power who garnered a negative reputation among American Protestants for his secretive politics.⁶ But not all saw Nardi as evil—or he certainly would not have been included among the Childses’ guests for the Longfellow fête. In fact, Longfellow wrote to family friend Jane Norton that although he “never cared much for his political views, whatever they were,” Nardi was not so “nero” as he seemed; rather, he was “an active, energetic, stirring personage” who had been “very kind” to the poet’s family.⁷

On this festive evening, the stimulating Nardi escorted Brewster to the table, where the two discussed the controversial Syllabus of Errors, at the center of the Vatican Council’s deliberations on papal infallibility. During the dinner conversation, Brewster asked Nardi “as frankly as if it were the program of a concert” for a copy of “an ecclesiastical document meant only for

the private use of bishops.” Although surprised by her American abruptness, Nardi did not give Brewster the cold shoulder. Instead, their playful tête-à-tête in front of Longfellow that evening triggered correspondence between the two and fueled Brewster’s international newspaper work. Her regularly published letters to the Philadelphia and Boston papers provided details of the Vatican Council’s meetings, such as insights to the 1870 declaration of papal infallibility, gathered from local informants. She continued reporting on affairs abroad for another twenty years.⁸

But Nardi’s behavior with Brewster that January evening was not the same as his decorum with all Americans in Italy that winter—including Gould. The same month as the Longfellow dinner, one US periodical headline announced “An Outrage in Rome,” directing attention to Gould’s arrest for meeting with Protestants in her home. Soon after the arrest, the news account detailed, the Monsignor interrogated Gould before a Roman tribunal. Especially troubling to the reporter, and contributing to what they saw as a scandalous situation, was that an upstanding and virtuous female American underwent such public torture. Gould was not alone in Rome but accompanied by her husband, a retired US naval physician. As the supposed head of household in which the private worship occurred, Dr. James Gould, rather than his wife, should have been the responsible and interrogated party. But she was the accountable social force. Notably, Gould’s arrest and interrogation did not suppress her drive. Instead, they intensified her fervor. Gould’s activities evolved into educating young, impoverished Catholics in an industrial school and orphanage she established in 1870. Motivated by her hearing before the tribunal, Gould continued to reach out to other Anglos and Italians who she believed would support the cause of education among these children.⁹ For Gould as for Brewster, the encounter with Nardi needled her—contributing to a calling and fostering fruition of her utopian visions while abroad.

The public rendering of Gould’s arrest depended on other accounts made popular in the press. Roman Catholics’ treatment of those outside the church had garnered increasing attention in American newspapers at least since the forced baptism of Edgardo Mortara, a young Jewish boy in Bologna, in 1858. In 1860 Nathaniel Hawthorne, then as renowned as Longfellow, contributed to public interests in Jesuit operations in the US and abroad with his novel *The Marble Faun*, in which Hilda, a young American in Rome, is kidnapped by church officials. Anti-Catholic sentiment in the US had intensified, as the influx of European immigrants contributed to a growing Roman Catholic population in the US, making it the largest denomination

by the mid-1840s. Many parishes were bolstered by leadership and missions of Jesuits in exile after the 1848 European revolutions. The numbers had grown from 3 percent of the US population in 1830, continuing to 18 percent in 1900.¹⁰ This context of anti-Catholic sentiment contributed to support for Gould's work.

Gould's school project depended on many Americans in the US as well as in Italy in the 1860s and '70s. As the Longfellow celebrations illustrated, they were a diverse crowd. Brewster, for example, whose interactions with Nardi had been quite different, was a "Southern sympathizer" during the Civil War and a Roman Catholic. Brewster's and Gould's diverse lives and writings reflect the American interests in what came to be called the Roman Question—in short, a question of the relationship of church and state on the Italian peninsula, and the temporal power of Roman Catholic leadership in what had emerged as the newly unified Kingdom of Italy in 1861. Decisions in Italy, of course, would impact events within the US as well as the nation's relationships with others.

This controversial political situation also influenced the writings of New Englander Caroline Crane Marsh, who interacted in the same networks as Brewster and Gould. In fact, Marsh corresponded in 1867 with a friend who participated in the "Sunday night sings" at Gould's home in Rome, and Gould, while visiting Marsh in Florence the same year, had written to the president of the American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU) seeking help for their reform work.¹¹ Marsh, as wife of the first US minister plenipotentiary to Italy, George Perkins Marsh, certainly knew of Nardi's reputation, and Gould's arrest and the troubles among Protestants in Rome intensified her relationship with the Marshes. However, the relationship predated this period. In 1860 a young and unmarried New Yorker, Cornelia Mitchell, had traveled to Europe with the Goulds and, a few years after returning from her Grand Tour, wed Marsh's favorite nephew, Alexander B. Crane.¹² Additionally, linked by their mutual interest in social reform, the two women would communicate more after the move of Italy's capital from Florence to Rome in 1871 and the Marshes' transition to that locale.¹³ Marsh, neither an evangelical Protestant like Gould, nor a Roman Catholic like Brewster, wrote of her fascination with Norse and eastern mythology and labeled herself a "Progressivist" after reading Matthew Arnold's *Religion and Dogma: An Essay Towards a Better Understanding of the Bible*.¹⁴ She nonetheless supported the Italian "Free Church" movement, its leaders, such as former political exile Salvatore Ferretti, and its social reform efforts. Distinct from these other women, Marsh was a published translator and wrote poetry.

All three, however, saw their writings in print and wrote voluminously in diaries and private correspondence.

To claim that Marsh, Gould, and Brewster were close friends would exaggerate the nature of their relationships. Rather, their shared citizenship and language linked them through networks of transnational concerns and social obligations that endured for many years. They merit attention in these pages because their diverse lives and writings through these years illuminate the powerful symbiotic and generative relations among people and their texts—especially in explosive moments of political uncertainty. When controversial public figures and institutional powers stimulate speculation on the future, social networks provide a powerful generative force for civic activity and reform—even among those acquaintances who hold differing views. Within these networks and activities, writing provides a record and a reinforcement, as well as an enabler of ideas. The ideas about change, also described here as the utopian visions these three American women held, lie at the center of *Engaging Italy*. Gould, Brewster, and Marsh have remained in the shadow of prominent and powerful men of poetry and politics, such as Longfellow and Nardi. Yet notably a series of fortunate events in Rome on the eve of the peninsula's political unification linked them. These events triggered and fostered their activities for more than a decade. These three women illustrate how they seized opportunities to actualize their utopian visions within a network of Americans abroad, some of whom were engaged with the local and global political climate. The women's writings—specifically, their public and private records—revise stories of women abroad, underscoring that many were more than consumers, artists, or mere spectators.

Gould, who established an industrial school and orphanage in Rome in 1870, generated reports, fundraising pamphlets, and letters to political and religious leaders in Italy to foster its growth and continuation. The Istituto Gould, an educational center in Florence, bears witness today to traces of her past and its ongoing influences.¹⁵ Marsh, too, became a leader of a girls' school and orphanage affiliated with Ferretti in Florence, raising funds for it in the US, organizing events, and overseeing teachers—all while writing regularly and overseeing a complex household of family members, visitors, and staff. In addition to translations, poetry, and encyclopedia entries, Marsh wrote her husband's biography after his death. Brewster sent approximately 750 "letters" to more than a half dozen American newspapers—and was reprinted in at least sixty others—during her twenty-year career in Rome. Regular columns in the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* and the *Boston Daily Advertiser* won her a following of readers, who anticipated her weekly

news from abroad. *Engaging Italy's* pages bring all three women's labors—trials, triumphs, and limitations—to light. They, like many other women throughout history, fostered social change in ways that deserve recognition. They followed their callings, sometimes fell in the face of challenges, and yet rose to figure out new ways of moving forward. Through their writing in transnational networks, they continually reconceived their identities and capacities as American women concerned with the world around them.

Armchair Travels and Types of Travelers

We all know Rome and its famous monuments from pictures we have seen in our childhood. No city is so familiar to us.

—Anne Hampton Brewster, November 1868¹⁶

The American in Europe, if a thinking mind, can only become more American.

—Margaret Fuller, *New-York Tribune*, 1848¹⁷

These women's diverse vocations while abroad were prompted in part by factors predating their arrivals in Italy and by prejudices they brought with them. Even before they arrived in Italy, Europe was nothing new to them. Marsh, for example, first traveled through Europe in 1849 en route to Asia, where her husband would serve as US minister to the Ottoman Empire from 1850 to 1854. This period of life abroad, where she witnessed devout and welcoming Muslims as well as the activities of well-intentioned American missionaries, influenced her experiences later in Italy. Brewster arrived in Europe first in 1857, settling in Vevey, Switzerland, and then Naples for an eighteenth-month sojourn, a full decade before she acted on her calling to move abroad for the final time as a news writer in Rome. Gould set out for Europe first with her husband in 1860, arriving in Rome in February of 1861 after a six-month journey on the typical Grand Tour route from Le Havre overland to Genoa and throughout Italy's Piedmont and Tuscan regions—a decade before she established the industrial school. Both Emily and James had hopes that her feeble health, the publicly stated reason for their journey, would improve. But long before arriving on the peninsula, Brewster's, Gould's, and Marsh's appetites for transnational concerns had been piqued by reading what others had written. These readings not only

influenced what they experienced while abroad but motivated them to create their own records—in unpublished diaries and letters as well as in published travel sketches and articles.

This material, largely untouched by scholars, provides rich, multifaceted pictures of their diverse transnational experiences, compiled throughout long periods in which the women lived abroad. This temporal expanse distinguishes them from numerous female travelers who kept diaries in which they sketched what they observed with a “tourist gaze.” Studies of travel diaries, initiated more than twenty years ago, have enriched awareness of how women traveled and with whom, the paths of their Grand Tours, and the books that influenced these travelers. These studies also note typical reactions to tourist sites, for example, providing a context for Brewster’s, Marsh’s, and Gould’s responses. Their journal accounts changed over time—much different when the women first arrived than they were later, as they wrote about events that filled and punctuated their daily lives during their decades abroad.¹⁸ These records illuminate how the women visualized themselves in relationship to a historical diorama of Americans and others on the Italian peninsula. Their situations early on would dramatize some typical responses of American exceptionalism but they would also play out with unique and diverse experiences on the world stage. The Roman Catholic news correspondent, the evangelical Protestant reformer, and the more liberal *ambasciatrice* each gained humility as they realized their places within another culture.

Before writing their views, of course, they were enticed to travel by reading, an activity common among Americans of their social class—educated individuals from property-owning families with access to private and circulating libraries. Popular authors such as Hawthorne and Longfellow also wrote of Italy even without having traveled there. Hawthorne set his 1844 story “Rappaccini’s Daughter” in Padua, long before he arrived in Italy in 1858. Longfellow’s 1824 poem “Italian Scenery” renders his imagined vision of Florence’s Arno much differently than his reaction upon arrival in the city in 1828 and his 1874 vision in “The Old Bridge at Florence.” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* and Germaine de Staël’s *Corinne*, both early-nineteenth-century fictional accounts, influenced American readers, providing visions of travelers to Italy who were transformed by the experience. Such works evoked a variety of responses in readers, such as Margaret Fuller, also motivated to travel to Rome by her reading of classical literature and history; Emily Dickinson, stimulated to write of the volcanoes Etna and Vesuvius without ever leaving the US;

and Hawthorne's wife, Sophia Peabody.¹⁹ Brewster, Marsh, and Gould as prospective travelers were not alone in having their imaginations influenced by literary visions of Italy.

Brewster, born into a long-standing Philadelphia family in 1819, read voraciously, borrowing from the library in Philadelphia and annotating numerous books of European history and literature in her personal collection.²⁰ Marsh, born in 1816 in Berkley, Massachusetts, read transnational literature and translated, long before going to Constantinople.²¹ In her early years she exhibited a gift at learning and helping others learn, an attribute that assisted her as a teacher before her marriage as well as in her years as ambassador's wife. Gould also was a teacher in her youth. Born in New York in 1822 as a child of a physician and leader of the American Sunday School Union (ASSU), her early instruction and teaching was in Sunday schools. As the ASSU was enlarging its missionary activities in this period, Gould would have had access to information on life abroad.²² And later, while abroad, the women continued their readings about the cultures in which they lived.

One illustrative example from Brewster's library is a volume she heavily annotated, A. H. L. Heeren's *A Manual of the History of the Political System of Europe and Its Colonies* (1857), published just prior to her departure for Italy. It helped prepare her for travels and remained with her as she journeyed across the Atlantic and settled in Rome. She scribbled on the back pages and noted dates and distances from Gibraltar during her voyage. Later, she added her views of 1872 occurrences in Rome and quoted from British political figure Sir Russell Odo's writings. In the section entitled "Political Relations of Europe, 1821," she cited points related to Italy, Napoleon III, France, and Prussia from Archibald Alison's *History of Europe* (1866), a book that appeared just two years before she left for Rome.²³

Brewster also wrote of the impact of her reading and the numerous "pictures" that formed travelers' ideas of Italy. On her arrival in 1868, she described her tour of Rome by moonlight:

We all know Rome and its famous monuments from pictures we have seen in our childhood. No city is so familiar to us. So of course I knew that this great mass of brick stone, with trees growing on the summit, this immense ellipse was the Flavian Circus, the Colosseum; this the arch of Titus, and that Constantine's, the hill to the left with its fine front of waving trees the Palatine, the other the famous Capitoline.²⁴

Brewster's preparatory reading and armchair traveling, later complemented by her own travels and observations, was not unique to her. It typified many nineteenth-century Americans who traveled to Europe. But what was it they were seeking? Why did these and others cross the Atlantic?

Gould's, Marsh's, and Brewster's desires, activities, and accomplishments abroad shine against the backdrop of comments about travel by their well-known contemporaries, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller. Fuller advocated the possibilities in one of her first letters from abroad published in Horace Greeley's *New-York Tribune*. Drawing from Emersonian ideals, Fuller described three "species" of American travelers and noted what she believed the superior of the three. While there were those who traveled to "spend" and "indulge" themselves in "fashionable clothes" and "good foreign cookery" in order to show off and gain "importance at home," there was also the "conceited," ignorant and bumbling "Jonathan" type, who asserted "that the frogs in one of our swamps make much finer" music than that of an antique European violin. This second type considered everything at home newer, simpler, and more natural—and therefore better than its counterpart abroad. But the ideal third type opened themselves to learn from their experiences in order to return and improve their own country. This type of traveler—with a "thinking mind"—would be a "Jonathan" nonetheless, an identity he could not shed. However, he would be changed in a positive way by experiencing "thought and culture" abroad, even while also becoming "more American."²⁵ Such changes in the "thinking American" would occur only with what Emerson idealized in his essay "The American Scholar" as "active reading," in which readers moved from the ideas contained in books, to go beyond the study and into the streets. Such "active reading" suggests engagement with immediate surroundings. Fuller experienced such engagement herself as she wrote about her interactions with people on the Italian peninsula.

Notably, Fuller's friend Emerson differed from her on his idea of travel. He wrote in "Self-Reliance," after his first trip to Europe, of the desires to travel to escape or "lose . . . sadness" as always "a fool's paradise." Noting Italy, England, and Egypt, in particular, as "idols" of travelers, he encouraged American artists not to "follow the Past and the Distant" but to consider what is nearby and within.²⁶ While Fuller was an advocate of allowing people—especially women—to unfold from within, building from their own inclinations and strengths, she considered insights while abroad essential to personal and social improvement. Her writings, recorded for the *Tribune* readers, distinguished her views from Emerson's in that

she considered these international interactions part of a “dialectical and cosmopolitan approach to culture and politics,” necessary to deconstruct oppositional and hierarchical boundaries. Chief among her visions emerging from these cross-cultural interactions was a razing of supposed sacrosanct “idols,” to which she refused to bow. Fuller’s views of “idolatry” emerged in her early writings, prior to her travel to Europe, as she considered her own hero worship of men such as her father and Emerson. Moved by the situations of other women she witnessed in rural Massachusetts and in her urban “conversations” and teaching, she fought against “the incorporation of images of patriarchal power (‘male idols’) within female psyches.” What Fuller saw as women’s “melancholic imprisonment in postures of idolatry” she would later apply to the people she observed in Italy—both male and female—as they were depicted by other Americans and Anglos in art and literature. Fuller experienced and wrote of her engagement with Italians, as she had with women in the US, in a way that reconstructed their possibilities and their agency.²⁷ Her view of the possibilities for travel and the openness it provided through cosmopolitan and cultural exchange provide a point of comparison—and perhaps even influence—for the experiences of other American women abroad.

Gould, Marsh, and Brewster knew of Fuller and likely knew of her writings, as many educated people of the northeastern US did. The Marshes’ library contained at least one biography of Fuller, and Gould hosted Fuller’s New England Transcendentalist peer, Elizabeth Peabody. Brewster referred specifically to Fuller as she employed the “Jonathan” type in a sketch of Americans in Rome in 1869. In this *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* letter, Brewster also referred to the Transcendentalist Fuller’s time in the failed Fourierist community Brook Farm, where Hawthorne also lived for several months before his marriage.²⁸ Most importantly, the women’s experiences abroad suggest Fuller’s concepts of American travelers might be revised and extended to apply to those who remained abroad long enough to be more than tourists.

Three new categories emerging from Fuller’s concepts would be, first, those Americans who chose isolation and almost ignored the Italian political landscape; second, those who observed it—as part of the “museum” or “spectacle” Mark Twain and Henry James described when they wrote of Americans abroad—or as a form of entertainment that would reinforce their own concepts of what was good with America; and finally, those such as Marsh, Brewster, and Gould who were open to engage with it more fully and were transformed by these interactions. Fuller advocated that the ideal

travelers would bring new insights back to the United States upon their returns. However, Gould, Brewster, and Marsh began to live differently while in Italy.²⁹ They were open to change while pursuing vocations abroad although they, like Fuller, wrestled with the idols that had been established in their lives as American genteel women. Challenges abounded, though certainly not of the same type they would have faced had they been victims of slavery or of forced exile from scenes of political chaos and war. Some of these challenges emerged due to their American “exceptionalism”—that self-centered perception Fuller described, in which their views were best; other challenges emerged because of their gender and cultural norms about women.

Circumscribed Women and Later Vocations

I like to think of women as half angels, as we should be.

—Anne Hampton Brewster, *Journal*, 1872³⁰

The woman who has peculiar gifts has a definite line marked out for her, and the call . . . may be as imperative as that which calls the missionary into the moral field or the mother into the family . . .

—Maria Mitchell, 1891³¹

The stories of Marsh, Gould, and Brewster, as they left the northeastern US and sailed abroad, illuminate decisive actions in response to callings, even as they were somewhat circumscribed as women. Their motivations for travel abroad remain relevant among discussions of nineteenth-century female travelers and literary heroines. Why did women such as Brewster, Gould, and Marsh travel? For health or for recreation? For business or pleasure? Did they seek, like so many nineteenth-century Americans taking their Grand Tour of Europe, to be educated and improved, or was the Tour merely a false front for self-indulgence? Did they hope to improve only themselves, or did they wish also to improve the people and places in which they found themselves? The questions suggest simple binaries, of course, and the answers are much more complex. These women imagined nineteenth-century Italy would expose them to centuries of traditions in art, architecture, religion, and culture, leading to self-improvement and, later, improving those with whom they interacted. They imagined life would be

less expensive, full of good food and wine, and they might be free from some of society's strictures. They imagined sunnier skies and a warmer climate than that of the northeastern cities they left. These imaginings—their utopian visions—prompted them to act, when at midlife they faced the possibilities of doing otherwise.

The women's visions and accounts of attempts to actualize them within the larger social and cultural contexts exhibit themes of "utopianism" as it has been discussed since Thomas More wrote his 1516 work, *Utopia*. His title captured the impossibilities of achieving *eutopia*, as he punned with the Greek prefixes "ou" and "eu," designating a "good place" that is always "no place." More's vision of a good place impossible to be reached emerged when England was in the throes of economic despair, crime brought about by hunger, and what is now called a "welfare gap." Since then, "utopianism," or "social dreaming" as it has been defined, generally has suggested a civic element, an attempt to improve "the good of the whole" through restructuring of flawed systems.³² Such "social dreaming," however, often accompanies visions of individual improvement. These personal desires for improvement lie in tension with dreams of making society a better place. The tension sometimes grows too tight, snapping as civic rules stifle individual freedoms, or self-centered desires demonstrate no concern for larger society. Both extremes are dystopian. But the dialectical nature of utopian dreaming dances between the two.

Not only does utopian dreaming shuttle between visions of the present, the past, and a possible future, it often occurs through conversations—or even disagreements—with others. As More's text illustrates, a Platonic dialogue between characters and assumed readers should engage them in thinking about a society or world different from the one they already know and in which they live. Gould, Brewster, and Marsh carried on such dialogues and conversations—with themselves, with others, and with the texts they read. These linguistic activities—including translation—enabled them to dream of lives different from those in which they seemed limited or confined. Nonetheless, as they stepped out on these paths of action, their dreams devolved from a perfect or good place sometimes into quasi-nightmares of its opposite. For the three, these shifts did not generally occur because of their own self-centered desires taking over, but more often as they realized their relative lack of power in the newly unified Kingdom of Italy. Their transformations occurred as they faced their limited positions. As privileged American women endowed with a degree of "exceptionalism," they awakened to the realities of living in a culture that was not their own.

The women's limitations emerged not only from their being outsiders in another culture but also because of gender and their relationships with men, who held much influence over them. Marsh went abroad because of her husband's appointment. Gould traveled with her husband—supposedly for her health, but also as he began a new part of his professional path. Each depended on her husband's finances, to a degree. Brewster, too, relied on some inheritance from her father—although she wrestled with her brother for it. Most notably, though, all three chose behaviors that did not push them to live on the margins of community. Instead, they circulated at the center of networks of Anglos and Americans abroad. And despite any desires they may have had for freedom and independence, they remained within the bounds of behaviors expected of women in the era.

Two statements Brewster wrote illustrate this circumscribed situation. As she wrote to her friend Thomas Davidson, describing her professional and personal struggle with Roman civic leader Rodolfo Lanciani, Brewster confessed and admitted defeat: "I gave in, woman like."³³ She languished in the shadows of Lanciani's limelight, in part because she refused to go beyond the bounds of what was considered appropriate female behavior. Brewster also wrote in her journal in response to the radical behaviors of writer Amelia Edwards, known for her racy romances and lifestyle. When she met Brewster in Rome, the two spent several stimulating evenings together. During the period of their encounters, Edwards began wearing a ring, signaling her marriage to her female traveling companion. Near the end of their short and intense relationship, Brewster wrote of the shock of "women loving women" and confessed, "I like to think of women as half angels, as we should be."³⁴ Brewster, like Gould and Marsh, chose actions that did not defy her understandings of acceptable womanhood. As a result, these women have fallen into archival crevices.

These privileged women knew of the conversations about questionable behaviors of women in Italy. They knew the stories of the *improvisatrice* Corinne, based on the Roman poet Corilla Olimpica, made famous by Madame de Staël's novel of that title, and how the American Fuller was said to have followed her path. They knew of American artists Louisa Lander and Harriet Hosmer and actress Charlotte Cushman, the "female Romeo," who was scorned for breaking gender boundaries. These women's behaviors, admired by some, helped to circumscribe Brewster, Gould, and Marsh within a compromising vision of "women as half angels." Yet these three older women acted nonetheless. The stories of their visions, engagement, and transformations merit consideration on two accounts: first, for

how they reveal the women's decisions to take action, fostered largely by the networks in which they interacted; and second, for how writing significantly developed, sustained, and recorded those deliberative actions. This book intertwines their literary activities and the voluminous pages each generated with the women's decisive behaviors in their public and private lives, noting at the same time the difficulty of distinguishing between public and private realms as they wrote for themselves, family, friends, and the larger world. These transnational networks in which they lived and wrote expand our understanding of women's lives and influences. Finally, these pages illustrate their changing utopian visions, as they recognized the problems of American exceptionalism and their own limitations. They did what they could, as women following their later vocations in Italy.

Of course, these women were not the only American women, writers, and artists who traveled to and lived in Italy, with attention to the political and social upheaval surrounding them. Marsh's husband had noted in an official dispatch of 1868 that "many Americans . . . for long terms of years . . . spent considerable periods in this country for reasons of health, economy, society and culture." He wrote of his opposition to impending trade taxes that he feared would doom the long-standing relationships between the two countries, explaining that Americans had never paid taxes to Italy. The potential imposition of taxes on Italians in the US might lead to reciprocity on those living abroad. In fact, temporary visitors as well as those who chose longer sojourns had "pursued different branches of art, industry, and commerce" and had increased dramatically in the Jacksonian and antebellum years.³⁵ Many of these Americans were women. The Grand Tour expected of elite men early in the century as part of their education, somewhat typical of privileged newly married couples on their honeymoons, and occasionally experienced by single women traveling with families, changed as the century progressed. The numbers exploded and began to include women traveling with other women or alone in the Gilded Age.³⁶ The stories of several of these travelers, especially visual artists, have been told.

Perhaps best known among these, news correspondent Fuller—the "Mythic Margaret"—looms large in the study of Americans in Italy. Fuller's tragic death by drowning just prior to reaching New York on her return home to the States in 1850 undoubtedly has contributed to her mythic stature. Her relationship with Emerson and her "foreign correspondence" for Greeley's politically progressive *New-York Tribune* had gained her quite an audience before she, her young son, and his father, Giovanni Ossoli, fled the political upheavals on the Italian peninsula following the Roman

revolution of 1848 and the short-lived Republic in the Eternal City. In addition to Fuller, many other women not as “mythic” engaged in social and political activism. English-born Jessie White Mario, for example, also witnessed military battles and wrote of them for American (as well as British) newspapers. Frances Power Cobbe wrote from Florence for the British press, and Eliza Lynn Linton also wrote of the social needs of impoverished children in Florence rather than romanticizing tourist sites. Hosmer and Edmonia Lewis responded to political controversy in the US and around them through their sculptures. And reformer Sarah Parker Remond—neither a visual artist nor a widely published author—contributed to abolition and equal rights movements through her European lecture circuit, medical studies, and a career in Italy.³⁷

In light of these numerous American and British women traveling to and living in Italy, and the numerous men who were traveling as well, two questions often asked about this project are “Why women?” and “Why *these* women?” The answers—at least to the first question—seem obvious to anyone familiar with women’s history and the pages that have been printed since the 1970s, when recovering stories of women’s lives long left languishing began to flourish within and outside of the academy. As the field of history emerged in the nineteenth century, decisions about genre and style impacted content as well, eliminating many works by intelligent, observant women writers such as Staël, whose histories did not fit the boundary-delineating definitions. Their works, what came to be referred to inappropriately as “amateur writing,” became distinct from “a more transcendent, professionalized, male realm of history writing.” By contrast, “women who made their living by writing for the marketplace” fell into a different category, although they combed libraries, newspapers, and artifacts for their sources, and at the same time “wrote endlessly, managed childbirths, families, and political catastrophe while doing so.” They “tried to make this material vibrant in travel books and historical novels,” even while they “haggled with publishers for terms.”³⁸ These smart, insightful works they left behind enlarge our views of culture and its strata, the numerous layers factoring in to social forces which lead to change.

Through their writings, the answer to the second question, “Why *these* women,” begins to emerge. The women in this study wrote genres that even today might not be deemed “serious” works—newspaper correspondence, fundraising reports, translations of poetry, and original verses, encyclopedia entries, and biography—yet they contributed to American and international history in the process. Additionally, their experiences enlarge arguments about

domesticity and “woman’s sphere,” especially in recent decades interested in globalization and mobility.³⁹ These women not only pushed the traditionally conceived boundaries of the “home” but also labored outside the “domestic” US space while they engaged with global affairs as they followed their “vocations” in Italy. I employ the term “vocations” to distinguish Brewster, Gould, and Marsh from what others have written about American women’s transformative experiences abroad. Helen Barolini, for example, describes Italy’s “lure” that enabled “personal metamorphoses,” and Sirpa Salenius has described the reasons for travel to Italy and its outcomes as “acculturation” and “self-fulfillment” where “Americans could concretize their potential.”⁴⁰

Records illustrating the successes of such female “professionals” abound—from the sculptors Hosmer and Lewis to the widely published American authors Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Constance Fenimore Woolson. While these studies provide valid explanations of their female subjects, Gould’s, Brewster’s, and Marsh’s experiences stray from prior patterns. Although all three women were transformed, *Engaging Italy* adds attention to each woman’s response to a calling, or “later vocation,” not initially anticipated. Each vocation centered on a “utopian vision” that arose from reflections on and negotiations with their past lives, present social situations, and uncertain futures. These negotiations, as laid bare here, distinguish these women’s stories.

Bergland’s description of Maria Mitchell’s life, travels, and writing are helpful in making this point. Mitchell, late in her life, reflected on women with a “call from God,” a phrase that aptly depicts Brewster’s, Gould’s, and Marsh’s activities in Italy. Mitchell expounded in 1891, reflecting on earlier years and their contemporaries:

The woman who has peculiar gifts has a definite line marked out for her, and the call from God to do his work in the field of scientific investigation may be as imperative as that which calls the missionary into the moral field or the mother into the family: as missionary, or as scientist, as sister or as mother, no woman has the right to lose her individuality.

Mitchell went on to comment on the impact of specific nineteenth-century women whose exemplary “callings” had an influence on her own professional trajectory, in a sense recognizing what I call a “sisterhood of support” even as she emphasized “the right to . . . individuality”: “We cannot overrate the consequences of such lives, whether it be Mrs. Somerville translating

LaPlace, Harriet Hosmer modeling her statues, Mrs. Browning writing her poems or Caroline Herschel spending nights under the open canopy; in all *it is devotion to idea, the loyalty to duty* which reaches to all ages.”⁴¹ This “devotion to an idea” and “loyalty to duty” by a translator, a visual artist, a poet, and an astronomer indicate what I label “vocations.” The term “vocation,” used interchangeably with “profession” in its secular sense, notes a movement to a particular type of work, or “special function,” toward which a person seems to have a “natural tendency . . . or fitness.” However, the primary definition of “vocation” includes also a spiritual or “divine influence” that “directs” or guide a person.⁴² This definition of “vocation” evokes the “devotion” and “duty” Mitchell describes and the sense of calling that reverberates in the writings of Brewster, Marsh, and Gould. It also suggests the use of “engaging” in this book’s title.

Engagement in the realm of courtship and marriage sometimes connotes an ethereal or ineffable bond that links people privately, yet it also indicates a bond that has public manifestations, and it suggests commitment to duty and responsibility. Sometimes the scientific metaphor of “chemistry” describes such an engagement, as though a rational, mathematic equation might explain a link otherwise considered inexplicable. So, too, whether considered divinely inspired or rationally explained, Brewster, Marsh, and Gould became engaged by the environment of Italy, called to “special functions” while abroad. For Brewster, it was relaying to the US information about the Vatican and the politics of new Rome, the latest excavations, and social and cultural events she deemed important to them. For Gould, it was raising funds for and directing the Roman schools that she believed would save spiritually and economically impoverished Italians. For Marsh, it was literary translation and writing, leading committee work for the Florentine orphanage and school, supervising young nieces, and assisting her husband’s work as they both interacted in the new Italy’s cosmopolitan and political circles.

Noting how these women responded to their callings—neither sent abroad as Christian missionaries nor following husbands who went for evangelical reasons—increases the already numerous facets of how women traveled and lived in cultures not originally their own. Of course, their experiences contrast greatly with those of women who came into the US in the nineteenth century, fleeing Europe and Asia for political, religious, and economic reasons. And they differ markedly as well from those who were brought as slaves, subject to the brutalities of the economic system. And there were those who became US citizens without moving, as the nation

annexed colonies on the same continent or within the same hemisphere. This story of privileged white women, whose paths reversed the traditional migration direction as they followed their callings abroad, is not meant to minimize other accounts of pain and struggle—including American expatriate visual artists and writers who went abroad as “exiles,” such as Constance Fenimore Woolson.⁴³ All deserve attention, yet all cannot be told within a single volume. Rather, this volume zooms in on how these three women to illustrate the networks in which they engaged and chose to act.

These privileged positions often emerge poignantly for readers today and are an important part of the story. The stereotypes about Others on the peninsula come through. Whether discussing the aristocratic, as Marsh often did when she critiqued their arranged marriages, or with references to impoverished laborers, as Gould did, or to the intermarriages of privileged, literate Anglo-Americans with less educated Romans, as Brewster did, the women’s words and actions resonate for readers now. The women’s successes and their failures as they took steps toward their utopian dreams speak loudly of human strengths and weaknesses. They learned about others and about themselves in the process, and their education in the face of these facts provides a redemptive quality—perhaps at least in the eyes of readers. While later learning does not excuse previous bad behavior, it may push readers to consider their own actions driven by ignorance.

Similarly, the stories of these women’s strengths and weaknesses, triumphs, and trials are not meant to minimize the roles of “the men in their lives”—to use a rather worn phrase. Their decisions of how to act and their abilities to do so often depended upon these men. Men, then, are not absent from this story. One way to visualize them is through Fuller’s vision of male–female relations as she matured as a writer and thinker. Fuller began to see the problem of hero worship, and the necessity of breaking the idealized “statues” as she matured and wrote her reflective “Autobiographical Romance.” She had idolized her father and Emerson as well as the heroes of Greek, Roman, German, and English literature and history, only eventually learning how these figures and her admiration of them reinforced the imbalanced and gendered roles of adoration that surrounded her in nineteenth-century culture. The everyday realities she faced moved her to action. Women she encountered in rural New England and in Boston, if they were to become more capable of achieving what we now call agency, needed to be taught to look within rather than to look to external sources for their truths and value. They should allow the “natural unfolding” from within themselves, stimulated by friends they considered their equals rather than by men they

idolized.⁴⁴ Men in Brewster's, Gould's, and Marsh's lives should be seen similarly in their supporting roles. This view is almost impossible, given the way in which men controlled so much of civic and cultural life. Unfortunately for Brewster, Gould, and Marsh, glimpses of hero worship emerge in their writings, sometimes conflicting with and limiting their visions of activism and engagement while abroad. Nonetheless, even with such social circumscriptions and dependency, Brewster, Gould, and Marsh responded to their callings, doing what they could to help those around them and to sustain themselves.

Italy as "Museum" and "Spectacle": Actors and Agents

Marsh, Gould, and Brewster were among many Americans abroad who witnessed firsthand the physical turmoil of political changes affiliated with global networks. But Gould's, Brewster's, and Marsh's actions help to revise the perspectives of James and Twain that Italy in this period was for Americans abroad a "museum" or a "mere spectacle."⁴⁵ The women became engaged with the volatile political situation around them as actors and agents of change rather than as spectators or merely self-centered performers. During this time of Italian "Unification," controversies about national unity, the pope's temporal power, and monarchical authority abounded, following not long after the Risorgimento Fuller had witnessed at midcentury. "Unification" and "Risorgimento" are fraught terms that embody complex, ongoing processes of negotiation and uncertainty; both labels designate periods whose boundaries blur. Some historians mark Unification as occurring in 1861, when the first capital and parliament of the Kingdom of Italy were established at Turin (the point at which the US President appointed Marsh to serve there). In 1861, however, the Papal States (from Rome in the west and extending to the Adriatic in the east) remained separate, in effect dividing the peninsula into northern and southern regions. Other scholars mark Unification as the moment when Rome was taken by the Italian soldiers of the new Kingdom of Italy, with their entry on September 20, 1870. But even after the breach of the Roman walls at Porta Pia, the uncertainties of leadership and diversity, of dialects, languages, and regions—which had been a part of Italian history for centuries—continued.⁴⁶

Earlier in the century, for example, Napoleon had ushered in changes with his revolutionary leadership and rise to power, even overthrowing two popes. After the fall of his system in 1814, the papacy and Papal States had