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EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

"Installing Judas as Steward":

"Power," Perfectionism, and Responses to Emerson at the Oneida Community

DANIEL ROBERT KOCH
University of Oxford

Emerson's voice carried a long way during his lifetime, even into the assembly hall of America's most successful and long-lived utopian commune, the Oneida Community (1848-1881). The founder and leader of the Community was John Humphrey Noyes (1811-1886), a close contemporary of Emerson who, like him, was born in New England, trained for the ministry, experienced a period of crisis, and eventually abandoned the clerical path to develop ideas of his own. Examining the Community records shows for the first time that Noyes and his followers read Emerson's works attentively, and that Emerson's words took on a strange and unexpected use for Noyes in maintaining his supreme leadership in the Community. On a deeper level, uncovering the reactions to Emerson at Oneida captures the contrast between Noyes's vision of absolute spiritual and social perfection as real and attainable on Earth (for those who followed his example), and Emerson's moral perfectionism which hinges, in Naoko Saito's words, on "the idea of perfection without final perfectibility."[1]

The Oneida Community would be a cult by today's standards: several hundred men and women living together in a compound, following an unorthodox interpretation of the Bible, and practicing "communal marriage," all under the guidance of a charismatic leader who claimed to be ordained by God. In its time, however, it was only one of scores of religious communes founded while the spiritual fires of the Second Great Awakening burnt hot in the United States. Its most unusual feature in that history is that it survived and prospered long after its rival communities foundered one by one. The Community's beginnings were in rural Vermont, where Noyes, after a series of youthful religious conversions and demonstrations of his power to work miracles, persuaded a group of followers in the town of Putney in 1839 to accept him as their spiritual father. Noyes's religious views had evolved from Christian Perfectionism, which he encountered as a divinity student at Yale. In 1834, Noyes declared himself "without sin" and began writing theological works arguing that the Second Coming of Christ had occurred, quietly, in 70 A.D., thereby making human sinlessness possible for a select few.[2] Noyes put forward the idea that the marriage of a single man to a single woman was an institution of the sinful world but that sinless saints and angels should love each other equally. When the local Vermonters learned of Noyes's program of communal marriage, they threatened him with imprisonment. The Community relocated to the banks of Oneida Creek in a sparsely populated area of upstate New York.[3]

Noyes's pamphlet *Bible Communism* (1848) argued that in the community of saints, property as well as spouses should be shared. Upon entering the new Community, members were obliged to turn over all of their wealth and to renounce the spirit of private possession. While developing his social theories in the 1840s, Noyes was naturally interested in the experiment at Brook Farm. He later wrote that he and his followers "have always acknowledged that they received a great impulse from Brook Farm," seeing the formation of their own community as having grown, partially, from what he called "the Socialism of Unitarianism."[4] The founders of the Oneida Community originally hoped to create a completely self-sustaining agricultural community. However, it quickly became apparent that they could not live on farming alone. Unlike Brook Farm (and other contemporary agrarian communes that faltered after an initial period of financial turbulence), Oneida later achieved financial success by partially abandoning its pastoral ideal for more lucrative pursuits. To generate the capital needed to feed and supply the commune, the Community's businessmen sold Community products such as silk, canned goods, and later steel traps and silverware on the market for a profit. By the end of the Civil War, the Community had become prosperous because of its business activity.[5]

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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.

American Literature Assocation Conference

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society will present two panels in Boston during the twentieth annual conference of the American Literature Association, which will be held 21-24 May 2009. Both panels and our annual business meeting will be held on Friday, 22 May. For details check the ALA's Web site, www.americanliterature.org.

SESSION I (9:30–10:50 a.m.)
Emerson after Cavell
CHAIR: Elizabeth Addison *(Western Carolina University)*

"Romancing the World: Emerson, 'Nature,' and the Voice of Experience," Prentiss Clark *(SUNY—Buffalo)* [Mr. Clark is the 2009 winner of the Emerson Society's graduate student travel award.]

"The Cavellian Turn," Lawrence Rhu *(University of South Carolina)*

"The Return of the Repressed: Cavell and Emerson," Joan Richardson *(The Graduate Center, CUNY)*

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING (11 a.m.–12:20 p.m.)

SESSION II (2–3:20 p.m.)
Teaching Emerson: A Roundtable Discussion
CHAIR: Todd H. Richardson *(University of Texas of the Permian Basin)*

"Teaching Gender in Emerson's Essays," Phyllis Cole *(Penn State Delaware County)*

"What Emerson Is Not: Teaching Emerson against His Popular Inheritors," William Day *(Le Moyne College)*

"Teaching Emerson to Science and Engineering Undergraduates," William Day *(Le Moyne College)*

"Emerson's Value for Teaching Reading," Susan Dunston *(New Mexico Tech)*

"The Way to Learn Grammar: Teaching Emerson's School," Sean Ross Meehan *(Washington College)*

The ALA conference will be held at the Westin Copley Place, 10 Huntington Avenue, Boston (617-262-9600).. The conference fee for those who pre-register before 15 April is $85; $50 for graduate students, independent scholars, and retired faculty. After 15 April the fees are $100 and $60.

Concord 2009: "Emerson's Politics"

The Emerson Society will present a session on "Emerson's Politics" at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering in Concord, Mass. (9–12 July 2009). The format will be a discussion, led by Daniel S. Malachuk (*Western Illinois University—Quad Cities*) and chaired by Emerson Society Program Co-Chair Todd H. Richardson (*University of Texas of the Permian Basin*). The program is tentatively scheduled for Friday, 10 July, at 7 p.m. in the Masonic Hall. For details on the Gathering, whose theme is "Social Awareness: Thoreau and the Reform Movement," visit www.thoreausociety.org.

Emerson/Nietzsche Colloquium

David LaRocca is directing a colloquium entitled "Liberty and Necessity in Emerson and Nietzsche" that will convene in Big Sky, Montana, this July. LaRocca received the Society's Community Project Award to develop the conference. Readings include primary source material by Emerson and Nietzsche on fate and freedom; individual power and the development of creative potential; social responsibility and leadership; representation and interpretation. LaRocca, a member of the Society, is the author of *On Emerson* (Wadsworth, 2003) and editor of Stanley Cavell's book on Emerson, *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* (Stanford, 2003), both published under his bachelor surname, Hodge. Author of several recent articles on Emerson and Nietzsche, he is also a documentary film producer. More details at www.DavidLaRocca.org.

Emerson Collection on Market

Emerson Society member Mark Stirling, proprietor of Up-Country Letters Rare and Fine Books, writes that he has brought to the market his personal Emerson collection: "My first acquisition was a rather shabby copy of *Society and Solitude* (1870), found in 1988 in a bookshop while killing some time, being early for an appointment. Having discovered the world of rare books, I had a copy of Joel Myerson's descriptive bibliography in my book bag a few weeks later. Now, the collection contains about 200 items, including most of the first editions issued during Emerson's lifetime, many association copies, and much autograph material.

"Why is Emerson important? This collection contains an 1885 letter from Christopher Pearse Cranch to Oliver Wendell Holmes, complimenting his biography of Emerson in terms like these: 'I am delighted at your just and cordial appreciation of him…as you know, I have been from the first among his enthusiastic admirers…. I feel I have lived from the beginning to the end of a wonderful revolution in thought.'" For details on Mark's collection, see the flier in this issue.

Online Emerson

Some major editions of Emerson's writings are now available online, though at significant cost, reports Len Gougeon. InteLex Corporation of Charlottesville, Virginia, has added Emerson to its Past Masters series, used by many academic libraries. For Emerson's *Collected Works* visit www.nlx.com/titles/titlemersonw.htm; for the *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* visit www.nlx.com/titles/titlemersonj.htm; and for the *Early Lectures* visit www.nlx.com/titles/titlemersonel.htm.

Emerson Sightings/Citings

THE OBAMA EDITION:

Elizabeth Addison and **Roger Thompson** report that Harold Bloom, in "Out of Panic, Self-Reliance" (*New York Times*, Sunday Opinion section, 11 October 2008, p. 12) discusses the economic crisis facing President Obama in the context of Emerson and the depression of 1837.

From Italy, **Ellen Emerson** writes that in a *New York Times* opinion piece on 22 January 2009, Stanley Fish noted that Penguin Books will soon publish a book presenting President Barack Obama's inauguration speech alongside writings by Abraham Lincoln and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Peggy Isaacson and **Clarence Burley** found another mention of RWE in connection with President Obama, in Liz Smith's syndicated gossip column for 12 February 2009. Describing the President's "pathetic belief in 'bipartisanship' [as] a snare and a delusion," Smith writes: "'If two or three persons should come with a high spiritual aim and with great powers, the world would fall into their hands like a ripe peach,' wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson. ¶ Old Ralph obviously

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never had the future shock of knowing about Barack Obama in the White House with conservative Republicans in complete battle mode in the House and Senate against him."

Libby Westie sends a feature *Newsweek* article ("Therapist-in-Chief: The President explains the details of his $778 billion stimulus package to a crowd in Mesa, Arizona," 21 February 2009) in which Jonathan Alter writes: "If Ralph Waldo Emerson had a 19th-century Facebook page, his 'Favorite Quotation' (or maybe I should say *my* favorite Emerson quote) would likely be: 'Events are in the saddle and tend to ride mankind.' ¶ For the last six months, events have been in the saddle of the world economy and they might ride us for quite a while. Every day seems to bring bad news, with more on the way. Will commercial real estate crash next? Is General Motors toast? Dow 5,000, anyone?"

NON-PRESIDENTIAL SIGHTINGS:

Corinne Smith writes: Former Amazon.com editor James Marcus admits that after putting in a long day of work at the online bookstore, he often went home at night and immersed himself in Emerson's essays. As he notes in his book *Amazonia: Five Years at the Epicenter of the Dot.Com Juggernaut* (The New Press, 2004), Marcus eventually saw a resemblance between the beginning Internet revolution and the Transcendentalist movement of the 1840s. "[W]hat was the World Wide Web but a Transcendental telephone? It made people into disembodied spirits, without fixed identity or abode" (p. 157). And Emerson's "transparent eyeball" notion anticipated "the Web by a good century and a half. At the very least," Marcus writes, "Emerson deserves the title of the First American Online" (p. 162).

Tiffany Wayne reports that in "My Mother's Case of 'Pleasant Dementia'" (*Newsweek*, 22 September 2008, pp. 62-63), the author, Sara Davidson, interviewed Professor Oliver Sacks on Emerson's "soft oblivion" in his later years. The point of the article is that dementia does not have to be a frightening or disorienting experience but that, as was the case with the author's mother, some individuals find it peaceful and calming to live only "in the moment." She quotes Emerson reporting to a friend that he was doing "Quite well. I have lost my mental faculties, but am perfectly well." She ends the article with an excerpt from Emerson's poem "Terminus": "Lowly faithful, banish fear, / Right onward drive unharmed; / The port, well worth the cruise, is near, / And every wave is charmed."

Roger Thompson sends two other Emerson-related items: Bruce Sterling, in "Self-Reliance 2008" (*The Atlantic*, November 2008, p. 42), moves from an Emersonian vein of American thinking to the leather-man to the Ipod and Iphone; and Oliver Sacks, in *Musicophilia* (Knopf, 2007, p. 339), relates a tale of Emerson's descent into dementia, citing David Shenk's telling the tale in *The Forgetting*.

Rebecca Beam, a senior English major at Penn State Altoona, sent her professor **Sandy Petrulionis** a copy of Patrick McDonnell's "Mutts" daily comic strip (King Features Syndicate) for 26 November 2008. Woofie is shown bounding out into a beautiful new "Thanks Giving" day under a quotation from Emerson: "I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new."

Corinne Smith reports that on 2 January 2009 Garrison Keillor, in his NPR "Writer's Almanac," observed the birthday of science-fiction writer Isaac Asimov (born 1920). Keillor claimed that Asimov's "most famous story," "Nightfall" (1941), was inspired by a passage in Emerson's *Nature*, which "his friend and editor John Campbell" had been reading.

In an article called "The Dystopians," **Joel Brattin** writes, Ben McGrath treats Nassim Taleb, the author of *The Black Swan*, in Emersonian context: "Like Ralph Waldo Emerson, who responded to the crash of 1837 by writing of the 'good' in 'such emphatic and universal calamity as the times bring,' Taleb sees reason for encouragement in, for instance, the rapid shrinking of certain institutional endowments: 'Universities will have less funding, so economists will lay low and won't burden us with as much nonsense.'" (*The New Yorker*, 26 January 2009, p. 46).

The house in Concord, New Hampshire, in the front parlor of which Emerson married Ellen Tucker is the subject of a lengthy article in the *Concord [N.H.] Monitor* on 22 February 2009 ("At home with history," by AnnMarie Timmins). Thanks to **Rodney Obien**.

Mark Sullivan reports that Emerson was cited and quoted in a recent lecture by the noted Buddhist leader Daisaku Ikeda. ("The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra," *Living Buddhism* [March-April 2009]: 51-65). On p. 64, Mr. Ikeda discusses the ideas of courage and cowardice as expressed by Emerson in *Society and Solitude*, and sees a clear parallel between Emerson's concept of courage and the Buddhist view of courage.

Follensby Pond, the landscape of Emerson's "Philosophers' Camp" in the Adirondacks, is now protected by the Nature Conservancy, reports **Bob Habich** (see Emily Manley, "Now & Then: The Fortune of Follensby Pond—History Repeats Itself in the Adirondacks," *Nature Conservancy Magazine* [Spring 2009]).

It's not specifically an Emerson sighting, but **Sandy Mott** writes that in the 2 April 2009 issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine, David Fricke titles his piece on Van Morrison "The Grouchy Transcendentalist" (pp. 28-29). Commenting on the revival of Morrison's 1968 album *Astral Weeks*, Fricke describes the eight songs that were included in the two eight-hour sessions in New York in the fall of 1968 as "a hushed balance of spidery improvisation and lyric mystery, with Morrison citing places, faces, and blurred memories in deep-blue growls, trance-like chanting, and ascending, almost wordless release." He quotes Morrison's lyrics "I believe I've transcended," and asks if Morrison felt that way as he sang these songs in 1968. Morrison replies: "I'm talking in terms of trance. But, it's always been there, even before that. Not many people actually heard what I was doing live then. But there has always been an element of the transcendent in the music and it has continued throughout."

George Harrison, Waldo Emerson, and Lao Tse:

"The Same Centripetence"

WESLEY T. MOTT
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Something in the lyrics of George Harrison (1943-2001) sounds strikingly Emersonian, and ever since I was a middle-aged professor rediscovering the joys of the Beatles, I have wished to write an essay accounting for the likeness of sentiments and, occasionally, phrasing in works by the mystical Beatle and the Concord Sage. Both write of the moral centeredness and wisdom that come, paradoxically, from self-abandonment; lament the institutional corruption and worldly snares that crush psychic and emotional wholeness; and express variously longing or serene spirituality. Here is a sample of provocatively similar passages:

On knowledge: "The soul is no traveller: the wise man stays at home.…Travelling is a fool's paradise. Our first journeys discover to us the indifference of places." (RWE, "Self-Reliance")

"Without going out of your door / You can know all things on earth / … / The farther one travels / The less one knows / The less one really knows" (GH, "The Inner Light")

On ego and the material world: "'Mine and yours; / Mine, not yours. / … / They called me theirs, / Who so controlled me; / Yet every one / Wished to stay, and is gone'" (RWE, "Earth-Song" in "Hamatreya")

"All through the day / I Me Mine, I Me Mine, I Me Mine / … / Now they're frightened of leaving it / Everyone's weaving it" (GH, "I Me Mine")

On the trap of narrow thought: "[To lose one's] balance … by the exaggeration of a single topic . . . . is incipient insanity. Every thought is a prison also." (RWE, "Intellect")

"Watch out now, take care / beware the thoughts that linger / winding up inside your head—" (GH, "Beware of Darkness")

On feeling: "I have been told, that in some public discourses of mine my reverence for the intellect has made me unjustly cold to the personal relations." (RWE, "Love")

"I don't know why nobody told you how to unfold your love" (GH, "While My Guitar Gently Weeps")

On success: "I fear the popular notion of success stands in direct opposition in all points to the real and wholesome success." (RWE, "Success")

"Back then long time ago when grass was green / Woke up in a daze / … / Casualties at dawn / … / long time ago when we was fab / Fab—but it's all over now, Baby Blue" (GH, "When We Was Fab")

On illusion: "All things swim and glimmer. Our life is not so much threatened as our perception." (RWE, "Experience")

"In a room of mirrors you can see for miles / But everything that's there is in disguise" (GH, "Rising Sun") ["Watch out now, take care / … / beware of Maya" ("Beware of Darkness")]

On dualism: "An inevitable dualism bisects nature, so that each thing is a half, and suggests another thing to make it whole; as spirit, matter; … motion, rest; yea, nay." (RWE, "Compensation")

"I'm a living proof of all life's contradictions / One half's going where the other half's just been / And I'm a Pisces fish and the river runs through my soul" (GH, "Pisces Fish")

On the God Within: "The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God." (RWE, *Nature*)

"Oh the rising sun and the place that it's coming from / Is inside of me and now I feel it constantly" (GH, "Rising Sun")

On silence: "[W]ithin man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty … the eternal ONE." (RWE, "The Over-Soul")

"There's a temple on an island / I think of all the Gods and what they feel / You can only find them in the deepest silence" (GH, "Pisces Fish")

On mortality and grace: "It is time to be old, / To take in sail:— / … / As the bird trims her to the gale, / I trim myself to the storm of time" (RWE, "Terminus")

"All things must pass / None of life's strings can last / So—I must be on my way / and face another day" (GH, "All Things Must Pass")

As these phrases suggest, the sage utterances of Emerson and Harrison range in tone from wistful to angry, from confessional to prophetic, and several are laced with irony and paradox. Indeed, for each man, humor was a saving grace. Emerson—sometimes called our "American Saint"—confessed to a "*silliness*" that protected him from the deadly earnestness that afflicted his brothers[1]; and Harrison—capable of writing the achingly devout lyrics of

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"Harrison, Emerson, and Lao Tse"

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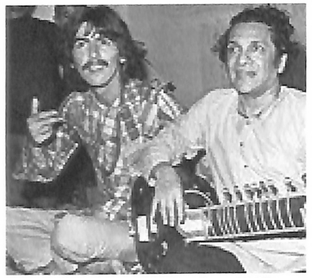
"My Sweet Lord" and "Life Itself"—loved edgy humor and sponsored many projects of the zany comedy troupe Monty Python.[2] The heart of their shared outlook, however, clearly is an attraction to Eastern wisdom. For students in my course on the Concord writers, the limpid aphorisms and exotic sitar strains of Harrison's "The Inner Light" help to evoke the Asian mysticism to which Emerson was drawn, illuminating his very un-American diatribe against traveling in "Self-Reliance." Raised Roman Catholic, Harrison was a spiritual seeker who mastered the sitar under the tutelage of Ravi Shankar and immersed himself in Hindu scriptures even before leading the Beatles' legendary pilgrimage to Rishikesh, India, in 1968, and explored Eastern culture till the end of his life.[3] Descendant of Puritans, Unitarian minister in early adulthood, and admirer of Quakerism, Emerson too was a seeker who from boyhood had been fascinated by Eastern lore. Having referred in a sermon of August 1829 to the core moral truth of what he then considered the superstitious fable of "the God Vishnu," in 1845 he was avidly reading translations of Hindu sacred texts including the Vishnu Purana and the Bhagavad Gita, which he declared a "trans-national book."[4]



Harrison with Ravi Shankar, 1967

Nailing down common sources for Emerson and Harrison in Eastern writings is a slippery matter, for as Arthur Christy observed many years ago, "it is a difficult task to account for the dreams and ecstasies of mystics. They … crush the centuries as the sections of a telescope, and staunchly declare that they must get beyond time and space and rely more on intuition than reason."[5] Emerson and Harrison both were attracted to the quality of the Bhagavad Gita that Dale C. Allison Jr. terms its emphasis on "the disparity between the outer and the inner."[6] And scholars have identified some specific Asian sources for each artist. Robert Richardson, for example, points to echoes of the Vishnu Purana in Emerson's "Hamatreya," and recent Harrison studies point to origins of his lyrics in the Bhagavad Gita.[7] The pursuit of common sources gets stickier when considering the first pair of parallel passages above—on knowledge and traveling—which are the closest in verbal quality. Harrison wrote that he appropriated the lyrics for "The Inner Light" from Cambridge University Sanskrit scholar Juan Mascaró's translation of the 47th chapter of the ancient Chinese Tao Te Ching; but Emerson could not have read the Tao Te Ching, which was first translated into English by James Legge only in 1891, nine years after Emerson's death.[8]

Given the number of similar passages, and notwithstanding Harrison's careful account of his use of Mascaró, could the Beatle's knowledge of Hindu and other Asian texts and ideas have been derived in part from the Concord Sage? Could the American who, after his first trip to Europe and Britain, sailed for home from Liverpool on 4 September 1833 have inspired the spiritual quest of one of the four Liverpudlians who, 131 years later, launched a new British Invasion of the U.S.?

In early August 2005 I wrote to the London office of Harrison's widow, Olivia Arias Harrison, asking if there were Emerson books, marginal notes, or other jottings that would suggest not only that Emerson and Harrison had read the same Eastern scriptures but that Harrison might have been drawn to Emerson's writings.

Never really expecting a reply, I was amazed to find on my Labor Day voice mail a message left the previous Friday by Mrs. Harrison's assistant, Rachel Cooper, asking me to return her call at my earliest convenience. I called London on 6 September and got Ms. Cooper immediately. Charming and friendly, she said how much Mrs. Harrison had enjoyed my letter—"Olivia smiled," Ms. Cooper went on, "and she said that in over thirty years, she never heard George mention Emerson."

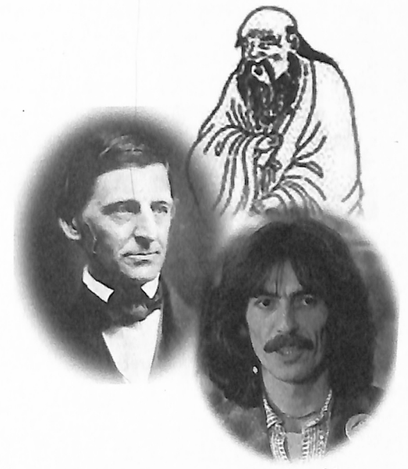
Well, that seemed to end my pursuit of a tangible Emerson-Harrison connection.

> Grossman is interested in how "philosophical ideas appear and reappear throughout history and across cultures, and are enriched in each new incarnation."

But now comes a remarkable new book by psychotherapist, author, and Emerson Society member Richard Grossman offering an alternative to the limits of influence and source study.[9] In *The Tao of Emerson*, Grossman (using the Legge translation) presents the 81 chapters of the Tao Te Ching, traditionally ascribed to the sage Lao Tse, on verso pages facing parallel passages from Emerson. Some of the Emerson passages are from a single source; others are "culled" from as many as four separate sources. Grossman's book at first glance appears to be a throwback to an old way of reading Emerson: as a homey philosopher dispensing nuggets of go-ahead wisdom to earnest readers, an approach long since pooh-poohed by scholars of every critical camp. The last quarter century, after all, has revealed to us a more complex Emerson—pragmatist, scientist, philosopher, reformer, cultural hero, radically experimental stylist. But for Grossman, the comparative reading of sages offers a rich cross-cultural experience. In this approach the essential Emerson is to be found in his sentences—and this is no mere spouter of cracker-barrel epigrams. Grossman's Emerson, placed in excerpts alongside Lao Tse, is the Emerson captured in Robert Richardson's marvelous description: "Emerson persuades by lightning strikes.… Through the coiled aphoristic energy of his language, with its whip-cracks of metaphor, he unsettles and incites, shaming us out of the cant of premature defeat."[10] Nor is either the Tao Te Ching or Emerson presented here as a model of navel-gazing quietism. For although Confucianism (which Emerson knew) emphasizes civic and moral duty, the Tao Te Ching also offers much provocative wisdom about leadership, ethics, and worldly affairs, and it regards Nature, as Emerson does, as a volatile realm.

Grossman's "comparative" Emerson, moreover, is timely, with our age's new emphasis on American literature in global context. Grossman is interested not in "similarities of verbal expression" but in how "philosophical ideas appear and reappear throughout history and across cultures, and are enriched in each new incarnation."[11] No loose, subjective grasp of world cultures, this was *Emerson's* method of appropriating universal truths across times and places. Grossman's epigraph is aptly taken from Emerson's lecture "Plato": "All philosophy, of East and West, has the same centripetence."[12]

Perhaps my initial linear pursuit of mutual literary sources and influences in Emerson and Harrison had been off track all along. Harrison apparently did not read Emerson, and Emerson could not have read Lao Tse. But perhaps these three "great men" are linked by what Emerson called "the revelations of the soul," before which "Time, Space and Nature"—and certainly such finite entities as "Boston, London"—"shrink away."[13]



Counterclockwise from top: Lao Tse (ca. 6th century B.C.); R. W. Emerson (1854); George Harrison (1974).

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7. Richardson, *Emerson*, p. 407. The Bhagavad Gita is paraphrased in "Living in the Material World" (Greene, p. 195) and echoed in "That Which I have Lost" (Allison, p. 156).

8. Harrison, pp. 117-19. Arthur Versluis observes a passage in Thoreau that also "sounds almost like a quotation from the *Tao Te Ching*, though it is not" (Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993], p. 93.

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Review Essay

The Transcendentalists.
BARBARA L. PACKER. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007. 304 pp. $22.95 paper.

American Transcendentalism: A History.
PHILIP F. GURA. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007. 365 pp. $27.50 cloth, $15.00 paper.

Not so long ago, students of Transcendentalism had no contemporary stand-alone history of the movement; now we have two, both of them lucid as Walden's water, deeply learned, and beautifully written. Yet the story they tell is quite different. As James Freeman Clarke quipped, Transcendentalists "called themselves 'the club of the like-minded'; I suppose because no two … thought alike" (quoted in Gura vii). Certainly Packer and Gura don't think alike, and the resulting debate will no doubt go on for years to come. At its core is the dilemma the Transcendentalists themselves faced: Should spiritual life and moral action center on individual integrity or on communal association? In Packer's book, this structural opposition becomes a productive tension which resolves happily in great literature; in Gura's, this tension first splits the movement, then destroys it altogether, leaving American society the poorer.

While Packer gives full attention to the religious, philosophical, political, and social dimensions of the movement, her book, published originally in 1995 as a chapter in the *Cambridge History of American Literature*, is organized around the American literary canon, centering on Emerson's dynamic and catalytic prose. Her interests are more aesthetic than social, animated by the provocative question posed by Romanticism: Given the crisis in religious belief, could a renovated, modern scripture be written by poets? Could modern poets reawaken a spiritual connection to the social and natural world? The framework for such questions may have come from Europe, but her dynamic is firmly nationalist: Peabody and Bronson Alcott, for instance, direct spiritual regeneration into American education; Emerson and Jones Very (the latter a little *too* literally) into American literature. The countercurrent to Emersonian individualism is led by Orestes Brownson, whom Packer positions as a sort of loyal opposition who both praises the work of the spirit in Emerson and laments Idealism's potential for political quietism. As Emerson developed the voice of the prophet, Brownson developed the voice of the democrat, and the resulting "fault lines" between "the integrity of the soul's intuitions" and the needs of "reformers who wanted to feed the hungry or free the slave" generated tremors that were felt for years (69).

The radical dimensions of Transcendentalism came to the fore in the face of conservative opposition as open hostility to Emerson and Parker, among others, rallied Transcendentalists into a more or less unified movement. With core principles established, various members diversified to address a range of audiences through multiple vehicles: Clarke's *Western Messenger*, Brownson's *Boston Quarterly Review*, the *Dial*, Fuller's "Conversations," Ripley's Brook Farm. Packer emphasizes the sheer exhilaration of these years: the *Messenger*'s courage in defending Brownson, Brownson's "exuberance" and "intellectual fearlessness" (102-3), audiences who found Emerson's elliptical and exhilarating lectures "strangely stimulating" (138), the Brook Farmers' experience of the "joys of associated life" and the personal empowerment enabled by Ripley's experiment (158-59). Diversification, though, led to fragmentation, as various pathways diverged: Parker to his church, Clarke to his, and Brownson to Catholicism; Brook Farm to Fourierism, then to total disintegration; Fuller to New York and onward to Europe; Thoreau to Walden. Yet in Packer's reading this was also the era of triumph, as Thoreau matured as a writer, toughing it out against continuing discouragement, and Fuller broke out of New England's constricting shell to blossom, all too briefly, as a world-class reform writer and visionary. This drama is epitomized in the sheer brilliance of Emerson's achievement, sustained through book after book: Packer's gift for canny, precise, and illuminating readings of Emerson's essays is fully evident. In her narrative, then, fragmentation ultimately leads to affirmation, as resistance to the social reforms of Brownson, Ripley, and Parker, followed by the antislavery turmoil of the 1850s, confirms "Emerson and Thoreau in their sense that they had been right to insist on private integrity before all else—only in private integrity was there any defense against the stupidity of government or the immorality of law" (231). In her long concluding essay on Thoreau, Packer suggests how he resolved the conflict between personal integrity and social reform: Thoreau's longing displaces tenderness onto perception, turning representation of nature into "an act of love" (186); Thoreau's withdrawal from the world of corruption bridges principle in the self to power in the world, leading to action as vigorous as Napoleon's "without having to compromise your integrity" (191). Her book ends on a note of optimism, as Transcendentalists, who "never lost faith in the ultimate triumph of moral law," could look back on a century that had proved them right (274).

The contrast with Gura's conclusion is stark: By century's end, the ultimate ascension of Transcendentalism's faith that "each person makes his own truth from what works for him" meant that its other half, the dream "of a common humanity committed to social justice, fell by the wayside." What triumphed was not deep moral law but the shallow individualism of the Gilded Age (306). Gura's book covers largely the same ground as Packer's, but is posed as a question: How did Transcendentalism, which began with such promise, ultimately fail? How did a movement "whose roots were so catholic and universal eventuate … in a discourse that promoted an American exceptionalism based on self-interest"? (xv). What haunts Gura is the way Transcendentalism was first split, then defeated: Transcendentalists awoke "to the possibility of a fully egalitarian brotherhood, encouraged it, and then, under the pressure of insular politics, finally lost their battle to maintain its relevance to the meaning of America" (xv).

Gura's opening chapters convey the group's radical strangeness and power, its challenge to American materialism and insularity, through a brilliant and detailed exposition of the transatlantic, cosmopolitan roots of Transcendentalism in European theology and philosophy. During its embattled rise, Brownson and his soulmate Ripley became "the de facto field generals of the emergent Transcendentalist movement, popularizing Idealist thought through their seminal publications and applying it to pressing social needs" (75). Emerson rose through the ranks less through intellectual impact than through the personal "charisma" of his challenge to conventional wisdom (96), and as he moved to center stage he became the movement's "chief proselytizer for an imperial self" (212), splitting the movement between Emersonian advocates of self-reliant individualism and the socially conscious egalitarian wing led by Brownson and Ripley, then by Parker, who moved most decisively into antislavery activism. After the defeat of the European democratic revolution of 1848, New England's radicals were "left alone with America" (208), and through the 1850s and beyond their transatlantic dream of world transformation and social harmony gave way to the triumph of Northern nationalism, industrial capitalism, and Emerson's canonization as the Gilded Age's self-reliant man of the hour (266). Gura ends by portraying the largely unfulfilled hopes of the Second Generation, exemplified by Cyrus Bartol, John Weiss, David Atwood Wasson, Caroline Healey Dall, Samuel Johnson, and Octavius Brooks Frothingham.

WES MOTT

The Old Manse—the Emerson ancestral home—in Concord, Mass.

So was Transcendentalism a brilliant achievement, or a poignant failure? It's hard to craft an answer without keeping in view the drama of today's politics: In our own time of crisis, on any given morning it is possible to awake to Packer's defiant pride in the power of poetry to revive the broken pieces of the world around us into a new vision of the cosmos; or to Gura's disquieting fear that the dream of cosmopolitan social justice will end once again in private self-cultivation and isolationism. Can poetry move the heart without displacing social action? Can social action be kept alive without compromising the principles in the heart? The Transcendentalists are alive to us now as never before because we are playing out in our own world the drama that inspired them—but with one advantage: We have their words and experience to guide us. We need both these books. One reminds us of the transcendent power of art; the other reminds us that art alone cannot save our world.

—LAURA DASSOW WALLS
University of South Carolina

Reviews

Emerson's Ghosts: Literature, Politics, and the Making of Americanists.
RANDALL FULLER. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. xv + 194 pp. $55.00 cloth.

Emerson's "American Scholar" address became an enduring force that rattled and disturbed as much as it influenced and inspired many who have devoted themselves to the study of America. Randall Fuller documents the haunting of Americanists by Emerson from the 1880s onward, arguing that key figures in the development of American cultural and literary studies conceptualized their professional mission in ways that essentially were defined by their relationship with Emerson. Emerson's urgent call in his 1837 Phi Beta Kappa address for the intellectual to engage in society in the role of critical prophet has lain heavy on the minds of scholars from the Gilded Age to the present day. Fuller succeeds not only in convincing readers that Emerson's work exerted the type of haunting influence he describes, but also in illustrating the fundamental relevance of Emerson to any attempt to study the American cultural tradition.

Fuller contends that in the 1830s Emerson realized that he could inspire a "cultural resistance" (7) against negative aspects of modern American democratic culture by adopting and troping elements of populist political discourse. "The American Scholar" weaves a democratic emphasis on the value of the individual together with elements that undermine the materialistic strains of Jacksonian individualism. The lecture demands that scholars view it as their vocation to convert or transform the nation to higher aims, but prescribes no straightforward set of actions to satisfy this demand. Hence "The American Scholar" became an "Ur-text" (18) of both inspiration and malaise for those who tried to live by it.

A series of short thematic intellectual biographies devoted to some of the most influential twentieth-century critics of the American literary tradition makes up most of the book. For figures such as Van Wyck Brooks, F. O. Matthiessen, Perry Miller, and Sacvan Bercovitch the very definition of America and its destiny hinged on their understanding of Emerson. Brooks, coming of age during the period of Emerson's posthumous cultural dominance, first directed much of his anger over America's cultural failures at Emerson, then re-read "The American Scholar" as a powerful call to resist materialism, signaling a revitalization of Emerson's image among leftist thinkers who recast him as a progressive icon.

Matthiessen, a left-wing activist, was drawn to the robust figure of the American Scholar. However, his sense that Emerson failed to appreciate the tragic role of that scholar as one who is doomed to be in constant conflict with the existing order, and yet whose failure to transform society is inevitable, led him to dismiss Emerson as an "oblivious" (93) optimist. While Matthiessen reacted to the paranoid atmosphere of the early Cold War with despair, Perry Miller used Emerson as a buoy amidst the waves of politicized discourse that flooded the academy and the nation. Miller came to see Emerson as a symbol of the free play of the mind, standing against the groupthink he perceived in the overt political agendas of many of his academic colleagues and contemporaries in the 1950s and 1960s.

The arguments of these chapters are supported by Fuller's meticulous analysis of the published works of the Americanists he discusses and by a wealth of primary and secondary sources including private letters, personal interviews, and email exchanges. Fuller delves into the darkest periods of his subjects' lives, including Brooks's period of madness and Matthiessen's tragic suicide, making discerning connections between these personal events, the subjects' reactions to the political atmosphere of their times, and the haunting effect of Emerson's work.

The book's final chapter points out that Emerson's central place in American literary history is threatened by new disciplinary trends which challenge the cultural predominance of great, dead, white men, as well as by those who challenge the idea of a delimited national literary tradition altogether. Fuller answers to these challenges, arguing that recent studies by Lawrence Buell, Phyllis Cole, Len Gougeon, and others that focus on Emerson's transnational legacy and his activism in the women's rights and antislavery movements show that Emerson's relevance will withstand these critical challenges.

The book will be of greater use to scholars interested in the development of American literary history as a discipline than to those seeking new perspectives on Emerson's life and times. However, this work will surely hold an important place in the future of Emerson studies as powerful encouragement to continue approaching Emerson and his work from new critical perspectives. *Emerson's Ghosts* strongly testifies to Emerson's unfading importance to the study of America and its culture.

—DANIEL ROBERT KOCH
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In History's Embrace: Past and Present in Concord, Massachusetts.
LESLIE PERRIN WILSON. Foreword by Doris Kearns Goodwin. Hollis, N.H.: Hollis Publishing, 2007. 125 pp. $21.95 cloth.

Leslie Perrin Wilson's *In History's Embrace: Past and Present in Concord, Massachusetts* is a thoroughly delightful and absorbing little book. These essays, originally written for *The Concord Journal*, are full of juicy details and unexpected stories behind familiar names and places, a sense of mystery paired with down-to-earth facts that Wilson has accumulated as the Curator of the William Munroe Special Collections at the Concord Free Public Library.

Her theme takes us well beyond the tourist's view of Concord—behind the bunting-wrapped reminders of the Revolution and the "ardor" of the Transcendentalists—to enhance the familiar with unexpected detail or startle with a larger context. The strengths of this book are many, among them its clear organization and wonderful stories. Each chapter takes a facet of the history or culture and opens by placing it in context. After a kind of thesis/teaser summarizing the major elements of the chapter, Wilson goes into leisurely detail about each. A reader unfamiliar with the story can follow it as it unfolds, whereas a reader with a bit of knowledge has the pleasure of watching the circuitous development that leads to the pleasure of recognition, of finding the familiar suddenly fitting into the larger context Wilson has drawn.

In "Image Shaping," the opening chapter, Wilson looks at the way myths and stories have emerged. She is able to tease the truth from some of them by careful collection and comparison of reports and accounts in primary sources over many years. Who planted the "whipping post elm" and who used it for whipping? Where did the Revolution actually begin—Concord or Lexington—and who made the claims? If Lemuel Shattuck, the first historian of Concord, was biased, what was the truth of the matter? Wilson does not solve all these mysteries, but she does examine the many reports and points out the contradictions.

Her chapter on change and preservation—"Concord's durable commitment to mediating between past and present" (22)—is truly fascinating, with its accounts of houses moving, in whole or in part, assembled or disassembled. The news that Concord was proposed as a site for the United Nations is no more startling than that an amusement park once stood by Walden Pond, or that a developer wanted to tear down historical buildings and build authentic replicas, an effort thwarted in part by the crash of 1929. "The comment 'Concord is not Williamsburg'—meaning that it is a vital place where life goes on in old and new buildings alike, not a museum frozen at a single period in time—is a local commonplace," Wilson points out (25).

In the chapter "Higher Concerns," Wilson notes that "Concordians from Peter Bulkeley on have been conscious of the uneasy coexistence here of spirituality and idealism on the one hand, and materialism on the other" (80). Her most fascinating example is that of Mary Merrick Brooks, whose well-known abolitionism, Wilson speculates, stemmed in part from her father's slave owning in South Carolina.

This community spirit and pride in local history Wilson illustrates with explanations of the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery landscaping, the "widow's thirds" that gave Thoreau a metaphor and Mrs. Minot a home, the Emerson house fire that called forth enormous community response, and a history of the Concord Free Public Library. It is fitting that William Munroe's efforts to develop the library should highlight this volume by the curator of the William Munroe Special Collections.

Throughout, Wilson builds a portrait of a town indeed "in history's embrace" but very much present, a town where practicalities coexist with idealisms, and a town where diverse innovators continue to balance preservation with change. Concord is not just a place of historical significance but "a place where people really live and work."

—ELIZABETH ADDISON
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Emerson and Self-Culture.
JOHN T. LYSAKER. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008. i-xxi + 226 pp. $24.95 paper.

Towards the outset of *Emerson and Self-Culture*, John T. Lysaker cites a recurring passage from Emerson's journals in which Emerson shows that the task of the lecturer is to seek an "eloquence that can agitate"" (13). For Lysaker, such eloquence becomes "a key to the door through which we might responsively receive Emerson's claims" (13). It marks the enduring and prospective force of his "rhetorical provocations" – how his lectures and writings irritate us against any forms of mortifying stasis, how they make us chafe at any habitual inertia, how they perpetually dare us to leave our chairs to find new possibilities for self-enlargement.

Lysaker explores self-culture, as oriented towards the "eloquent life," through several modalities (1; 7). He begins by outlining how we can "take Emerson personally," but hastens to underscore the "double consciousness" of self-culture as both passive reception and active practice (17; 98-99). Thrown into the world, thrown into our bodies, thrown into the spontaneity of each moment, a guest in the house of even our closest thoughts, we nonetheless must act; and, in so acting, we fashion a "self." Thus Lysaker develops self-culture as a "braid" of pre-reflective and reflective events, of a native and ecstatic genius, of impersonal and personal elements (120). To cultivate a self becomes our singularizing performance of our affective lives – of the impersonal moods, involuntary perceptions, and relational affinities that continually hold us in their sway (7).

Although its pitch is philosophical, *Emerson and Self-Culture* finds itself among several debates concerning Emerson's writings on nature, God, friendship, and reform. Lysaker culls from Emerson the possibility of a "post-theological self-culture" that frees itself from "the shadow of God" by attending to the "ethos of the moment" (124; 134-35). This is to affirm life as perpetually under the law of metamorphosis, not as a complete narrative to be measured against eternal moral criteria. This culminates in his expansive reading of "Experience" in the chapter "On the Edges of our Souls," the philosophical centerpiece of the study. It drives Lysaker's sketch of Emersonian friendship, the otherness woven into the heart of self-culture, and informs how self-culture, if not a politics "sufficient unto itself," leads to a life of activism (194). Lysaker is careful to highlight how Emerson's philosophical concerns are inextricable from the conduct of life. He rejects any perceived divide between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* as anathema to the transformation of genius into practical power. He calls into question those that separate the political or historical Emerson from the philosopher, especially those that deny him the entitlements of philosophy altogether. He draws into affinity, but marks essential differences with, Cavell, Buell, Cadava, Kateb, and Cameron, as well as Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, and Benjamin.

It is quite fitting that Lysaker finds self-culture's orientation to be towards eloquence. His prose-style is lucid and fluent. He offers us crisp reformulations of his central themes, and lets his ideas breathe the lung-full of their rhetorical potential. He revivifies standard Emersonian terms such as temperament, mood, self-reliance, or genius, and unfolds familiar quotations to new angles of vision. His study is complex, yet accessible to non-specialists. He invites us to reflect on the strengths and vulnerabilities of his program, and what these could mean for our own.

There are, however, several instances where we could hope for more from Lysaker. Some of his personal anecdotes (probably irresistible given the topic of the essay) lack the compelling force of other examples. He could further elaborate Emerson's own *Bildung* as a thinker by demarcating the transitions and key encounters of Emerson's intellectual life. This in turn could enable him to chart more precisely Emerson's intersection and reorientation of the complex philosophical history of self-culture via its related problems (e.g., practice, subjectivity, friendship). Given Lysaker's implicit conversation with the "powerful" work of Sharon Cameron on the impersonal in Emerson, it is a shame that he does not engage with it in a more sustained manner (69). But these instances are points that could be expanded rather than outright faults. They do not seriously diminish the "prospective force" of Emerson's texts, which Lysaker harnesses and perpetuates.

In the final analysis, Lysaker himself achieves in *Emerson and Self- Culture* an "eloquence that can agitate." Not only does he outline a series of nuanced approaches to self-culture in Emerson; like Emerson, he rhetorically provokes us towards greater possibilities for ourselves and our relations.

—MICHAEL JONIK
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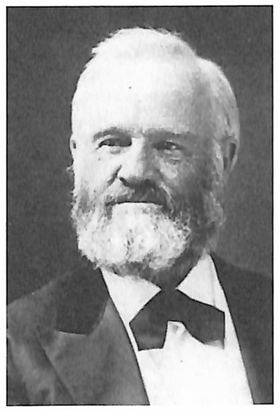
"Installing Judas as Steward"

(Continued from page 1)

Emerson's words became ammunition in a debate over leadership and fiscal control in the Community just as it entered into a period of unprecedented economic prosperity. With dollars rolling in, Noyes felt the spiritual basis of the Community to be under pressure in the face of its material success. He was suspicious of one of the Community's most successful businessmen, Amasa Carr, in whom he perceived a threat to his leadership. When Noyes caught word that that Carr had criticized him behind his back, he read it as an "indication of [Carr's] persistent determination to rule me and the Community." In 1865, Noyes judged Carr to be an incorrigible "curse to the Community," leaving Carr no choice but to remove from Oneida permanently.[6] In connection to this expulsion, Noyes delivered a "Home Talk" (the closest equivalent to a sermon in the Community) in the form of an argument against a statement in Emerson's *The Conduct of Life*.

In the chapter "Power" Emerson writes that the "Communities hitherto founded by Socialists, — the Jesuits, the Port-Royalists, the American communities at New Harmony, at Brook Farm, at Zoar, are only possible, by installing Judas as steward."[7] He does this in the context of a larger discourse in *The Conduct of Life* concerning the two dominant forces he sees at work in the Universe: Fate and Power. The book's opening chapter presents a bleak outlook, arguing that Fate is an all-encompassing natural force unconnected to human will, which variously supports or destroys life, insensibly and indiscriminately. However, the chapter also introduces Fate's attendant and counterbalancing force, Power. Emerson shows that Power, or human will and endeavor, is of real avail and that, in cases where it raises humanity above its brute natural condition, it limits the rule of negative fate. Power bends and remakes merciless natural law into a "Beautiful Necessity," a pathway to higher and better forms of existence; even, potentially, a ladder to the ultimate perfection of humankind.

The passage about Judas in "Power" illustrates an anticipated objection within the larger argument about the limits of fate that Emerson presents in *The Conduct of Life*. Emerson concedes that personal force, or Power, is not necessarily moral. He argues that those with greater-than-average abilities to lead and to succeed in politics, war, and trade are those who were unwittingly born with the "advantage of a strong pulse," and that they very often are ferocious and unscrupulous "bruisers" (*COL* 30, 34). The reference to the communities comes immediately after the aphorism "Philanthropic and religious bodies do not commonly make their executive officers out of saints" (*COL* 35). Emerson argues that men of savage power, including those whose actions appeared unethical, have contributed in important ways to the uplifting and cultivation of mankind. The main point Emerson communicates is that without vital power and connection to the "aboriginal source" (*COL* 37), human endeavor ultimately remains shallow, but that if that raw power is harnessed and properly managed, it can challenge and overcome the limits imposed by fate.



John Humphrey Noyes in 1863. Courtesy of Oneida Community Mansion House

In his Home Talk, Noyes ignored the context of Emerson's statement concerning the American communes. He read the passage aloud and interpreted it as a declaration "that Christ's original association of disciples had to make a Judas their steward; and that the same necessity has existed in all similar bodies ever since." Determined to disprove this concept, Noyes argued that when Jesus died, Judas "went and hanged himself, and was no longer steward." The new steward and financier of the early Christian community, in Noyes's narrative, became Paul, whose previous experience as a tax collector made him particularly good at the job. Paul's work brought in the money needed to maintain a "communism among all the churches under his charge." Noyes concluded that in his Community, the good men and not the treacherous would hold the purse.[8]

Noyes's reading of Emerson served an obvious political purpose in the Community. At Oneida, Noyes called himself chief among angels, and his absolute leadership depended on a shared recognition of this fact. In 1865, Noyes needed to reaffirm that although it was the Community's business leaders who had made it wealthy and prosperous, his followers must not, under any circumstances, transfer their allegiance away from the spiritual perfection that only his leadership could provide. Noyes made convenient use of Emerson, casting his sentence about Judas as an argument that honorable societies must vest monetary powers in a diabolic figure in order to succeed, and demolishing it in order to reaffirm the Community's principle that all power, both spiritual and monetary, should rest squarely with its most morally elevated figure.

For Noyes, Emerson's concession in *The Conduct of Life* that the ability to lead effectively and to deliver humanity to the greater good was not necessarily linked to moral goodness must be wholeheartedly rejected.

Noyes, while arguing against Emerson's statement, was clearly more interested in influencing his followers' thinking about Carr than about Emerson. By 1865, the Community's general opinion of Emerson was already well established. Community members saw Emerson as a talented and interesting writer, but as one who shunned the communal spirit, whose moral position was murky and compromised, and whose philosophical stance was wholly out of line with their own. Most members of the Community were avid readers. They produced a weekly newspaper, *The Circular,* which, in addition to keeping hundreds of regular readers updated on Community news, carried opinionated reviews of the latest works in science and literature. After reading *Walden* in 1854, a Community reviewer found value in Thoreau's simplicity and in his plan for agricultural self-sufficiency.[9] *The Circular* also reviewed works by Nathaniel Hawthorne, ran poems by Walt Whitman, and offered commentary on contemporary British writers including Carlyle and Dickens, though scientific works generally received the most attention.[10]

Before 1856, *Circular* contributors referred to Emerson in generally negative terms as one of the leaders of popular thought who "ignore [Christ] and crucify him afresh daily."[11] The Community began to focus more attention on Emerson after the publication of *English Traits*. The book was read aloud in the Community's Mansion House for evening entertainment soon after its publication in 1856. In a daily journal published in *The Circular* a listener called it "a model in point of style" and "nearly perfect" as a work of art, but still felt that Emerson should show more "reverence, and fear of God, and less of the purely materialistic conception of man and his destiny."[12] The author of the piece did not elaborate on which sections of *English Traits* provoked this opinion, but (in light of later responses) it is likely that Emerson's theme of England's unrivalled "practical power" as a product both of dark, animal energies and of noble yearnings, may have struck an inharmonious chord at Oneida.

Later in the 1850s, some *Circular* writers kept an open mind with regard to Emerson, concluding that his opinions on marriage and domestic life were more enlightened than most and reprinting several of his poems.[13] More often, however, *Circular* articles reminded readers that Emerson was exerting a dangerous influence. An 1859 article declared that the country was pervaded with a "spirit of unbelief and a proud, independent, philosophical skepticism, which rejects Christ, scorns the Bible, and which feeds on the inane transcendental fatalism of Emerson and the German metaphysicians."[14] Five years later, an article described Emerson's ideas as "representative" of the "foolish and shallow spirit of unbelief" abroad in the land.[15] These, like all opinions published in the *Circular*, could not have reached print if they were in conflict with Noyes's views. This already-established understanding of Emerson as a materialist and fatalist played easily into Noyes's hands when he used the passage from "Power" to remind his followers that in his Community, no worldly Judas would undermine his claim to unconditional authority based on and justified by his unquestionable spiritual superiority.

It is certain that Emerson knew of the Oneida Community, but difficult to know to what extent he was familiar with their arrangements. The Community was open to visitors, even welcoming tourists (sometimes over a thousand per day) who flocked to study their unique society at first hand on their grounds. Emerson did not visit the Community during his 1855 tour of upstate New York when he delivered a lecture three miles away in the village of Oneida Depot. In his journals of the 1850s he made mention of "New York Socialism" and "Free-Love Socialism," but did not devote any extended entries to the subject.[16] Emerson's lack of interest in the Community may stem from his sense that the fate of Fruitlands and Brook Farm had proven the impossibility of achieving a social arrangement that would make perfection visible. Emerson believed in the idea of moral perfection and extolled what he called "the effort at the Perfect." He referred to human perfection as the "the inspirer … of every success." However, Emerson's perfectionism is best understood as a Platonic faith in what he called the "moral fact of the Unattainable, the flying Perfect," and in the efficacy of striving toward it. Though Emerson never denied the possibility of human perfection, his feeling that perfection had never been truly possessed by any individual past or present, and that no transformation in social arrangement could cause this to change, was unwavering throughout his career.[17]

From the date of Noyes's invocation of Emerson in connection with the Carr affair onward, there was no further positive commentary on Emerson in any Community publication. During the late 1860s and early 1870s, with internal threats lopped off and a steady flow of income into the Community, Noyes remained in firm control. He initiated a eugenics program, continued to plan for the day when untold thousands would call him their leader, sent representatives abroad, and took time to complete his ambitious *History of American Socialisms* (1870). In this work, Noyes pronounced his final word on Emerson and his place in history.

Five of the book's chapters are devoted to Brook Farm, which Noyes upholds as one of the most important

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"Installing Judas as Steward"

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experiments ever conducted on American soil. In the *History* Noyes makes three main points about Brook Farm. First, the reason why Brook Farm is of high historical significance is that it inspired Americans to consider Socialism. Second, Brook Farm was not only a socialist but also a spiritual Community, and the organ that it used to spread Fourierism, its periodical, *The Harbinger*, also effectively spread the Swedenborgianism which laid the foundations for Spiritualism. (For Noyes, who was experimenting with spiritual séances and contacting the dead through mediums at this time, this was another point to celebrate).[18]

Third, Brook Farm was the product of a "transcendental afflatus" which consisted of two main elements. On the one hand, there was a positive tendency toward spiritual Communism, which Noyes associates with Channing and Ripley; on the other, was a negative "tendency to literature," which was the "farthest opposite of Communism, finding its *summum bonum* in individualism." Emerson was the clear representative of this second strain, which Noyes interprets as having prevailed over the former and led to Brook Farm's downfall. Noyes refers to Emerson as the "spiritual fertilizer of all the Transcendentalists, including the Brook Farmers," but accuses him of having "stood by smiling" while Ripley worked "like a hero" to bring ideas to life in the real world. Noyes presents the Emerson of the 1840s as an idle chatterer — one who inspired others with the language of idealism, but who also persuaded them to give up trying to fulfill the human ideal on earth. Noyes concludes that eventually "Emerson prevailed over Channing even in Brook Farm; nay, in Channing himself, and in Ripley." These men gave up their heroic attempt, and "[literary] utterance has been their vocation ever since."[19] Noyes naturally passes over Emerson's logical objections to joining Brook Farm, enhancing an image of Emerson as an irresponsible, hands-off bystander with a demoralizing influence.

South (or Children's) Wing of Main Dwelling (built 1869–70), Oneida Community (1871). J. H. Noyes on south porch in white coat. Courtesy of Oneida Community Mansion House

Noyes was able to maintain his authority in the Community itself nearly until the end of his life, but his arguments ultimately failed to convince either the American public or the authorities of the State of New York. Though the Community had succeeded in creating a thriving business and in conducting one of the most successful experiments in communal living in modern history, by 1880 internal tensions, threats of legal action, and a crusade led by upstate clergymen against them shook the Community to its core and contributed to its downfall. Noyes died three years after Emerson in exile in Niagara Falls, Canada.

Noyes's portrait of Emerson was an unflattering one. The Community saw Emerson as a fatalist and a skeptic whose negative influence led to Brook Farm's demise. However, it was a portrait built on ideological self-promotion and on opportunistic misinterpretation. Noyes and the Community's main quarrel with Emerson was that his ideas would not support the brand of religious perfectionism or the belief in the infallibility of Noyes's leadership that underlay the Community's existence. Another portrait of Emerson—as an affirmative philosopher and an idealist who worked to make moral truths resound in his time and place—has been preserved by history, but was lost, it would seem, on the man who would be perfect.

Notes

1. Naoko Saito, *The Gleam of Light: Moral Perfectionism and Education in Dewey and Emerson* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 140.

2. Noyes compiled his early religious writings, originally published in various newspapers under his editorship between 1834 to 1846, in *The Berean: A Manual for the Help of Those Who Seek the Faith of the Primitive Church* (Putney, Vt.: Office of *The Spiritual Magazine*, 1847).

3. Several biographies of Noyes and histories of the Oneida Community are available. A short list of the best general works includes Spencer Klaw, *Without Sin* (New York: Allen Lane, 1993); Robert David Thomas, *The Man Who Would Be Perfect: John Humphrey Noyes and the Utopian Impulse* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977); Maren Lockwood Carden, *Oneida: Utopian Community to Modern Corporation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969); and Robert Allerton Parker, *A Yankee Saint* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1935).

4. Noyes, *History of American Socialisms* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1870), p. 615.

5. Net earnings rose from less than $10,000 per year between 1857 and 1862 to $44,755 in 1863, and $61,382 in 1864. See "Financial History of the Oneida Community," *The Circular*, 9 January 1865.

6. Unpublished manuscript, Syracuse University Library (G.W. Noyes Papers, Box 2, pp. 78-79). For information on this source, see n. 8.

7. *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 7 vols. to date, ed. Alfred R. Ferguson, Joseph Slater, and Douglas Emory Wilson et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971-), 6:35. Volume 6, *The Conduct of Life* (2003), is henceforward abbreviated *COL* and cited in the main text.

8. "Judas Defunct," *The Circular*, 24 May 1869. This transcript, printed in the Community's weekly newspaper, indicates that Noyes originally read it as a Home Talk on 14 November 1865. There is no mention of the Carr affair in the printed version. My source for this connection is a manuscript documentary history of the Community by J.H. Noyes's nephew George Wallingford Noyes, housed in the Syracuse University Library Special Collections Department. Part of this manuscript, which narrowly avoided destruction when Community archives were burned in 1949 and became available to researchers only in 1991, has been edited and published in Lawrence Foster's *Free Love in Utopia: John Humphrey Noyes and the Origin of the Oneida Community* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001). The pages cited here have not been edited but are available in digitalized format at library.syr.edu/digital/collections/l.

9. Several reviews of Thoreau in *The Circular* are reprinted in Joel Myerson, ed., *Emerson and Thoreau: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 364-66, 371, 413-14. Also see Geoffrey Noyes, "Thoreau at the Oneida Community," *Thoreau Society Bulletin* No. 115 (Spring 1971), pp. 3-4.

10. See, for example, "'Blithedale' and Brook Farm," *Circular*, 1 August 1852. A later piece ("Nathaniel Hawthorne," *Circular*, 30 May 1864), by Noyes himself, laments the wide influence of the "apostate Socialist."

11. "Heathen Literature," *Circular*, 22 March 1855.

12. "An Oneida Journal," *Circular*, 2 October 1856. Also see earlier journal transcript in *The Circular* for 18 September 1856: "After supper, a reading in the parlor of Emerson's *English Traits*. The subtlety and force of writing in this book, makes it highly enjoyable."

13. See "Emerson on Marriage," *Circular*, 5 February 1857 and "How to Beautify the Household," *Circular*, 22 November 1860. Poems by Emerson such as "Sea Shore," "The Squirrel and the Mountain," "Forbearance," "Give All To Love," and "The Soul's Prophesy" appeared in *The Circular* for 19 December 1864, 27 March 1865, 18 December 1865, 12 March 1866, and 9 April 1866 respectively.

14. "An Oneida Journal," *Circular*, 3 November 1859.

15. "The Superciliousness of Unbelief," *Circular*, 11 February 1864.

16. See Joseph Slater's editorial notes in *The Conduct of Life*, *CW* 6:258. For journal passages, see *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), 13:457; 14:13, 204.

17. Quoted material is from Emerson's "Lecture on the Times" and "Circles," in *CW* 1:174 and 2:179 respectively.

18. Noyes, *History of American Socialisms*, pp. 107, 539-50.

19. Ibid., pp. 561-62.

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WES MOTT

Daniel Chester French, The Minute Man. *Concord, Mass. Dedicated 19 April 1875. The first stanza of Emerson's "Concord Hymn" (1837) is engraved on the base.*

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Correction: In the center spread of the Fall 2008 issue of *ESP*, the blue headings were dropped out during printing. On page 8, Daniel S. Malachuk's abstract should be titled "One Emerson, Not Two: On War and Other Uses of Violence"; and Roger C. Thompson's abstract should be titled "*Kairos*, War, and the Power of Eloquence." On page 9, the text and photos should be titled "Concord 2008: 'Emerson and Social Reform.'" We regret the omissions