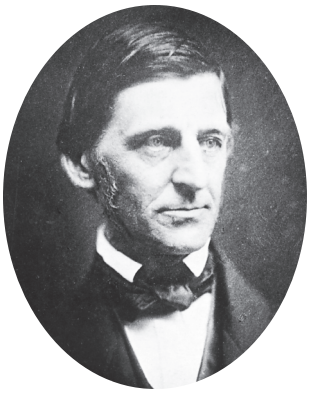

Volume 27, Number 1 Spring 2016

EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

Choral Setting of Emerson's "Boston Hymn" Premieres at Symphony Hall

WESLEY T. MOTT
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Ralph Waldo Emerson enjoyed concerts by the Handel and Haydn Society (H+H) in Boston and deeply admired both namesake composers.[1] H+H reciprocated on June 18, 2015, placing Emerson at the center of the finale of its ambitious 2014–2015 Bicentennial season at Symphony Hall.

Gabriela Lena Frank (b. 1972), award-winning composer-in-residence for both the Houston and the Detroit Symphony Orchestras, was commissioned by H+H and the Library of Congress to arrange Emerson's poem "Boston Hymn" for chorus and chamber ensemble.[2] Her *My Angel, his name is freedom* premiered in a program titled "Handel + Haydn Sings" conducted by H+H artistic director Harry Christophers. Works by Handel, Samuel Webbe, Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947), Palestrina, James MacMillan (b. 1959), and Bach opened the evening. After the intermission, David Rockefeller Jr. read the full text of "Boston Hymn," followed by Ms. Frank's twelve-minute setting of the poem, then *The Deer's Cry,* by Arvo Pärt (b. 1935). Part the Third from Handel's *Messiah* concluded the program.

Photo by Gretjen Helene, courtesy Handel and Haydn Society

Harry Christophers conducts the H+H chorus on June 18, 2015.

Emerson composed the poem at the urging of his friend the music critic John Sullivan Dwight for the Grand Jubilee Concert celebrating President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, at the Boston Music Hall on New Year's Day 1863.[3] Ticket proceeds, the broadside declared, would benefit freed slaves. The twenty-nine listed supporters of the event were prominent abolitionists and civic and cultural luminaries including H. W. Longfellow, former mayor Josiah Quincy Jr., Edward E. Hale, Francis Parkman, James T. Fields, *Dial* contributor and businessman S. G. Ward, R. W. Emerson, J. M. Forbes (railroad magnate and future father-in-law to Emerson's younger daughter Edith), Charles E. Norton, O. W. Holmes, J. S. Dwight, and John G. Whittier.

Emerson opened the event by reading what became known as "Boston Hymn," a morally elevated, piercing denunciation of all tyrants in which the voice of God declares, "I am tired of kings." The Lord calls "watching Pilgrims" to throw off oppression by finding divine strength within: "My angel,—his name is Freedom,— / Choose him to be your king." The poem ends with God's mighty promise: "My will fulfilled shall be, / For, in daylight or in dark, / My thunderbolt has eyes to see / His way home to the mark" (*CW* 9:381, 384).

As Emerson finished, the audience of three thousand, including former slaves, stood "shouting and singing." The rest of the program featured music: Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture, Holmes's "Army Hymn," Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus," Rossini's *William Tell* Overture (McAleer, pp. 573, 572). At the podium leading the Grand Philharmonic Orchestra was Carl Zerrahn (1826–1909), the longtime conductor of H+H (1854–1895, 1897).

(Continued on page 6)

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ESP welcomes notes and short articles (up to about 8 double-spaced, typed pages) on Emerson-related topics. Manuscripts are blind refereed. On matters of style, consult previous issues. We also solicit news about Emerson-related community, school, and other projects; 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 of Emersonian scholars. Send manuscripts to the editor, Derek Pacheco, English Department, Purdue University, 500 Oval Drive, West Lafayette, IN 47907 or dpacheco@purdue.edu (email submissions are much preferred).

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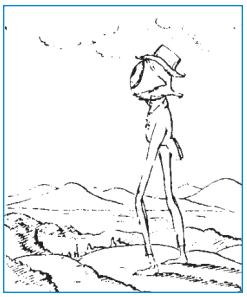
PROSPECTS.



Emerson Sightings / Citings

The eagle-eyed Clarence Burley calls our attention to the book *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essential Spiritual Writings,* edited by Jon M. Sweeney and published by Orbis Books of Maryknoll, New York, in their Modern Spiritual Masters Series. (Mr. Burley notes that the online ad refers to Emerson, incorrectly, as "a Congregational minister.")

Society for the Advancement of American Philosophers

Session VII.E. The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society
Saturday, March 5, 2016, Portland, Ore.

"'Not Enough of Labor': Thinking as Doing in Emerson and James," Austin Bailey, CUNY-Hunter College

"'The Man with No Senses': Bronson Alcott's Idealism and Its Impact on Emerson's Philosophy," Joseph Urbas, University of Bordeaux, France

"Mysticism and the Form of Emersonian Gospels," Jason Hoppe, West Point

Emerson Society Panels at ALA Conference

The Society presents annual panels at the American Literature Association meeting, to be held this year from May 26 to 29 in San Francisco. Visit **americanliterature.org** for more information.

Emerson as Orator and Rhetor

"Emerson, Rhetoric, and the Idea of Liberal Arts," Joseph M. Johnson, Union College

"Emerson and the Possibilities for Civic Rhetoric," Joseph Jones, University of Memphis

"'I Accept the Topic Which Not Only Usage, But the Nature of Our Association, Seem to Prescribe to This Day': Ralph Waldo Emerson's Place in the Tradition of Phi Beta Kappa Orations," Michael Weisenberg, University of South Carolina

Global Emersons I: Emerson's Influence

"Emerson in the Middle East: an Influential Return," Roger Sedarat, Queens College, CUNY

"Emerson and Daisetz Suzuki," Yoshio Takanashi, Nagano Prefectural College

"'The Enraptured Yankee': Emerson in France," Joseph M. Johnson, Union College

"The World Turned Outside In: The End of History in Emerson," Michael Lorence, The Innermost House Foundation

Global Emersons II: Affinities

"Emerson and China," Neal Dolan and Laura Jane Wey, University of Toronto, Scarborough

"Transatlantic Authorization: Emerson and English Literature," Tim Sommer, University of Heidelberg, winner of the Emerson Society Graduate Student Travel Award.

"Emerson, Husserl, and the Transcendental Phenomenology of History," Bradley Nelson, Graduate Center, CUNY

"Emerson's Egypt," Jennifer Sears, New York City College of Technology, CUNY

Thoreau Society 75th Annual Gathering

The theme of this year's gathering in Concord July 7–10 is "Finding the Extraordinary in the Ordinary," with an emphasis on Thoreau as "Proto-ecologist, Reformer, and Visionary." The Thoreau Society is generously extending to RWES members the same discount on registration fees as Thoreau Society members. For information and full schedule, visit **thoreausociety.org**.

Emerson and the Extraordinary Self

"Emersonian Infinitudes: the Case of 'Terminus'" Peter Balaam, Carleton College

"Building a Representative Frenchman: Emerson's Francophone Turn in Poetry and Prose in the 1840s," Michael S. Martin, University of Charleston

"Extraordinary Individualism: Emerson, Self-Reliance, and the Dictation of Democracy," Austin Bailey, CUNY Graduate Center

Transcendentalist Intersections: Literature, Philosophy, Religion

This conference is sponsored by the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, the Margaret Fuller Society, and the Anglistisches Seminar and Center for American Studies at the University of Heidelberg, July 26–29, 2018. A call for papers will be forthcoming by fall 2016.

Award Recipients

The 2016 RWES Research Grant has been awarded to Christina Katopodis, a PhD student in English at the Graduate Center, CUNY. The award will support archival research at the Ellen Tucker Emerson Music Collection for a dissertation chapter on sound, silence, and music in the Transcendentalist's writings as well as an article-in-progress, "Reading Silent Music in Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*."

Recipient of the 2016 RWES Subvention Award is Daegan Miller, PhD, an independent scholar who completed a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Humanities at University of Wisconsin-Madison last May. The Award will help defray costs of images he is using in his book *Witness Tree: Essays on Landscape and Dissent from the Nineteenth-Century United States,* forthcoming from University of Chicago Press.

RWES Helps Preserve the Margaret Fuller House

Past RWES president Phyllis Cole wrote to alert us to the plight of the Margaret Fuller House. Fuller's birth house, built in 1807 and designated a National Historical Landmark, requires major repairs to its ancient foundation, and Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House, Inc. has launched a drive to raise $10,000 toward the cost. In September, RWES Board members swiftly approved a $200 donation, which has been gratefully acknowledged by Mark Stearns, Director of Programs.

As Phyllis notes, "The staircase is still there upon which, as Margaret reported, she paused as a child and asked herself, 'Who is this Margaret Fuller … and what should I do about it?'" But the house is not only a piece of literary history. Since becoming the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House in 1902, Fuller's childhood home has housed community services, which now include a Food Pantry, a computer lab, and programs for seniors and the homeless. For more information, visit margaretfullerhouse.org.

—Sue Dunston
New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology

Fellowship Update

Report from Nicholas Guardiano, RWES Research Grant recipient, 2015

As promised, I am sending you a report about my project for the Emerson Society grant. I am glad to say that I finally completed my proposed essay, "Charles Peirce's New England Heritage and Embrace of Transcendentalism." It turned out to be two times the length than originally planned, about 50 pages! This was because I turned up so much fascinating information during my research (a good thing).

As stated in my proposal, the grant money helped fund my visit to The Peirce Edition Project at Indianapolis. There I made use of Max Fisch's notecards to locate discussions about Emerson and other Transcendentalists throughout Peirce's extant writings. I also purchased the remaining volumes of the Writings of Charles S. Peirce for my library, and this chronological and critical edition was very useful to seeing Peirce's gradual embrace of Transcendentalist doctrines over the course of his career.

In April I will present a portion of the essay at the International Congress on Ecstatic Naturalism at Drew University in New Jersey. Also, I plan to pursue publishing some or all of it.

About the Recipient:

Nicholas L. Guardiano received his PhD from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. He continues to reside in the nearby area of Shawnee National Forest, teaches philosophy at local colleges, and holds the position of Research Specialist at the Morris Library archives overseeing American philosophy collections. He has published articles on Emerson, Peirce, and North American artists, and received awards and grants from the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, and the American Philosophical Association. His work is committed to a close analysis of the ideas of American philosophers in order to properly adjudicate their contribution to the greater history of world philosophy. Simultaneously, it aims to creatively amplify the progressive ramifications of this tradition, especially on the topics of metaphysics, aesthetics, and nature.

ABSTRACT

"Charles Peirce's New England Heritage and Embrace of Transcendentalism"

The great American philosopher and founder of pragmatism, Charles S. Peirce, famously remarked that he was reared in Cambridge, "the neighborhood of Concord," and that the "truth is I am a sort of ... New England Transcendentalist." Investigating Peirce's early life in the mid nineteenth century, we learn that he and his family had personal connections to many Transcendentalists and their peers, such as Emerson, Fuller, Hedge, and Henry James, Sr. This intellectual "neighborhood" would have a profound impact on Peirce's mature architectonic philosophy, especially his metaphysics. Moreover, his scattered remarks in his extant writings on Transcendentalism show that he, over the course of his career, came to gradually appreciate Transcendentalist ideas and to ultimately embrace the formative impact of his New England philosophical heritage.

"Boston Hymn"

(Continued from page 1)

Gabriela Lena Frank describes "Boston Hymn" in the June 18 H+H program guide as "a poetic sermon by Ralph Waldo Emerson on attaining freedom from false masters."[4] Interviewed in 2014, Frank, who first read "Boston Hymn" while in high school, called it "an example of Transcendentalist poetry at its best." "[M]y composer's eye already finds attractive its lofty calls for freedom and self-determination welded to specific, even humble, imagery familiar to the farmers who built our nation. My challenge will be how to capture something that I find so essentially American—that an ordinary existence can be tied to extraordinary aspirations—in sound."[5] According to music critic Jeremy Eichler, she succeeded admirably: "The music is taut and involving, with angular lines and pungent, darkly colored harmonies …. Frank's writing for the chorus … is clear and effective, with certain words repeated for emphasis."[6]

Frank, who holds a DMA in composition from the University of Michigan, acknowledges an eclectic range of musical influences: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Ravel, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Shostakovich. She especially finds Bela Bartók, Benjamin Britten, and Chou Wen Chung "the truest kindred spirits in terms of how my polyglot background [Peruvian, Jewish, and Chinese] informs my work" ("Q+A," pp. 30, 29). When H+H approached her about commissioning a work, she told Lee Eiseman, "they never assigned the poem, they just suggested or requested it." But she found both "Boston Hymn" and the nature of H+H amenable and challenging. She did not set the entire poem. "Rather, I isolated lines from different verses and put them together into a poem and it was, remarkably, not that difficult to do, because Emerson has some powerful lines in there in defiance of unearned authority … and those could be glued together as if it was a small poem." Frank notes that she isn't being facetious in saying that "you would like the words to come across both with and without a text." "[S]ometimes when you follow along [with the text in the printed program]," she observes, "you're too much in your head and you're not letting the words pick you up. It's a careful balance, and I would like the music to work always both ways for any vocal piece that I write." "The music," she stresses, "has to communicate no matter what the level of understanding is with the words."[7]

That balance, Ms. Frank feels, was beautifully achieved in the premiere:

> H+H's stunning performance of *My Angel* quite literally took my breath away. When asked at the last working rehearsal for my final thoughts on the group's efforts, I melted and exclaimed, "Ohhhh … I love it so much … And hope you do, too!" I was embarrassed that I had lost my composure, but there was an audible titter of approval running through the singers and instrumentalists. Honestly, it's experiences like these that make me realize how much I love my job.[8]

Frank's *My Angel, his name is freedom* joins a distinguished H+H tradition. In the nineteenth century, H+H presented the American premieres of Handel's *Messiah,* Haydn's *Creation,* Verdi's Requiem, and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. (In 1823, H+H tried, unsuccessfully, to contract Beethoven to compose a grand oratorio.[9]) In the past half-century it has commissioned works by Randall Thompson, Daniel Pinkham, and John Tavener. Harry Christophers conducted the Washington, D.C., premiere of *My Angel, his name is freedom* at the Library of Congress on February 20, 2016.

Above, composer Gabriela Lena Frank

Right, artistic director Harry Christophers conducts the Handel and Haydn Society in the world premiere of Frank's My Angel, his name is freedom *on June 18, 2015, at Symphony Hall in Boston.*

Photo by Gretjen Helene, courtesy Handel and Haydn Society

Notes

I wish to thank H+H public relations and communications manager Benjamin Pesetsky and marketing manager Brandon Milardo for kindly providing essential information and the photographs.

1. See, for example, *JMN* 9:59-60; also my "Handel's *Messiah* 'In This Unbelieving City,'" *The Boston Musical Intelligencer,* November 28, 2014 (www.classical-scene.com/2014/11/28/messiah-1843-boston/) and "Haydn's *Creation* in Transcendental Boston," *The Boston Musical Intelligencer,* April 26, 2015 (www.classical-scene.com/2015/04/26/haydns-creation-in-transcendental-boston/).

2. A profile of Ms. Frank appears at www.handelandhaydn.org/gabriela-lena-frank/

3. On Dwight's role in the emergence of musical culture in Boston, see Sterling F. Delano, *The Harbinger and New England Transcendentalism: A Portrait of Associationism in America* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), and Ora Frishberg Saloman, *Beethoven's Symphonies and J. S. Dwight: The Birth of American Music Criticism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995). Lively accounts of the Grand Jubilee Concert are

"Boston Hymn"

The word of the Lord by night
To the watching Pilgrims came,
As they sat by the sea-side,
And filled their hearts with flame.

God said,—I am tired of kings,
I suffer them no more;
Up to my ear the morning brings
The outrage of the poor.

Think ye I made this ball
A field of havoc and war,
Where tyrants great and tyrants small
Might harry the weak and poor?

My angel,—his name is Freedom,—
Choose him to be your king;
He shall cut pathways east and west.
And fend you with his wing.

Lo! I uncover the land
Which I hid of old time in the West,
As the sculptor uncovers his statue,
When he has wrought his best;

I show Columbia, of the rocks
Which dip their foot in the seas
And soar to the air-borne flocks
Of clouds, and the boreal fleece.

I will divide my goods;
Call in the wretch and slave:
None shall rule but the humble,
And none but Toil shall have.

I will have never a noble,
No lineage counted great;
Fishers and choppers and ploughmen
Shall constitute a state.

Go, cut down trees in the forest,
And trim the straightest boughs;
Cut down trees in the forest,
And build me a wooden house.

Call the people together,
The young men and the sires,
The digger in the harvest-field,
Hireling, and him that hires;

And here in a pine state-house
They shall choose men to rule
In every needful faculty,
In church and state and school.

Lo, now! if these poor men
Can govern the land and sea,
And make just laws below the sun,
As planets faithful be.

And ye shall succor men;
'T is nobleness to serve;
Help them who cannot help again:
Beware from right to swerve.

I break your bonds and masterships,
And I unchain the slave:
Free be his heart and hand henceforth,
As wind and wandering wave.

I cause from every creature
His proper good to flow:
As much as he is and doeth,
So much he shall bestow.

But, laying hands on another
To coin his labor and sweat,
He goes in pawn to his victim
For eternal years in debt.

To-day unbind the captive,
So only are ye bound;
Lift up a people from the dust,
Trump of their rescue, sound!

Pay ransom to the owner
And fill the bag to the brim.
Who is the owner? The slave is owner,
And ever was. Pay him.

O North! give him beauty for rags,
And honor, O South! for his shame;
Nevada! coin thy golden crags
With Freedom's image and name.

Up! and the dusky race
That sat in darkness long,—
Be swift their feet as antelopes,
And as behemoth strong.

Come, East and West and North,
By races, as snow-flakes,
And carry my purpose forth,
Which neither halts nor shakes.

My will fulfilled shall be,
For, in daylight or in dark,
My thunderbolt has eyes to see
His way home to the mark.

Gleason's Pictorial, December 18, 1852

Interior view of the Boston Music Hall (1852), where "Boston Hymn" was read January 1, 1863

John McAleer, *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Days of Encounter* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984), pp. 571-74, and Len Gougeon, *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Anti-slavery, and Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 290-92.

4. *Handel + Haydn Sings,* June 18, 2015, p. 13.

5. "Q+A with Composer Gabriela Lena Frank," *Handel + Haydn Society Bicentennial Commemorative Issue,* September 2014, p. 29.

6. Eichler, "H&H caps bicentennial with Frank premiere," *The Boston Globe,* June 20, 2015, G5.

7. [Lee Eiseman], "A Premiere for H+H 200th Season Closer," *The Boston Musical Intelligencer,* June 16, 2015. www.classical-scene.com/2015/06/16/hh-200th-closer/

8. Gabriela Lena Frank, email to the author, July 30, 2015 [original punctuation—not ellipses].

9. Jan Swafford, *Handel + Haydn Society Bicentennial Commemorative Issue,* p. 16.

Instruction *and* Provocation

A column dedicated to innovative Emerson pedagogy

#Emerson in 140 characters or less

KRISTINA WEST

In his essay "The Problem of Emerson," Joel Porte discusses a number of issues facing scholars and critics in approaching, or returning to, Emerson. In quoting Stephen Whicher, he claims one of these is that: "Not only is Emerson incapable of being 'summed up in a formula, he is, finally, impenetrable, for all his forty-odd volumes.'" While this remark pertains more to "penetrating to the heart of Emerson the *man*,"[1] I think it is equally enlightening when considering the difficulty of teaching Emerson. With "forty-odd" volumes of text and an author largely considered to be "impenetrable," at least in some respects, how to even find a place to begin when faced with a class of undergraduates and a limited timeframe in which to teach them?

My own experience as an undergraduate was limited to a single class on *Nature* and, fortunately, for me that was enough to inspire a lifelong passion. However, both the limitations and the opportunities for teaching Emerson have changed in the digital age, and it is for this reason that I wish to consider how the Internet, and Twitter in particular, might be a useful tool in introducing students to Emerson.

The question is sure to be asked: can the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson ever be conveyed in the 140-character limit imposed by Twitter, and is there any value in attempting to do so? Emerson already has a number of Twitter accounts, as do many of his contemporaries—being dead is no barrier to daily tweeting—so there is an existing market for what might be termed literature by sound bite. But what is at stake in using social media to read and engage with the work of Emerson? Is this approach more harmful than rewarding? Is it just a form of academic tourism? Or do the boundaries of social media offer the opportunity for new interpretations of Emerson's work, and new possibilities to engage with students on what might be understood as their own terms?

To consider this further, I intend to look at a Twitter post made under Emerson's name, within the current 140-character limit, from an account called @dailyemerson. The explanatory blurb given by @dailyemerson is "The wisdom of Emerson, as enlightening today as it was in the 19th century."[2] First, I'd like to think about the claims being made here. @dailyemerson is offering "the wisdom of Emerson" as something which is "enlightening today." The inference is, then, not only that Emerson was wise but also that his wisdom can be communicated within the confines of Twitter, that it is relevant to do so, and that it is as enlightening to modern readers, in this format, as it was in Emerson's own time and chosen methods of publication. @dailyemerson clearly believes in the power of Twitter as a tool for both communication and enlightenment via Emerson's works. This Twitter account differs from many literary accounts that are run as if from the perspective of the deceased author.

So how best to approach this Emersonian post? The first thing to consider is how Twitter might be read in terms of frame. After all, what is Twitter? Is it just an access point to further reading and research? What would it mean if a generation just read these Emerson quotes? Due to the set number of characters and the frequent referral to outside links, these posts are often read as incomplete, fragmentary or limited, with an appeal to a text or texts constructed as "other" to the text of the post, but still necessary to complete it. Twitter's claim about itself, its mission statement, is this: "To give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers." While advertising its platform as "without barriers," Twitter imposes not only a character limit, but also other limitations as to subject and free speech. Twitter does, therefore, have limits framing the engagement of these Emersonian tweeters and their followers. The character count alone limits @dailyemerson to tweeting what today might be called sound bites, selected fragments of Emerson's works that already fit the Twitter-imposed brief. For many, this might be reason to assign a lack of value to engaging with Emerson in this way: the fact that so little of his work can be made available to be read.

However, on what basis do we, as academics, engage with Emerson at all? After four years' work to complete my PhD on Emerson and childhood, and despite many late nights and early mornings, and weeks spent in the Houghton archive, I cannot claim to have read every single word Emerson has ever written; and I was only able to analyze a fraction of what he has written even with an 80,000 thesis word count, a limit that was reduced still further by my chosen subject of Emerson and childhood. My point is, surely we always engage with Emerson's work on a basis that is framed and limited in some way: by time available, by areas of interest, by a word count that may be more generous than Twitter's but is still constituted by a limit. So engaging with Emerson, and with our students, in 140 characters or less is perhaps not as radical as it might at first appear. Instead, looking at quote or fragment, especially in terms of a writer of whom it has been said that his "sentences […] tend to

stand detached and isolated,"[3] can offer to the initiate a pathway, rather than the entire, sometimes overwhelming, landscape.

With that in mind, I would like to look at a Twitter post from @dailyemerson, made under Emerson's name, to see what kind of meaning can be achieved within this frame. It reads: "Let us treat men and women well; treat them as if they were real. Perhaps they are."

To begin with, there is no direct appeal to another text here and no sense of this as fragment beyond the initial claim to daily Emerson quotes. The perspective of the narration in this post is constituted in an appeal to "us"; this is an "us" that encompasses what could be read as the narrator and his implied readers, and one that separates the narration and those included within the "us" from "them" and "they." This separation, this claim to "they" as other, relates to "men and women" in this quote. Although different from each other—men and women—they are also constructed as the same or linked in their status as other to the "us" of the narration. In this case, "we" are not, therefore, men and women. However, we are yet in relation to men and women, under Emerson's perspective here, and that relation is about how we "treat them"—the narration is advising those established as "us" to "treat" or deal with them, but in such a way that is signified as in one direction only, without possibility of response: it is how we treat them.

The advice, if it can be read as such, is to treat them "well," and this well-ness is constituted as, or alongside of, the advice to "treat them as if they were real." This separation is subject to a conditional, then, to the perception of the reality of "men and women." The perspective, in this second half of the first sentence, is that "men and women" are not real, but may be treated as if they were. The narration, therefore, claims to know what men and women are, suggesting that they are other to itself (in this plural of "us"), and, in knowing that they are not real, also claims to know what reality is and is not.

The text also appears to assert that this "treating" of others differs, or should differ, depending on whether "they" are real or not under the judgement of the narration. Treating "well" is only accorded to those who could conditionally be real, even if it is known that they are not. In that case, can the plural "us" be read as real here? It is not entirely possible to say—the ability to recognize reality is subject to a reading of, or a subjective response to, what reality is. But here, it is also subject to the ability to counterfeit, to treat as real what is not or may not be. Already, then, reality is destabilized: it is subject to perspective and can be faked.

This claimed knowledge of reality is undercut even further in the second sentence, which states: "Perhaps they are." The "we" constituted by "us" does not know, then, whether "men and women" are real or not, so this quote ends on an uncertainty, an unsettling of "us" and "them" to accompany the unsettling of reality, with even the conditional "perhaps" failing to entirely negate the claim that "they are" real. The claim to a division, once constituted in terms of a direction, a treatment from "us" of "them," is based on a certainty or a knowledge that ultimately fails, with the treating "as if" they were real either a misguided mistaking of the situation, or one that results in a paradigmatic shift in the construction of "men and women" from the not-real to the real, albeit a reality that is still constituted in the conditional.

In reading this quote from @dailyemerson, therefore, what we are left with is an understanding of reality and of division that ultimately escapes itself, and a sense of a progress made through these two short sentences from a perspective of what might be termed superiority and difference to an unsettling of the terms under which that positioning is operating. This unsettling ultimately breaks the barrier down, leaving "us" and "men and women" together in a reality that is not and cannot be known.

So, having considered this piece of text as entire and sufficient, framed only by Twitter and by our own readings rather than fragmentary in and of itself, what else might we do with it in terms of teaching? We can read it as Emersonian commentary on the human condition, on the nature of reality, on free will or even self-reliance, and leave it at that. We can consider why it was posted on Twitter at all, though we cannot ever really know. We can share it with our own followers to further promote Emerson's works. We can consider it in terms of our own scholarship, or even our own lives.

Of course, we can also choose to engage with this, and other, posts in completely different ways. We can decide to engage as fragment, as a gateway, looking up the post for its original context with the assumption that this would offer a completeness that we might not find on Twitter. The point of this exercise is not to suggest that we limit our engagement with Emerson to Twitter; rather, I feel that taking the time to consider some of Emerson's work in this context and within a frame that may at first appear oppressive to the point of negating all value can yield results that may have been missed in another context. In considering Twitter, or other social media, as teaching tools, then, with the close reading that such an approach necessarily entails, I consider this as another approach to teaching Emerson to the timeworn method of giving *Nature* to students and hoping for the best.

Krissie West completed her PhD at the University of Reading, UK, and is co-founder of @wethehumanities. wethehumanities.org

Notes

1 Joel Porte, *Consciousness and Culture: Emerson and Thoreau Reviewed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 29.

2 https://twitter.com/dailyemerson

3 Stephen Fredman, *The Poet's Prose: The Crisis in American Verse (Cambridge*: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 38.

My Emerson

A column devoted to our readers' personal reflections on Emerson

Jennifer Sears

On the first morning of the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute, "Transcendentalism and Reform in the Age of Emerson, Thoreau, and Fuller," I walked to the Emerson House at sunrise, sat under the arbor, and listened to the birdsongs—blissfully ignoring sounds of the nearby turnpike. I was tired. The night before, a group of us had walked in the dark to Walden Pond after the evening's opening reception at the Colonial Inn. On early mornings to come, I would walk again to the house, again to the pond, to Sleepy Hollow, and once to the Sudbury River where spirals of mist hovered above the water's surface. The young Thoreauvian who'd recited lines of *Walden* from memory at the cabin site that first night reportedly walked to the pond every morning. Another crew met each morning in front of the Inn for a run.

These spontaneous experiences first come to mind because they provided what can't be conveyed in textbooks and lectures. For two weeks, we experienced the landscape that generated that unprecedented American convergence of minds. We saw their tones of light moving through their shades of green; their "auroral" sunrise; their town buildings surrounding Monument Square; the site of their train station that dragged Emerson away on his exhausting lecture circuits, invited the background noise that competed with Thoreau's meditations, and provided escape during the Underground Railroad. We retraced by foot the physical proximities that sparked intellectual affinities and neighborly bickerings, and though any resourceful tourist can fit together such facts, this immersion in both place and text offered a more cohesive understanding and even excitement for the Institute's participants, many new to the field, who were also encouraged to contribute their individual expertise.

During the months leading to the event, we each received Joel Myerson's enormous *Transcendentalism: A Reader* and the Summer Institute Reader, a bound volume of supplementary material, weighing in at 2 ¼ pounds. The assigned list of more than 30 readings included primary and foundational texts, contemporary analyses, and sections of

Early morning fog over the field. Concord, July 2015

Fog hangs over the Sudbury River, July 2015

biographies corresponding with an inspiring roster of lecturers: Phyllis Cole, John Matteson, Robert Gross, Megan Marshall, and our leader Sandra Petrulionus, to name only a few. And if the required list weren't exhaustive enough, a note invited us to go beyond and "read as much as possible" of the book before our July meeting.

The Institute concentrates on Transcendentalist writings on social reform, including the roles of women in and their contributions to nineteenth-century American society and the paralyzing crisis of slavery. As my project focused on later Emerson, I knew I had much to learn regarding his middle years, in particular his response to slavery. For this purpose, our reading of Emerson's "Seventh of March Speech on the Fugitive Slave Law" and "The Emancipation of the British West Indies" and lectures from Joel Myerson and Wesley Mott, who examined Emerson's reluctance to join collective political causes, offered valuable direction. I better understood the intrinsic link between these two reform efforts through the increasingly public presence of women working for the Abolition movement—including Lydian, Ellen, and Mary Moody Emerson, the Thoreaus, and Mary Merrick Brooks—which helped me situate not just Emerson's evolving views but those of his conflicted Concord community. Our visit to the new Robbins Museum showed the painful realities of the area's African American families and the deep societal injustices underlying even that liberal-minded town that hosted John Brown and helped Emerson and his contemporaries thrive.

There is much to learn from how these writers responded to racial crises, many of which continue to be our own. In the time surrounding our gathering, July 12-25, 2015, the Confederate flag was removed from the South Carolina State House after the brutal Charleston murders; police killings

reached a 2015 high; and Harper Lee's novel *Go Set a Watchman* was published almost simultaneously with Ta-Nehisi Coates' brilliant *Between the World and Me* containing the words: "In America, it is traditional to destroy the black body—it is heritage." For many Institute participants who teach in a wide variety of settings, this research means more than scholarly exercise. The writings of Emerson, Thoreau, and Fuller demand that readers investigate the past

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My Emerson

(Continued from page 11)

to better question and understand their responsibilities within present, an always relevant demand for scholars and teachers. On returning from the Institute, having revisited the complexities of the Civil War and considering how the Transcendentalists responded to them both in writing and action, I see one layer deeper into the racial challenges that still polarize the country's communities and affect my students, some of whom live with the ongoing effects of that tragic heritage in Brooklyn and larger New York City.

"My Emerson" first took root when I was new to New York City, where I'd come alone to dance and attend graduate school. I'd never had money, but at that time, I really had no money and was accruing a student loan debt too laughable to seem real. My most peaceful moments were spent dancing or reading in the city's wealth of old libraries. The Open Center, then on Spring Street near a studio where I taught dance, offered an introductory course on Emerson taught by Barbara Solowey, who provided close readings of "Circles," "Self-Reliance," and "The Over-Soul." The book I purchased for that class still sits on my shelf, the margins and front cover filled with notes, its back cover gone. Though I'd learn that some readers find Emerson's work cold or detached, I came to his essays after nearly fifteen years of studying Middle Eastern dance and its cultures and having read Sufi and related philosophy and literature, including Hafez and Saadi. In Emerson's words and sentences, alongside his shattering clarity, I recognized a familiar turn toward the ecstatic, a vitality in his ornamentations, and an affinity with an earthy Orientalism, even in its classical and troubling "Other"-making sense. Filled with his images and mind flights, I'd leave class and head to the studio—for years I worked on an unfinished dance, fatefully titled, "Residuum Unknown"—or to a Village coffee shop to reread the essays and my notes.

Oddly, I'd lived in the Boston area before moving to New York and for years taught belly dance in Concord at the Scout House and Emerson Umbrella for the Arts in a top floor dance studio with high ceilings, worn wooden floors, and enormous windows that drew dramatic angles of afternoon light. When I began reading Emerson in New York, I remembered that light filling the bare room. Perhaps I was homesick, but my connection with Emerson intensified even in superficial terms. I managed to contract a mild version of Waldo's tragic scarlet fever, diagnosed by an elderly doctor in front of his baffled younger colleagues. Then, my parents unexpectedly moved to an apartment on Concord's Stow Street, and I kept returning to the town's sites, dragging them to Sleepy Hollow, touring Bush, circling Walden in all weather, whirling again in that luminous studio as I read and re-read Emerson's essays and journals, having become an eager tourist in a place I'd once thought I'd known.

This "seeing new," a part of the transcendental intellectual tradition I hope to better understand and keep vital, is fed by the excitement of ongoing research, which the Summer Institute helps promote. Many presenters, clearly longtime colleagues, embodied this excitement. Sandra Petrulionis spoke of her work on Mary Moody Emerson's Almanacks and the 2008 discovery of a posthumous tintype of Moody Emerson wearing perhaps one of the funereal shrouds Emerson's journal memorialized, resulting in a human image attached to this important aunt's forceful thought and vivid handwriting. For my project, a visit to the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston led to photographs taken in Egypt in 1873, the year of Emerson's travels there. I also came across a letter hastily written by Edith Emerson describing her father's condition after the 1872 house fire. Though I'd read this description in many brilliant biographies, the anxious letters before me took on the shade of a very real adult daughter's worry for her suffering father.

For me, these intimate and perhaps even mundane discoveries and connections generate commitment to my continued research, an excitement echoed by other participants relating their own finds. The week after the Institute ended, our message server filled with responses to newly released images of the penciled notes Thoreau wrote when, in a quest sponsored by Emerson, he searched the beach for the remains of Margaret Fuller, her husband and son, and her manuscripts. Strangely, those three lives we'd been so deeply considering in Concord re-emerged together, a newsflash beneath contemporary headlines. That these brilliant figures continue to reveal themselves is inspiring for those of us working to understand how they so prolifically wrote and worked and tried to most effectively experience and live in this strange world.

Jennifer Sears is Assistant Professor of English at the New York City College of Technology-City University of New York. In addition to American Transcendentalism, her interests include writing fiction and creative non-fiction.

Reviews

Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Major Poetry. Ed. Albert J. von Frank. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015. 336 pp. $35.00 cloth.

The ninth volume of the Emerson *Collected Works,* Albert J. von Frank and Thomas Wortham's variorum edition of Emerson's *Poems,* assembled the greatest trove of textual and contextual information we have ever had on Emerson's poetry. From that invaluable edition von Frank has distilled this selection, including both well-known works and overlooked poems well worthy of recovery. Each of his selections includes a lucid, deeply informed headnote that opens the biographical and intellectual grounding of the poem, making this volume an invaluable interpretive tool. In the "Emerson Revival" that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, and continues to demonstrate remarkable strength, Emerson's poems have been a somewhat neglected child. The variorum *Poems* and this selection of *The Major Poetry* may initiate an overdue reconsideration of Emerson as a poet.

Von Frank argues that Emerson held, with Novalis, the "belief that poetry and philosophy comprise in fact a single pursuit" (xi). Poetry and philosophy shared the imperative of "authentic" expression, free from tradition and convention. Such authenticity can only be approached through the constant pursuit of a cognitive and linguistic "innovation caught in the nick of time," making the poet-philosopher a "radically creative spirit" in a continual state of metamorphosis and development (xii). We tend to associate this figure of thinker in continual transmutation with the great prose works of Emerson such as "Circles" and "Experience," but von Frank reminds us that his poetry also emerged from this same restless spirit of innovation.

This sense of poetry as new and authentic expression is rooted in Emerson's effort to refigure himself as a poet in the 1830s, as he moved to Concord and began to disassociate himself from the ministry. Reminding us of the earlier work of Carl F. Strauch, who emphasized 1834 as the year of Emerson's poetic maturity, Von Frank shows this "breakout year" (xv) as a key point of reference in charting Emerson's developing sense of himself as a poet. From the perspective of his poetry, the year 1834 seems as significant biographically as the 1832 resignation of his pulpit, or the 1836 publication of *Nature*.

Ellen Louisa Tucker, Emerson's first wife, played a crucial role in this narrative. In *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (1995), Robert D. Richardson Jr. memorably describes how Ellen's death utterly reshaped Emerson. Von Frank provides a further dimension to her influence, noting that their brief relationship encompassed "a particularly intense unfolding of the themes of love and death," in which the mutual exchange of poems was a vital element. Ellen's poems exemplified the authenticity of self-expression that Emerson so deeply sought and valued, and Ellen's "lucid revelations of her character and situation" reached Emerson "at a crucial moment in his emotional history" (xiii). The intensity of this exchange became a formative element of Emerson's growth, and he reached back to Ellen's sense of poetry as the truest and most intense form of experience as he reshaped himself as a poet. "For all of Emerson's life after Ellen's death," von Frank writes, "the Muse would be a decidedly feminine presence" (xiii).

One of the distinguishing features of this volume is von Frank's gathering of "The Ellen Poems, 1828-1831" (243-60). This group of twenty-five poems and poetic fragments includes Emerson's poetic epistles to Ellen, as well as his more private poems of grief and mourning that express the emotional impact of their relationship. "Their life seems almost to have been conducted in poetry," von Frank writes, and Emerson's Ellen poems, "intimate, impassioned, unstudied," were something new for him, echoing "the very rhythms and diction of Ellen's own poetry" (243). Three of these poems appeared in print, and von Frank located twenty-two others in the Emerson *Poetry Notebooks,* the *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks,* Edith W. Gregg's *One First Love* (1962), and the Emerson papers at Harvard's Houghton Library. They represent a significant addition to the Emerson poetic canon, and provide deeper insight into this determinative phase of his life.

"The Ellen Poems" are included as an "Appendix" to the collection, which is structured around the publication of the successive volumes of Emerson's poetry—*Poems* (1847), *May-Day and Other Pieces* (1867), *Selected Poems* (1876), and three additional "Uncollected Poems." The first of these volumes is perhaps the richest poetically, including signature poems such as "The Sphinx," "Uriel," "Ode, Inscribed to W. H. Channing," "Concord Hymn," and "Threnody," his elegy for Waldo Emerson. Von Frank calls attention to the poetic distinction of "Threnody," terming it "one of the great nineteenth-century elegies" (120). I stand in full agreement with that estimation, and, in my own reading of this collection, found the little-known poem that precedes it, "Dirge," to be another accomplished and moving elegy. In it, Emerson remembers his lost younger brothers, Edward and Charles, as those "who made this world the feast it was" (118). Many poems from this volume first appeared in the *Western Messenger* or the *Dial,* reminding us of the crucial role that these Transcendentalist journals played in the development of most of the key authors associated with the movement. Von Frank also calls attention to an "intensely creative period (1844-46)" (xv) in which Emerson wrote or completed another significant group of poems in this volume.

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Reviews

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The later *May-Day and Other Pieces* reflects a complex range of moods generated by the building tensions before the Civil War and the desire for recovery and renewal afterwards. Emerson's celebration of spring in the poem "May-Day" arises from a yearning for "solace and reparation" (133), but the volume also includes works such as "Days," "Terminus," and "The Past" whose somber tones echo the Emerson we know in essays such as "Experience" and "Fate." Of particular importance in this volume is the much-studied "Brahma," Emerson's poetic tribute to the ancient Hindu texts and their power to merge "the doubter and the doubt" (165) in a philosophy beyond philosophy. "May-Day" and "The Adirondacks" are two of Emerson's longest poems, but the selections from this volume also demonstrate Emerson's bardic taciturnity by including many brief, epigrammatic poems. These poems strongly suggest his artistic affiliations with Emily Dickinson and her mastery of the poetry of compression. Poems now virtually lost to critical commentary, such as tributes to "S. H." (Samuel Hoar) and "A. H." (Anne Sturgis Hooper), or descriptive poems such as "Artist," "Gardener," and "Forester," all have an effect that may well renew our sense of Emerson's poetic craft, and his anticipation of forms of verse that would become influential in the modernist period.

The poet that we find in *The Major Poetry* adds an important dimension to the much better known Emerson of the lecture and the essay. To see Emerson through the lens of the pursuit of this craft restores a sense of Emerson as the literary artist. This perspective is easy to lose as we engage his discourse through religious doctrines, political affinities, or philosophical systems. "The poet is rare because he must be exquisitely vital and sympathetic, and, at the same time, immovably centered" ("Poetry and Imagination," *CW* 8:40). As this volume suggests, poetry was the practice through which Emerson pursued that immovable center.

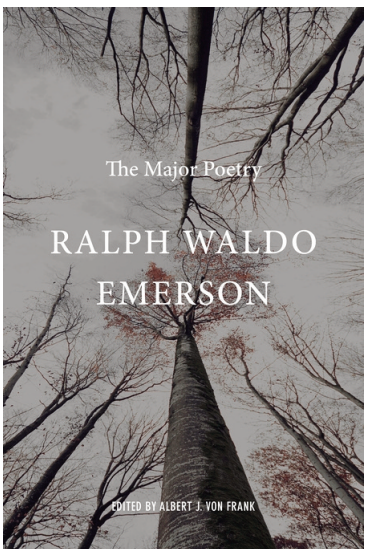
—David M. Robinson
Oregon State University

Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Major Prose. Ed. Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015. xxxix + 568pp. $45.00 cloth.

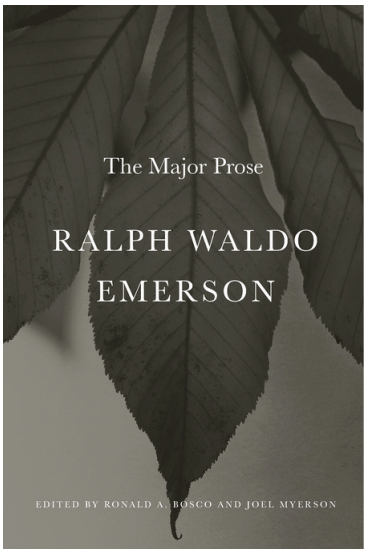
Among all the Emerson anthologies, and there are many, this collection is unique. As the editors indicate in their Preface, this is the only anthology of Emerson's writings that "draws from the three predominant sources of his prose: the pulpit, the lecture hall, and print" (xxix). What they do not tell is that, judging from the diversity of the selections, the impeccable editorial standards employed, the comprehensive, highly informative Introduction, the copious detailed notes, and the superb material quality of the printed book, this is without question the finest single-volume anthology of Emerson's prose writings that we are ever likely to see.

The volume presents twenty-eight pieces that represent Emerson's entire public career in prose. Included are the sermon, "The Last Supper" (1832), early lectures such as "The Uses of Natural History" (1833-1835), his seminal work *Nature* (1836), and classic essays like "Self-Reliance" (1841) and "The Poet" (1844), among others. Emerson's substantial engagement with social reform, a topic woefully underrepresented or even completely absent from almost all earlier anthologies, has a substantial presence here with pieces like "... Emancipation in the British West Indies" (1844), "American Slavery" (1855), and "Remarks at the Kansas Relief Meeting" (1856). In the latter, Emerson anticipates the Civil War. When the war came, he helped to define the new nation that would emerge from that bloody conflict in critical essays like "American Civilization" (1862) and "The President's Proclamation" (1862). The collection ends with the late essay "Works and Days" (1870).

This collection will undoubtedly become the standard text for those of us who teach Emerson, as well as those who are drawn to him for personal reasons. In both cases, Emerson can often be challenging. He wanted it that way. He believed that knowledge is a journey of discovery designed to dislodge us from our comfort zones, hence, his desire to "unsettle all things" (*CW* 2:188). Recognizing this, the editors have provided an excellent Introduction to Emerson's essential ideas. This substantial essay (39 pp.) traces the evolution of Emerson's thought through the works presented in the volume. The result is an overview of his intellectual life and the experiences that stimulated his own journey of discovery. That journey begins with Emerson as minister. Drawing on an exceptionally broad range of Emerson's writings, including his journals, letters, early and late lectures, and books, the editors offer clear explanations of key elements of Emerson's thought that are illustrated with well-chosen quotations. When these are derived from works included in the anthology, endnotes



reference the source paragraphs. (All paragraphs in each work are numbered throughout the volume.) Thus, we see that Emerson's early alienation from the Unitarian church, an alienation that would eventually lead to his Transcendentalism, derives in part from Unitarianism's emphasis on external forms rather than the spirit that once animated them. This is captured succinctly in his pungent comment on Christian Communion, "To eat bread is one thing; to love the precepts of Christ and resolve to obey them is another." Emerson's Transcendentalism argues for personal godliness, thus the "excellence of Jesus" is "that he affirms the Divinity in him and in us" (xiii). This belief, in turn, led Emerson to embrace what the editors identify as a type of "process philosophy," where each day offers the possibility of a new revelation. Thus, rather than following a set of static precepts, Emerson insists that our lives should be "an apprenticeship to the truth," a craft we are forever learning but never completely master (xvi). Emerson's rejection of Lockean sensationalism in favor of Kantian idealism is explained in an Emersonian nutshell. "[W]e stand in the midst of two worlds, the world of matter and the world of spirit." Thus, "Idealism is an hypothesis to account for nature by other principles than those of carpentry and chemistry" (xv). Emerson's view of the macro/microcosm theory of nature is also explained succinctly. The editors note that Emerson believed, "By studying something small we can make generalizations about something big." Regarding his idea of compensation, they point to Emerson's observation that the "oppressions of William the Norman, savage forest laws, and crushing despotism" made the Magna Carta possible (xix). Through such pithy and insightful explanations, using both Emerson's words and their own, the editors offer pathways into the essential elements of Emerson's philosophy. Often these are captured in ways to which students (both young and old) might readily relate. Thus, when speaking of Emerson's concept of self-reliance, they point out his belief that the way to find yourself is to lose yourself, "to go into solitude" in order to be free of the distracting burden of "things." This idea, they suggest, is captured in the popular lyric, "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose" (xxi).



Various misconceptions about Emerson are also addressed. One of the most common is that he was something of a hermit. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. As Emerson told the young scholars at Harvard, "Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential" (*CW* 1:59). He expected them to do something with their knowledge. As the editors note in yet another contemporary reference, "Emerson recommends a type of spiritual research-and-development model that encourages research (the search for self-reliance) with a down-to-earth Yankee argument that one day all this would pay off in material ways that will aid society" (xxiii). They also admit to some negative qualities in the man. These include what some perceived to be his personal chilliness, his limited (by modern standards) view of woman's place in society, and his tendency, like most of his contemporaries, to think in racial and ethnic categories.

A unique features of this volume is the attention that has been given to the editorial process. Of course, one might expect this since between them, Myerson and Bosco have virtually set the standard for modern scholarly editing, especially where Emerson is concerned. The brief but important statement of "Textual Policies" indicates that each selection is presented "as close as possible to what contemporary audiences read." To achieve this end, they have "printed first edition texts, conservatively emended to correct errors" (xxxvii). While this seems to be a perfectly appropriate and reasonable approach, it is not the standard that was followed in the past. Even in the now complete *Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* with some variations, the early volumes followed an "editorial policy of producing eclectic texts drawn from many sources over many decades" (xxxvii). These were often supplemented with materials from so-called correction copies of Emerson's works where he inscribed, over a period of time, potential emendations. Because these emendations were only potential, the editors here have excluded them (xxxvii).

Finally, it should be noted that a companion volume, *The Major Poetry,* has also appeared, carefully selected and flawlessly edited by Albert von Frank. Together, these two collections present the most authentic and reliable Emerson that modern standards can produce. No library should be without them.

—Len Gougeon
University of Scranton

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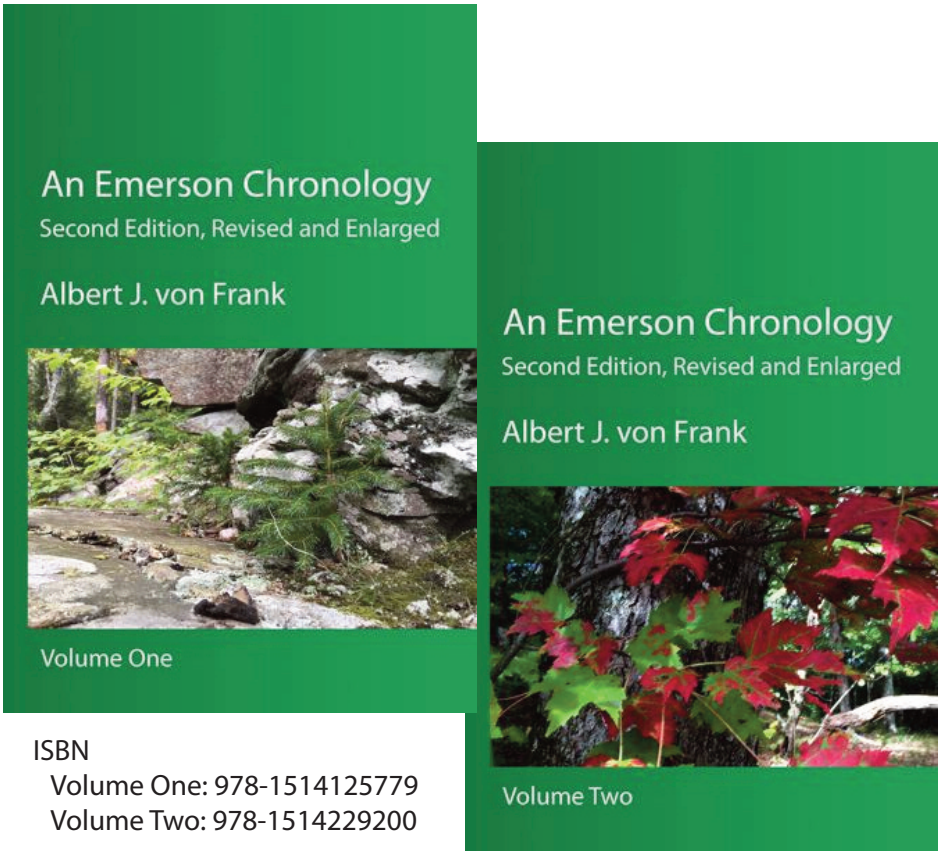

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