

R.W.E.

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EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

Emerson Writes to Clough: A Lost Letter Found in Italy

STEFANO PAOLUCCI
Tusculum, Italy

When I finally opened the purple box given me by my friend Roberta Vinciguerra, I could not imagine that I was to remember my 30th birthday forever. I had just delivered my first public lecture on Emerson, occasioned by the presentation of my book *Diventa chi sei*¹ in my hometown, and I was eager to share my joy and relief with a couple of friends by dining out at a vegetarian restaurant. This happened in mid April 2006.

We were having dessert when Roberta placed the box on the table with a knowing smile. Inside was a yellowish, handwritten letter that was both vaguely and unmistakably familiar to me. Roberta had tricked me—and succeeded far too well! Using an Internet alias (lest she spoil her planned surprise), she had asked my “expert” opinion on an autograph, signed letter of Emerson she had supposedly found among her grandfather’s papers. In fact, she had found it on eBay (Italian version) and wanted to authenticate it before bidding. As a result, Roberta not only bid with confidence and won the auction as the only bidder, but she made herself the lovely instrument of the most genuine demonstration of friendship I have ever experienced.

I thus prepared myself to enjoy the rare privilege of touching a letter written by the hand of the “Sage of Concord.” Accompanying it, scrapped on a piece of paper, there was a note from the Italian eBay seller which stated that the letter had been saved from the fire of Baron Horace de Landau’s and his heiress Mrs. Finaly’s archive in the Villa Landau at La Pietra, Florence.

Having miraculously survived a fire, the letter is in good condition. The scorched edge was eventually trimmed, apparently with scissors, and as a consequence the sheet is split in two halves. The strip of paper thus removed, however, has not caused the loss of any relevant part of the text, which is overall clearly legible. The ink itself looks still bright and fresh. Emerson filled in only three of the four pages of the letter and folded the sheet twice, so that it could fit into a small envelope. The sheets measure about

7" x 4¼" each. Distinguishing marks: 1) two brownish fingerprints (Emerson’s?) on the lower right edges of both page 1 and page 3; 2) four and three pinholes, respectively, in the upper right corners of the two separate sheets; 3) a “33” penciled askew on the upper left corner of page 2.

The letter was once part of a large collection of books and manuscripts housed in the Villa Landau-Finaly at La Pietra (The Stone), a 15th-century villa built in the vicinity of the first milestone—hence the name—on the road that linked Florence to Bologna. In 1845, Lord Normanby, the last English minister at the Grand-ducal Court, purchased the villa and lived there until 1864. In the same year, James Rothschild, owner of a bank in Turin, purchased the Villa Normanby and, in 1866, he sold it to Baron Horace de Landau, a representative of the Rothschild banking house across Europe.

Baron Horace de Landau (1824-1903), a Hungarian citizen with Jewish origins, was a famous bibliophile and a man of vast culture. In a hall of his Florentine villa, he created one of the largest private libraries in Europe—60,000 volumes—with a full-time librarian in service. After Landau’s death, the villa and all his possessions were inherited by his niece Jenny Ellenberger, who was married to Hungarian banker Hugo Finaly, a cousin of Landau’s. Mrs. Finaly would eagerly follow in her uncle’s footsteps in taking care of the library and the manuscript collection, and in 1936 she employed a young German librarian, Rudolf Blum, who was to remain in service until 1943.² According to Blum, the fire in the Landau library broke out in 1926.³

The letter is addressed to English poet Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-1861) and is dated London, 20 March 1848. Emerson had arrived in England in the autumn of 1847 and he first heard from Clough in November 1847, when the young poet, then a Fellow and Tutor at Oriel College, Oxford, wrote to invite him there. Clough’s letter reached Emerson when he was in Liverpool, and on 3 December 1847, Emerson replied from Manchester: “I shall esteem it

(Continued on page 4)

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American Literature Association Conference

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society will present three panels in San Francisco during the nineteenth annual conference of the American Literature Association, which will be held 22-25 May 2008. Times and dates for the panels and for our annual business meeting will be announced later. For details check the ALA's Web site, www.americanliterature.org.

SESSION I

Emerson and War I

CHAIR: Todd H. Richardson (*University of Texas-Permian Basin*)

"Concord's Idealistic Hawk: Emerson's Advocacy of 'the Benefits of ... War,'" Ronald A. Bosco (*University at Albany, SUNY*)

"Emerson and Thomas Cary on the Mexican War," Barbara Packer (*University of California, Los Angeles*)

"Neighbor, Cell, Sect, and Section: Emerson, Brown, and Post-Secular Violence," Michael Ziser (*University of California, Davis*)

SESSION II

Emerson and War II

CHAIR: Elizabeth Addison (*Western Carolina University*)

"Civil Disobedience, Civil War, and Satyagraha: The Application of Natural Law in Emerson, Thoreau, and Gandhi," Erika Anne Kroll McCombs (*University of Illinois at Chicago*) [Erika is the 2008 winner of the graduate student travel award.]

"One Emerson, Not Two: On War and Other Uses of Violence," Daniel S. Malachuk (*Western Illinois University*)

"Kairos, War, and the Power of Eloquence," Roger Thompson (*VMI*)

SESSION III

Emerson's Representations of Asia, Asia's Representations of Emerson

CHAIR: Sarah Wider (*Colgate University*)

"Heraclitus in Emerson," Shoji Goto (*Rikkyo University, Japan*)

"Transpacific Cultural Understanding: What is Japan to Emerson and What is Emerson to Japan?" Mikayo Sakuma (*Wayo Women's University, Japan*)

"Emerson and Chu Hsi — A 'Scholar's' Role in Pursuing 'Peace,'" Yoshio Takanashi (*Nagano Prefectural College, Japan*)

The ALA conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco in Embarcadero Center. The conference fee for those who pre-register before 15 April is \$85; \$35 for graduate students, independent scholars, and retired faculty. After 15 April the fees are \$100 and \$50.

Emerson Sightings/Citings

One of the fruits of Roger Thompson's preparation for his recent sabbatical was the discovery of a front-page article in the Boston *Globe* discussing the shape of new beer glasses ("With new design, foam follows function" [20 June 2007] pp. A1, A5). The opening line reads: "Build a better mouse-trap, Emerson observed, and the world will beat a path to your door. Build a better beer glass, and first you'll need a squadron of scientists, engineers, and other experts versed in such concepts as nucleation site, volume-to-surface ratio, foam retention, and profile-attribute analysis method." Roger hopes the article will help convince his students of Emerson's relevance, even if the Sage of Concord is being used to improve beer drinking!

Joel Brattin sends "A Mutts Valentine" cartoon from the "Mutts" comic strip by Patrick McDonnell (King Features). In the single panel, a dog races eagerly toward the bowl of food being lowered by its owner. The caption reads, "Make yourself necessary to somebody. —Ralph Waldo Emerson." (From "Considerations by the Way," in *The Conduct of Life*)

Concord 2008: Emerson and Social Reform

The Emerson Society will present a panel on "Emerson and Social Reform" at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering in Concord, Mass. (10–13 July 2008), reports our program chair, Todd Richardson (*University of Texas of the Permian Basin*), who will also moderate the session. Featured speakers will be Len Gougeon (*University of Scranton*) on "Emersonian Reform and the Rise of Liberal Democracy" and Tiffany K. Wayne (*Cabrillo College*) on "Emerson, Women's Rights, and 'the difference of sex.'" The panel will be on Friday, 11 July, at 7 p.m. in the Masonic Hall. For details on the Gathering, visit www.thoreausociety.org.

EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

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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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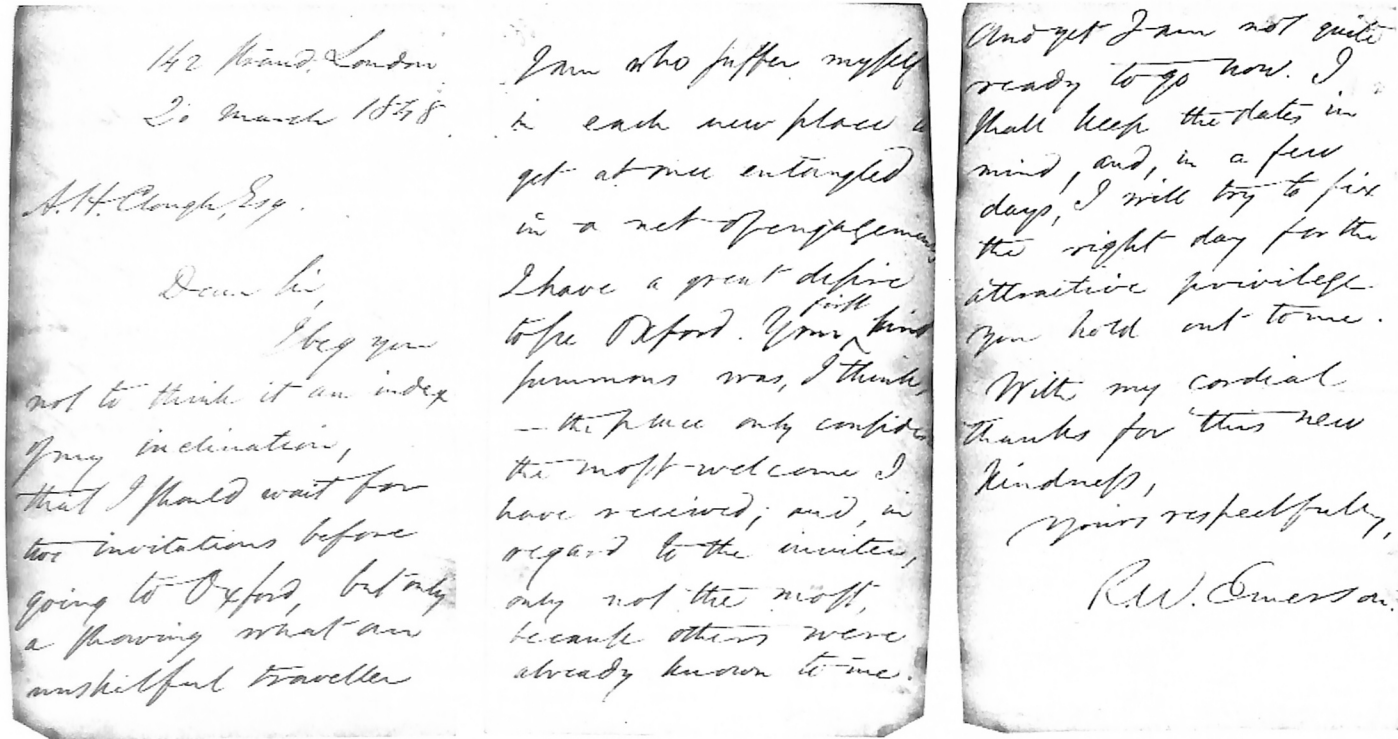
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R. W. Emerson to A. H. Clough. Courtesy Stefano Paolucci

a high privilege to claim the opportunity of seeing the Colleges, which you offer me, as soon as I find myself in your neighbourhood. I fear, it will not be until after the vacation.”⁴

After the first exchange of notes, Emerson was fully occupied for several months with a strenuous season of lectures in the north of England and in Scotland. On 1 March 1848, Emerson settled in London in John Chapman’s house—the Strand, No. 142—where he had “a good sittingroom & chamber.”⁵ He had begun his equally wearing round of dinners and receptions in London before Clough reminded him, in a letter dated 12 March 1848, of the invitation to Oxford. In Lowry’s and Rusk’s *Emerson-Clough Letters*, we see that Clough’s letter of 12 March is followed by another one, dated 22 March, which clearly indicates that Emerson *did* reply to Clough’s letter of 12 March, though Emerson’s answer is not printed in the book. About this “missing letter,” Lowry and Rusk wrote:

Though the letter once contained in it is now lost, there is an envelope, addressed in Emerson’s hand to Clough at Oriel College, Oxford, and sealed with the signature “E,” which bears a postmark dated March—apparently March 21—1848. Emerson may well have delayed so long his answer to Clough’s letter of March 12. Clough’s letter of March 22 would have followed, naturally, without delay.⁶

The “lost” letter of which Lowry and Rusk had found only the envelope among the manuscripts from the collection of Mr. Arthur Clough, the son of the poet, is the very letter my friend Roberta has given me for my birthday—everything coincides perfectly.

Here follows the transcription of the letter:

[p. 1] 142 Strand, London
20 March 1848

A.H. Clough, Esq.
Dear Sir,

I beg you not to think it an index of my inclination, that I should wait for two invitations before going to Oxford, but only a proving what an unskilful traveller [p. 2] I am who suffer myself in each new place to get at once entangled in a net of engagements. I have a great desire to see Oxford. Your first kind summons was, I think, —the place only considered the most welcome I have received; and, in regard to the inviter, only not the most, because others were already known to me. [p. 3] And yet I am not quite ready to go now. I shall keep the dates in mind, and, in a few days, I will try to fix the right day for the attractive privilege you hold out to me.

With my cordial thanks for this new kindness,
Yours respectfully,
R.W. Emerson.

Emerson went to Oxford on 30 March and spent something more than two days very happily. They all thought he had come to stay a good while, and marveled much at his rapid departure at the end of 48 hours. Clough, however, was to meet Emerson again in London in April, and the bond between them was drawn even more closely in May, when they witnessed the spectacular Revolution in Paris. Returning to London from Paris on 6 June, Clough again saw Emerson and heard him give three lectures. Finally, on 15 July at Liverpool there were farewells.

Of the subsequent course of their friendship, including the reunion in America in 1852, the later correspondence gives a clear account. Altogether it was a fortunate association. In 1848 Emerson reflected in his journal upon his first reading of Clough’s *The Bothie*: “‘Tis, I think, the most real benefit I have had from my English visit, this genius of Clough....I have a new friend, & the world has a new poet.”

Arthur Hugh Clough died in Florence, Italy, on 13 November 1861. Whether it is a blind coincidence—but “Shallow men believe in Luck,” said Emerson—or a shining illustration of the Law of Compensation, I cannot help but see a link between the fact that Clough died in Florence and that Baron de Landau, also residing there, would later come into possession of a letter addressed to Clough. I do not doubt that deeper research would even cast some light upon how Baron de Landau came into possession of that letter, as well as reveal *why* that same letter was eventually “taken out” of the Landau collection, seriously damaged by a fire in 1926, and ended up being auctioned on eBay eighty years later. Emerson’s letter may not have been “lost” in the first place; it may well have been “given away,” perhaps as a gift to Baron de Landau, sometime after Clough’s death.

I like to think that things went more or less that way, for no other reason than that it would give a truer and more

romantic meaning to Roberta’s act of *giving* that letter to an Emerson lover and scholar, as well as a fuller sense, if possible, to one of the main points in Emerson’s own thought: “One moral we have already deduced in considering the circular or compensatory character of every human action.” (“Circles”)

What goes around, comes around—sooner or later.

This article is wholeheartedly dedicated to Roberta and her newborn daughter, Martina. I also wish to thank my friend Carmelo Modica for editorial suggestions.

Notes

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Diventa chi sei. Fiducia in se stessi, Compensazione, Leggi spirituali*, ed. and trans. Stefano Paolucci (Roma: Donzelli, 2005). [Italian annotated edition of Emerson’s “Self-Reliance,” “Compensation,” and “Spiritual Laws.” Includes a bibliographic note on Emerson in Italy, a chronology of Emerson’s life and works, and an afterword on “The Law of Universal Balance: Emerson’s Habit and ‘God’s Garment,’” by Stefano Paolucci.]
2. In 1938 Mrs. Finaly moved to France, where she died not long afterward. In 1940, when France and Italy waged war, the villa was confiscated. In 1944 the villa became headquarters for the Allied Forces, and in 1945 it was returned to its heirs, who, in 1953, respecting Mrs. Finaly’s and Baron Landau’s wishes, donated the villa to the University of Paris. The current owners of the villa are the thirteen Universities of Paris and Ile de France, heirs of the old University of Paris. A website devoted to Villa Landau-Finaly can be reached at www.villafinaly.sorbonne.fr
3. Maura Rolih Scarlino, “Contributo a un inventario ‘virtuale’ della biblioteca lasciata da Horace Landau,” *Nuovi Annali della Scuola Speciale per Archivisti e Bibliotecari* 14 (2000): 147, n. 2.
4. Howard F. Lowry and Ralph L. Rusk, eds., *Emerson-Clough Letters* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1968 [first published 1934, The Rowfant Club]), Letter 2 (page not numbered).
5. Ralph L. Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Scribner’s, 1949), p. 341.
6. Lowry and Rusk, *Emerson-Clough Letters*, Note to Letters 3 and 4. The newly found letter is also the “lost” letter referred to by Rusk in *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 6 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 4:40.
7. *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 16 vols., ed. William H. Gilman, Ralph H. Orth et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-1982), 11:64.

R.W.C.

"October Satisfaction": Methodist Gilbert Haven Reviews *Society and Solitude*

WESLEY T. MOTT
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

A previously unrecorded review of Emerson's *Society and Solitude* by Methodist minister Gilbert Haven appears in *Zion's Herald* for 9 June 1870.¹

Zion's Herald, published by the Boston Wesleyan Association, proclaimed itself the "oldest Methodist newspaper in the world." Many in the denomination had been surprised by the selection of Gilbert Haven (1821-1880) as editor in March 1867. A devout minister radically committed to human rights, Haven—enraged by the Fugitive Slave Law—preached that to obey an unjust law is to crucify Christ anew. Espousing "higher law" theory as fervently as Thoreau, Emerson, and other abolitionists did, he insisted upon "our obligation to obey conscience."² Six days after John Brown was hanged, Haven eulogized him in *Zion's Herald*, invoking phrasing from Emerson's "Brahma": "The slain knew he was not slain" by "that red slayer, the slave power."³ Welcoming the Civil War as a providential means to end the abomination of slavery, Haven was commissioned almost immediately as chaplain of the Eighth Massachusetts Regiment.

Haven proved to be an energetic and imaginative editor. Though the review of *Society and Solitude* is unsigned, external and internal evidence point to Haven as the author. His friend and early biographer George Prentice wrote that Haven took special pride at "noticing books."⁴ The reviewer, moreover, recalls walking ten miles, "sometimes through high drifts," to hear Emerson's "Representative Men" lectures. Indeed Haven, as a young teacher at Chelsea Point, had walked to Boston in the winter of 1845-1846 to hear Emerson's first "Great Men" lecture series. A few months earlier, in August 1845, he had heard Emerson give an address during commencement festivities for his graduating class at Wesleyan College and thought it "the greatest treat" of the season—this at a time, Prentice recalled, when Emerson was still widely considered "a prophet of misty incoherency."⁵

Despite his youthful enthusiasm for Emerson, Haven's evangelical Methodism trumped his literary sensibilities. Even as Haven admired Emerson's character and found great pleasure in his style and imagination, he lamented that his writings were vitiated by lack of Christian faith. Having come to know Emerson personally and to respect him as one of the great men of the age, Haven in 1870 was pleased to see that the blasphemous author of the early *Essays* had mellowed, and he ranked him now with Socrates, Bacon, and Franklin. But for all his gifts and ripened vision, as a spiritual guide Emerson was no David, Solomon, Moses, or Paul, nor, for that matter, was he Wesley or Wordsworth.

Theological reservations about Emerson notwithstanding, Haven was passionately committed to many of the same reform movements that engaged Emerson and a younger gen-

eration of Transcendentalists after the Civil War. In 1868 he helped found the New England Woman Suffrage Association and served as president of the American Woman Suffrage Association. He worked for reform of higher education. He supported U.S. Grant for President as the best hope for Reconstruction. Named Bishop in 1872, he was assigned to Atlanta, where he courageously fought for unconditional civil rights and equality. Haven died from several ailments complicated by malaria contracted while on a mission to Liberia. Still hated through much of the South, he was mourned by Methodists and other reformers as a champion of human dignity.



SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE, by R. W. Emerson. Fields, Osgood, & Co. Mr. Emerson could safely be tried by his own rule,—“not to read a new book for a year.”⁶ If it lives that time, it will be worth examining. His books will last a year. They are long-lived. Not that all shorter-lived books are necessarily unworthy. Many a tractate, issued for the hour, and dying with the hour, is worthy of high praise. A babe of a year is as marvelous a creature as a man of seventy. Yet there is point in this word of his, as there is in many of them. His last work has been issued long enough to get the flavor well in the mouth, and a rare flavor it is. His first taste was as delectable. We remember walking ten miles in and out of Boston, of a winter's night, sometimes through high drifts, to hear his lectures on "Representative Men," and they paid for the healthful labor they cost. His first essays were a revelation of a new world of expression and of thought. Read with Bacon's, they showed no less richness of fancy, depth of thought, homeliness of illustration, rareness of genius. That June fruit is offset by this October. Is there any difference in the quality or flavor? There is an improvement in one vital respect. These early words were more positively and earnestly antichristian. Snakes hid in the gorgeous flowers. The Great Serpent himself seemed often coiled in the centre of the luscious fruit. One had to taste carefully, to escape the subtle poison. His motto to his first essay was the height of Pantheistic blasphemy. His treatment of Christ was ever as one of the elements that his larger nature absorbed. He exclaims:—

"I am the owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars, and the solar year;
Of Caesar's hand, and Shakespeare's strain,
Of Lord Christ's heart, and Plato's brain."⁷

Had he said "St. John's heart," his aphorism would have been perfect.

This was his usual strain. Every essay treated with sublime blasphemy the claims of Christ and Christianity. He summed up his philosophy of man and nature, in the Papal pitch of infallibility, and put under his portrait "I am God," though he did not add the consummation of blasphemy, "There is none else." He was generous. All else were in like condition. Everybody was God. A wild infidel, at the late free religion anniversary, made this declaration of himself, and his wild sympathizers cheered responsive. Mr. Emerson's last book differs from the first in being far less obtrusive in this form of unbelief. He feels that chill and weakness of age which he so graphically paints in his "Terminus," and his clear brain cannot but confess that such a withering of forces is not consistent with Godhood. He rebels and protests, but he can't help it. The broad fullness of the June era of his life is gone, and things and thoughts take a soberer and sadder—

—"coloring from the eye
That has looked out on man's mortality."⁸

His last work is quite reticent on Christ and Christianity. It talks of art, farming, books, society, ambition, courage, domestic life, and old age; it has a multitude of acute and attractive sayings. Mr. Emerson's mind is of the type of Socrates, Bacon, and Franklin. His eye is the shrewdest to detect analogies between profoundest ideas and the most common phenomena. Nature shows him her secret ways, and delights to make him the confidant of her meanings. Yet the deepest of them she does not disclose. That Holy Spirit that informs man and nature; the Christ by whom the worlds were made,⁹ never appear to him in their Divine revelations. The mystery of this present and future life in Jesus Christ is hid from his eyes. Having eyes and ears of wonderful clearness, he sees not, and hears not this voice of Incarnation and Redemption, "that rolls through all things."¹⁰

Nowhere is this more painfully disclosed than in the last essay, that on "Old Age," in which the only mention of the Word and work of God is a reference to President Quincy's address at a Phi Beta Kappa dinner, at Cambridge, in which he says, "The naïveté of his eager preference of Cicero's opinions to King David's, gave unusual interest to the College festival." What was this reflection at David that so pleased the men of Harvard, we are not told; but no man, who has read Cicero on "Old Age," and David, will fail to remember the infinite superiority of the latter. He alone cries out to God, "when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not."¹¹ He alone dwells on those deep and solemn thoughts which the close of the little span of human life brings to every religious soul. He, not Cicero, looks beyond this speck of earth and time, and exclaims, with the assurance of Christian hope, "Though heart and flesh faileth, Thou art the strength of my heart and my

rejoicing forever."¹² No such word finds expression in these pages any more than they did in Cicero's. But the latter was under less condemnation; for he probably never had read the rich words of King David. It was left for two of the most able and aged of the sons of the Puritans to utter their preferences for the heathen over the Christian views of age, and for a college festival to applaud the same. Not a holy looking forward, not a glimpse of faith mark this saddest of essays. The old seer is stone blind.

The grace of his style and beauty of his fancy still abide; though one sees a forgetfulness, occasionally, in his repetition of his quotations, yet the fullness and variety of these sayings, the aptness and richness of his own suggestions, yet keep him at the head of his craft. He has more of the October satisfaction and containment than of the unfathomable fullness of June. If this ripened and full estate were filled with the grand outlooks of Christian faith, such as Paul the aged and John the aged saw and said, such as the Wesleys' old age exhibited, both John's and Charles's, such as David sang and Solomon essayed, such as Moses chanted, and Wordsworth, in so many holy verses, celebrated,—had he this, he would be indeed the immortal essayist of our literature. But he rejects Wordsworth's wise words,—

"By grace Divine,
Not otherwise, O Nature, we are thine."¹³

He refuses this heavenly grace, and all his art, wit, learning, wisdom, fancy, and "rhetorique sweet" suffer this unspeakable loss. May his admiring reader carefully supply the great deficiency. Then will he rejoice, in society or solitude, over the rare companionship this volume will afford.

Notes

1. The review appears on page 269 in the reviews section "Our Book Table" under the heading "Literary." I am grateful to the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts, for access to its run of *Zion's Herald*.
2. George Prentice, D.D. *The Life of Gilbert Haven: Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1883), pp. 291-292.
3. Prentice, p. 303.
4. Prentice, p. 341-342.
5. Prentice, p. 65. See also William B. Gravely, *Gilbert Haven: Methodist Abolitionist* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), p. 22. The discourse is published for the first time in *The Later Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 2 vols., ed. Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 1:81-100.
6. The first of "three practical rules" for reading that Emerson offers in the chapter "Books" in *Society and Solitude* (Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1870), p. 175: "Never read any book that is not a year old."
7. Haven slightly misquotes Emerson's epigraph to "History" (*Essays* [1841]).
8. Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," ll. 199-200.
9. Hebrews 1:2.
10. Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey," l. 102.
11. Psalms 71:18.
12. Psalms 73:26.
13. Wordsworth, "Not in the Lucid Intervals of Life," ll. 16-17.

Reviews

The Gleam of Light: Moral Perfectionism and Education in Dewey and Emerson.

NAOKO SAITO. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005. 200 pp. \$65.00 cloth.

Although Saito's book concerns Emerson's influence on Dewey, she doesn't want to claim Emerson as a proto-pragmatist but, rather, to investigate the ways in which Emerson's philosophy of individuation shaped Dewey's thinking about the modern individual. While Dewey is often seen as owing most to Hegel or Darwin, Saito shows that certain aspects of his thinking emphasize his anti-foundationalist orientation with regard to personal growth, something that he elaborated in response to Emerson's idea of self-transformation.

Following Cavell's interpretation of Emerson's moral perfectionism—in fact, Saito's Emerson coincides to a large extent with Cavell's—Saito understands Emerson's self-culturing as the courage to follow the “gleam of light,” e.g., what is intuitive or whimsical. Because the power of the instinctive is the otherness that visits us in order to transform us, self-perfecting becomes the exercise of otherness within us (4). As the process of leaving the self and reaching for a new one, perfecting is the “activity” of receiving otherness, accompanied by a fidelity to this transformative newness within us (107-109). The growth of the individual is related to its power to convert itself, time and again; such an unrelenting conversion itself becomes the work of perfecting, rather than what it converts us into. In that sense, Emerson's self-culturing is not teleological. Saito claims that, like Emerson, Dewey saw individuation as a process of “transformations” enacted by “breaches” in temporal continuity, which would structurally coincide with Emerson's “conversions.” Of course, an argument about breaches in personal identity can be endlessly complicated to include the questions of “how” exactly one enacts the conversational transformation, of depersonalization, and of the impersonal, which in Emerson plays such a prominent role and which Saito mentions only in passing.

However, the main interest of her argument, and, it seems to me, the chief importance of her book, lies in the ways she mobilizes Emerson's and Dewey's ideas about individuation in the context of political questions raised by the contemporary global cultures. In a cultural climate in which multiculturalism is, as Saito puts it, “either resisted because of its apparent endorsement of relativism” or “accepted in terms of a toleration reduced to the token recognition of difference” (140), Emerson's practice of self-renewal and Dewey's idea of the “qualitative change” can be mobilized to educate individuals in a manner that would do away with the conservative plea for firm moral values while still managing to attach persons to the social.

Saito proposes that the idea of a “conversation among friends,” which plays an important role in self-conversion both in Dewey and Emerson, be transmitted to modern educational practices and adjusted to the ambiance of modern societies. Dewey's ideal of such a conversation is not simply about understanding the other as the “object of knowledge” but is rather “the matter of mutual learning by being attentive to the different other” (152), a reception that necessarily affects a person's thought and enacts a conversion.

In what she identifies as “an Emersonian move,” Saito extends Dewey's notion of the “art of communication” into what she calls “the art of translation” (152). Drawing on Emerson's

idea according to which poetic creativity is to be found neither in staying at home nor in traveling, “but in transitions from one to the other” (153), Saito understands Emerson's individual to be one who practices this transitivity. Because he translates nature to thought and mind to body, Emerson becomes in her reading an emblem of the contemporary individual who lives among cultures and constantly translates from one language to another: “Emersonian perfectionist education requires translation in a broader sense than the experience of self-transcendence. As a mediator between two parties whose worlds are mutually alien at the outset, the translator needs to travel from one place to another and then travel back again” (154).

Translational identities constitute a particularly apt response to the culture of transitional lives bred by post-industrial worlds since they are molded by a transitivity that orients our communal imagination in directions different from the national collective. The communality Saito talks about would be based on the commonality of mutual listening and learning: “Dewey states that ‘democracy must begin at home.’ The experience of a translator points us beyond this remark: we must unsettle ourselves and leave home to find home again” (155). I would disagree with Saito that Emerson's translational persons depart home only in order to return to it, for it seems to me that Emerson carefully cultivated the idea of leaving with no return to the previous circle, and worked toward emancipating us from nostalgia through an ongoing practice of “abandonment.” Such a disagreement, however, in no way detracts from the positive impact of Saito's rescuing Emerson from tedious arguments concerning his supposed nationalism. For she persuasively argues that Emerson's philosophy calls for the multiplicity of languages and identities, and for a public sphere opened as the site of their mutual translatability.

—BRANKA ARSIC
SUNY-Albany

Ralph Waldo Emerson: Une Introduction.

C. JON DELOGU. Rennes: Les Perséides, 2006. 160 pp. EUR 17 paper.

C. Jon Delogu's new introduction is a tour-de-force that targets a wide audience and should appeal especially to French readers. Throwing a bridge between Emerson's cosmic yet sporadic metaphysics of nature and French readers often strongly attached to the tradition of historical philosophy and rationalism is no mean feat. Short though the format is, he brilliantly manages to deliver a crisp, dense, and much enlightening presentation of an archipelago of texts which to a traditional French mind are liable to be received as overly disconnected, unstable, whimsical: in so many words a sin against consistency. The book includes an introduction, conclusion, and five chapters entitled “The Portrait of the Thinker as a Young Man,” “The World According to Emerson,” “Society and Self-Reliance,” “Of the Usefulness of Art and the Role of the Poet,” and “Emerson's Heritage.”

Not least of Delogu's merits is his deftness at bringing into view a synthetic yet never organically distributed picture, at pointing out the mutual dis-concordance of the essays, and at drawing lines between them and Emerson's journal and the budding times of the swelling nation. Delogu emphasizes the connections between Emerson's method and form of writing and the young Republic's swift consolidation into a multifarious nation. He aptly points out the idiosyncratic nativeness and pragmatism of what he calls Emerson's circular endeavor: collecting material into a journal, processing it for lectures given on tour, fine-tuning those on

the way, then revising them for publication.

Also strikingly expounded are the Emersonian ideas of creative reading and creative writing, which require that one work like an inventor. Authentic reading brings active life experience to the task, and writing is not so much a singular heroic achievement as the right attitude and the capacity to let the breath of the spirit work through oneself. This impersonalization is very cleverly highlighted when set against Emerson's strident calls for self-reliance and his contention that history is essentially biography. The hero as democratic epitome and the personal to impersonal swing are subtly pictured within the sweeping see-saw movement of Emerson's dual holistic monism.

Brilliantly depicted too is the potency of nature bodying forth with its original energy to inspire the childlike gaze of the innocent bystander, or to proffer a glimpse of its oracles to the self-detached observer. Delogu strikingly correlates such personal observation with the background presence of principles and laws, and he connects these themes with Plato and many great others not far behind. His crisp description of the intricacy of such sundry spiritual and philosophical strands both baffles and delights a French consciousness like mine. Although familiar already with Nietzsche and the anti-metaphysical tradition, French readers especially will welcome this most needed initiation into such invigorating motley thinking where contradiction and misunderstanding are hailed as ethical necessities, and where the adequate attitude, besides adequate action, is to await moments of illumination.

—CLAUDE DOREY
*University of Paris X,
Nanterre*

Emerson's Nonlinear Nature.

CHRISTOPHER J. WINDOLPH. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007. 360 pp. \$39.95 cloth.

“What a parade we make of our science,” Emerson pugnaciously observed in 1860, “and how far off, and at arm's length, it is from its objects!” (30). The defiant unbelief of this observation is still a surprise coming from Emerson, with his reputation as a writer so idealist or intuitive as himself to have little actual contact with the world of facts. But this substantive critique of science's failure to contact the objects it aims at is attractive for being less solipsistic than Poe's Romantic dreamer beneath his tamarind tree, less yielding than the poet Wordsworth called “to follow the steps of the Man of science” into the material future. Scholarly reconsideration in the last ten years of Emerson's relation to the science of his era has produced a sense that Emerson's approach to nature is less vulnerable than it once was to the charge of being merely poetic or mystical. Recent work of Eric Wilson, Lee Rust Brown, William Rossi, Robert Richardson, and Laura Dassow Walls has now established Emerson's avid and abiding interest in the scientific learning of his era and revealed the importance of scientific ideas to his thought. While the claim in *Nature* that the laws of physics should translate those of ethics seemed for many decades a merely poetic expression of his longing for a holistic picture of the world, we are now gaining the perspective to see how entirely serious Emerson was in his rapturous belief that, under the light of science, the very “limits of the possible are enlarged” (*JMN* 4:199).

This is the spirit of Christopher J. Windolph's challenging and rewarding new study, *Emerson's Nonlinear Nature*, which extends such recent work on Emerson and science to reveal the

geometric imagination behind his most familiar formulations of individual perspective and renewed sight. Windolph shows why Emerson was wary of the distortions of linear science and then reveals that from the perspective of 20th-century nonlinear science, he was in such views largely correct. Tracking his search for an optimal perspective and his geometrical pursuit of nature's language of architectural forms, Windolph argues that Emerson's unique perspective was derived from “his recognition that modern ways of knowing were increasingly dominated by an emerging worldview that conceived of space by means of a linear perspectival construction.” However powerful for Renaissance painting and as a conceptual backdrop for the development of the modern sciences, rectilinear perspective produces knowledge that is “inconsistent with the fundamental reality of nature, which is not linear but curved” (21). Windolph shows how fully the truth claims of Emerson's project have been misconceived even by major Emersonian critics and persuasively reveals an Emerson more literal, Aristotelian, and empiricist in his views than we may have thought possible. In short, from these carefully reasoned pages emerges a new Emerson whose cultivation of the Joyous Science enabled him to see beyond the Newtonian cosmos to the patterns within the “orderly disorder” of nature's dynamic system and so to anticipate 20th-century ideas that would emerge fully only in later scientific work (64). More than ballasting him against the impulses of Whim, then, science gave Emerson an eye for iteration and pattern that enabled him in his work to “yok[e] together phenomenological ideas about consciousness and speculations about the dynamic and stochastic qualities of particle physics, [and thus to anticipate] an expanded way of thinking about the world that is only recently being appreciated” (66).

Windolph makes his case with impressive learning in the history of science and effectively brings the lay reader in Euclidean geometry and contemporary physics along. Perhaps most appealing to such readers will be the fresh readings of familiar Emerson works with which Windolph grounds the case he is making and immediately demonstrates its payoff. This challenging book is more rewarding re-read than read, but even those underexposed to the orderly disorder that chaos theory describes will find it a provocative and informative guide to the wonder-world of Emerson's nonlinear nature.

—PETER BALAAM
Carleton College

A Natural History of Pragmatism: The Fact of Feeling from Jonathan Edwards to Gertrude Stein.

JOAN RICHARDSON. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 346 pp. \$91.00 cloth; \$29.99 paper.

Richardson's has all the elements of a great scholarly book—immense learning, ambitious arguments, impressive scope, and a powerful rhetorical presence. And there are many memorable insights and significant connections drawn among her primary characters—Edwards, Emerson, William and Henry James, Stevens, and Stein—especially in relation to matters of style and attitudes toward thinking. Richardson does a particularly fine job of pointing “to the informing texts in natural history, language theory, and science read by my subjects” in order to discuss “the ways in which what they learned inflected their ministerial mission to fashion an instrument adequate to describing their situation” (xi). Yet I found the book disappointing. It draws associative circles rather than develops specific arguments, and it

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generally refuses to place its observations in relation to specific pressures encountered in distinctive phases of careers.

Richardson's aim is to "follow the moves in the American language game that comes to be known as Pragmatism, specifically, the method of thinking described by William James in his 1907 volume" (ix). This language game has its origins in the notion of providential history because that left American writers the sense that "being lost among signs ... was prerequisite to reform" (ix). Reform would then be mostly a matter of emphasizing the power to articulate lived experience. Hence "truth" could no longer be an ideal, timeless property. Rather it had to be located in provisional assertions realized by a mode of thinking that was firmly situated in particular occasions. These Americans understood thinking to be "a life form, subject to the same processes of growth and change as all other life forms" (1). That sense of truth would allow performative utterance to serve as "its testimony": Embodied thinking affords the vehicle for the Jamesian process of "coming to see the invisible, not embodied in mythological figures, but as the real relations themselves" (95).

So the aesthetic becomes inseparable from the Pragmatist search for truth, since Richardson defines it as the aspect of thinking that is most focused on the feelings of satisfaction accompanying the discovery process. Emerson provides a perfect example of such thinking. Richardson shows how his concern "to annul the adulterous divorce ... between the intellect and holiness" (11) leads from his dynamic sense of nature to his theory of correspondences to his effort to remake language so that it can embody the multiple tracks of the mind's attunement "in sentences fashioned to excite the heat of their words into motion, light, translating religious experience into aesthetic performance through 'the somersaults, spells, and resurrections, wrought by the imagination'" (89).

Engaging as this is, I cannot shake what seem substantial doubts. First, is this distinctively American? Thinkers like

Whitehead, whom she frequently cites, and Spinoza, whom she does not cite, provide the overall framework. Second, I suspect that at some point accounts stressing relationality must at least desire to establish underlying structures that shape relations. Third, her pragmatist instrumental view of the aesthetic facilitates the work's "integration and expression within the pitchtime grid of its culture" (224). But this is a very weak and general sense of "aesthetic" that ignores the stronger uses of the concept that shows also how art can resist integration into its dominant culture by providing testimony for alternative values artists see their culture destroying. Fourth, her often brilliant excursions into scientific matters are rarely connected clearly to what writers state to be their basic concerns in what they are doing.

I find most problematic her claim that Emerson's "understanding of the processes underlying the transformations of matter and of words as matter derives from the sources he shared with Darwin" (90). Technically this claim is supportable, and Richardson notes the differences between thinkers caused by Darwin's "having to integrate the actual facts ... into his account" (93). But what she does when she moves from sources to allied themes is misleading. Historically, Darwin the proto-pragmatist was not the Darwin Emerson would have come to know (after writing most of his work on nature). That Darwin would have been the figure who seemed to deny spirit so that he could find an utterly natural mechanism for selection (which Richardson almost admits on page 93). And that Darwin would have been not the figure who resurrected "thinking" but who deadened it by emphasizing explanations that challenged all sense of mystery. He accounts for large-scale shifts in populations by explaining how over time certain characteristics succeed and others fail to reproduce in sufficient numbers. There is no ideal sphere, no sense of how individual models might gather strength because of what is distinctive to how the work performs a mode of thinking. Integrity and forcefulness are nothing; adaptation everything. The American writers might have wanted to participate in the evolution of the culture, but not by forms of replication that erase their specific performative energies.

—CHARLES ALTIERI
University of California
at Berkeley



Mary Moody Emerson Society

The entire Mary Moody Emerson Society congregated on the steps of the First Parish in Concord, Mass., for this undated photo during a July Thoreau Society Annual Gathering. From left, the late Joan Goodwin with Phyllis Cole and Nancy Craig Simmons.

Emerson and Philosophy: A Special Panel

The Emerson Society was invited to participate in the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, a group especially interested of late in Emerson's status as a philosopher and his usefulness for defining philosophical questions. On 15 March 2008, at Michigan State University, three members of the Emerson Society addressed these concerns on a panel entitled "Emerson Thinking," chaired by Jennifer Gurley.

Emerson, Transcendentalism, and the Ontological Turn in American Thought, 1820-1850

JOSEPH URBAS, *Université Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux III*

This paper presents and defends three related claims:

1) Emerson is primarily a philosopher of being, not an epistemologist. To be more precise, he is a philosopher of being-as-cause or—to borrow his own coinage—a "causationist." Emerson's oeuvre, including his poetry, is a sustained development of this dynamic ontology of being-as-cause. 2) The three decades from 1820 to 1850, which witnessed the emergence, consolidation, and maturation of Emerson's philosophy, mark a distinctive ontological turn in American thought. Transcendentalism, which may be understood as a species of causationism, was a part of this general trend. 3) Emerson and his peers, as they themselves recognized, were also part of a broader transatlantic philosophical movement seeking a legitimate passage from psychology to ontology, a movement in search of a new philosophy of being.

Why Emerson Is Not a Pragmatist

JENNIFER GURLEY, *Le Moyne College*

In this paper, I refute current accounts of Emerson's pragmatism as I reexamine his conception of truth and its implications for ethics. First, I describe William James's claim that ideal truths can be discovered immanently, without conceiving an ideal realm, and expressed positively, as local accounts. I then turn to Emerson to demonstrate that James's self-contained epistemological system cannot adequately account for other-worldly truth because it fails to account for otherness as such. Suspicious of reliance on private experience alone, Emerson understands truth rhetorically: as constructed in dialogue with a psychic or social other. His truth therefore is not positive understanding, but

an act of recognizing limits, namely, of discovering the constraints that bind and so produce what we can know and say in particular conversational moments. Since original insight is partial and dynamic rather than universal and stationary, Emerson cannot describe ethical conduct in causal, instrumental terms: If truth has no stable content, it cannot prescribe plans of action. Hence Emerson's value is not, as modern pragmatist readings would have it, in his ability to adapt knowledge for particular instances. He matters instead because he struggles repeatedly to overcome his alienation from universal truth by attempting to express the necessarily partial truth he always finds instead. Moreover, he models the appropriate attitudes—of humility and doubt—that enable this inevitably fruitless work. His writings therefore are not arguments that offer truth (pragmatic or not), but examples of truthseeking that might inspire others to engage their own dialogical battles with the impersonal limit that bounds and only indirectly affects the ethical: by establishing ethical subjects.

A Philosophy of Difference and Its Political Fallout: Emerson, Cavell, and Feminism

SUSAN DUNSTON, *New Mexico Tech*

Despite some obvious discrepancies between Emerson and Stanley Cavell, on the one hand, and feminists, particularly contemporary, on the other, remarkable philosophical consonance exists among them in their theories of difference, power, and political ethics. Cavell's work facilitates ways of reading Emerson that reveal the aspects of Emerson's thought most relevant to tensions feminism seeks to address: difference and relation, and power and violence. The "itches" of their philosophies, as Cavell would say, resonate across a world irradiated and shot through with the fallout of our history to suggest an integrated approach to the problem of violence.

IN MEMORIAM
Gary L. Collison
1947–2007

Gary L. Collison, a longtime member of the Emerson Society and Professor of English and American Studies at Penn State-York, died on 19 September 2007. Scholars of nineteenth-century American life have lost a friend and an accomplished colleague.



PENN STATE-YORK MEDIA OFFICE

I first knew Gary when he enrolled in my Penn State graduate seminar on Emerson and Thoreau. He quickly showed himself to be a very engaged, accomplished reader, one whose work was characterized by perception and wit. It was my good fortune subsequently to be Gary's dissertation director as he

worked his way through the correspondence of Theodore Parker and Convers Francis. I often shuddered to think how hard Parker made it for Gary: an all-but-indecipherable hand coupled with endless streams of obscure titles in several languages. But persevere Gary did and produced a work that remains to this day the only modern edition of a portion of Parker's correspondence.

Gary was not one to settle into a rut. In the mid-1980s he began work on a book so hard to research that it is a wonder that it ever was written: *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen*. Gary painstakingly worked through public and private papers to write a biography of a

former slave well known to history but about whom we had known almost nothing. The book, published by Harvard in 1997, is a model biography, one that earned a nomination for the Pulitzer Prize. The book is, as Gary says, the story of how "Shadrach Minkins and his fellow refugees could create new lives, find new identities, and build a new community."

After his work on Shadrach, Gary turned to gravestone studies and became the editor of *Markers*, the journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies. One of my best afternoons in Concord was when he took me on a tour through the lower part of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. It was fascinating to hear him describe the style the craftsmen had used, what era they worked in, and what was routine and what unique among the markers. While we are all aware of gravestones, few of us stop to think of them as works of art that have distinctive styles. I was delighted to learn some of this from someone who so obviously knew what it all meant.

While members of the Emerson Society will remember Gary most for his scholarship, it was his teaching that was most on his mind late in his life. In a letter he wrote me a few months before he died, he said: "I have come to love teaching and love my students in ways that I never, ever imagined were possible for me. It has been an unbelievably satisfying and fulfilling period. Teaching has become a mission to me, and the goal has become in every class to break down the alienation that so many of my students are afflicted with." Gary will be sorely missed by them and by us.

—Robert N. Hudspeth