



Rev.

Volume 15, Number 2

Fall 2004

EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

Distinguished Achievement Award Presented to Albert J. von Frank

Albert J. von Frank received the Emerson Society's Distinguished Achievement Award on 29 May 2004 at the American Literature Association meeting in San Francisco in recognition of his many contributions to Emerson studies. The Edward R. Meyer Distinguished Professor of English at Washington State University, von Frank has served on the Emerson Society's advisory board (1990-1994). His work has been recognized by the American Antiquarian Society, which elected him to membership in 2003; by Washington State University, which chose him to deliver the Distinguished Faculty Address in 1996; and MLA, which awarded him the Richard Beale Davis Prize in 1994 for the best article in *Early American Literature*.

After receiving his A.B. degree from Amherst College in 1967, von Frank went on to receive an M.A. from the University of Wisconsin in 1968 and the Ph.D. from the University of Missouri in 1976. He spent a year as an instructor at the University of Rochester, then was an assistant professor at Harvard University from 1977 to 1983, during which time he helped support his wife Jane while she received her law degree. He joined the faculty at Washington State in 1984.

Von Frank's career began with an annotated secondary bibliography of John Greenleaf Whittier (1976). He then went on to help edit Emerson's *Poetry Notebooks* (1986), for which he completed the bulk of the critical work in the volume, particularly the "Analysis of Poems" section. From here, he put together a team to edit (in four volumes, 1989-1992) Emerson's *Sermons*, a masterful edition that thoroughly located the development of Emerson's early thought in these seminal writings, and that has changed the

way we look at Emerson's development as a thinker and his ultimate break with Unitarianism. His *Emerson Chronology* (1994) is a valuable day-to-day account of Emerson's life, one which every real Emersonian keeps close at hand.

His two critical books demonstrate von Frank's ability as a literary historian. *The Sacred Game: Provincialism and Frontier Consciousness in American Literature, 1630-1860* (1985) looks at literary provincialism and how American authors tried to compensate for their lack of cultural security in their writings. *The Trials of Anthony Burns* (1998) is a masterful tracing of the Emersonian influence on the people involved in Burns' trial and return in a book that is a combination of shrewd literary history, reception study, and cultural work. The many favorable reviews of this book show its impact, and the breadth of reviewing media demonstrates its interdisciplinary value.

When von Frank went to Washington State, he became the book review editor for *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*. He became co-editor in 1987 and editor in 1994, taking over a publication in transition and engaging in a redesign of the journal. His own critical eclecticism can be viewed in the choice of selections for *Critical Essays on Hawthorne's Short Stories*, which he edited in 1990.

For many years von Frank has encouraged Emerson studies by assisting colleagues with their work in many ways, from his insightful readings of their scholarship prior to publication to providing facts about Emerson's life and times, and it is therefore appropriate that he was chosen as the eleventh individual to receive this highest honor from the Emerson Society.

—Joel Myerson

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Emerson Society members continue generously to join at various "patron" levels of membership. All donations above the \$10 annual regular membership go to support special programs of the Society. Dues categories are Life (\$500), Sustaining (\$50), Contributing (\$25), and Regular (\$10). Please send check payable to The Emerson Society (U.S. dollars only) to Robert D. Habich, Secretary/Treasurer, Dept. of English, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306-0460.

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EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

The newsletter of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society
Published at Worcester Polytechnic Institute

www.emersonsociety.org

Editor: Douglas Emory Wilson
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Emerson Society Papers is published twice a year. Subscriptions, which include membership in the Society, are \$10 a year (students \$5). Send checks for membership (calendar year) and back issues (\$5 each) to Robert D. Habich, Department of English, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306-0460.

For future issues of *Emerson Society Papers* we solicit information about editions, publications, and research in progress on Emerson and his circle; queries and requests for information in aid of research in these fields; and significant news (promotions, transfers, retirements, deaths, etc.) of Emersonian scholars. We will also consider notes and short articles (about 4 to 5 double-spaced typewritten pages, or less) on subjects of interest to our membership. MLA stylesheet is preferred. Send manuscripts to the editor, Douglas Emory Wilson, 1404 Christine Ave., Anniston, AL 36207-3924.

Review copies of books on Emerson should be sent to book review editor Jennifer Gurley, Department of English, Lemoyne College, 1419 Salt Springs Road, Syracuse, NY 13214-1399.

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PROSPECTS.



Call for Papers—ALA 2005

The American Literature Association announces that its sixteenth annual conference will be held at the Westin Copley Place Hotel in Boston, Mass., on 26-29 May 2005. For details see www.americanliterature.org. Abstracts are invited for the two Emerson Society sessions below.

Please note that the Emerson Society's new Graduate Student Paper Award can provide up to \$500 to support travel to ALA to present an accepted student paper.

SESSION I: Reconsidering *The Conduct of Life*.

This panel celebrates the recent publication of *The Conduct of Life* as Volume 6 in the ongoing scholarly edition of the *Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Harvard University Press). *The Conduct of Life* (1860) is increasingly recognized as a key text in Emerson's corpus. Papers could address issues in any of its essays, the contribution of this new edition to Emerson studies, or the importance of *Conduct* itself, in Emerson's work or more generally in 19th-century letters and culture. 300-word abstracts by 15 December to Elizabeth Addison (addison@email.wcu.edu).

SESSION II: Emersonian Dilemmas: Individual and Community

The complex relations between Emerson's philosophy, his sense of his own intellectual vocation, and his allegiances to social reform have been widely discussed in recent years. Individualism and communitarianism have been, and will continue to be, important touchstones in these discussions. Papers for this panel could address ways in which Emerson and Transcendentalism negotiated the competing demands of individualism and communitarianism in reference to, for example, utopian social movements, women's rights, abolition, or the intellectual's role in public life. 300-word abstracts by 15 December to Joe Thomas (jthomas@caldwell.edu).

New Emerson Awards and Grants

The Emerson Society announces four new awards for projects that foster appreciation for Emerson:

- A Research Grant
- A Graduate Student Paper Award
- A Pedagogical or Community-based Project Grant
- A Subvention for books or articles on Emerson

Each carries up to a \$500 award. The awards emerge from

the 2003 Emerson Bicentennial initiative and were discussed and voted on by the Emerson Advisory Board and the general membership at the 2004 annual meeting. The Society is especially eager to foster work by graduate students, junior faculty, and Emerson admirers outside of the academy. We encourage all members of the Society to apply or to help publicize these awards by sharing a copy of the flyer with potential members. For more information about the awards, including deadlines and application procedures, please see the announcement elsewhere in this issue of *ESP* or contact Roger Thompson (thompsonrc@vmi.edu). Information is also available on the Society website, www.emersonsociety.org.

Oxford, England, 2006

The Emerson Society—in collaboration with the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society and the Poe Studies Association—will be crossing the Atlantic for a special conference on *Transatlanticism in American Literature: Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe* on 13-16 July 2006. The conference will be hosted by the Rothermere American Institute of Oxford University (www.rai.ox.ac.uk), with accommodations at nearby St. Catherine's College (www.stcatz.ox.ac.uk). Specific topics and a call for papers will be announced.

Emerson Sightings/Citings

Maxine Kumin's poem "On Being Asked During a National Crisis to Write a Poem in Celebration of the Bicentennial of Ralph Waldo Emerson" appears in *The Nation* (27 September 2004, p. 37). Clarence Burley, who sent this item, also points out that *The Mariner's Book of Days*, a calendar for 2005 by Peter H. Spectre (Sheridan House), has three Emerson items.

Allan Holtzman reports that in *Living a Life That Matters* (Knopf: 2001, p. 157) Harold Kushner credits Emerson with the familiar inspirational passage about "Success"—a common misattribution, as shown by Joel Myerson ("Emerson's 'Success'—Actually, it is not." *Emerson Society Papers* 11 [Spring 2000]: 1, 8).

Joel Brattin writes that in *Northern Borders*, Howard Frank Mosher's 1994 novel about coming of age in rural Vermont, the central character's "Big Aunt," Maiden Rose, has a matched team of Morgan horses. The horses are named Henry David and Ralph Waldo.

Additions to "A Bibliography of 'Emerson in 2003' in the Popular Media"

(See *ESP* 15 [Spring 2004]: 4-5)

Cotner, Robert. "Musings" (editorial) and "Emerson: Representative 'Great Man' of American letters" (five images with chronology of Emerson books). *Caxtonian: Journal of the Caxton Club of Chicago* 11 (July 2003): 2, 3. [Joel Myerson]

Kipen, David. "Muir owed a debt to Emerson." *San Francisco Chronicle*, 25 May 2003, p. M-1. [Richard Grossman]

Perrin, Noel. "Here's Waldo." *Washington Post*, 15 June 2003, p. T15. [Richard Grossman]

Abstracts of San Francisco ALA Papers

The following panels were presented by the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society
at the fifteenth annual conference of the American Literature Association on 27 and 28 May 2004 in San Francisco, California.

SESSION I: Emerson's Poetry: A Bicentennial Roundtable

Chair, Joseph M. Thomas (*Caldwell College*)

Thinking About Emerson's Poetry

PAUL KANE, *Vassar College*

- 1.1 We have not yet *read* Emerson's poems.
- 1.2 We have *interpreted* the poems in the light of three primary refractions:
 1. The prose (mainly the essays)
 2. Whitman and modern poetics
 3. Conventional or normative aesthetics
- 1.21 Here is an example of each approach:

"Much of the best of Emerson's poetry is to be found not in his verse but in his prose."
—Hyatt Waggoner, *Emerson as Poet* (1974)

Emerson's poetry "was a search for the dance of language that Charles Olson was to speak of a hundred years later."
—David Porter, *Emerson and Literary Change* (1978)

"The truth behind these charges is that he never mastered the poetic line as he did the prose sentence. Too much filler, too much reliance on cliché, too much semantic and syntactical contortion to fit rhyme and meter."
—Lawrence Buell, *Emerson* (2003)
- 2.1 In addition, critical studies of Emerson's poetry tend to conclude that the poetry is a failure.
- 2.2 Some examples:

"The poetry failure and the prose triumph were inseparable."
—David Porter, *Emerson and Literary Change* (1978)

"[Emerson] eventually descended, not to an underworld, but to a middle region where poetry is a limited power and the poet a man of common size or less."
—R. A Yoder, *Emerson and the Orphic Poet in America*, (1978)

"The paradox of Emerson's career is that his failure as a poet derives from his brilliance as a theorist."
—Eliza New, *The Regenerate Lyric* (1993)
- 2.3 A question: is it possible that such conclusions are influenced by or based upon *a priori* judgments rather than inductive analyses?
- 3.1 To *read* Emerson's poems we must first abandon our ideas about Emerson.
- 3.2 This would require something like a phenomenological approach to the poems themselves: a careful listening to what they say, and a close scrutiny of what they do.
- 3.21 Poems are events, not texts.
- 4.1 Once we have read Emerson's poems we must recall all our ideas about Emerson.
- 4.2 Having now thought about Emerson's poems, we should go on thinking about them.
- 5.1 To read an Emerson poem is to discover something we didn't know was there.

Emerson's Poetry – "Rival of the Rose"

SAUNDRA MORRIS, *Bucknell University*

I show how Emerson's poems, conventionally underemphasized among his texts, resonate especially well with current theoretical exchanges about language and politics. I stress the importance of reading Emerson's poetry in light of contemporary political issues, delineating what I have come to term a "politically ethical aesthetics" as a mandate inherent in Emerson's prose and poetry and crucial for readers today. Emerson's poetry, I suggest, calls into question high-modernist dichotomizations of the "aesthetic" and the "political." The question of the relation between the poetic and the political, I explain, is central to Emerson's poetry and his poetry theory. Rather than separating the two realms, Emerson's texts bring them into a necessary, even if also impossible, dialectic. I then read selected Emerson poems with historical and current issues of social justice and global survival in mind. I propose that the texts raise, then resolutely refuse, the option of ignoring political engagement in favor of aesthetic escape. At the same time, they insist upon the vital contributions of poetry and beauty to the establishment of justice and the continuance of life.

Reading Emerson's Poems: The Harvard Edition

TOM WORTHAM, *UCLA*

Abstract not available at press time.

SESSION II: Engendering Transcendentalism: A Panel Discussion

Chair, Sarah Ann Wider (*Colgate University*)

Emerson, Vocation, and the Problem of the Female Intellectual

TIFFANY K. WAYNE, *Stanford University*

This paper explores how women thinkers took up the Transcendentalist idea of *vocation* and responded to Emerson's conceptualization of "Man Thinking" as a model for intellectual life. The pursuit of self-knowledge and of one's true calling prompted Transcendentalist men to take up vocations outside of institutional frameworks as well as outside of the motivations of the marketplace. For women, however, vocational choice was less a matter of commitment to an idealistic pursuit and more an issue of *access* and of the *right* to put one's talents to use. The Transcendentalist feminist understanding of vocation thus incorporated *both* a call for reform of self (in discovering one's true purpose) and a clear social reform agenda (in opening up professional avenues for women).

This paper traces the careers of Transcendentalist women who took up the issue of vocation as the foundation of their activism in the 1850s and beyond. Paulina Wright Davis advocated "new avenues of employment" for women in her role as president of the first national women's rights convention in 1850, and as founder of *The Una* newspaper beginning in 1853. While Davis dedicated herself to the practical issue of women's work, Caroline Dall focused on the historical and contemporary work of women as the primary theme of her major feminist theoretical works. Both women identified Margaret Fuller's

Woman in the Nineteenth Century, with its "general demand for freedom of vocation" for women, as the foundational statement of the 19th-century women's rights movement. An overview of the careers of these thinkers reveals that they approached their own vocational crises not as philosophical dilemmas, but as a result of personal and professional hardships that exposed the need for educational opportunity and economic independence for all women.

Poetry without the Fetters: Openings from Emerson

SARAH ANN WIDER, *Colgate University*

A quick survey of the artists and activists who found a voice in relation to Emerson's words is tantalizing. The list is long and wide-ranging, including painters, composers, photographers, educators, peace activists. Some are well known: Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles Ives. Others are now little more than a name: Sarah Freeman Clarke, Sarah Jane Farmer. All looked to Emerson at some crucial point in their careers, or indeed, throughout their careers. In Emerson's own day, landscape painter Sarah Clarke matched her own thoughts with and at times against Emerson's. Two generations later, as the twentieth century opened, painter Marsden Hartley carried a copy of Emerson's *Essays* (First Series) in his pocket and likened his canvases to Emerson's prose. Sarah Jane Farmer founded the Green Acre School in Eliot, Maine, to continue conversations where the Concord School of Philosophy had left off. Charles Ives titled his most ambitious piano work "Concord, Mass., 1840-1860" and named its most difficult movement "Emerson."

While each figure reveals a story fascinating in its own right, we still fall short when we write about these related yet non-comparable works. How do we proceed with interpretation when we are working across, between, and with very different forms? All too often we get lost in translation, caught in a dead-end situation where one work ends up being subordinated to the other whether we like it or intend it or not. The painting becomes a mere illustration of an essay's ideas or the words seem no more than a poor caption for the painting. To move beyond such limitations, we must devise approaches in which each part is equally essential, where each would be, in a word, insubordinable. That is much easier stated than realized. Our critical methodology more often than not pulls us in the opposite direction. We have been taught to subordinate, prioritize, say what is most important and what is less important. We don't yet have a well-developed method for the "equally-at-the-same-time important." To borrow a concept from music, we need a concept of and language for bitonality, the very method that Charles Ives, that champion of Emerson, wrote into his music.

Developing those new methods is indeed an Emersonian project, requiring experimentation as we explore new interpretive methods. Emphasizing interpretation rather than criticism, we are called upon to create circumstances in which new understandings can be developed and represented. One example can be found in Ron Bosco's and John Warzonek's collaborative work for *The Illuminated 'Walden.'* Others remain to be developed whether we are looking at non-objective painting or listening to bi-tonal music. Commenting upon Emerson's poor fit with conventional methods of criticism, Charles Ives raised a question we are well advised to ask: "If Emerson's manner is not always beautiful in accordance with accepted standards, why not accept a few other standards?" As Emerson studies continue to grow, the prospects in those "few other standards" raise exciting new directions for Emerson's twenty-first-century readers, highlighting the unfettered possibilities Emerson offered the artists and their interpreters.

Reputation Formation in the Gilded Age

TODD H. RICHARDSON, *University of Texas-Permian Basin*

Scholars of Emerson's reputation typically understand the Gilded Age's representations of Emerson as uncritical, politically withdrawn, and homogenous—in short, boring. One critic, for example, notes that Emerson's genteel biographers of the period "insisted on imagining his life as loftily detached from all social and historical references."

Another critic argues that "the lives of Emerson consistently spell the end of Emerson's text.... Objective criticism (historical, biographical), consequently, supposes a termination of relations, marking [an] end of reading." Exactly. Yet scholars, relying exclusively on the monolithic full-length biography, have not fully understood the propensity of periodical communities to manufacture Emersonian reputations—reputations fully engaged in their social and political milieu—to advance radical political agendas. Therefore, the genteel critics' marble-bust images of Emerson as a bland exponent of middle-class respectability have persisted.

Specifically, I focus on Boston's *Woman's Journal*, the most prominent and widely-circulating suffrage periodical in the country, as a means of understanding the conditions under which Emerson's reputation could and did become appropriated within a periodical community. Along with the periodical press of the Gilded Age generally, the *Journal* forever changed the process by which cultural consensus was established.

Dialogic in the extreme, the *Journal* created forums for public debate on the value of Emerson's suffrage credentials and subsequently put those credentials to work. Ultimately, the *Journal* captured the power of Emerson's Gilded-Age iconic status and craftily molded it to endorse women's creative and occupational abilities, their progressive and determined fight for justice, and ultimately their right to vote, even while evidence regarding Emerson's sympathy to gender inequalities was (and still is) inconclusive.

Dear Emerson Society Members,

Greetings from Jennifer Gurley, your new book review editor. I am writing both to let you know that the next issue of *ESP* will include reviews of several books that appeared during Emerson's bicentennial year, and to ask that you send my way any items (or names thereof) that you'd like reviewed. I am also always interested in hearing from anyone who would like to write a review of any book regarding Emerson and/or his era, so don't miss out on this chance to get a shiny new (free) copy of that book you've been dying to read. I can be reached at gurleyja@lemoyne.edu, Lemoyne College, 1419 Salt Springs Road, Syracuse, N.Y., 13214-1399.

An Emerson Bibliography, 2003

DAVID M. ROBINSON
Oregon State University

New scholarly works on Emerson and Transcendentalism from 2003, including items missed in the 2002 bibliography (ESP 14, ii [2003]:13-14). Readers should also consult the periodic Thoreau bibliographies in the Thoreau Society Bulletin, and the chapter "Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller and Transcendentalism" in the annual American Literary Scholarship (Duke University Press).

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- Belasco, Susan. "'The Animating influences of Discord': Margaret Fuller in 1844." *Legacy* 20:76-93. [Fuller's pivotal year, including her review of Emerson]
- Bellot, Marc. "Emerson et l'Amerique moderne: l'idealisme à l'épreuve du matérialisme." *L'œuvre en Prose de Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. François Brunet and Anne Wicke. Paris: Armand Colin. Pp. 79-94. [Emerson on science and technology]
- Birnbaum, Milton. "The Kaleidoscopic Emerson." *ModA* 45:27-36. [Emerson's inconsistencies and his legacy]
- Bosco, Ronald A. "'Good society is such an optical illusion': Ralph Waldo Emerson and His Correspondents." *Manuscripts* 55:117-34. [Emerson as a correspondent]
- Bosco, Ronald A. and Joel Myerson. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Bicentennial Exhibition*. *HLB* 13, nos. 3-4. [Emerson holdings at Houghton Library]
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- Brunet, François. "Emerson et la figure de l'inventeur." *RFEA* 91 [February 2002]:27-42. [Emerson and invention]
- Brunet, François and Anne Wicke, eds. *L'œuvre en Prose de Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Paris: Armand Colin. [Essays on Emerson by French scholars. Essays are also listed here separately]
- Buell, Lawrence. *Emerson*. Harvard. [Emerson as an international figure]
- Buell, Lawrence. "Emerson's Significance for the Twenty-First Century." *JUUH* 23: 41-48. [Emerson as spiritual awakener]
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- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Spiritual Emerson: Essential Writings*. Ed. David M. Robinson. Beacon. [Selected religious and ethical essays with a historical introduction]
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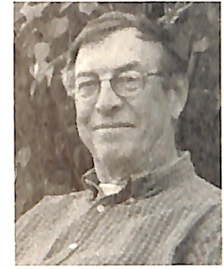
IN MEMORIAM

Roger L. Gregg, 1934-2004

With the passing of Roger L. Gregg on 3 August, the Emerson Society lost one of its earliest and most consistent friends. A great-great-grandson of Ralph Waldo Emerson and a founding member of the society, he served continuously from 1990 as the ex officio member of our advisory board representing the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association (RWEMA). With RWEMA president Margaret Emerson Bancroft, he was involved several years ago in the initial discussions about how the Emerson Society and RWEMA could collaborate on the major bicentennial celebration "Emerson in 2003."

Born in Cambridge, Mass., Mr. Gregg was a graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy and Harvard University (Class of 1956). A noted conservationist—especially in the Milton, Mass., area—he was a charter member of the Friends of the Blue Hills and a member of the Neponset River Watershed Association, which honored him with the Founders Award in 2004. He was a founder of the Hillside Neighborhood

Association and a Trustee of First Parish of Milton (Unitarian). He was also active in Milton town government, serving for twenty-four years as a Town Meeting member and for more than twenty years on the Zoning Board of Appeals. Mr. Gregg was a partner in J.M. Forbes Company in Boston for more than twenty years and had been a Trust Officer at the Bank of New England.



A skilled cross-country skier and sailor, Roger Gregg was also an avid fisherman. On my weekly commute from Martha's Vineyard to Worcester, a frequent but always surprising pleasure was encountering Roger on the island ferry, lugging his gear but animated by the prospects of the newest fishing expedition. All of us on the Emerson Society Board will miss his counsel and his friendship.

—Wesley T. Mott

"Walking with Emerson at Walden"

In honor of the 2003 Emerson bicentennial, the Thoreau Society devoted its Annual Gathering in Concord, Mass., last July to the theme "Thoreau and the Emersonian Influence." This summer, the Emerson Society returned the honor as our Thoreauvian friends celebrated the sesquicentennial of the publication of *Walden*. Several Emersonians joined dozens of Thoreauvians on 8 July in a marathon twelve-hour reading of Thoreau's masterpiece by the shores of Walden Pond. And on Friday evening, 9 July, W. Barksdale Maynard presented a highly original lecture, "Walking with Emerson at Walden," before a full and lively hall at the Masonic Temple. Sponsored by the Emerson Society, the lecture, accompanied by slides, explored Emerson's love of Walden, defined his role in Thoreau's famous experiment in Transcendental living, and celebrated the role of Emerson's descendants as stewards of the treasured and vulnerable pond and woods.



Barksdale Maynard at the lectern, holding his new book, *Walden Pond: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2004)

During discussion that followed, conservationist Walter Brain, of Lincoln, Mass., suggested that a cove on the south side of the Pond be called Emerson's Cove in lasting tribute to Emerson's love and care for Walden. We hope to present a full account of this proposal in a future issue of *ESP*.

2004 Annual Business Meeting

President Phyllis Cole presided at the 2004 annual meeting of the Emerson Society at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco on 29 May 2004. Bob Habich reported on current membership in the society to date (188 members from 35 states and 5 foreign countries). Current assets total \$21,474. Major expenditures since May 2003 include support for the MHS conference (\$16,000), a subvention for Jean Mudge's documentary film (\$2500), and production of *ESP* (\$1135); major credits include dues (\$4191) and interest on investments (\$201). Among those elected to office were Roger Thompson and Barbara Packer (Special Projects Committee), Todd Richardson and Leslie Perrin Wilson (Advisory Board), Richard Grossman (Distinguished Achievement Award Committee), and Joe Thomas (Program Co-chair). Elizabeth Addison and Joe Thomas were thanked for their service on the Board. Doug Wilson reported on the progress of *Collected Works* and announced that he was stepping down as general editor, to be replaced by Ron Bosco. (Doug will remain the textual editor of the series.) Doug and Ron were thanked with a round of applause. Other major items of discussion included the Oxford 2006 conference to be held the second week of July at St. Catherine's College; the 50th anniversary of *ESQ*; the progress of Jean Mudge's film; the status of *Emerson Bicentennial Essays* (still planned as a book publication, according to Joel Myerson); and program ideas for 2005. The amended Special Projects proposal was approved and will be announced on the Society's web site. Al von Frank received the 2004 Distinguished Achievement Award for his many contributions to Emerson studies. The Secretary/Treasurer Report for 2004 may be obtained by request from Professor Habich, Department of English, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306 or via email: rhabich@bsu.edu.