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Volume 17, Number 2 Fall 2006

EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

Distinguished Achievement Award Presented to Joel Porte

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society awarded its Distinguished Achievement Award to Joel Porte on 26 May 2006 at the American Literature Association meeting in San Francisco. The Ernest I. White Professor of American Studies and Humane Letters, Emeritus, at Cornell University, Professor Porte has been the author or editor of twelve books, essay collections, and editions, all but two of which significantly concerned Emerson. His death from esophageal cancer came on 1 June, five days after our award.

A graduate of City College of New York, Porte received the Ph.D. from Harvard in 1962, going on to teach in and chair the Harvard English Department until accepting a position at Cornell in 1987. He has been a beloved mentor of many students, and the authors of this and the tribute on page 11 represent that large cohort, one from each of his two universities.

Porte's career arches over the past forty years, both reflecting and shaping this generation's revaluing of Emerson as a man engaged with words and world. A comparably influential member of the Distinguished Achievement Award committee remembers Porte's first book, *Emerson and Thoreau: Transcendentalists in Conflict* (1966), as "a brilliant framing of the differences between these two like-minded writers," continuing even now to make Transcendentalism more interesting and complex through its bold argument. But, characteristically, Porte himself was not satisfied with the book. In the preface to *Representative Man: Ralph Waldo Emerson in His Time* (1988) he found his previous work too thesis-driven, "inadequately respectful" of Emerson's complexities. Now, in a series of essays themselves rather Emersonian in style, he approached his subject from a variety of vantage points, from mental apocalypse to moneyed resources, to sense of humor. And the rethinking continued: his last book, *Consciousness and Culture: Emerson and Thoreau Reviewed* (2004), was itself reviewed in *ESP* just this past spring.

Meanwhile, he also gathered and sponsored the work of others, in *Emerson: Prospect and Retrospect* (1982), *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1999), and *Emerson's Prose and Poetry: Authoritative Texts, Contexts, and Criticism* (2001). He was always generous to former students and younger scholars, never hesitating when I let him know that my piece in his 1982 collection would be about Mary Moody rather than Ralph Waldo Emerson. He also respected eminent adversaries, arguing against Richard Poirier at the conclusion of his most recent book but also including Poirier among authoritative critics in his 2001 collection.

Porte made Emerson more attractive and available in a series of editions: *Emerson in His Journals* (1982), harvesting the riches of the complete *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* in a selection for wide readership; the Library of America *Emerson* (1983); and *Emerson's Prose and Poetry: A Norton Critical Edition* (2001). The latter two volumes, as well as the *Cambridge Companion,* were co-edited with Saundra Morris of Bucknell University, his former student at Cornell. Joel and Saundra have been pleased to see the Norton edition in use by a new generation of students at colleges across the nation.

I will leave last words on Joel Porte to Saundra, except to recall him a few years ago as the generous host to several members of the Emerson Society as we gathered at Cornell to discuss with Jean Mudge the possibility of a television documentary on Emerson. His openness to new possibilities acted directly from an Emersonian spirit. The Emerson Society is pleased to honor his spirit and his long achievement.

—Phyllis Cole

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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 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, Wesley T. Mott, Department of Humanities & Arts, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, 100 Institute Road, Worcester, MA 01609-2280, or email wmott@wpi.edu.

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

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PROSPECTS.

Calls for Papers

Program Chair Joseph Thomas announces calls for three Emerson Society panels in 2007. To propose a paper for any of the panels, please send a 300-word abstract by 1 December to Professor Thomas (jthomas@caldwell.edu).

American Literature Association, 24-27 May, Boston

New Approaches to Emerson: Exploring the Family Ties
Acknowledging the recent interest in Emerson's family relationships and their bearing on our understanding of both Emerson's work and Transcendentalism, this panel solicits papers exploring those family ties, their rhetorical constructions, and their significance.

Emerson on Other Shores: *English Traits* and Beyond
One year after the sesquicentennial of Emerson's *English Traits,* and with the current interest in transatlantic and transnational studies in view, this panel solicits papers exploring Emerson's engagement with England, Europe, or other societies, or theirs with him.

Thoreau Society Annual Gathering, 12-15 July, Concord

Emerson and the Quotidian Life
In concert with the Thoreau Gathering's 2007 theme, "'Simplify, simplify': Thoreau's Timeless Message," for its panel the Emerson Society solicits papers that explore the ethos, philosophy, and/or practice of simplicity in Emerson's life and writings.

RWEMA Visiting Fellow

Fan Shengyu, a postdoctoral scholar in the Foreign Languages Institute of Beijing Normal University, China, is this year's recipient of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association Visiting Fellowship for the Study of Emerson and His Circle. Leslie A. Morris, curator of modern books and manuscripts at the Houghton Library, Harvard University, and a member of RWEMA, reports that Shengyu's research topic is "Emerson as Literary Critic." She notes that he will also "undertake to translate into Chinese a representative selection of Emerson; it will be the first to select from all the various genres of poetry, prose, correspondence." For details of Shengyu's Fellowship, e-mail Leslie_Morris@harvard.edu.

Emerson Sightings / Citings

Jack Holmbeck wrote on 25 May, "Garrison Keillor just mentioned [on the PBS radio program "A Prairie Home Companion"] that it's Emerson's birthday today."

"Dancing with Emerson," a poem by Deborah Digges in the 12 June 2006 *New Yorker,* p.6, was reported by Joel Brattin.

Umhoefer Prize to Grossman

Richard Grossman has been awarded the Umhoefer Prize for Achievement in Humanities for his book *A Year With Emerson* (reviewed in *ESP* 16 [Spring 2005]: 10-11). The recognition by the Minneapolis-based Arts and Humanities Foundation includes a bronze bust, cash prize, luncheon, and announcement in *The New Yorker* magazine.

Coe Publishes Novel

Marian Coe, a member of the Emerson Society, has published *Rachel's Story: A Southern Girl in Pre-Civil War Boston* (High Country, 2006). Emerson is among the historical characters who appear in the novel. Details at www.highcountrypublishers.com.

The Littlest Emersonian

Recent board member Roger Thompson and his wife, Laura, happily announce the arrival, on 22 July, of 8-pound Ethan Page Thompson. Our warmest welcome to Ethan and best wishes to all three.

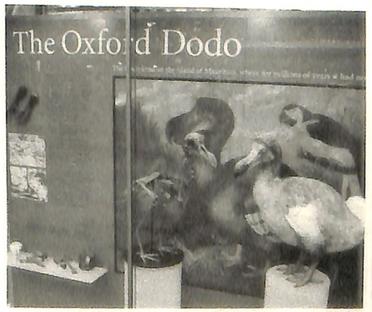
Van Cromphout Collection

Our late friend and colleague Gustaaf Van Cromphout left an extensive collection of books for which his widow, Luz, would like to find an appropriate home or homes. The library is particularly rich in Emerson, German literature, and French literature, and includes a collection related to Gustaaf's mentor at the University of Minnesota, Charles Foster. Send inquiries to the editor, wmott@wpi.edu.

Emerson 2005 Bibliography

David Robinson's Emerson bibliography for 2005 will appear in the Spring 2007 issue of *Emerson Society Papers.*

Emersonians at Oxford



The "Oxford Dodo," the inspiration for the dodo in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland,* attracted visitors to the University Museum of Natural History during this summer's conference "Transatlanticism in American Literature."
See pages 8-9.

Living Learning: Lessons from Emerson's School

SEAN ROSS MEEHAN
Morningside College

Let us see him in his school, and consider him in reference to the main influences he receives. —"The American Scholar"[1]

Before all else, Emerson was a teacher. It is a familiar enough phrase to apply to a writer of Emerson's stature and broad-ranging appeal. As scholars, we are used to thinking of Emerson and his transcendental or philosophical or spiritual writings as teachings. Consider the subtitle of Richard Geldard's *Esoteric Emerson* (1993): *The Spiritual Teachings of Ralph Waldo Emerson.* This is an important way we characterize how Emerson's writings seek and speak to us, how the writer mentors us as readers. Consider Emerson's enduring "American Scholar": We read as though we are in the audience of his writing, we the scholar whose biography Emerson is not so much detailing as calling forth, *e-ducating.* "One must be an inventor to read well."[2] As readers, in other words, and through these words, we go to school on Emerson. Consider Bronson Alcott's view of the "teachings" that Emerson's works represent: "any youth of free senses and fresh affections shall be spared years of tedious toil,—in which wisdom and fair learning are, for the most part, held at arm's length, planet's width, from his grasp,—by graduating from this college."[3]

Much as I appreciate the tenor of this metaphor of Emerson's texts taking us to school, and offer it to my students when I teach "The American Scholar" and other locations of his thinking, I share with it a deeper concern. Something is lost, it seems to me, when we view Emerson's teachings merely in terms of the metaphorical, qualified by an adjective or reduced to a subjunctive: as if Emerson were a teacher. The metaphors have kept us at arm's length from the grasp of Emerson's real experiences in education. We need a better recognition of what those experiences with teaching and schooling entailed. But more importantly, Emerson's educators, we who teach with and from Emerson, need a more thorough understanding of Emerson's interest in education as a writer and thinker, beyond his early school-teaching days, an interest emerging out of those days. Before (and beyond) the metaphor of Emerson's teachings, there is the metonymy of Emerson's school: the contexts and contiguities that locate his words in the experience of teaching and learning, the time and place of education in his day. Metaphor suggests relationship through distance and difference, language that substitutes one idea for another generally unlike it; metonymy suggests relationship through connection, language that conveys an idea through another that is somehow connected with it, a part representing a larger whole. Emerson understands this distinction when he argues in "Poetry and Imagination" that to be a good reader and thinker of life's forms and its analogical connections, one needs "to learn metonymy."[4] I have set out to track such "learning metonymy" in a project I am calling *Emerson's School,* an exploration of Emerson's neglected vision for American education. I surmise that Emerson has much to teach us about teaching, about educating for the kind of literacy and thinking we so marvelously associate with him. I offer here some initial reflections on where we can read Emerson's *educational* teachings and how we can return the dead metaphor of Emerson's "school" to the living contingencies of learning.

Is it redundant, for example, to speak of "The American Scholar," one of Emerson's most well-known texts, as if it were a philosophical or spiritual teaching? Doing so, we might forget that Emerson's audience is most immediately educational, that his context is pedagogical. Emerson, in this address given before the Phi Beta Kappa society and graduating seniors at Harvard in 1837, confronts the institution of education from within. The location is—no mere metaphor here—Emerson's school: It is the place where he went to school some fifteen years earlier and from which he offers a critique of education based on his own experiences with schooling and, as we learn in his journal and lectures in the years following this address, his thinking about what the experience of school should be. That experience, it may surprise many readers of Emerson, included actual teaching in school, a point generally discounted in biographical studies and thereupon neglected by many who have taught Emerson the writer. At best, Emerson's teaching experience has been viewed as a stop-over along the way to his divinity studies, an economic necessity and not a vocation, an endeavor not suited to the higher pursuit of his eventual calling as a writer. Ralph Rusk titles this chapter of Emerson's experience "The Unwilling Schoolmaster" and writes of Waldo "being inevitably doomed to the family purgatory of school teaching."[5] I don't suggest that Emerson's largely uninspired performance as a teacher has been misunderstood. Rather, I would argue that the discounting of Emerson's experience as an educator, informed by such performance, has misled our recognition of the significant role educational experience plays in Emerson's work from the beginning. Inspiration in education and teaching matters to Emerson, and his earliest experiences in schools are certainly one reason why.

Lawrence Buell's more recent contextualizing of Emerson's emergence in a "time and place of educational ferment" begins to re-focus our understanding of that actual experience and interest in pedagogy: "Pedagogical innovation was part of Emerson's daily experience."[6] Emerson points to his own involvement and interest in pedagogy and educational reform when he begins to imagine in his journal, not long after the "American Scholar" address, starting up his own college with the leading writers and thinkers of his day, Bronson Alcott among them, as lecturers: "Then I would open my lecture rooms to the wide nation.... Then I should see the lecture room, the College filled with life and hope.... I should see living learning; the muse once more in the eye and cheek of the youth."[7] Emerson would carry this interest in education and innovation into the rooms of his own lecturing, consistently turning to the topic (and title) of school and education, both early and late, as one of the important issues of his day. The "reform of Education" is a primary focus in "New England Reformers," included in *Essays: Second Series.* But the writer's interest in the issue, like the words themselves, emerge and reappear throughout his journals and lectures. "We are students of words: we are shut up in schools, and colleges, and recitation-rooms, for ten or fifteen years," Emerson complains, "and come out at last with a bag full of wind, a memory of words, and do not know a thing."[8] This is a concern Emerson takes up in *his* words throughout his work—a concern he ties directly to the cold conventions of education and pedagogy he observes emerging in his midst. A version of this "memory of words" surfaces in his 1840 lecture "Education" (in "The Present Age" series) and reappears in the later essay of that name edited and published by Cabot in 1883. But the passage begins, in fact, in a September 1839 journal in which Emerson reflects on an actual (not just metaphorical) "death-cold convention" of education he attended the day before, featuring an address by Horace Mann.

Horace Mann is already a name for what Emerson observes, for a systematizing of education that is, at that very moment, taking place. As Martin Bickman shows in *Minding American Education: Reclaiming the Tradition of Active Learning,* Mann establishes at this time an institutionalizing of American schools that contrasts with Emerson's vision of an active, living education.[9] Mann's formal vision and version of schooling largely wins out—it is the "school" with which we are all familiar. As Bickman further suggests in his study of a forgotten counter tradition of active learning in American education, Emerson's legacy is most directly apparent in the early twentieth-century philosophy of education developed by John Dewey. Emerson's interest in an "education in things," in using our hands as much as our head, echoes forward to the kind of hands-on, constructivist learning that Dewey will emphasize. "The inclination to learn from life itself and to make the conditions of life such that all will learn in the process of living is the finest product of schooling," Dewey argues in *Democracy and Education,* before going on to cite from Emerson's late lecture "Education."[10] In his 1839 journal, in contrast to Mann and the conventions of cold education, Emerson cites Thoreau and his brother as a model for living learning: "my wise young neighbors who instead of getting like the wordmen into a railroad-car where they have not even the activity of holding the reins, have got into a boat which they have built with their own hands....The farm, the farm is the right school. The reason of my deep respect for the farmer is that he is a realist & not a dictionary. The farm is a piece of the world, the School house is not."[11]

Building or learning with one's own hands, learning in an environment that is a piece of the world rather than removed from it: Emerson's words recall the figure of metonymy with which I began. Learning takes place through a living engagement with the world at hand. Words, for Emerson, necessarily mediate that engagement with the world (much as for Thoreau, who after all writes a book about his boat and a second book about his labors at Walden), but cannot wholly substitute for it.[12] In fact, Emerson applies this critique to his own memory of words, in connection with his earliest experiences as a teacher. Emerson's own account of those experiences suggest not an unwilling schoolmaster as much as an uninspiring one—a picture of teaching that is dissonant with the joy of the writing life he has already begun. In an unpublished manuscript titled "Paper read at a meeting of his former scholars," Emerson prepares an informal speech he gave in 1865 to a reunion of his female students, former pupils from the school he took over when his brother William left for divinity studies in Germany.[13] A portion of this manuscript is quoted by Cabot in the *Memoir,* used to confirm the assertion that "school-keeping had not proved an attractive occupation for him." Looking back before this gathering of his former scholars, Emerson candidly admits a sense of failure. "Now I have two regrets in regard to the school," Emerson reflects: "The first is that my teaching was partial and external." As he goes on to explain, Emerson regrets a disjunction between the conventional pedagogy of the school and the kind of inquiry and literary exploration he was himself, at that very moment in his life, setting out on as a reader and writer. "I am afraid no hint of this [Emerson's own writing] ever came into the school, where we clung to the safe and cold details of languages, geography, arithmetic, and chemistry. . . . I could have engaged you in thoughts that would have given reality and depth and joy to the school, and raised all the details to the highest pleasure and nobleness."[14] The point, then, is not that young Emerson is unsuited for teaching (because "school-keeping" is not his true vocation). The point, more crucially, is that Emerson's teaching was not suited to his ongoing interests, the joy of his own learning. Emerson admits his own, early participation in a failing of teaching and education.

Cabot's citation of this informal speech neglects Emerson's second regret. It reinforces the first regret (the disjunction between living and learning) while extending its significance to all of Emerson's work. "The other regret is that in leaving the school, I left my scholars instead of holding fast to them." Emerson goes on to recount his more familiar professional path, from divinity studies and preaching to his eventual vocation as a "public lecturer" and author. Emerson draws a connection between the kind of "friendships" he develops with his later audiences and the kind of companionship he first developed in the school. His regret highlights the contact between his later and his earlier "teachings," observed in the

(Continued on page 15)

Abstracts of San Francisco ALA Papers

The following panels were presented by the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society at the seventeenth annual conference of the American Literature Association on 26 May 2006 in San Francisco, California.

SESSION I: Emerson and Philosophy: A Roundtable Discussion
Chair, Todd Richardson, *University of Texas-Permian Basin*

Emerson, Words, and Things: Personal Language and Impersonal Faith

ELIZABETH ADDISON, *Western Carolina University*

In both theory and practice, Emerson chose concrete language. "What would we know the meaning of? The noise in the street, . . . the meal in the firkin, the milk in the pan"— this famous line from "The American Scholar" has become a touchstone for Stanley Cavell and others who emphasize Emerson's love for "the familiar, the low." The world of things serves as our dictionary, making our speech rich in proportion to what we have lived. Yet in the alembic or "menstruum" of the poet's imagination, words are forms that can fill with multiple meanings. Similarly, one meaning can take multiple forms. Defining Goethe's genius in *Representative Men,* Emerson saw his "wit" as a "menstruum" in which "the past and the present ages . . . are dissolved into archetypes and ideas." This word *menstruum* implies Goethe is an alchemist—his "wit" is the solvent that transmutes metals or natural things into written gold. Emerson's praise of Goethe is that he "would have no word that does not cover a thing"—he is a force of nature, which itself writes "memoranda" everywhere: Goethe "writes in the plainest and lowest tone . . . putting ever a thing for a word." Describing the religious reformer who founded the Society of Friends, Emerson says that George Fox "puts ever a thing for a hollow form." As Fox accused "priests" of feeding people "husks," outdated religious forms and empty words, Emerson told a Quaker friend: "I never willingly say anything concerning 'God' in cold blood." Theological language is liable to be untrue in proportion to its specificity. In this philosophical antinomy—thought and reality, spirit and commodity, mind and body, silence and expression—Emerson champions reality, the language of things.

Shall We Fancy Emerson a Philosopher?

JIM BELL, *Oberlin College*

How should we defend the claim that Emerson is a philosopher, or that his essays are works of philosophy? In my view, defending Emerson's status as a philosopher is a bit like defending one's status as a good cook: The best way to do it is to demonstrate it. We must show Emerson doing philosophy in his essays. To borrow from the cooking analogy, our task is not to add ingredients or seasoning to the dish and attempt to pass it off as Emerson's. The defense I'm talking about involves revealing an engagement with fundamental philosophical questions which is already there in the text. Further, just as it takes an educated palate to discern a good cook, reading Emerson philosophically requires a maturation process on the part of the reader.

One way to put my suggestion is that we need to read, or learn how to read, Emerson with philosophical attention. A running theme in the essay "Experience" is the importance of attention over fancy. "Men live in their fancy, like drunkards whose hands are too soft and tremulous for successful labor. It is a tempest of fancies, and the only ballast I know, is a respect to the present hour." Attempts to defend Emerson as a philosopher must be free of fancy; we must approach an Emerson essay free of any imaginings or preconceptions about what doing philosophy consists in, or what it should look like. A respectful engagement with his text involves heeding its potential for meaning. This sort of attention becomes philosophical when we heed its potential for meaning on subjects that clearly concern Emerson, subjects like ethics, autonomy, agency, knowledge, skepticism, and the nature of the self.

Emerson and the Evolution of American Philosophy

JENNIFER BERNSTEIN, *The Citadel*

Questioning Emerson's legitimacy as a philosopher raises larger issues regarding the origins, constitution, and style of American philosophy. Ideas, like literary styles, have histories. They emerge in particular moments in time and get worked out in specific ways in different places. Stanley Cavell recognizes this fact when he describes Emerson as the "founder of the difference in American thinking." I want to suggest, however, that American philosophical expression did not just suddenly emerge in the 1840s; it evolved over time. For me, the difference in American thinking harkens back to New England's first epistemological crisis—the Antinomian Controversy of the mid-1630s. The term *antinomian* is usually used to describe individuals who believe that those who have experienced God's grace are no longer subject to human law, but Anne Hutchinson, our country's representative antinomian, was concerned chiefly with obedience and had no interest in rejecting the colony's laws. Theologically speaking, she was not an antinomian. If, however, we consider the etymology of the term, it is clear that "antinomian" is not an inaccurate label for Hutchinson or the central concerns of future generations of American philosophers. Nomos, the law, refers to that which is laid down and settled. Hutchinson's obedience to God was antinomian in that it resisted and destabilized Puritan endeavors to fix knowledge through systems of logic and language. The questions she raised regarding the stability and reliability of both knowledge and language lingered on over the course of the centuries. Edwards, Emerson, Thoreau, Peirce, and James explored, in various ways, the epistemological and stylistic consequences of obedience to the divine mind, the higher laws of being, or the better laws that are in the process of becoming.

"A Sublime but Modest Empiricist"

KRISTIN BOUDREAU, *University of Georgia*

Questions about Emerson's credentials as a philosopher tend to revolve around the subjects of his essays, which seem insufficiently philosophical to some philosophers. But his essays concern some of the same matters that consumed philosophers after him. Toward the close of "Experience" he laments the distance between "the world I converse with" and "the world I think." William James announced with great fanfare a philosophy that would address this troubling gap and realize its place as "at once the most sublime and the most trivial of human pursuits…[a discipline that] works in the minutest crannies and…opens out the widest vistas." James confronted his audience as a circus-barker bringing in paying clients, promising them a resolution that Emerson had in fact quietly effected at the close of "Experience." Likewise, Friedrich Nietzsche took extravagant aim at philosophers who, in the name of Reason, "falsif[y] the evidence of the senses" and introduce "the lie of unity." Emerson has had difficulty gaining admission as a philosopher not because of the content of his essays (which address the gap between real and ideal worlds) but because of their modest style.

Philosophy in Emerson, Cavell, and Feminism

SUSAN L. DUNSTON, *New Mexico Tech*

The consonance between Emerson and contemporary feminists is most effectively revealed by what Stanley Cavell brings to studying Emerson and to contemporary American philosophy. Cavell discovers the things in Emerson that are most clearly aligned with feminism: a certain "intimacy with existence" and a deep respect for and deference to the obvious and the ordinary. Cavell fully appreciates "the weight" Emerson "puts on the obvious," and feminist philosophers generally share Emerson's attention to the ordinary, to "the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life." Cavell identifies and appreciates "Emerson's understanding of the origination of philosophy as a feminine capacity" rooted in receptivity and the ability to bear. For Cavell, "philosophical knowledge" leaves things as they are rather than taking them as something else: it bears the world as a matter of creation and survival.

Cavell, Emerson, and feminists share key philosophical approaches to individual difference: a metaphysics of relation (Benjamin), an epistemology of reception, acknowledgment, and feeling (Nussbaum), and an ethics of care and attention (Gilligan, Noddings). They also share key political and cultural values and analytic approaches to what Cavell calls "the waste of America." Cavell and feminists concur with Emerson's insight that "genius" consists in believing "that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all," that there is truth in the private and personal. Like Cavell, Emerson and feminists lament "our refusal to listen to ourselves, to own our best thoughts." At the same time they understand, even better than the pragmatists, the "provisional" nature of their philosophy and of our original relations with the universe and with each other.

Radical Self-Reliance and the Limits of Democratic Faith

JOHN S. HOLZWARTH, *Lewis & Clark College*

Abstract not available at press time.

SESSION II: Emerson and Later 19th-Century Writers
Chair, Joseph M. Thomas, *Caldwell College*

Nodding Over Emerson: Kate Chopin and the Relevance of Emersonian Transcendentalism in a Post-Romantic Age

WILLIAM MOSS, *Wake Forest University*

In an often noted passage of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), Edna Pontellier, as she begins the awakening that gives the novel its title, "sat in the library after dinner and read Emerson until she grew sleepy." In 1989, Virginia Kouidis observed that the interpretation of this passage "remains an issue of critical debate that also addresses the moderns' response to [Emerson's] ideas." Although interpretations of the passage and of Chopin's attitude toward Emerson have varied widely over the years, most critics have seen in it a critique of Emerson and of the inadequacies of Emersonian thought, especially for turn-of-the century, indeed all, women. John Carlos Rowe cites it and Chopin's novel in his "reprimand" of Emerson for complicity with a repressive establishment ideology at odds with the "great emancipatory movements of the American nineteenth century."

Other references by Chopin to Emerson, however, both veiled and explicit, reveal a close familiarity and a considerably less antipathetic attitude. In her first novel, *At Fault* (1890), a character's attitude toward Emerson's works is clearly a measure of the character, not of Emerson. In a letter taking issue with a review of that novel, Chopin quotes from Emerson's essay "Character" (also invoked, without attribution, in her short piece "The Story of an Hour") to enforce her point, warning against overlooking the flaws of her heroine.

These and more subtle references, along with a heretofore unnoticed allusion to Plato's *Phaedrus,* which serves as a gloss to the novel's pervasive imagery of wings, suggest that Emerson does not fail Edna but that Edna herself lacks what Emerson characterizes in "Self-Reliance" as "the self-sufficing, and therefore self-relying soul." While Chopin's flawed heroines may never fully achieve their liberation, Chopin herself succeeds as a subversive writer, an emancipatory writer—whose revolt is thoroughly grounded in Emersonian thought.

Emerson and the Gilded Age Utopia

SOPHIA FORSTER, *SUNY-Buffalo*

The ideas of Ralph Waldo Emerson are rarely considered in relation to the explosion of utopian writing during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Yet Emerson's vision of the importance of the individual self has much in common with ideals raised in the book that opened the floodgates to the production of utopian fiction, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888). Like Emerson, Bellamy sought an alternative to the possessive individualism that dominated the social field of capitalist America, and also like Emerson, he imagined narrow self-interest overcome in individuals by the confluence of an ethic of self-abandonment and one of self-development (two of the central features of Emerson's "self-reliance"). Bellamy's vision, however, differs substantially from Emerson's, and in such a way as to suggest that Bellamy misconstrues Emersonian ideas. But Bellamy is not simply naive.

An Emersonian assessment of the relation between the individual and capitalism shaped Bellamy's utopian socialism, but Bellamy's different historical circumstances led him away from Emerson. Emerson initially elaborated his ideal of individual self-reliance in opposition to the commercialism of the Jacksonian era, which he saw as fostering both individual egotism and mass conformity. But based on his historicist reading of the increased possibility for self-reliance as the product of the shift from feudalism to capitalism, Emerson ultimately accepted the ideology, if not the practice, of Jacksonian laissez-faire economics. Bellamy couldn't manage quite the same reconciliation with his society's economic status quo, the Gilded Age consolidation of capital. His pursuit of an Emersonian vision of a mutually enabling relationship between capitalism and a higher form of selfhood (also defined, significantly, as a form of self-reliance) led to a utopian reconstruction of the existing economic system as authoritarian state capitalism. It is this pursuit, however, that decisively separates Bellamy's focus on the potential of individuals (as actualized in the citizens of utopia) from Emerson's. With this reading, I raise the question of the limitations that the Emersonian framework might have placed on later writers struggling with similar questions surrounding the liberation of both the American individual and American society.

(Abstracts continued on page 16)

Transatlanticism in American Literature: Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe

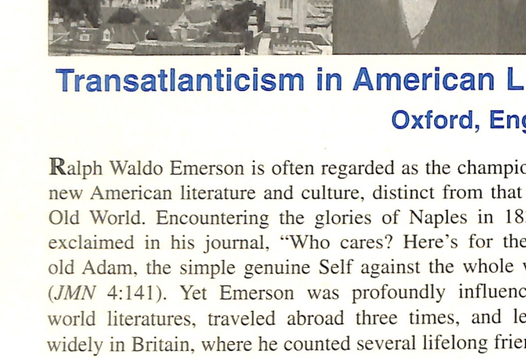
Oxford, England, 13–16 July 2006

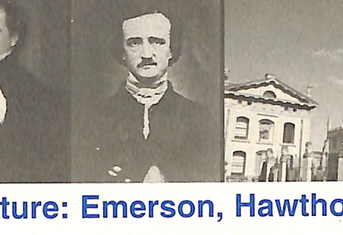
Ralph Waldo Emerson is often regarded as the champion of a new American literature and culture, distinct from that of the Old World. Encountering the glories of Naples in 1833, he exclaimed in his journal, "Who cares? Here's for the plain old Adam, the simple genuine Self against the whole world" (*JMN* 4:141). Yet Emerson was profoundly influenced by world literatures, traveled abroad three times, and lectured widely in Britain, where he counted several lifelong friends. In various ways, all U.S. writers have engaged in two-way exchanges with transatlantic cultures.

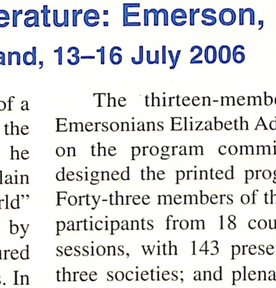
This summer, in collaboration with the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society and the Poe Studies Association, the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society presented a pioneering international conference exploring global contexts of American literature. "Transatlanticism in American Literature: Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe"—held on 13-16 July 2006 at Oxford University, UK—was hosted by the Rothermere American Institute and St. Catherine's College. Nearly three years in the planning, this was, as conference coordinator Rosemary Fisk of Samford University noted, "the first-ever joint meeting of the Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe societies, also the first gathering of any of these groups on English soil." Indeed, it was the first time the Emerson Society has held a meeting abroad.

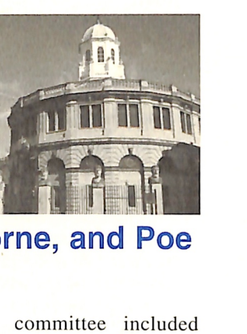
The thirteen-member planning committee included Emersonians Elizabeth Addison, Phyllis Cole (who also served on the program committee), Jennifer Gurley (who also designed the printed program), Bob Habich, and Wes Mott. Forty-three members of the Emerson Society were among 170 participants from 18 countries. The conference featured 48 sessions, with 143 presentations; business meetings for the three societies; and plenary addresses by Paul Giles (Oxford University, and director of the Rothermere American Institute) and Susan Manning (University of Edinburgh).

Splendid papers, renewed acquaintances, special receptions, access to the academic and cultural resources of the historic City of Oxford, a concluding banquet at St. Catherine's College, and new networks of international friends and colleagues—all made for a provocative, moving, and memorable experience for this unique gathering of scholars. American literary scholarship will be influenced incalculably for years to come.

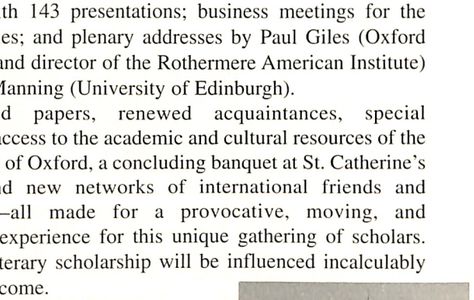






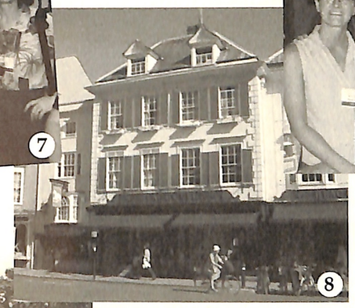


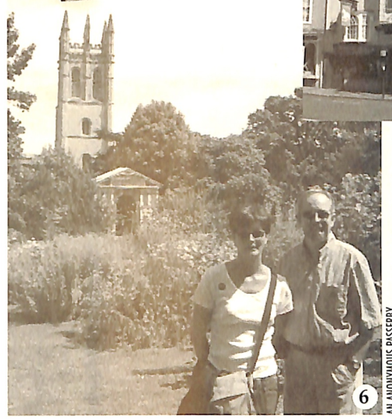
(2) Sandy and Wes Mott.
(3) String quartet provided by The City of Oxford Orchestra.
(4) St. Mary the Virgin Church.
(5) nearby Blenheim Palace, birthplace of Winston Churchill.

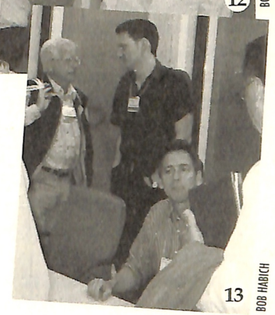


(1) Opening reception hosted by Oxford's Rothermere American Institute and sponsored by Stephan Loewentheil and The Nineteenth-Century Shop: first row, Elizabeth Addison, Elvira Osipova (Russia), Dieter Schulz (Germany), Len Gougeon, David Robinson; second row, Jennifer Gurley, Daniel Koch (U.S. doctoral candidate at Christ Church College, Oxford), Wes Mott, Bob Habich; looking on approvingly in background, Paul Giles, director, Rothermere Institute.

PHOTOS AT TOP OF PAGE *Flanking Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe: View of Oxford from Carfax Tower; Christopher Wren's Sheldonian Theatre (1669). Design adapted from conference Web site created by Scott Peeples.*







Clock and quarterboys, Carfax Tower.

(6) Brenda and Bob Habich at the Oxford Botanical Gardens, with Magdalen College tower in background. (7) Jennifer Gurley, Phyllis Cole, Laura Dassow Walls at an after-hours reception hosted by (8) Blackwell's—Oxford's great bookstore—along with (9) Brenda and Bob Habich, Sarah Ann Wider, Alison Easton (conference UK liaison), Sallee Engstrom, Len Gougeon. (10) Sandy and Wes Mott, Sarah Ann Wider, Phyllis Cole and (11) board member Shoji Goto (Japan) at breakfast, St. Catherine's College. (12) Sarah Ann Wider chairs panel with Amanda Emerson, Jan Stievermann (Germany), Jennifer Gurley. (13) Dieter Schulz, with Jan Stievermann, and Kerry Larson answer questions after their panel. (14) Conference coordinator Rosemary Fisk receives plaque from Sam Coale, who represented the planning committee.

(15) 1,000-year-old St. Cross Church, near St. Catz. (16) Radcliffe Camera, 1748. (17) 14th-century Carfax Tower, St. Martin's Church. (18) Spire of 14th-century St. Mary the Virgin Church. (19) Kings Arms pub, circa 1606.

Text and photos by Wes Mott, unless otherwise credited. If you have photos of Emersonians at Oxford who are not pictured in this issue, please send them to wmott@wpi.edu. *ESP* will publish them as space permits.

In Memoriam

Kenneth Walter Cameron, 1908–2006

I originally encountered the name of Kenneth W. Cameron during my first year in graduate school, when I consulted issues of the *Emerson Society Quarterly,* a periodical new to me (my undergraduate, small Liberal Arts institution had no subscription), and then went to *Emerson the Essayist* for research on a project in an American Renaissance class. These materials alerted me that here was the work of a genuinely knowledgeable, deeply committed scholar. Some years later I corresponded with Professor Cameron in regard to some Hawthorne topics, and years later, thanks to our mutual friend, Richard P. Benton, I got to meet the man in person—no mean feat because for years Ken intentionally tried to maintain distance between himself and anyone who might be/become a contributor to one of his publishing enterprises.


BRAD DEAN

On another occasion when I was passing through Hartford, Ken asked Benton to bring me to his home for a visit, and what a wonderful visit that proved to be! To say, as Benton had told me, that Ken was "very much a scholar" was an understatement. His home was filled with bookstacks, from the attic to the cellar, and those shelves housed one of the finest collections of American literature in private hands. Not containing just books by or about the American Transcendentalists, Ken's library ran an impressive gamut from British Renaissance authors (particularly the dramatists) to T. S. Eliot, with good holdings on Bryant, Simms, Dana, along with numerous other useful items for the scholar and editor that Ken was. As the longtime Historiographer for the Archdiocese of Connecticut, Ken also amassed a valuable collection of items pertaining to the Episcopal church, in which denomination he was an ordained clergyman.

Although Ken's resemblance to Thoreau, i. e., a person who wanted to get his work done efficiently (Ken worried that he himself might come to an early end), spurred him to publish according to his own lights and methods, his contributions to studies in Transcendentalism earned him international renown, just as his edited periodicals provided outlets for publications by novices and seasoned academics alike. In his later years he donated many of his literary holdings to Yale and Trinity, where the validity of his diligent labors on behalf of Transcendentalism may be used. Still later he queried me for the appropriate addressee in the British Library, then sent a set of *American Renaissance Literary Report* as a gift to that research center.

Outspokenly critical of scholarly publications that did not meet his own high standards, Ken was also very generous in assisting the causes of others when they requested his help. The several occasions when Kent Ljungquist, and sometimes Wes Mott, and I visited with Ken and Dick Benton in Hartford were times of repeated laughter, overall social pleasure, and intellectual stimulation, much relished by all. Ken was an animated conversationalist, always curious about and supportive of younger academics' projects and ideas. Perhaps surprisingly, perhaps not, Ken was also interested in folklore and folkways, once consenting to sample that old Pennsylvania Dutch dish *Schnitz und Knepp* (apples and dumplings), which I prepared at Dick Benton's home, and which Ken claimed to enjoy exceedingly. He also used to bake cookies for his classes at Trinity, a homey aspect in this sometimes formidable figure in Transcendental scholarship.

In sum, neither Kenneth W. Cameron's name—nor the flourishing style with which he signed that name in his letters—is likely to be soon forgotten by those in the Emerson Society and by many others, in many places, elsewhere. His *Emerson the Essayist* and *Young Emerson's Transcendental Vision* were still being sought long after he ceased active research-publication, and far longer after the original publication dates of those books. These are only two among a host of books Ken produced that still command respect throughout academe. Here I have wanted to portray Kenneth W. Cameron, the great scholar, but I have also wanted to offer some illuminations into the life of a very private, but also very humane, friend.

—Benjamin F. Fisher

J. Frank Schulman, 1927–2006

Jacob Frank Schulman—renowned Unitarian clergyman and founding member of the Emerson Society—was born in Nashville, Tenn. His father was a Russian Jewish immigrant, whose family escaped the pogroms, his mother a Southern Jewish lady. Enlisting in the U.S. Navy right after high school, Frank served in Norman, Oklahoma, where he helped start the church on campus. He graduated from the University of Oklahoma, where he was strongly influenced by Rev. Frank Holmes and decided to enter the Unitarian ministry. After another stint in the navy in Japan during the Korean War, he earned his S.T.B. from Harvard Divinity School. As assistant to the minister at Arlington Street Church, he met with the weekly young working people's group, which included Simmons College student Alice Southworth. They married and had four children. Frank received his D.Min. from Meadville. One of a handful of scholars before the publication of Emerson's *Complete Sermons* who paid attention to Emerson's ministry, Frank wrote his thesis on why Emerson left his pulpit; it was later published as a book. During several research trips to Concord, Mass., he and Alice became friends with the Emerson family.


ALICE SCHULMAN

Rev. Schulman served churches in Worcester, Mass., and Youngstown, Ohio, and retired after twenty-five years at the Emerson Church in Houston, Texas. He then served for a year as interim pastor in Horsham, West Sussex, England. The opportunity to teach and minister at Manchester College, Oxford, where Unitarian ministers are trained, led Frank and Alice to stay in England for six more years. He was the only Unitarian ever to be a member of the faculty of theology at Oxford, and besides serving as chaplain and dean, he earned his M.A., D.Phil., B.D., and M.Litt. degrees from Oxford. He was honored with a D.D. from Meadville Theological School a month before his death from cancer.

The author of nine books and many pamphlets and articles, Frank had a weekly radio talk show in Youngstown for several years and lectured at conferences and the UUA General Assembly. A contributor also to *Emerson Society Papers,* he joined me for lunch several years ago during one of his return trips to Worcester. For all his accolades, he was kind and unpretentious, generously sharing his rich insights into Emerson's career. Frank's favorite picture of himself was taken at the Emerson home in Concord, wearing the great man's robe and sitting in his chair, with one of Emerson's books open in his lap.

*—Wesley T. Mott**

*with grateful acknowledgment to Alice Schulman

Joel Porte, 1933–2006

I write as Joel's former student at Cornell; his collaborator on the Norton Critical *Emerson's Prose and Poetry* and *The Cambridge Companion to Emerson;* his close friend of two decades; and his sharer, with you, in Emersonian loves of literature, language, imagination, benevolence, impish humor, and life. It is especially poignant that Joel learned that he had received the Emerson Society's Distinguished Achievement Award just after he had entered the Hospicare facility in Ithaca, N.Y.


CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Joel's life manifestly affirms our faith in the "zigzag" yet sure path that Emerson describes in "Self-Reliance." This path began in Brooklyn, where he was born to impecunious and unpedigreed Brooklyn second-generation Russian Jewish immigrants. It went on through an adolescent amateur radio fascination, Brooklyn Tech High School, Cooper Union, night school at Brooklyn College, City College, a cold-water flat near Chelsea, and an abandoned engineering career. His energies culminated, as have yours, in the seductive allure of what Mark Van Doren titled his book, a turning point for Joel, a *Liberal Education.* For Joel, this allure led to Harvard (as a student and then a professor), to Emerson, to Cornell, and, I found, continued to lead him at the end.

As a Harvard student, Joel formed three dear friendships that would span almost fifty years—those with scholars Al Gelpi, Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi, and Bob Kiely. He shared with them and with his other friends and family his enthusiasms for music (especially the cello, which he played as a young man), travel, cooking, and wine.

In the twenty months between Joel's diagnosis and his death, the most enlivening energy that he and I shared involved our reading together the poetry and prose that we and you love—that of Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Dickinson, and also that of Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Stein, Millay, Roethke, Rilke, Pessoa, Moore, and Bishop, and, most especially, Wallace Stevens, who resolutely reminds us that "words of the world are the life of the world." In the valley of the shadow, lovely literature sustained.

When Joel died, as Helene, her sister Gail, Joel's daughter Susanna, and I gathered around the bedside, I read two passages from Emerson. First, Emerson's affirmation that closes "Terminus," Emerson's poem to "the god of bounds," in a quatrain of embedded quotation of the voice of divinity within us:

> 'Lowly faithful, banish fear
> Right onward drive unharmed;
> The port, well worth the cruise, is near,
> And every wave is charmed.'

I then read from the opening of the Divinity School Address, one of Joel's favorite passages of Emerson's prose, a passage I also used to close my remarks at his memorial service at Cornell. It begins and ends: "In this refulgent summer, it has been a luxury to draw the breath of life.…The cool night bathes the world as with a river, and prepares…[our] eyes again for the crimson dawn."

Your award to Joel affirms that the waves of his life have indeed been "charmed." In his life and even near his death, which he faced with courage and good humor, his vision remained that of "the crimson dawn."

—Saundra Morris

Reviews

The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism.
MEGAN MARSHALL. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 624 pp. $28.00 cloth.

In her collective biography *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women who Ignited American Romanticism,* Megan Marshall rescues these extraordinary women—Elizabeth, Mary, and Sophia—from the competing shadows of obscurity and caricature, and places them at the vanguard of America's Transcendental experiment. As much cultural history as biography, *The Peabody Sisters* documents the economic, domestic, religious, and educational contexts that circumscribed the possibilities of all women in the nineteenth century and that challenged these women in particular. Yet it would be wrong to characterize Megan Marshall's biography as a simple paean to the heroic triumphs of suffering women. In fact, the author's insightful narrative reveals the remarkable complexity of each of the Peabody sisters, as well as the powerful currents of intellect and desire that shaped their relationships with each other and with the outside world.

Marshall begins with two stories that become cautionary tales for the sisters: the secret of Royall Tyler's seduction of their grandmother, Betsy Hunt Palmer, as well as his sexual abuse of their mother, Eliza; and the legend of Polly Palmer, their great-aunt, once a bold and talented young woman, who fell into permanent invalidism after being frightened by a suitor. Yet if Elizabeth, Mary, and Sophia grow up haunted by the ghosts of victimized or hysterical women, they also, according to Marshall, develop complex strategies for articulating alternate possibilities for themselves in the world. Elizabeth's devotion to being an educator becomes, therefore, both an economic imperative (dictated by the disempowerment of women generally and by the particular ineptitude of the Peabody men) as well as an opportunity to cultivate an intellectual life less vulnerable to the dangers of conventional domesticity. While Elizabeth emerges from this biography as the fearless warrior and generous muse of the Transcendental movement, Marshall represents Mary, the most passive of the three sisters, as carving out a rich interior life mediated by fiction. Her private experience as a reader of fiction in turn makes possible her own heroic endurance of a life marked by marginalized and postponed desires. Marshall further suggests that while Mary never achieves the notoriety or fame of either of her sisters, she eventually translates her engagement with fiction into an active critique of slavery. As a governess in Cuba, struggling with her own brand of indentured servitude, Mary drew upon the heroic identities contained in much contemporary women's fiction to write *Juanita,* a novel exposing the brutality of slavery (it was published posthumously by Elizabeth). Finally, Sophia anticipates Emily Dickinson's strategic withdrawal and Thoreau's defiant refusal to be commodified, by using her illnesses as the medium for her artistic life. Marshall narrates the almost cyclical process through which Sophia retreats into some room of her own, either before or after a bout of illness, and produces art which she refuses to sell, gives away, or fails to complete. Unlike other biographers of Sophia who have casually labeled her as a hypochondriac—a diagnosis Elizabeth is at one time tempted to credit—Marshall respects both the legitimacy of Sophia's physiological complaints and the psychological opportunities for interiority they create. Of the three sisters, Sophia manages most successfully—at least prior to her marriage to Hawthorne—to follow the integrity of her own mind by embracing the frailty of her body.

Until recently, the Peabody sisters appear in criticism like the black and white silhouettes popular in the nineteenth century: Elizabeth, the schoolmarm; Mary, the governess; Sophia, the invalid. Megan Marshall reveals the sisters in three dimensions and credits them with the integrity and individuality they fought so hard to maintain. If one of Marshall's intentions is to revise our perceptions of the Peabody women, it is Elizabeth Peabody whose image is most profoundly altered; she emerges from the text in all her energy and intellectual passion as one of the original voices of transcendental philosophy. In addition to coining the term "transcendentalism"—a minor historical footnote when measured against her many accomplishments—Elizabeth anticipates Emerson's rejection of historical Christianity, just as she surpasses the vision and intellectual range of many of her contemporaries and mentors, including William Ellery Channing, Bronson Alcott, and Theodore Parker. Marshall does not explicate the feminist implications of her research; the story speaks for itself. Elizabeth Peabody articulates transcendentalist principles, and as a result enacts her own quite public rejection of conventional relationships and behaviors, as a direct response to her life as a woman. Long before Emerson wrote *Nature,* Elizabeth Peabody was actively engaged in the process of defending the "Me" from the demands and prejudices of the "Not Me."

The Peabody Sisters, despite the enormous amount of detailed research it contains, reads like a wonderful historical novel, complete with romantic adventures. However, the various loves and losses of the three sisters are not the focus of this narrative; instead, they provide a measure of how difficult it was for Elizabeth, Mary, and Sophia Peabody to maintain the twinned challenges of any transcendental union: independence and intimacy. If there is any flaw in this biography, it's that it ends too predictably, with the marriages of Mary and Sophia. After reading this remarkable book about these unique women, it's hard not to resent the suggestion that their lives reach a peaceful state once they have resolved their domestic situations. Yet one can hardly blame Megan Marshall for not following the Peabody sisters through to the end of their lives, after proving so spectacularly how important their origins have been to American intellectual and cultural history. No one who teaches, reads, or writes about the American Transcendentalists can afford not to read this book.

—ANN M. RYAN
Le Moyne College

Emerson, Romanticism, and Intuitive Reason: The Transatlantic "Light of All Our Day."
PATRICK J. KEANE. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005. xv, 555 pp. $54.95 cloth.

The timing of this book could not be better, coming to Emersonians just before our co-sponsorship in summer 2006 of the conference on transatlanticism at Oxford University. Patrick Keane's work on Emerson's dialogue with Coleridge and Wordsworth significantly expands the study of transatlantic Romanticism. It is certainly not news that Emerson read and personally visited the two British giants of the generation just before his own. Yet several generations' critical insistence on American originality has meant that his actual debts to them have been seriously underestimated. Harold Bloom, even as he has powerfully shaped the study of literary influence, epitomizes the claim that Emerson's genius was "fierce" enough to recognize his precursors without feeling any burden of debt to them. Keane acknowledges the power of Bloom's claims and continues to draw upon his critical vocabulary, while responding, "Yes, but…" (29). What follows the "but" is a lengthy, close, and meditative reading of the textual appropriations and echoes revealing Emerson's profound debt to Coleridge and Wordsworth. Instead of taking at face value Emerson's debunking of the "old gentlemen" he visited, we are asked to explore the "figures of capable imagination" whose critical and poetic writing actively shaped him and his American circle (99).

A longtime scholar of British Romantic poetry, Keane works from knowledge of the original sources uncommon among Emerson scholars, persuasively showing how Coleridge's celebration and interpretation of Wordsworth overcame Emerson's initial skepticism. Emerson became the disciple of both. So Keane intricately traces Emerson's sense of self as "glad to the brink of fear" in *Nature* as a response to three passages from Wordsworth's *Excursion,* and he locates the "transparent eye-ball" passage in relation to the moment in "Tintern Abbey" when "We see into the life of things" (101-04). Coleridge profoundly and permanently shaped Emerson's thought, through both his conceptualization of transcendent Reason and his particular turns of phrase. But Emerson progressively effaced the debt as he claimed this thinking as his own, explicitly citing Coleridge's "mighty alphabet / For infant minds" in his 1826 journal, then merely attributing these words to "the poet" in an 1833 lecture, and finally stating the Coleridgean idea without the words in the "Language" chapter of *Nature.* The 1836 manifesto mentioned Coleridge just "once…, and innocuously, Wordsworth not at all" (112-15). Yet Keane cogently argues for their presence on every page, Emerson's suppression of their names testimony of his desire for distance from these precursors.

Keane's study is far more, however, than a one-way tracking of influence from these British Romantics to Emerson, since he also follows Richard Gravil in claiming the reciprocity of transatlantic dialogue (81). Through Coleridge Emerson could also claim Kant and German metaphysics, and along with Wordsworth he registered the profound influence of Milton. But in turn he was read by Nietzsche and Nietzsche's disciple Yeats—and in turn by modernists from Frost and Stevens to Elizabeth Bishop. Keane keeps much of this range in mind amidst his close readings, so that he wryly describes the result as a "vertiginous labyrinth of quotation and allusion" (256). But he offers sure guidance through the labyrinth. A reader can newly appreciate Emerson's Divinity School Address in juxtaposition not only to Coleridge and Wordsworth but to Stevens's "Sunday Morning." Emerson's under-appreciated "Threnody" comes to new life alongside Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" (master text of this entire study), but also amidst the elegiac "art of losing" from Milton to Bishop. Keane tempts a reader who has lingered primarily in nineteenth-century New England to dust off books long unread on her study shelves.

Rather than seeking in any sense to debunk Emerson, Keane treats inter-textual debts in the generous spirit of Emerson's own "Quotation and Originality," the 1859 essay that brought earlier habits of discipleship to conscious articulation. "Only an inventor knows how to borrow," Emerson claimed, and in pursuing the subject incorporated a long journal entry explicitly about Coleridge: "I value in Coleridge his excellent knowledge & quotation, perhaps as much, possibly more, than his original suggestions" (153, 33). In fact Coleridge had been accused of straightforward plagiarism from Schelling, and Emerson asked, "Why could not he have said generously like Goethe, I owe all" (27). Likewise he recorded with amusement Wordsworth's habit of claiming words he had overheard as "mine, and not yours" (179). In both cases Emerson was recognizing instincts of appropriation and self-declaration that were his own as well. Forgiving the egotistical sublime when it resulted in new work that was in turn a gift to others, he designated both Wordsworth and Coleridge as "benefactors" to their times (178). Nor was his conversation with them a closed circuit among an elected few creative minds. Keane's argument makes room for other American readers of British Romanticism, from Mary Moody Emerson to Henry Thoreau and Margaret Fuller, whose responses also created the times in which Waldo Emerson was doing his work. "Benefactors" could be living neighbors as well as transatlantic giants.

Keane's Emerson was fully and consciously part of a Romantic movement that extended across the Atlantic and across the generations before and after his own. He embodied its impulses even through his very denials of a belated position in the movement. Neither British nor American study of Romanticism can ignore the other: If Americanists must think harder about transatlantic origins, so must our colleagues in Brit lit recognize the importance of American refractions as intrinsic to their subject. Our course catalogues might resist cleaving literature in English down the middle. Nation itself plays a relatively small role in this book, despite Keane's grasp of the British Romantics' response to the French Revolution and the Americans' struggles over slavery. Nowhere is there a grand theory of America's post-colonial or revolutionary relation to the parent country, nor any entertainment of non-western origins or expressions of Romantic thought. Instead this is a study, as one chapter title puts it, of "Emerson among the Orphic Poets": Orphic, that is, in the spirit of Wordsworth's "Prospectus," necessarily transcending nation in its invocation of a prophetic spirit that fuses the divine-human soul and heart with their parent earth. Keane sees Emerson as the principal American receiver of this Wordsworthian call, as well as chief among the American minds Coleridge (in his own words) "excited into activity, and supplied with the germs of their aftergrowth" (510).

—PHYLLIS COLE
Penn State Delaware County

West of Emerson: The Design of Manifest Destiny.
KRIS FRESONKE. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. xii + 201 pp. $49.95 cloth, $19.95 paper.

Kris Fresonke's *West of Emerson: The Design of Manifest Destiny* is a text of curiously cartographical ambition. Fresonke's central objective is to uproot the "prime meridian" of early nineteenth-century American culture by confounding and conflating the cardinal coordinates of East and West. She sets out in the first three chapters to find the signature vision of Eastern politicians in the Western exploration narratives of Lewis and Clark, Zebulon Pike, William Emory, and Stephen Long and then in the final three chapters to find in the "nature" writings of Eastern intellectuals such as Emerson and Thoreau a determining fascination with these explorers' vision of the West. Fresonke's ultimate aim is to reorient and decenter some of the foundational texts of New England Transcendentalism. Along the way she also rethinks the spatial relations of early-nineteenth-century American culture, not only by delineating the shared rhetorical forms through which continental terrain—from the western frontiers to the eastern landscapes—was transformed into the redeeming space of nation, but also by reconfiguring the lines of communication between a culturally transmitting Eastern metrapole and the Western terra incognita upon which it is said to write.

What's curious about this chiasmic cartography is that it ends up documenting not so much the interpenetration of West and East but rather the *failures* of the East and the West to manifest in and through one another, a failure to manifest marked, as such failures often are, by the presence of a haunting "ghost." Fresonke's cartographic ambition is thus ultimately overtaken by the genealogical imperatives of the ghost story, for it is in telling the story of one very important—if also analytically "exhausted"—historical ghost, the "ghost of design," that Fresonke hopes to shed new light on the nebulous political stakes of "New England transcendentalism" by finding in its aesthetic stance the animating presence of a manifestly designed West. At the heart of the argument from design is the inferential claim that there is a rational order apparent within the natural world and that from this "manifest design of the world, we can infer the presence of a designer" (2-3). The aim of Emerson and Thoreau, according to Fresonke, is in short to advocate the contemplation of design independently of the inference of a designer. Their objection to the inferential act, however, is not so much theological as it is political,

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for it is from this seemingly innocuous act of inference that the Jacksonian Democrats famously draw (though of course they are not the first) their most potent political weapon, the weapon of "manifest destiny." Emerson and Thoreau are thus mesmerized, in their patent fascination with exploration narratives and the estimable "intellectual habits" they express, by the ghost of design they see traveling there, yet seek to conjure and free that ghost from its violent and "depraved" imperial mission.

And yet, not only do Emerson and Thoreau resist the politics of manifest destiny which underwrite Western exploration, but so too, it turns out, do the exploration narratives themselves. In the case of Lewis and Clark, the picturesque triumphalism which marks their journey West is ultimately belied by the melancholic, "failed" narrative of eastward return which, in its narrative breakdown, admits "the distance between the order imposed on the landscape and the landscape itself" (43). Although intriguing in its challenge to a common reading of the *Journals* as handmaidens to empire, Fresonke's story of narrative failure—in a pattern repeated throughout the book—frequently is less telling than she intends it to be. The failure of Lewis and Clark to maintain the discourse of manifest destiny, for example, is seemingly ascribed in the end to the literal exhaustion the party experienced on the return trip, and thus its implications for the inherent exhaustibility of the national narrative are not made altogether clear. A similar interpretive tendency dogs the chapter on Zebulon Pike. Like her argument that Emerson and Thoreau's aesthetics are reactionarily consolidated through a rejection of a particular set of nationalist narratives, these early chapters similarly tend to simply detach the exploration narratives from the nationalist narrative of manifest destiny rather than examine either how the discourse of national destiny gets reworked in such a detachment or how the narratives of manifest destiny already contain their own undoing. There's a refreshing intellectual honesty in this refusal to find in all narrative an ideological message, but the richness with which Fresonke portrays the particular intersections of politics and aesthetics leaves one hungry in these early chapters for a slightly more pointed interpretation of how the plot of manifest destiny itself "collapses under its own weight" (9).

The occasional meagerness of Fresonke's "melancholic" approach, however, is frequently compensated for in the later chapters by a more sustained analysis of Emerson's interventions in the discourse of manifest destiny and in particular of his attempts to disentangle and reconstrue the notion of "providence" while avoiding the rocky shoals of skepticism. Integral to this intervention is Emerson's (and Thoreau's) embrace and elevation of the picturesque as "a model for cognition" (59), and it is Fresonke's expansive treatment of the picturesque that is the real strength and guiding thread of the book. Fresonke not only demonstrates how the picturesque, in its static schematizations and moral ordering of the landscape, gives narrative form to the explorer's ranging gaze, she also demonstrates how the picturesque constituted in the eyes of Emerson and Thoreau an important, albeit undeveloped, epistemological model for understanding the design of nature, one which moreover incited them to "deepen" the account of nature it entailed. The picturesque thus emerges in Fresonke's account as the transcontinental vehicle for the ghost of design shuttling between East and West, and it is a vehicle compellingly powered by an at times explosive blend of genre, epistemology, politics, and natural science.

—James Salazar
Temple University

2006 Annual Business Meeting

President Sarah Ann Wider presided at the annual business meeting of the Society at 3:30 p.m., 26 May 2006, in Pacific Concourse A of the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Hotel. Approximately 15 people were in attendance. Sarah distributed the minutes of the 2005 business meeting and the 2006 Secretary/Treasurer's report by Bob Habich, who was unable to attend the meeting. (David Robinson agreed to take notes on this year's meeting and has the Secretary's thanks for doing so.) Current membership in the Society to date is 194, from 43 states and 10 other countries. Since last year, total membership has increased by 11; new membership has doubled; states represented have increased by 7; and foreign countries represented, from 6 to 10. Sarah noted with sorrow the recent deaths of Kenneth Walter Cameron, Gustaaf Van Cromphout, Bradley P. Dean, Rev. Frank Schulman, and Douglas Emory Wilson

Current assets of the Society total $22,137 (compared to $21,474 last year). Major expenditures for the past 12 months include support for the Thoreau Society annual gathering, where the Society conducts a program (2 years @ $250); awards for Emerson scholarship (3 @ $500); design and layout of *ESP* ($500); and Web site updates ($260). Major credits for the past 12 months include membership dues ($3,343), appreciation of a CD ($253), and interest income on savings accounts ($20). The minutes and the Secretary/Treasurer's report were accepted.

Sarah Wider announced the nominations of Susan Dunstan and Wendell Refior for new Advisory Board members. The nominees were unanimously approved. Joe Thomas will serve one more year as program chair, assisted by incoming program chair Todd Richardson. Jennifer Gurley and Roger Thompson will serve on the Awards Committee.

Ronald Bosco reported on recent developments and plans for the Emerson *Collected Works* edition published by Harvard University Press. With six volumes completed, four volumes are planned for the next five years to complete the edition: *Society and Solitude* (2007), *Letters and Social Aims* (2009), *Poems* (2010), and *Miscellanies* (2011).

Joel Myerson reported on the Society's Web site, www.emersonsociety.org, noting that more images are constantly being added to the approximately 400 images there now. Please send suggestions for additions to the Web site to Joel Myerson, myersonj@gwm.sc.edu.

Sarah Wider reported on future plans for activities and programs as part of the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering (Concord, 6-9 July) and the conference on Transatlanticism in American Literature (Oxford, England, 13-16 July). Roger Thompson, representing the Awards Committee, announced that the 2006 research awards had been made to David Wehner and Mamta Anand, a publication subvention award had been made to Richard Geldard and the Ralph Waldo Emerson Institute, and Sophia Forster had received an award for her paper at the 2006 ALA. Phyllis Cole announced, on behalf of the Distinguished Achievement Awards Committee, that Joel Porte had been given the Distinguished Achievement Award. Because Professor Porte is gravely ill, Phyllis was able to inform him of the award prior to our meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at about 4:00 p.m. The next business meeting will be held at the May 2007 ALA meeting in Boston. The Secretary/Treasurer's Report for 2006 may be obtained by request from Bob Habich, Department of English, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306 or via e-mail: rhabich@bsu.edu.

—Robert D. Habich

Living Learning

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breach: "it would please me better if there were no gap; if I had been able to join my first to my later friendships, & to have felt that I had secured the full sympathy of our little company to my later studies & later companions."[15]

What would this joining of his earliest experiences with education to his later studies have entailed? One could speculate that Emerson might have more fully pursued the dream for a college of living learning, perhaps following more closely Alcott's example. Emerson might also have fulfilled the desire he expressed to become a professor of rhetoric. But I would argue that Emerson, late in his career before this gathering of his earliest audience, is reminding us that he became the teacher he at first failed to be. The joining and connection Emerson wishes for returns us to what I have called the metonymy of Emerson's school, the lesson that all is connected and learning is a matter of recognizing this metonymy. Emerson's own experiences in education inform the achievement of the "later studies" as part to whole, or (in Emerson's version) as leaf to tree. With regard to Emerson's current scholars, I am interested in what we can do with this educational flowering, how we can apply this back to the Emerson we love to read and want to teach and to the very schools in which we find ourselves doing that.

Notes

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* 6 vols. to date, ed. Alfred R. Ferguson, Joseph Slater, Douglas Emory Wilson et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971-), 1:54. Cited hereafter as *CW.*

2. *CW* 1:58.

3. A. Bronson Alcott, *Ralph Waldo Emerson, Philosopher and Seer: An Estimate of His Character and Genius.* 2nd ed. (Boston: Cupples and Hurd, 1888), 22.

4. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* 12 vols., ed. Edward Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903-4), 8:15.

5. Ralph L. Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Scribner's, 1949), 89.

6. Lawrence Buell, *Emerson* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 310.

7. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* 16 vols., ed. William H. Gilman, Ralph H. Orth et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-82), 7:199. Cited hereafter as *JMN.*

8. *CW* 3: 152.

9. Martin Bickman, *Minding American Education: Reclaiming the Tradition of Active Learning* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003).

10. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 60.

11. *JMN* 7: 238.

12. Though he doesn't use the name "metonymy" in "American Scholar" as he will later do, I would argue that Emerson has this conception of living engagement with learning, privileging the metonymic over the metaphorical potential of our words, in his well-known image of a living dictionary: "Life is our dictionary.... Life lies behind us as the quarry from whence we get tiles and copestones for the masonry of to-day. This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and books only copy the language which the field and the work-yard made." *CW* 1:60-61.

13. Though the manuscript is undated, Edward Emerson identifies the date of this reunion as 1865 in *Emerson in Concord.* In addition, Edward offers a different conclusion than Rusk regarding Emerson's experience in the school, noting that "Miss Hannah Stevenson, one of these ladies, told me that neither the parents nor pupils considered the school a failure." Edward Waldo Emerson, *Emerson in Concord: A Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1889), 31.

14. James Elliot Cabot, *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1887), 1:69, 71.

15. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Paper read at a meeting of his former scholars," undated (Emerson Papers: Lectures and Sermons, bMSAm 1280.214 (205) Houghton Library, Harvard University). Cited by permission of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association and by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Biographical Note

Sean Ross Meehan is Assistant Professor of English at Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa. His essay "Emerson's Photographic Thinking" was published in *Arizona Quarterly* (Summer 2006). In 2005 he was awarded the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association Fellowship for the Study of Emerson and his Circle from Houghton Library, Harvard University.

The Quotable Emerson

Emerson was master of the sound bite. Consequently, his words were (and still are) appropriated for various occasions when wisdom or inspiration is called for. Even when Emerson's sizable corpus cannot provide the needed words, his name can be counted upon to lend the required gravitas to a spurious quotation. See Joel Myerson's "Emerson's 'Success'—Actually it is not" (*ESP* 11 [Spring 2000]:1,8) for a recent debunking of one famous misattribution. In the past few months I've discovered a couple new attributions to Emerson—one illegitimate, the other not. One quote appears on a bumper sticker marketed by Northern Sun Merchandising:

THE END OF THE HUMAN RACE WILL BE THAT
WE WILL EVENTUALLY DIE OF CIVILIZATION

Smacking of nuclear age angst, the quote is too cynical and too late for Emerson, and it garners only a few hits on Google—sites associated with Northern Sun and various chat rooms. This clearly is not from Emerson, and perhaps originated with Northern Sun.

The second is as follows:

SOME BOOKS LEAVE US FREE
AND SOME BOOKS MAKE US FREE

I found this on a tin case that holds a gift card for Walden Books. Joel Myerson tells me it appears in *JMN* 7:329. The quote has many hits on the Internet, especially sites specializing in inspirational quotes. Almost all of the sites make no effort to identify its source, while one incorrectly attributes it to the essay "Books" from *Society and Solitude.*

—Todd Richardson



Concord 2006: "Emerson and Wildness"

This summer's successful Thoreau Society Annual Gathering in Concord, Mass., focused on the theme "Mountains, Seashore, and Moonlight: Thoreau's Exploration of Wildness." Emerson, no less than Thoreau, celebrated nature as the realm in which we live and move and have our being. The Emerson Society's panel at the Masonic Temple on 6 July featured (pictured, from left) Dan Malachuk ("Wildness and the Ecology of Transcendentalism"), Gayle L. Smith ("Emerson and Wildness: in Nature, in Mind, and in Writing"), and Robert Burkholder ("R.M.S. Jackson and Emersonian Wildness").

Abstracts

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Emerson Iconography and the *Free Religious Index*

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

For the Free Religious Association, which comprised radical Unitarians and other free thinkers in postbellum New England, Emerson had not lost his revolutionary ardor in American religion as manifested in his Divinity School Address delivered in 1838—he remained a radical ecclesiastical visionary to the end of his days and beyond. Typically, scholarship on the Association—scant as it is—acknowledges Emerson's inspiration for the movement. But the Association's interest in Emerson went well beyond a recognition of his progenitorship. Primarily by way of the *Index* (1870-86), what became the Association's official organ and its most powerful means of proselytization, the Association transformed Emerson into an icon designed to define its vision for religious reform, to establish the legitimacy of the movement, and to win converts. The center of gravity for the claim to Emerson was his renunciation of his Unitarian pastorate and his subsequent speech before the Harvard Divinity School, and he came to be represented as a near-mythical denouncer of orthodox Christianity and, paradoxically, as a sort of evolutionary savior. The Association members' zeal was such that they fought vociferously to maintain their hold on their constructed Emerson even when facts from his life and corpus sometimes abruptly undercut it. By the mid 1880s, however, the Association's claim to Emerson became increasingly apathetic—it could no longer efficiently employ its Emersonian "wealth" for its work of religious reform. Such apathy was indicative of an inability to ensure its survival as an institution – the *Index* ceased publication in 1886 and the Association languished on a little while longer, never officially dissolving.

Emerson and Recovery: Post-Civil War Intellectual Culture

JEAN DARCY, *Queensborough Community College*

In *The Metaphysical Club*, Louis Menand reconstructs the circles of conversation among post-Civil War intellectuals who "changed our ideas about ideas." His premise is that Oliver Wendell Holmes, William James, John Dewey, and Charles Sanders Peirce could no longer believe in the cultural assumptions and belief systems that organized community before the Civil War. The war had been so traumatic that an idea about unity and how communities integrate had to be remade on new assumptions and beliefs in the face of the human violence that erupted in a democracy where "human beings are not expected to kill one another."

> They all believed that ideas are not "out there" waiting to be discovered, but are tools—like forks and knives and microchips—that people devise to cope with the world in which they find themselves. They believed that...ideas are social. They believed that ideas do not develop according to some inner logic of their own, but are entirely dependent, like germs, on their human carriers and environment. And they believed that since ideas are provisional responses to particular and unreproducible circumstances, their survival depends not on their immutability but on their adaptability. (xii)

While Menand brilliantly creates the connections among the post-Civil War "human carriers" of ideas, he is less able to clarify the way that it is Emersonian idealism that influences each thinker's approach to ideas. Four points need to be made in relation to Menand's argument. First, relying on the work of Judy Jordan and Judith Herman in the Stone Center at Cambridge it can be argued that contrary to Menand's claim that healing occurs through cutting off from the beliefs of the past, healing occurs by reconnecting to the identity that existed before the trauma. In *Trauma and Recovery,* Herman claims that recovery of a sense of community occurs through continuity, a re-connection to previous social networks of relation. Second, Menand claims that thinkers after the Civil War created circles of conversation that professionalized their "ideas about ideas." While I do not argue with this point, it is necessary to preserve an understanding of these newly emergent professions in relation to Emersonian concerns developed on the lyceum circuit, a circuit supported by a democratic audience of workers. Third, Emerson introduced the idea that language is used as a tool in relation to work to counter the use of language used as a weapon. In *The Body in Pain,* Elaine Scarry formulates the way the body is implicated in using language as a tool or weapon in the battle over ideas. In the essay "Fate" Emerson created an arc of connection from the idea to the body to the tool. Emerson not only made ideas social and adaptive but articulated the importance of human sentience in consciousness. Finally, Emerson was motivated to create a language that functioned more like an adaptive tool than a weapon because of his own witness to trauma in public spaces. In this experience Emerson had been exposed to the dissociative split created by language that is used as a weapon. In public spaces in a slave culture, the senses of the witness are cauterized when they watch passively as human beings are treated as property. Emerson is urging individuals to create a fully sentient relation to their own place and time in order to more fully feel the moral imperatives of their own witness.