

subjects' works were conceived, written, published, and received. The condition of women is central to her. Genteel, educated American women of this period were subject to the Victorian ideology of separate spheres. For wives, men, as in Emerson's and Hawthorne's case, chose stability over passion, a help-mate for their genius. Daughters, such as Louisa May Alcott, were pressed into similar service. Before her marriage to Hawthorne, Sophia Peabody, in Cheever's interpretation, chose a common alternative to the burdens of marriage or spinsterhood by making the most of her medically induced ailments and becoming a "bed case." Louisa May Alcott, also a life-long victim of bad medicine, served both her birth-family and friends all her life, directly and with her earnings. After a long career of potboilers, children's stories, articles, and editorial work, Alcott finally wrote her wishful woman's life into the best-selling and now canonical novel *Little Women* (1868-9). Cheever sees in *Little Women* and Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) "the foundation of the American memoir"; in *Little Women* "Alcott invented a new way to write about the ordinary lives of women," and Cheever pays back the debt in this biography.

But she also celebrates the unconventional life that the erudite and passionate Margaret Fuller insisted on creating for herself. The first woman to be admitted to the Harvard Library, she circumvented the law against women's public speaking for money by conducting "Conversations" in Boston. She edited Emerson's magazine *The Dial* until it became clear that he would not pay her for her "service," and, in tandem with her anti-slavery campaign, she published *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), which originated in an essay in *The Dial*: "The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men, Woman versus Women," laying out "the foundations of modern feminism." After becoming the first female editor of the *New York Tribune*, she travelled

to Europe and reported on the British working classes and the Roman Revolution of 1848-9. In Rome, she nursed wounded soldiers, as Louisa May Alcott, inspired by Florence Nightingale, did during the American Civil War. In Italy Fuller acted on her regret that by avoiding the "trap" that marriage seemed to mean for women she was incurring a loss: "With the intellect I always have always shall overcome, but that is not half of the work. The life, the life Oh my God! Shall the life never be sweet?" George Eliot quoted this sentiment in a letter of 1852 as "inexpressibly touching." In need of earning a living for her new small family, including her baby son and his father Count Ossoli, who had been disinherited for his republican politics, Fuller sailed with them to America, but they perished in a spectacular shipwreck on the New England coast. The manuscript of her "History of the Late Italian Revolutions" was also lost. A new biography, Charles Capper's *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life* (2 vols., 1992, 2007), aims at compensating for the relative neglect caused by her early death at forty and her small published record and at establishing her as a first-rank public intellectual.

Cheever's address throughout is exclusively American: from an American author to an American audience on American icons. This accounts for what in a larger historical and transnational context would be overstatements on her subjects' originality, achievements, and influence. For instance, she omits any reference to Mary Wollstonecraft in the case of Margaret Fuller and is silent on such European Romantic and proto-Romantic works as Rousseau's *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, Goethe's *Sufferings of Young Werther*, and Wordsworth's *Prelude* when she claims that in *Walden* Thoreau "invented nature writing and memoir writing in one swift, brilliant stroke." What her engaging narrative shows is the Concord Transcendentalists' patriating and thereby adapting of crucial

principles of thought and action for America.

Gisela Argyle, Associate Professor of Humanities at York University in Toronto, has published Germany as Model and Monster: Allusions in English Fiction, 1830s-1930s (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), another book and articles on Victorian literature and comparative literature, as well as literary translations from German into English and the converse.

SISTERS IN TWO WORLDS: A VISUAL BIOGRAPHY OF SUSANNA MOODIE AND CATHARINE PARR TRAILL

Michael Peterman
Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2007

REVIEWED BY ALISON NORMAN

Sisters in Two Worlds is a beautiful book, one that will appeal to both specialists in Canadian women's history, and general readers interested in Canadiana. Susanna (Strickland) Moodie and Catharine Parr (Strickland) Traill are two of Canada's best-known pioneer "bush ladies," having immigrated to Upper Canada from England in 1832. Both were prolific writers, publishing short stories, novels, children's books, emigrant manuals, and poetry throughout their lives. Although Strickland scholar Michael Peterman has written a thoughtful narrative that tells the life stories of these two famous sisters, the star of the book is not the text, but the hundreds of images reproduced in colour on virtually every page. The text is there to support the images, and not the reverse. For this reason especially, the book is a valuable addition to the collection of publications on the Strickland family.