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## EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

### Mary Moody Emerson's 1807 Almanack: Property Ownership and the Single Woman

JENNIFER COWFER AND ANNE MAUCIERI

Xxxxxxx ???

Over the course of several days in January 1807, Mary Moody Emerson's Almanack encapsulates a central period of her adult development, as she documents in almost painstaking detail her "hop[ing] & struggl[ing]" for "nothing but nearer conformity to [God]." Residing occasionally in Malden and traveling frequently throughout Massachusetts at this time to care for relatives, a thirty-two year old Emerson records her mixed feelings about the sale of the Malden estate, which she co-owned, and where she grew up with her surrogate parents, Aunt Ruth and Uncle Nathan Sargeant. In January 1807, Emerson; her uncle, Samuel Waite, Ruth's second husband; and her mentally unstable, widowed aunt, Rebecca Brintnall, sell this property, a transaction that causes Emerson to wrestle with, in her view, its unfair terms.

Importantly, both Emerson's unmarried status, with its potential for economic independence, and her spiritual ambitions contribute to this frustration. Later this year, Emerson rejects a marriage proposal, "promis[ing] never to put that ring on"; economic security and an equitable sale of her property are crucial for her as an independent single woman. As Cole proposes, by this time Emerson had "achieved a modest economic autonomy within her family circle." Cole also notes the equally crucial point that the Malden years are a time of "almost monastic discipline" as Emerson dedicates her life to holiness. While at this time Emerson certainly recognizes her human frailty and contends that "God may be [better] his own Almoner than I, if I feel vanity or . . . littleness!", she nevertheless seeks to mirror God in acting the part of almsgiver herself. Following this divine model, Emerson understands that she must risk her financial stability in order to practice "a charity holier and purer." Poignantly, and throughout this Almanack, Emerson vacillates between competing secular and religious tensions brought to bear by this property sale —on the one hand, between her natural desire, especially as a single woman, for worldly security; and on the other, her enduring pursuit of a charitable Christian sensibility.

In his 1929 pamphlet on Emerson, Concord historian George Tolman characterized the details of the Malden property sale. More recently, Nancy Craig Simmons contextualized the sale's historical background as well as the various parties involved. It is not clear whether Tolman actually reviewed the documents of these real estate deals, but our research of the records and a consideration of Emerson's position as a single female property owner, allow us to build on both Simmons's understanding of the sale and on Tolman's negative characterization of Emerson's contradictory comments about it. Tolman believed that Emerson's feelings of being cheated "had no adequate foundation" and stemmed "from her utter ignorance of business methods." In contrast to his dismissive attitude toward Emerson's concern about her "defraud[ment]," our research suggests the very real possibility that Emerson received less than her entitled share from the sale of her property.

Her anguished deliberations shed significant light on the potentially skewed legal details of Emerson's Malden property ownership. Simmons has explained that when she turned twenty-one in 1796, Emerson purchased a home, over three acres of land, and additional buildings situated there, from family friend Peter Thatcher. Over the years Nathan Sargeant had purchased segments of this property from his wife's siblings; in 1791, he transferred the estate to Thatcher, "to ensure its being inherited by Mary Emerson." After purchasing the property from Thatcher in 1796, Emerson leased it to the Sargeants for the duration of Ruth's life, and she remained sole owner until 1801, when she deeded a portion to Ruth's second husband, Samuel Waite, again leasing the remainder to them. Six years later, in January 1807, Emerson and Samuel Waite sold the entire estate for \$3,000, three-fifths of which proceeds went to Emerson (\$1,800), with two-fifths to Waite (\$1,200).

Further research reveals that Emerson and Waite sold their individual portions of the property to Samuel Tufts in two separate transactions rather than in one joint sale, the

*(Continued on page 5)*

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### 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 news about Emerson-related community, school, and other projects; information about editions, publications, and research in progress on Emerson and his circle; queries and requests for information in aid of research in these fields; and significant news of Emersonian scholars. Send manuscripts to the editor, Jennifer Gurley, English Department, LeMoyne College, 1419 Salt Springs Road, Syracuse, New York, 13214 or [gurleyja@lemoyne.edu](mailto:gurleyja@lemoyne.edu) (email submissions are much preferred).

Review copies of books on Emerson should be sent to book review editor Leslie Eckel, English Department, Suffolk University, 41 Temple St., Boston, MA 02114-4280.

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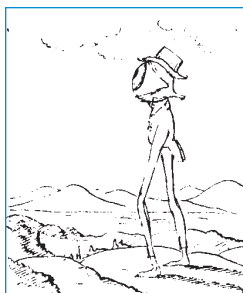
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# PROSPECTS.



## Emerson Sightings/Citings

Al von Frank directs our attention to what he calls a “truly horrifying piece” in *The Weekly Standard* on the apparent uselessness of teaching Emerson to undergraduates: [www.weeklystandard.com/articles/where-s-waldo\\_823370.html](http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/where-s-waldo_823370.html)

## Myerson Collection

The Joel Myerson Collection of Nineteenth-Century American Manuscripts, Images, and Ephemera is a part of the larger Myerson Collection of Nineteenth-Century American Literature. It contains letters, manuscripts, cabinet cards, cartes de visite, and a variety of other ephemeral material relating to nineteenth-century American authors, especially those associated with the Transcendentalist movement. The bulk of the collection comprises some ninety letters by Ralph Waldo Emerson, many of which are previously unpublished, and the largest collection of cartes-de-visite and cabinet cards of Emerson held by any library. There are also materials by or relating to Bronson and Louisa May Alcott, Christopher Pearse Cranch (including his caricature of Emerson’s writings), Theodore Parker, and Walt Whitman. The collection is available at <http://library.sc.edu/digital/collections/Myerson.html>.

## Emerson Chronology

Albert von Frank has been making good progress on the revised second edition of the *Emerson Chronology*, which has been out of print and effectively unavailable since 1995. He has been working with Doug Dunston, who knows the ins and outs of producing ebooks and print-on-demand books. This revision will be substantially longer (more detailed) than the original. Look to seeing it finished and available for purchase by the end of 2015.

## Call for Lesson Plans for Emerson and American Philosophy Website

Please consider submitting lesson plans on Emerson, Thoreau, and others for a new teaching resource, Teaching American Philosophy ([teachhigh-phi.org](http://teachhigh-phi.org)), a website sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities that will be featured on EDSITEMent!, “the web’s premier resource for teachers in the humanities.” [edsitement.neh.gov](http://edsitement.neh.gov).

See the site’s readings, content timeline, and other resources and submit initial queries and/or completed lesson plans to Jennifer Gurley, [gurleyja@lemoyne.edu](mailto:gurleyja@lemoyne.edu), anytime. Lesson plans will be posted as they are received.

## Emerson Society Panels at ALA

The Society presents two panels annually at the American Literature Association meeting, to be held this year from May 21 to 24 in Boston. Visit [americanliterature.org](http://americanliterature.org) for more information,

### Digital Emerson I

Organized by the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society  
Chair: Roger Thompson, Stony Brook University

“Mary Moody Emerson’s Almanacks: How Digital Horizons Advance Teaching and Research,” Noelle Baker, Independent Scholar & Sandra Petrulionis, Penn State Altoona

“Of Manuscripts & Metadata: Digitizing Emerson for The Joel Myerson Collection of Nineteenth-Century American Manuscripts, Images, and Ephemera,” Michael C. Weisenberg, University of South Carolina

“The Software Perspective: Technical Problems and Solutions from 15 Years of Emerson Content at [www.alcott.net](http://www.alcott.net),” Paul Christensen, Webmaster and Developer, [www.alcott.net](http://www.alcott.net)

### Digital Emerson II: Roundtable

Organized by the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society  
Chair: Roger Thompson, Stony Brook University

“Radio Emerson! Audio Emerson!”  
Paul Medeiros, Providence College

“The ‘Digital’ Scholar: Emerson and the Internet Age,”  
David Greenham, University of the West of England

“Unpredictable Arrangement: Emerson’s Speaking Style in Light of Digital Delivery,” John Gallagher, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

“In usum Delphinorum: Digitizing Emerson’s Letters and Journals,” Melissa Tuckman, Princeton University

“#Emerson in 140 characters or less,” Kristina West, University of Reading; Emerson Society Graduate Student Travel Award Winner

## Thoreau Society Annual Gathering

The theme of this year’s gathering in Concord July 9–12 is “Thoreau’s Sense of Place.” The Emerson Society will host a social hour following its panel. Visit [thoreausociety.org](http://thoreausociety.org) for information and full schedule.

### Emerson’s Sense of Place

Chair: Roger Thompson, Stony Brook University

“Making a Place for Dissent: A New Context for Thoreau’s ‘What Shall it Profit?’” Nancy Austin, PhD, Independent Scholar

“The West in Emerson: Place, Prospects, and Westward Migration,” Michael Lorence, Independent Scholar

“Guessing the Riddle: Emerson, Peirce, and the Reinvention of Epistemology,” Austin Bailey, CUNY Graduate Center and Hunter College

## 1807 Almanack

(Continued from page 1)

terms of which perhaps validate Emerson's suspicion that she did not receive her just due. In December 1801, Emerson had sold only "one sixth part" of the entire property to Waite, yet in 1807 he sold two-fifths of it as his portion, which may therefore have been more property than he actually owned. The nature of this potential discrepancy in the size of Waite's total ownership is unclear. Possibly, a deed no longer extant, or even a non-legally binding familial agreement might have granted Waite more of the property than the one-sixth purchased from Emerson; no record has yet emerged to account for this variance. The terms of the sale, however, set the stage for Emerson's central conflict in this Almanack.

As the new year began in 1807, Emerson's tumultuous emotions waver between her desire to emulate a godly model of charitable behavior and a human "duty" to ensure self-preservation. The first Almanack entry, on January 1, highlights this struggle: "I made a foolish bargain, tho I added to my estate yet I had rather be without it than to have descended." As the foregoing analysis of the property records suggests, Emerson's indignation at the possibility of being unfairly treated seems justified. She suspects that the sale may have played her for the "fool" and also endangered her economic welfare. Despite these frustrations, however, spiritual ambition compels her to live with austerity rather than "descend" into selfishness. Three days later, Emerson praises her selflessness through acts of charity: "to riot in the bestowment of the 'mite' was all I considered—it's consequent pleasures are dearer than the joys of fancy." Yet the next day, on January 5, still several days prior to the property settlement, she revolts again, only in another breath to reprimand herself for anger and selfishness: "What a descent—angry at a poor old man [Samuel Waite] because he was loath to let me have my money." Further, she prays for "nearer conformity to Him [she] love[s] supremely." What better way to resemble her God and "Almoner" than to sell her property and settle for less than her rightful share of the proceeds? Although the next day she laments having "sinned," possibly over continued resentment toward the impending sale, Emerson renews her efforts to "hope & struggle & hope & struggle," a testimony immediately followed by the news that her stepfather, Ezra Ripley, "consents that I sd [should] sell the place." Her natural inclination toward material survival thwarts her desire for godliness, leading to a valiant struggle as she laments "an awfull—a sublime and unspeakable duty of self preservation in the constitution of

man." This tension clearly rankles, and Emerson turns frequently to prayer in the ensuing days: "Take from me oh my Father health, knowledge food & home friendship & reputation—only leave me in the full possession of advancing virtue."

Emerson's emotional upheaval over the sale of her Malden property and its impact on her financial welfare intensified as she strove to act charitably towards her widowed, unstable aunt, Rebecca Brintnall. Prior to the sale, Emerson and a distant cousin, Silas Moody, had sold to Brintnall one-sixth portion of the Malden estate; Emerson and Moody essentially gifted a right of residency to Brintnall, who paid them one dollar for it. Because Brintnall agreed to relinquish this right to Samuel Tufts "at the period of [her] decease" for \$60, through her largesse, Emerson secured a place for her aunt to live for the rest of her life. Emerson appears untroubled in her writings about this charitable offering, but when Waite proposed that she give an additional \$20 to Brintnall, Emerson's recurring battle again disrupts this Almanack's pages. Initially angered, Emerson recounts just 12 days after praying for improved virtue: "Last. night I spoke tow sentences about that foolish place when Uncle Wait asked me to give money to Mrs B. w'h [which] I most bitterly lament. Not because yy [they] were improper but they arose from anger." Scolding herself, she continues: "But this shall teach me. It humbles me beyond any thing I ever [have] met, to find myself for a moment affected with hope fear . . . especially anger about interest." A few sentences later, however, Emerson exults in her piety: "But at last this very night the bargain is closed and I am delighted with myself—my dear self has done well—tho' I would not help on a bargain yet after effecting all Mrs. B. wished from the men I gave her 20 dollars in future. Never did I so exult at a trifle." Pleased with her generosity, Emerson immediately shifts: "the sale of the place appears one . . . of the worst things . . . at this time." As this particular instance depicts, Emerson's vacillation between secular and spiritual concerns is a constant back and forth arising not solely on the same day but even at times in the same sentence.

Emerson's 1807 Almanack demonstrates spiritual and secular tensions that reveal, on a larger scale, one early American single woman's struggle with dueling ambitions. Her method of contending with these divergent motivations relevant to the sale of the Malden property in which she spent her formative years seems to suggest that previous portrayals of her as merely "ignorant of the ways of the world," were both simplistic and unfounded.

## Notes

- 1 *The Almanacks of Mary Moody Emerson: A Scholarly Digital Edition*, folder 3, pp. 4, 3, ed. Noelle A. Baker and Sandra Harbert Petrulionis; <http://www.wwp.northeastern.edu/research/projects/manuscripts/emerson/output/emerson.folder03.xhtml>. All Almanack citations will refer to folder three of a prototype of this digital edition currently in progress; quotations of Emerson's many idiosyncratic spellings are not followed by [sic]. This edition is also being published in *Women Writers Online*.
- 2 Nancy Craig Simmons, ed., *Selected Letters of Mary Moody Emerson* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1993), 4.
- 3 Ruth Emerson Sargeant Waite (1741-1808) was Emerson's paternal aunt; she married Samuel Waite (1732-1815) in January 1802 after her first husband, Nathan Sargeant (1735-1798), died. Nathan's last name is spelled both "Sargeant" and "Sargent" in various published works. Rebecca Emerson Parker Brintnall Waite (1738-1816) was Ruth Waite's reportedly insane sister who married Samuel Waite following Ruth's death.
- 4 Almanacks, 9; Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, singlehood provided women several legal advantages, including the ability to own and disburse property, one of the few means by which they could avoid poverty and live independently. The scholarship surrounding this topic is extensive. See Aileen Agnew, "Women and Property in Early Nineteenth-Century Portsmouth, New Hampshire," *Historical Archeology* 29, no. 1 (1995): 62-74, and Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, A Better Husband: Single Women in America: The Generations of 1780-1840* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1984).
- 5 Phyllis Cole, *Mary Moody Emerson and the Origins, of Transcendentalism: A Family History* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998), 100. Other recent scholarship on Emerson includes Simmons, *Letters*; Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson, *The Emerson Brothers: A Fraternal Biography in Letters* (New York: Oxford UP, 2006); Noelle A. Baker, "'Something more than material': Nonverbal Conversation in Mary Moody Emerson's Almanacks," *Resources for American Literary Study* 35 (2010): 29-67 [published 2012]; and Noelle A. Baker, "'Let Me Do Nothing Smale': Mary Moody Emerson and Women's 'Talking' Manuscripts," in *Toward a Female Genealogy of Transcendentalism*, ed. Phyllis Cole and Jana Argersinger (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014) 35-55.
- 6 *Almanacks*, 3-4, 9.
- 7 George Tolman, *Mary Moody Emerson* (Cambridge, MA: Privately Printed, 1929).
- 8 Tolman, 6, 5.
- 9 Simmons, 4; Massachusetts Office of the Secretary of State, Registry of Deeds, Middlesex County South, book 179, pp. 133-34. Emerson's Malden property had originally been owned by her paternal grandmother, also named Mary Moody Emerson.
- 10 Simmons, 4. In 2014, \$3,000; \$1,800; and \$1,200 were worth approximately \$63,400; \$38,000; and \$25,400, respectively (Measuring Worth, <http://www.measuringworth.com>).
- 11 Massachusetts, Registry, book 143, "Mary M. Emerson to Saml Wait."
- 12 Massachusetts, Registry, book 179, pp. 133-4.
- 13 *Almanack*, 3, 4.
- 14 How Moody, a distant cousin, factors into this sale is currently unknown. Although this one-sixth portion may have been the sale of actual property, thus convoluting the proportions of the 1807 transaction between Emerson, Waite, and Tufts, Brintnall's own 1807 sale of her "right or title that I have in or to a certain messuage or tenement" to Samuel Tufts seems instead to indicate that Emerson had actually sold Brintnall a right of use rather than property (Massachusetts, Registry, book 179, pp. 134-5). The language in Brintnall's deed is notably different from Tolman's reference to "real property" sold by Emerson and Waite in 1807(5). Emerson's and Waite's actual deeds to Tufts discuss "certain tract[s] or parcle[s] of land" (Massachusetts, Registry, book 179, pp. 133-4, 135). This right of use could originate as far in the past as Brintnall's original inheritance of her mother's, Mary Moody Emerson's, property. Whether Nathan Sargeant gave verbal consent for Brintnall to reside at the Malden property when he purchased Brintnall's inherited portion of it, or whether Brintnall was simply living there in 1807, and Emerson and Waite felt she should receive something from the impending sale, this deed gave Brintnall leverage to remain in the house until her death.
- 15 Massachusetts, Registry book 169, "Silas Moody & [al] to R Brintnall," book 179, pp.134-5.
- 16 In 2014, \$60 and \$20 were worth approximately \$1,270 and \$423, respectively (*Measuring Worth*).
- 17 *Almanacks*, 7.
- 18 Tolman, 4.
- 19 We would like to thank Noelle Baker and Sandy Petrulionis for their ongoing support, encouragement, and 3 am editing sessions!



# Reviews

## **Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context.**

ED. WESLEY T. MOTT. NEW YORK: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014. XXXVI + 303 PP. \$99.00 CLOTH.

Wesley T. Mott writes in his preface to *Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context* that the collection aims to help readers “assess Emerson in his own dynamic terms” (xix). This book can thus be said to put forward a single thesis, variously iterated. The collection teases out contradictions and complexities in Emerson’s thought without prejudicing readers toward any one, globalizing reading of Emerson. Instead each section contributes to a vision of Emerson as a complex thinker who wrangled with the dualities of his life and times.

“Part I: Emerson and a Sense of Place(s)” situates Emerson in the nation and on the globe. Jacob Risinger’s “Boston and Concord” shows how Emerson exhibited “a new suburban sensibility” that afforded him a privileged view of Boston and Concord’s sweeping social, architectural, and intellectual changes (4). Next, Roger Thompson tackles the loaded issue of Emerson’s relation to America, avoiding cliché by defining Emerson’s Americanness through “the development of American public space” (18). Mott also does interesting work with another well-worn area of Emerson studies, the author’s relation to the literary and political traditions of Great Britain. Beginning with the “massive contradiction” that New Englanders faced when considering Old England (21), Mott skillfully navigates Emerson’s various statements about and trips to Britain, focusing on his lifelong friendship with Thomas Carlyle. Mott’s “Britain” flows logically into Jan Stievermann’s selection on “Europe,” which offers both a reading of Emerson’s relationship to the Old World and a useful survey of American attitudes toward political and literary upheavals on the Continent. Next, Alan Hodder analyzes Emerson’s relation to Asian thought and culture, which he sees as haunted by a career-long fascination with polarity (in this case, a malleable yet nonetheless distinct line drawn between East and West). While pointing out strains of what twenty-first century readers call Orientalism in Emerson’s thought, Hodder stresses the importance of Asian philosophy for Transcendentalism and concludes that Emerson’s texts present “a complex transnational system of interconnected interpretative loops” (47). The section concludes with John Berger’s essay on “Travel,” which places Emerson’s famously negative view of tourist-style globetrotting in relation to his belief in “self-culture” and the individual’s relation to the nation.

“Part II: Emerson and Ideas: ‘The Wide World’” opens with Jennifer Gurley’s “Reading,” which offers both a vivid portrait of Emerson at work in his study (we see his circular desk, learn his reading habits) and a survey of scholarship concerning books Emerson owned and pored over throughout his life. The chapter is an excellent resource for graduate students in particular, as Gurley lists major scholarly works and points toward the spe-

cific archives that anyone interested in seeing Emerson’s materials firsthand will reference. Albert J. von Frank highlights Emerson’s “inductive approach” to literature (68), arguing that by taking works on their own merits, Emerson was able to recognize literary greatness not only in fiction, but also in scientific and historical writing. Sandra Morris concurs with von Frank in “Poetry and Poetics,” illustrating how Emerson saw the poetic spirit animating the works and lives of authors, divines, historical personalities, and social activists. Morris puts Emerson’s own revision of Romantic aesthetics into conversation with African American and Native American poetic innovations, thus expanding and nuancing what could otherwise easily have been a curtain call of “Dead White Romantics.” David Greenham’s “Nature” offers a religious and philosophical genealogy for a central concept in Emerson’s works, placing Emerson in line with William Ellery Channing and the post-Kantian philosophers who influenced the European Romantics. David M. Robinson’s “Divinity” begins by rehearsing Emerson’s familiar discontent with his ministerial duties but then, in a surprising and original turn, demonstrates how Emerson’s “post-Christian” conception of the Over-Soul allowed him to engage with emerging ideas from the natural sciences (96). Emerson’s relation to Kant is once again at the forefront of Kristin Boudreau’s “Human Mind,” which reads Emerson against Kant’s *First Critique*. Neal Dolan’s “History” characterizes Emerson’s relation to the past as “liberal-historical” (109), an amalgam of New England Protestant eschatology, Scottish Enlightenment empiricism, and German Romantic historicism. Daniel S. Malachuk and Daniel R. Koch, handling “Democracy” and “Revolution” respectively, highlight Emerson’s erudite assessments of developments in nineteenth-century political theory. Jennifer J. Baker’s “Science and Technology” concludes the section by showing us how Emerson’s belief in a “holistic universe” (139) was shaped by the works of scientists such as Darwin and Faraday, and by technological change. Taken together, these ten essays provide invaluable resources for those wishing to understand the most complex topics Emerson takes up in his writing.

“Part III: Emerson and Society: ‘Hodiernal Circles’” opens with Ronald A. Bosco’s “Life Against Death,” an exhaustive and moving account of Emerson’s lifelong obsession with “the prospect and reality of disease, debility, and death” (147). It is a sobering beginning to the section, and represents an inspired editorial choice on Mott’s part. Noelle A. Baker’s “Family” and John Lysaker’s “Friendship” detail Emerson’s relationships with Mary Moody Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and others, while at the same time revealing Emerson’s attitudes towards his century’s shifting notions of family and the philosophy of friendship. In “Ethics,” Susan L. Dunston argues that Emerson’s involvement in his “turbulent and overwhelming” times demonstrates the depth of his commitment to ethical praxis as much as ethical theory (177). Alfred G. Litton’s “Clubs” sketches out Emerson’s broader social and intellectual circle. Leslie Elizabeth Eckel’s “Gender” and Len Gougeon’s “Race” approach Emerson’s often-debated attitudes toward these issues through close read-

ings of his work and biography. Gougeon's essay also serves as a useful compendium of shifting scholarly attitudes toward Emerson and race. Todd H. Richardson's "Reform" follows suit, laying out Emerson's involvement in abolition and temperance movements. The section ends with Joel Myerson on "Money" and David O. Dowling on "Publishers." Both essays provide brilliant material analyses of Emerson's "business" life. Dowling and Myerson both do deep historical work to present Emerson's financial and professional lives.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context* ends, appropriately, with a suite of essays on Emerson's reception. Emerson here is presented as a rich case study in how an author becomes a semi-mythic figure. Leslie Perrin Wilson's "Portraits" takes up the many famous photographs of Emerson we encounter, Bonnie Carr O'Neill's "Fame" presents Emerson as a somewhat unlikely media sensation in the nineteenth century, and Robert D. Habich's "Biography" chronicles the process by which Emerson became popularly known as "The Wisest American" (258). Glen M. Johnson and Randal Fuller's complementary essays on Emerson's critics from 1836 - 2013 should be required reading for all students interested in the long (and often tangled) history of Emerson's reception in America and abroad. Jillmarie Murphy concludes the book with an intelligent, entertaining appraisal of Emerson as national icon, including representative selections from some of his harshest critics.

Taken together, the thirty-two essays that comprise *Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context* constitute a major achievement. The collection not only serves its stated purpose of presenting Emerson in his various contexts, but also provides examples of dynamic, thoughtful criticism at work. The brevity and clarity of the essays make the collection suitable for undergraduates, while their careful scholarship makes them equally useful for graduate students and scholars wrangling with the depths of Emerson's thought and life.

Robert Yusef Rabiee  
University of Southern California

**Ralph Waldo Emerson in Europe: Class, Race, and Revolution in the Making of an American Thinker.**

DANIEL ROBERT KOCH. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012. x + 319 pp. \$96.00 cloth.

Students of Emerson's politics know the importance of literary history, particularly those books published two decades ago by scholars like Len Gougeon, David Robinson, and Albert von Frank. A century of hectoring about an "apolitical Emerson" was suddenly silenced in 1990 with Gougeon's *Virtue's Hero* (University of Georgia Press)! Thanks to books like these, scholarship on Emerson's politics is thriving, some adding to the historical record, and some—like Neal Dolan's superb *Emerson's Liberalism* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2009)—drawing upon that record to theorize Emerson's political thought.

Daniel Koch's *Ralph Waldo Emerson in Europe* makes many excellent additions to the historical record, specifically concerning Emerson's eight months in Europe in the late 1840s. As Koch observes in his Introduction, scholars have long agreed that 1847-48 was a "turning point" in Emerson's career, but here the agreement ends, "suggest[ing] the need for a deeper, more detailed investigation of Emerson's 1848 tour" (6). In five detailed chapters and three related appendices, Koch provides that investigation.

As Koch observes in Chapter 1, Emerson, returning from his first visit to England in 1833, declared in his journal that the great British authors were "all deficient" because they forget that "God is in every man" (qtd. 15). And so the American Scholar returned determined to promulgate that message in writings that made him hugely famous then, and canonical today. Fast-forward to 1847, though, and despite his incredible achievements, our author is adrift, politically most of all, pondering the meaning of race, revolution, utopia, the public, and more. The first chapter dramatizes Emerson's mid-career drift through a close account of his first international interactions in fall 1847.

Chapters Two and Three describe Emerson's first British lecture tour in winter 1847-48, and detail the press's and Emerson's own reactions. Here (as throughout) Koch's archival labors yield many new details, leading in turn to some nuanced readings, such as his contextualization of two journal entries about working-class men to highlight Emerson's stubborn middle-class allegiance (94-96). Basically confirming Larry Reynolds' account in *European Revolutions and the American Renaissance* (Yale University Press, 1988) of Emerson's rollercoaster response to Paris (right, then left), Chapter Four's narration of spring 1848 must now be the most detailed available.

Through an analysis of the June 1848 lectures Emerson gave once he returned to England, Koch introduces at the end of Chapter Four a few theories of his own about 1848 as a turning point, all developed in Chapter Five. Two of these do more to confirm 1850—and the Fugitive Slave Law—as the real turning point. The first is that Emerson changed his racialist discourse from literal to mythical sometime after the trip, but Koch's main proof is Emerson's lighter touch with "Saxonism" while drafting *English Traits* in the early 1850s (172-73), which substantiates (as Koch acknowledges) an argument made by Dolan (275n). The second is that, after Europe, Emerson "melded the legacies" of 1776 and 1848 (3), but again, the catalyst was 1850, not 1848. Koch notes how in 1848 Emerson still wondered if the barricades were worth the loss of Paris' trees (183) (which, incidentally, Fuller also wondered about Rome's pines). Not until an early version of "Fate" in 1851, Koch notes, does Emerson begin to recognize—in elite Boston's authoritarian response to anti-slavery protesters echoing elite London's to the 1848 riots (184)—the many faces of the *ancien regime*.

But Koch's third thesis does illuminate 1848's distinctive importance, mainly in persuading Emerson "to recreate some elements of the civil society he experienced in Britain" (157).

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With deft contrasts to the earlier efforts with the Transcendental Club and the *Dial*, Koch persuasively traces Emerson's contributions to the Town and Country Club, the Saturday Club, and the *Atlantic Monthly* back to his admiration of London's "liberal elite" in 1847-48 (158-66). Here—more than Emerson's anti-slavery activities, which culminate in praise of John Brown's silent deeds—may be the best proof of those commitments to public reason that T. Gregory Garvey and others have lately associated with Emerson.

Koch's main aims in this book, though, are historical, and the three theoretical assertions await further attention. So, too, does a quiet fourth in the book, which offers in passing abundant evidence that despite all the mid-career reversals, Emerson's transcendental motives hold firm, from that 1833 declaration about God being in every man through his obsessive appeal to "God's justice" in the June 1848 lectures (a phrase appearing four times in the evidence Koch cites alone) to the "higher law" moment of 1850 forward. When those 1990s histories proved Emerson's political commitments, they rendered forever obsolete the old bunk about an "apolitical Emerson"; mounting proofs of his transcendental commitment foretell a similar fate for the "de-transcendental Emerson."

Daniel S. Malachuk  
Western Illinois University

### **Transatlantic Transcendentalism: Coleridge, Emerson, and Nature.**

ED. SAMANTHA C. HARVEY. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. ix + 218pp. \$120.00 cloth.

Published in a series launched in 2007 that, according to the publisher, is dedicated to exploring "the multiple ways in which ideas, texts, objects, and bodies travel across spatial and temporal borders" and "generat[e] powerful forms of contrast and affinity," Harvey's book seeks to reconnect Emerson with a world wider than New England and broader than traditional American literary studies. Her subject, Coleridge's influence on Emerson, has of course been treated frequently by Emersonians (Joseph Warren Beach, Sherman Paul, Barbara Packer, and Laura Dassow Walls); and her larger argument owes much to M. H. Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971). But in addition to situating her writers in a transnational paradigm similar to David Greenham's recent *Emerson's Transatlantic Romanticism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), Harvey's study benefits immensely from the abundance of scholarship generated by the sixteen-volume Coleridge *Collected Works*, published by Princeton and completed in 2002. Consequently, what might be missed by focusing exclusively on a single figure more than gains by a richly informed understanding of Coleridge's self-proclaimed "method" and his writings – not only the *Aids to Reflection*, introduced to would-be New England Transcendentalists by James Marsh in 1829, but also Coleridge's less-often studied philo-

sophical lectures, *The Friend*, and other works. By restricting her scope to the first decade of Emerson's intellectual formation, culminating in *Nature* (1836), and by examining not only Emerson's early lectures, journal, and published writings through *Representative Men* (1850), but also his annotated copies of *Biographia Literaria*, *The Friend*, *Table-Talk*, *The Statesman's Manual*, and other books that circulated through the group, Samantha Harvey has produced what in all likelihood will remain a definitive work on this subject.

Harvey's is not your father's (or mother's) conception of "influence," either. She argues that, deeply attracted to Coleridge's interdisciplinary comprehensiveness and his cutting-edge rebranding of ancient (Plato, Plotinus), scholastic, and early modern (Bacon) philosophical concepts, Emerson so thoroughly assimilated Coleridge's key distinctions – reason/understanding, genius/talent, symbol/allegory, *natura naturans/naturata* – and, equally important, his maxim that "to distinguish is not to divide," Coleridgean thought permanently stamped the modes of Emerson's writing as well as his thinking, even while he liberally adapted that thought to his American and New England contexts (56). As Harvey says more than once, Coleridge did not teach Emerson "what to think, but how to think" (76). Much of the "how" is traced to the dynamic intellectual method Coleridge promoted in *The Friend* as "unity with progression," or, in Coleridge-speak, "UNITY WITH PROGRESSION, . . . progressive transition without breach of continuity" (qtd. 68). More keenly than *Aids to Reflection*, Harvey shows, Emerson appreciated the long "Essay on Method" that concludes the third volume of *The Friend*, which he read about the same time. Instead of dealing in reified, dualistic categories, Coleridge pictured an expansive, generative, spirally ascending process of inquiry that, while affirming holistic order at every level, only glimpsed, never fixed the whole, and then only in fragments. Chief among the romantic appeals of this dynamic, open-ended model of reflection was the way it linked sense experience and intuition, empiricism and idealism, science, philosophy, and religion without erasing the distinctions between them. Therefore, as Emerson put it in "The American Scholar" (1837), "the ancient precept, 'Know thyself,' and the modern precept, 'Study nature,' [might] become at last one maxim" (CW 1:55).

Besides documenting Emerson's "assimilative" relationship with Coleridgean ideas, another of Harvey's interventions is to substitute the "Romantic triad" – nature-humanity-spirit – for the binary problematic Emerson is usually said to have negotiated (14). Read through Coleridge's dynamic method, she argues, this model much better describes the two writers' "persistent desire to integrate" the three domains and "at the same time their resistance to establishing a rigid final schema that might betray their deep-seated intuitions," including "a deep reverence for nature, an established belief in a transcendent creator of the material world, and a faith that the human mind, in exalted states, could see nature and spirit transparently" (41). After establishing Emerson's engagement with Coleridge's philosophical, theological, and aesthetic thought in four chapters,



Harvey then explicates the triadic relationship in an extended reading of Emerson's *Nature*, the literary "zenith" of the complex relationship she has charted and a vivid account of Emerson's effort tentatively to mediate nature and spirit through the literary genius of the poet-prophet (119). If the triadic model does not contribute a new reading of *Nature*, it does clarify the romantic philosophical stakes of Emerson's first book, building upon and refining previous readings by Kenneth Marc Harris, Alan Hodder, and Richard Grivil. A final chapter traces Coleridge's influence beyond Boston Transcendentalism into Marsh's restructuring of the University of Vermont curriculum and thence upon John Dewey, the university's most distinguished graduate, and onward into American pragmatism.

While sometimes exhibiting the source hound's hyperfocus and contextual tunnel vision to which influence enthusiasts (including this reviewer) are prone, *Transatlantic Transcendentalism* is a deeply learned book: a scholarly synthesis and a timely reevaluation of a central intellectual strand in the complex weave of New England and transatlantic Transcendentalism. What may sometimes feel like special pleading very often turns out to be richly substantiated in terminology, connotations, and rhetorical strategies deeply soaked in Coleridgean thought, but so fully assimilated as hardly to be recognizable, especially to the uninitiated – which, of course, is the point.

At a job talk I once attended the candidate asked in a wry aside, "What would it be like to live on the planet 'Coleridge'?" After reading Harvey, I'm pretty sure Emerson could have answered.

Bill Rossi  
University of Oregon

### Emerson and Neo-Confucianism: Crossing Over the Pacific.

ED. YOSHIO TAKANASHI. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. xii + 193 pp. \$90.00 cloth.

Since the works of Frederic Carpenter and Arthur Christy in the 1930s, scholars in the West have been mindful, at least intermittently, of the importance of Emerson's readings of Asian religious philosophies, especially his life-long interest in the classics of Hindu India. For their part, several prominent Western-educated Indian readers, from Vivekananda to Gandhi, have returned the favor, sometimes even enlisting Emerson in their nationalist dreams and aspirations. Yet, as several scholars have shown, Emerson's study of the Chinese classics, notably the Five Classics and Four Books of the Neo-Confucian canon, also made a decided impact, notable not only in particular allusions in his writings, but more importantly, at the basic level of his natural and moral philosophy. Nowhere have the philosophical affinities between Emerson and Neo-Confucianism, with their blending of supernatural rationalism and worldly ethics, been more clearly recognized and reflected than among Japanese in-

tellectuals and literati from the period after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 up until the Second World War. In several important previous articles, and now in *Emerson and Neo-Confucianism*, Yoshio Takanashi has broken new ground in our understanding of this important area of East-West transcultural exchange.

Until now, Western scholars have tended to assume that Japanese Buddhism, and particularly Zen, served as the primary medium of Japanese interest in Emerson throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This assumption stems in part perhaps from a general lack of familiarity with Neo-Confucianism in the West but also from the remarkable vogue of Buddhism, especially Zen, in the middle decades of the twentieth century. The principal engine driving this trend was, of course, the indefatigable D. T. Suzuki, whose Transcendentalism-inflected conception of Zen served as the primary channel for the popularization of Zen in the West. Yet, as Takanashi argues in this study, it was not principally Buddhism but Japanese Neo-Confucianism that occasioned the remarkable affinity felt for Emerson among Japanese academics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To bolster this claim, Takanashi provides a searching comparative study of the philosophies of Emerson and Zhu Xi, the great twelfth-century Song Dynasty synthesizer of Neo-Confucian philosophy, whose influential commentary on the Confucian Four Books proved authoritative throughout the next thousand years.

The body of Takanashi's treatment consists of a scrupulous point-by-point comparison of several suggestively parallel themes in Emersonian Transcendentalism and Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism. His approach is clear, methodical, and circumspect throughout. He begins by framing the rise of Neo-Confucianism during the first millennium in China, its subsequent transplantation in Japan, and its relationship with other Japanese traditions in the early modern era. He then proceeds in the next three chapters to compare the views of Emerson and Zhu Xi in the areas of ontology, ethics, and the nature of the self. In his treatment of ontology, he shows that both thinkers conceived of ultimate reality as a law or principle that is both immanent in and transcendent to all things. In his discussion of ethics, he demonstrates how each thinker conceived a deep correspondence between "cosmic law and human ethics" (83-126). And in his analysis of psychology, he shows how each thinker conceived of the personal self as founded upon a supersensible transcendental source. Each of these three chapters further identifies several key sub-themes and examines them carefully, noting striking parallels as well as important distinctions. Along the way, Takanashi provides an erudite and highly instructive reconstruction of several key Neo-Confucian concepts, such as *tian* ("Unity Universal"), *li* ("principle"), *tai ji* ("the Supreme Ultimate"), as well as such pivotal Emersonian themes as "Over-soul," "Reason," "Revelation," "Godhead," and "Spirit."

Takanashi's principal concern in his book is to provide a comparative analysis of Emerson and Zhu Xi for the sake of highlighting universal aspects of their shared ideas. This undertaking takes up the bulk of his treatment, and it is both cogent

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and compelling. To stabilize the comparative project in historical terms, he frames it as a study in reception and influence, but here the focus on Zhu Xi may strike some as unduly restrictive. The main historical justification for highlighting Zhu Xi in this way is that although his commentaries on the Confucian Four Books were not available in Emerson's lifetime, David Collie and James Legge, whose translations Emerson did read, consulted them closely in preparing their own work. Yet Takanashi himself tells us that Zhu Xi was not the only, nor even at times the main Neo-Confucian authority that modern Japanese scholars cited in their various discussions of Emerson. Even Nakamura Masanao, "the Emerson of Japan" (33), appears to have been as much shaped by Christian as by Neo-Confucian ideals in his reception of Emerson. In the interests of sharpening the philosophical comparison, Takanashi perhaps underplays the historical complexity of this cultural exchange. But he roundly succeeds in his main objective, which is to bring to light the deep and abiding pattern of correlation between Neo-Confucian thought and Emersonian Transcendentalism. This incisive book at once illuminates and perpetuates a centuries-long trans-Pacific dialogue that now looks central and increasingly foundational to our shared interlocking future.

Alan Hodder  
Hampshire College

### **Emerson's English Traits and the Natural History of Metaphor.**

ED. DAVID LARocca. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. xii + 395pp. \$114.00 cloth. \$33.20 paper.

It is clear from the beginning that this book is intended to be different from other books, starting with the epigraph on the flyleaf from Carlyle that compares Emerson's *English Traits* favorably with Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* and calls Emerson's a book for grown-ups that is "full of thoughts like winged arrows." Flip the page, and there, instead of a table of contents, is a "Contents of Cabinet," a substitute for a table that represents this book as a metaphorical cabinet of natural history—non-chronological, asymmetrical, and metaphorical. Not only does the representation of this book as a metaphorical cabinet of natural history link it to *English Traits*, which LaRocca later describes as a "Cabinet of Metaphors" (158), but its visual appeal seems fitting for a writer/philosopher/scholar who is also a documentary film director. The visual seems never very far from the center of LaRocca's thinking. The front matter of the book continues after the title page with a second epigraph, this one from Derrida, which states that the question of whether there is metaphor in the text of philosophy demands a book. LaRocca's is such a book.

It is impossible to say what *exactly* this book is about, since it is arguably about everything. It may, in fact, begin with LaRocca's concern with *English Traits* as the representative work of Emerson's entire career, a metaphor for Emerson's central project, which was the development and expression of a natural history of the intellect, but it soon moves beyond a literal focus on one work to an ambitious attempt to portray the working of Emerson's mind. Someone once said that one of the reasons Stanley Cavell's work on Thoreau and Emerson is so important and distinctive is that he alone takes them seriously as philosophers. LaRocca, clearly an admirer if not a disciple of Cavell's, does the same. And, for the most part, he does it in a work that is often wildly original and brilliant. No serious student of Emerson can, therefore, ignore this work, even if it has a wart or two and sometimes may seem to border on the self-indulgent.

The feature of this work that most characterizes LaRocca's creativity is his choice of a "conceptual and textual parataxis" as a strategy for the book's organization (26), yet another aspect of LaRocca's work that links it to Emerson and his own paratactic style. Most basically, LaRocca's choice means that each of the chapters comprises a collection (maybe florilegium?) of consecutively numbered sections, some of them several pages in length and some only a line or two. Some of them are commentary by LaRocca and others are quotations from the work of others, most short but some not, assembled by LaRocca into paratactic "scenarios of investigation" (27), suggestive linguistic montages meant to constitute an argument of which the reader herself becomes a sort of co-author. Such a method results, as in the longish chapter "The Florilegium and the Cabinets of Natural History," in juxtaposing passages from Pliny the Elder, Virgil, Melville, Cuvier, Carlyle, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Emerson with LaRocca's own thoughts. LaRocca calls them "a connective tissue of commentary" (27), and argues that the "florilegium," a word used in the eighteenth century to designate an anthology or "collection of 'the flowers of literature'" (141), is a concept at work in such things as Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*; Emerson's *Parnassus* and his journals; and certainly in this book itself. What it produces is something that the author himself characterizes as a "complicated, often warped and disjointed, narrative of the use and influence of metaphors" (158).

But the strategy of "conceptual and textual parataxis" (26), while not at all tidy, allows LaRocca to achieve a study that is almost unbelievably encyclopedic and suggestive. Besides the pervasiveness of metaphor, among the many topics he manages to explore in this work are Burtonian melancholy, freedom, literary influence and originality, Lamarckian evolution and Darwinian evolution, epigenetics, asceticism, the nature of sin, and even the morality of pirates. However, in a work so dependent on the way language is used and one that contains a noticeable amount of wordplay, the number of typos and the occasional infelicitous use of language are both surprising and discouraging. This is a work whose strengths make it worth the extra time that it would

have taken to be more careful.

After devoting a lot of time to reading and thinking about this book, I can say that if I want to know more in particular about Emerson and science, I will go to Laura Dassow Walls, and if I want to know more about *English Traits*, Philip Nicoloff is still the best bet. But if I want to try to understand a bit of how Emerson thought, how his extraordinary mind may have worked, I will surely read David LaRocca.

*Robert E. Burkholder*

*Penn State University, University Park*

# My Emerson

*A column devoted to our readers' personal reflections on Emerson*

WENDELL REFIOR

*Ralph Waldo Emerson Reenactor, Concord, Massachusetts*

Becoming an Emerson reenactor was one bold (or brazen) step in the long progression of my studying major sages of spirit throughout my life. Now I help others see that Emerson remains a revolutionary voice of the past that deserves a future—a voice I believe will outlive us all. Emerson's vision, declared in *Nature*, was to establish “a poetry and philosophy of insight” here in America. This became his mission as he made his sally into the unknown.

Who is *my* Emerson? My Emerson is a man with an infinitude within as large as the infinitude without. He is passionate about oratory and feels called to express the miracles of man, of mind, and of life and its lessons. His has a faith based on a mature, definitive affirmation of life—all of life—including the ups and downs, the ins and outs, and the final end. My Emerson affirms the absolute unity of life and accepts himself and his own life. These are what I take to be his primary beliefs, beliefs that made him free and filled him with gratitude and the call to outward expression. One Sunday in 1995, I attended a Unitarian-Universalist service in Brooklyn, Connecticut, and bought my first book on Emerson and his circle. Soon I was engrossed in his “Divinity School Address” as I had found it in *Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing, Emerson, Parker* (Conrad Wright, ed., 1961). Today I am still studying the Sage of Concord and adding to my personal Emerson library that now fills more than two bookcases.

Quite frankly, I had been going through a midlife crisis when I first discovered Emerson and I was craving the idealistic enthusiasm of my youth. By 1999, I had embarked on a new mission devoted to him: I consciously decided, at age 50, that I would commit the next half of my life to promoting his ideas. By 2001, I was teaching his writings to an adult class at First Parish in Waltham, Massachusetts. By the 2003 bicentennial of his birth, with no one else doing it locally (I had often thought how unfair it was that a local reenactor of Henry David Thoreau got so much attention while no one spoke for Emerson), I decided I had developed just enough of Emerson's look to begin performing him in period costume. So I grew some Emersonian sideburns and bought a black wool costume complete with vest, tails, and satin collar from Fall Creek Sutlery (the label on the costume said “Grand Illusions”). Since I had been a debater in high school and later a lecturer and teacher, I had come to relish oratory. It is a passion to be heard more than merely to speak. I was struck by how much Emerson was committed to motivate

(or even excite) the members of his audiences to think for themselves and stand on their convictions. My own passion to motivate others began when Emerson motivated me.

When reenacting, I usually edit lectures and sermons to shorten sentences and put the subject before the verb to help the audience hear and understand the lines. Thus my presentations are my own form of a modern translation of an Emerson sermon or lecture. Here are two examples of my translations of moments in Emerson's 1839 lecture “The Protest”:

EMERSON: “But what is the history of the remainder; of the immense majority; of men and women who have not yet made their mark; in whom unfavorable organization ...?”

REFIOR: “But what is the history of the remainder? What of the immense majority? Men and women who have not yet made their mark? And what of those in whom unfavorable organization ...?”

EMERSON: “Then arise new and painful appearances.”

REFIOR: “Then a new and painful experience arises.”

In August 2005, I made my debut as Emerson at the Old Manse in Concord, delivering his 1851 Fugitive Slave Law address in a 45-minute rendition of what is more likely a 90-minute lecture. Military reenactors were on hand to recreate a Civil War Recruitment Rally, billing the year as 1862. The performance was outdoors, so the background noise made me raise my voice. Being a novice reenactor, I forgot to modulate my voice and continued to virtually shout throughout the performance. The soldiers obliged with loud consent at some of my declarations of outrage at Daniel Webster, while others seemed a bit bored by the lengthy prose. But all applauded at the end. The following year, my loud disgust with Daniel Webster disturbed a young boy in the front row, who, near tears, asked his father why Mr. Emerson was so mad at him. His father's name happened also to be Daniel Webster! To improve my delivery I engaged an acting coach who helped me soften and vary my tone and show some restraint and leave room for the audience's imagination. After my third annual address, someone gushed with enough approval to suggest to me that I should be paid for my performances and charge at least

\$250. Though twelve such paid gigs a year would not enable me to retire, I soon became a paid reenactor.

Since then I have performed mostly at Unitarian-Universalist churches and usually present sermon XC (“Trust Thyself”); sometimes I perform instead sermon X, CXXI or CXLIV. Other works I have performed are “The American Scholar,” “The Divinity School Address,” “Art,” “Bicentenary Address,” and “The Times.” I have also recited these poems: “The Snow-Storm,” “Rhodora,” “Days,” “Brahma,” and “Terminus.”

In 2007, 2009, and 2011, I presented “The Protest” to NEH-sponsored lyceum workshops for community college

Annual Gathering. I described Emerson’s wisdom as a mature attitude of faith, one that is based on the knowledge that it is wisest to put aside wishing for better days or the “good ol’ days” and to live in each of our “present hour(s) ... accepting our actual companions and circumstances,” as he recommends in “Experience.” I paired these thoughts with my previous study of Paul Tillich’s theology in his sermon, “You Are Accepted.” Tillich demanded: “Simply accept the fact that you are accepted!” Such acceptance, he thought, may lead us to a reunion with all of life (Shaking the Foundations, Scribner, 1955). My Emerson did accept **All**, and with immense gratitude.

EMERSON — MISSIONARY SAGE OF HIS AGE AND OURS		
Preparation and Profound Election	Representative and Profound Election	Saving Mankind from Subservience, from American Slavery
1803 — 1835	1836 — 1850	1851 — 1882
Carlyle, Coleridge, Hedge, Kant, Plato, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Aunt Mary Moody, Charles Emerson	<i>Nature</i> , Am. Scholar, Div. S. Address, Essays First and Second Series, <i>Dial</i> —Margaret Fuller, Alcott, Thoreau	Fugitive Slave Law Addresses and Abolition, Allowance for Women, Representative Men, Conduct of Life

teachers held at Northeast University, twice pairing with Emerson scholar Wesley Mott of Worcester Polytechnic Institute. I have performed most often in Concord, but have also presented in venues from Ferry Beach, Maine, to Worcester and Nantucket Island, Massachusetts. Responding to audience questions I have received along the way, I recently wrote and performed a biographical skit titled “Emerson Reminisces” that portrays Mr. Emerson at 60 sharing memories from his marriages, the deaths of his many friends and loves ones, the grieving, and the friendships, especially with Margaret Fuller and Thoreau. This skit seems to have had a more gripping effect on the audience than an Emerson lecture.

I have modified the Unitarian-Universalist “Living Legacy of R. W. Emerson” (ed. Nancy Simmons et al.) and taught six 4- or 6-week adult education courses using a chart (which the students loved) of each Emerson essay that is similar to my interpretative chart of Emerson’s life. Teaching is still my favorite way to share my commitment to my Emerson.

In addition, I served as a panelist on “Emerson’s Wisdom,” a session presented at the July 2001 Thoreau Society

In Emerson’s time, the scientific revolution was tearing down much of religious certainty as it began to solve many of the mysteries of nature. Emerson knew people could lose their faith when they lost that certainty. So he felt called to supply a remedy for the soul. It was this mission that led Emerson to speak out in his nearly 1,500 lectures and sermons. To me these insights explain how he could write: “In all my lectures, I have taught one doctrine—the infinitude of the private man.”

I had thought that Tillich was revolutionary in his day. I had thought that I was revolutionary when I was teaching leadership methods based on a faith that embraced Tillich and many modern thinkers. What really sold me on Emerson was that he had most of these same deep insights almost 100 years earlier, and that, most of the time, he did not need religious language to articulate them. This freed him to take this pulpit to the world, and it was my ticket to use Emerson’s wisdom to preach to the world without religious language. I now have a modern mission of preaching that we each have an infinitude of spirit inside us enabling boundless gratitude that can heal us and heal the world. This is how Emerson gave me my life back.

