

Rev.

Volume 30, Number 2

Fall 2019

EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

Distinguished Achievement Award Presented to Sandra Morris

At its annual meeting in Boston on May 24, 2019, the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society proudly presented its 2019 Distinguished Achievement Award to Sandra Morris. A professor of literature at Bucknell University, where she has taught since 1995, Sandra is the foremost scholar of Emerson's poetry. Her work consistently demonstrates that this seemingly narrow lane of poems is both deep and wide: Emerson wrote with commanding knowledge of the British and European poetic traditions, and then later translated Persian poetry. In his quest for "metre-making arguments," Emerson innovated poetic form in ways that resonated with contemporaries like Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, as well as with twentieth-century poets including A. R. Ammons, Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost, and M. S. Merwin.

Sandra's contributions to the study of Emerson's poetry began with her 1993 Cornell dissertation, *Whim Upon the Lintel: Emerson's Poetry and "The Sphinx."* She prepared that work under the direction of 2006 Distinguished Achievement Award recipient Joel Porte. Their professional relationship continued: with Porte, she co-edited two important volumes, *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1999) and the Norton Critical Edition *Emerson's Prose and Poetry* (2001). Both of these books have helped make Emerson's writings and related scholarship accessible to generations of students in the U.S. and abroad.

In addition to these books, Sandra has authored a string of influential articles on Emerson's poetry and poetics. Those articles include her indispensable essay, "The Threshold Poem, Emerson, and 'The Sphinx'" in *American Literature* (1997); "Metre-Making Arguments: Emerson's Poems" (1999); "Poetic Portals: Emerson's Essay

Epigraphs" in *Nineteenth-Century Prose* (2003); "Twentieth-Century American Poetry," in *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism* (2010); a contribution on the Transcendentalists to *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (2012); "'Whim upon the Lintel': Emerson's Poetry and a Politically Ethical Aesthetics," included in a special edition of *Nineteenth-Century Prose* commemorating the completion of the *Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (2013); "Poetry and Poetics," a chapter in *Emerson in Context*, edited by the 1999 Distinguished Achievement Award recipient Wes Mott (2014); a chapter, "Politically Ethical Aesthetics: Teaching Emerson's Poetry in the Context of U. S. Diversity," included in the recent *Approaches to Teaching Ralph Waldo Emerson*, edited by Mark Long and Sean Meehan as part of the MLA's series on pedagogy (2018).

As a poet, Emerson's reputation has been mixed. Even the most generous readers prefer to sift out the poetic "successes" from his other works. In his 1953 *Emerson Handbook*, for example, Frederic Ives Carpenter summarizes the critical response to Emerson's poetry thus: "In general, critics who value imagination above logic have preferred the poetry, but those who value logical thought above symbolic suggestion have judged the poetry inferior." Under this model, the work of the critic is like that of the proverbial Supreme Court justice who simply calls balls and strikes. As late as 2015, little has changed; in his introduction to *The Major Poetry*, Albert Von Frank reflects on critical neglect of Emerson's poetry: "It may be that none of [Emerson's] many claims on our attention has been more generally slighted than the commanding position he achieved as a theoretician and practitioner of poetry." A major strength of Sandra's

(Continued on page 5)

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EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

The newsletter of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society
Published at Purdue University

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ESP welcomes notes and short articles (up to eight 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, Michael Weisenburg, Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of South Carolina, 1322 Greene St., Columbia, SC 29208, or emersonsocietypapers.editor@gmail.com (email submissions are much preferred).

Review copies of books on Emerson should be sent to book review editor Prentiss Clark, Department of English, Dakota Hall, Room 212, 414 E. Clark St., Vermillion, SD 57069.

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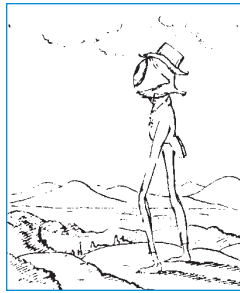
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PROSPECTS.



Emerson Sightings/Citings

Frequent correspondent **Wendell Refior** offers these two citings:

- From an article published Sept. 11, 2019, by Creators.com, referring to CommonDreams.org:

“Why Would We Trust Plutocrats to Protect Us From Plutocracy?” by Jim Hightower, in which he argues, “They’re still going to plunder your unions, paychecks, jobs, health, environment, and overall well-being. The only difference is that they now want you to think they feel bad about it.”

Hightower then goes on to cite the sage of Concord: “Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote of being leery of a loud-talking huckster who visited his home: ‘The louder he talked of his honor, the faster we counted our spoons,’ Emerson exclaimed.” <https://bit.ly/2VL2Mf9>

The quote, originally from the “Worship” chapter of *The Conduct of Life*, reads:

“We were not deceived by the professions of the private adventurer, —the louder he talked of his honor, the faster we counted our spoons; but we appeal to the sanctified preamble of the messages and proclamations of the public sinner, as the proof of sincerity.”

- From *Psychology Today*, Sept. 13, 2019, “What Do Healthy Relationships Look Like? – And what can we learn from them?” Diana Kirschner, PhD, discusses the benefits of practicing gratitude and quotes, “He who is in love is wise and is becoming wiser, sees newly every time he looks at the object beloved, drawing from it with his eyes and his mind those virtues which it possesses.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson <https://bit.ly/2qfstbS>

The quote comes from “The Method of Nature: An Oration” delivered before the Society of the Adelphi, at Waterville College, Maine, August 11, 1841.” *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*.

“He who is in love is wise and is becoming wiser, sees newly every time he looks at the object beloved, drawing from it with his eyes and his mind those virtues which it possesses. Therefore if the object be not itself a living and expanding soul, he presently exhausts it. But the love remains in his mind, and the wisdom it brought him; and it craves a new and higher object. And the reason why all men honor love, is because it looks up and not down; aspires and not despairs.”

2020 Barbara L. Packer Fellowship

The Barbara L. Packer Fellowship is named for Barbara Lee Packer (1947–2010), who taught with great distinction for thirty years in the UCLA English department. Her publications, most notably Emerson’s Fall (1982) and her lengthy essay on the Transcendentalist movement in the Cambridge History of American Literature (1995), reprinted as *The Transcendentalists* by the University of Georgia Press (2007), continue to be esteemed by students of Emerson and of the American Renaissance generally. She is remembered as an inspiring teacher, a lively and learned writer, and a helpful friend to all scholars in her field—in short, as a consummate professional whose undisguised delight in literature was the secret of a long-sustained success. In naming the Fellowship for her, the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society offers her as a model worthy of the attention and emulation of scholars newly entering the field. The Barbara L. Packer Fellowship is awarded to individuals engaged in scholarly research and writing related to the Transcendentalists in general, and most especially to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau. PhD candidates, pre-tenure faculty, and independent scholars are eligible to apply.

The application deadline is January 15, 2020. Additional information, along with application materials, can be found on the AAS website: americanantiquarian.org/short-termfellowship.

Marjorie Harding Memorial Fellowship

Recipients receive \$1,000 toward travel and research expenses at archives in the Greater-Boston area on Thoreau related projects, as well as free attendance at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering held in Concord, Mass., in early July.

Both emerging and established scholars, as well as Thoreau enthusiasts, are encouraged to apply. Preference will be given to those candidates who will use the Thoreau Society’s Walter Harding Collection housed at the Thoreau Institute for at least part of the fellowship period, but applicants intending to use any of the Thoreau Society Collections or other Thoreau archives in the Greater Boston area are encouraged to apply. (The Collections are described here: <http://www.thoreausociety.org/research>.) Candidates are encouraged to present their work at the Annual Gathering during the fellowship period or the year after the fellowship period.

To apply, candidates should send an email to the Executive Director, Michael Frederick (Mike.Frederick@thoreausociety.org) with the following attachments:

1. A current curriculum vitae or resume
2. A project proposal approximately 1,000 words in length, including a description of the project; a statement explaining the significance of the project; and an indication of the specific archives and collections the applicant wishes to consult
3. Graduate students only: A letter of recommendation from a faculty member familiar with the student’s work and with the project being proposed. (This can be emailed to the Executive Director separately.)

The deadline for applications falls near the end of January each year, and the winner is announced at the Annual Gathering in Concord, Massachusetts. More information: americanantiquarian.org/acafellowship.htm.

Editor’s Note: Recent issues of *Emerson Society Papers* were misnumbered. This issue is, in fact, Volume 30, No. 2. The misnumbering appears to have begun with the Spring 2018 issue. Thanks to Dan Malachuck for bringing this to our attention.

Spring 2017 is 28.1 • Fall 2017 is 28.2 • **Spring 2018 should be 29.1** • Fall 2018 is 29.2 • **Spring 2019 should be 30.1**

PROSPECTS

(Continued from page 3)

ALA Call for Proposals

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society will sponsor two panels at the annual meeting of the American Literature Association, to be held May 21-24, 2020, San Diego, USA. Conference Information: <http://americanliteratureassociation.org/ala-conferences/ala-annual-conference/>

Emerson and Resistance

The Emerson Society invites proposals on the topic of 'Emerson and Resistance.' Papers might like to consider the idea of resistance in Emerson in his own time, in subsequent periods, or in contemporary contexts. Emersonian resistance may also be considered in relation to other writers, political thinkers and philosophers.

Emerson's *Society and Solitude* at 150

The Emerson Society invites proposals on the topic of *Society and Solitude* at 150. Papers might like to consider new critical perspectives on the book and its place in the Emerson canon, perspectives on any of the 12 essays published in the book or the range of topics represented (civilization, art, eloquence, farming, books, old age, etc.), and more broadly, "society" and "solitude" in Emerson.

E-mail 300 word abstracts to David Greenham (david.greenham@uwe.ac.uk) by Jan. 10, 2020. Membership of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society is required of presenters.

Thoreau Society Annual Gathering, July 2020

The Emerson Society sponsors a panel at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering each summer in Concord, Mass. (2020: July 8–12). Find information on the conference theme at thoreausociety.org. Papers will be considered on both the topic below and the conference theme more generally.

“The way to mend the bad world is to create the right world”:
The Transcendentalists and Forms of Righting the World*

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society invites proposals on the topic of 'The Transcendentalists and Forms of Righting the World.' The RWES would particularly welcome proposals that situate Emerson in a wider Transcendentalist context. We would also welcome proposals that explore the relevance of Emersonian and Transcendentalist ideas of world 'righting' to contemporary contexts.*

E-mail 300 word abstracts to David Greenham (david.greenham@uwe.ac.uk) by Jan. 10, 2020. Membership in the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society is required of presenters.

**The RWES Graduate Student Paper Award provides up to \$750 of travel support to present a paper on an Emerson Society panel at the American Literature Association Annual Conference (May 2020) or the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering (July 2020). If you are a graduate student, please make this clear on your abstract. other writers, political thinkers and philosophers.*

Treasurer's Report: The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc.

May 10, 2019

Membership

Currently (as of May 10, 2019) Society membership totals 116
12 institutional members • 39 life members • 65 all other categories combined

Members come from 22 states and 9 foreign countries

2 New Life Members • 41 Total Life Members • 7 new student members

Balance June 30, 2018 (BoA Checking)	\$9,325
Deposits July–Dec 2018	\$1,907.25
Debits July–Dec 2018	(\$4,022.03)

Deposits Jan–June 2019	\$1,810
Debits Jan–June 2019	(\$1,400.14)

Balance June 30, 2019 (BoA Checking)	\$7,620.08
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Paypal Balance June 30, 2019	\$4,135.84
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Current Balance All Accounts (June 2019)	\$1,1755.92
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Respectfully submitted, Roger Thompson, Secretary/Treasurer • Roger.thompson@stonybrook.edu

SAUNDRA MORRIS

(Continued from page 1)

criticism lies in its deft avoidance of debates over Emerson's poetic "successes" or "failures." Her work implicitly rejects reductively binary views of the poetry. On the contrary, her analyses reveal complexities that evade easy categorization: the poetry is multivocal, oracular, self-reflexive, philosophically ambitious, and richly allusive—just like the prose it complements and



engages. Whereas others may be put off by Emerson's opacity, Morris demonstrates that the puzzling is the point, the art lies in the enigma. Such a poetry is far from the "jangling" verses Emerson hated. Hence, in addition to exploring the poetry's thematic complexity, Sandra's readings are characterized by their attention to the intricacies of Emerson's poetics. In short, she takes Emerson at his word when he writes to

Lidian in 1835, "I am born a poet, of low class without doubt yet a poet. That is my nature & vocation."

In Sandra's reading, Emerson's poems act as "thresholds." They are "gateways," "portals," open doors through which ideas, texts, and minds move. The traffic is always transdirectional, and—true to the spirit of Transcendentalism—meaning arises through dialogue and exchange. Her approach requires us to reconsider not just Emerson's poetics, but the genres he works in. She terms "The Sphinx" a "threshold poem," referring not only to its place at the opening of the 1847 collection *Poems* but to the ways it opens thematic pathways through the volume. Threshold poems, she explains, are "introductory verses" that "ask for distinctive and heightened attention by virtue of their liminal position" at the opening of a collection of poetry. As such, "The Sphinx" "serves as an open door into the volume, functioning as an allegory of reading, writing, interpretation dynamic subjectivity, and relations between and among texts and human beings." Similarly, she claims that in the poetic epigraphs to the essays, "Emerson transposes and appropriates convention." The self-authored epigraphs reject traditions of quotation—and they reject as well clarity, as

they instead proffer either "a sort of oracular wisdom" or else "fragmented narratives about the development of a poet-hero who can solve the enigmas that plague humankind." The "metre-making arguments" of both the threshold poem and the epigraph radically reimagine the function of poetry and concomitant acts of reading. They require readers to assume the state of receptivity that Emerson associates with wisdom. In this manner, the poetry does not simply reiterate the themes in Emerson's essays. Rather, the two forms converse with one another, or function as distinct facets of a cut stone, each reflecting the same beam of light at different angles.

This demanding theory of poetry asks much of readers, and thankfully Sandra shares her insights as a teacher of Emerson's poetry. Her recent essay on "Teaching Emerson's Poetry in the Contexts of U.S. Diversity" cites Emerson as both a subject and a pedagogical influence, whom she links, perhaps surprisingly, to the African American feminist theorist bell hooks. In her pursuit of a pedagogy "to accord with ... feminist, collectivist, antiracist, queered, and nonoppressive values," Sandra highlights Emerson's "politically ethical aesthetics," whereby "poems resonate in terms of politics and justice, whether or not they are explicitly about those issues." Her method enables her to pair a poem like "The Rhodora" with Maya Angelou's "Phenomenal Woman" in the effort to demonstrate the political significance of socially constructed conventions of beauty.

Altogether, Sandra's body of work demonstrates that Emerson, and Emerson's poems, cannot and ought not be regarded in isolation. The poetry emerges from and participates in a poetic tradition that it in turn extends to modernist poets. And in Emerson's corpus, the poems and essays engage with and reflect on one another in endlessly productive exchanges. For some time, scholarship on Emerson, like longstanding dismissals of his poetry, rested on convenient tropes of individual greatness, power, and authority that, while they have some basis in his philosophy of self-reliant individualism, are embedded in white patriarchy. Sandra's scholarship and pedagogy offer a way out of that cul-de-sac and into a modern criticism that is transhistorical, anticolonial, and intersectional. For this and more, the Emerson Society celebrates her achievements.

—Bonnie Carr O'Neill, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of English
Mississippi State University

Emerson Society Panels at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering, 2019

A double session investigating conversations across gender, within and alongside of the Transcendentalist movement, was offered jointly by the Emerson, Fuller, Alcott, and Thoreau Societies at this year's Annual Gathering of the Henry David Thoreau Society. When Emerson looked back in "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England," he explicitly recalled "men and women" joining in direct talk and letters, leading to friendship and to creation of a club and journal. Eventually some also responded to each other in published works. What did they have to talk about? The panel was put together by Phyllis Cole and David Greenham. The abstracts appear below. For further information about the Annual Gathering, visit thoreausociety.org.

Transcendentalism: Men and Women Conversing (S1)

Organizer: Phyllis Cole / Chair: Phyllis Cole

The Vexed Nature of Home: Concord in 1845

SARAH WIDER, *Colgate University*

Throughout their forty years of correspondence, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Caroline Sturgis frequently turned their discussions to the vexed nature of "home." In 1838, during the "Human Life" lecture series (a series which Sturgis attended), Emerson asked, "What is the philosophy of Home?" For both, there were no easy answers, as indeed there could be none. In their United States, the image, philosophy, and lived reality of home were fraught by slavery, removal of Native peoples from their lands, unfair labor practices and the constraints imposed by a rigidly gendered society. Indeed, it might be argued that Transcendentalism's fundamental questions were always founded upon the unresolved problems of creating an ethically grounded home.

In their correspondential conversations, we see Emerson and Sturgis working out what it means to be "inhabitants of the same thought." If there were any truth in that possibility, it turned on the fact that the "same" thought was often a divided reality. Given Sturgis's familial background, home was not to be trusted, and yet, she still argued strongly for the "necessary home" that could be found in "genius" or in her radical ideas about "love." A person who put Transcendental precepts into practice, she sought to live flux and transition off the pages of both Emerson's essays and her own writings. Residing in Concord in 1845 raised signal challenges: could a "philosophy of home" encompass the necessary wildness that would rid domestic life of its exploitative practices?

Margaret Fuller and John Neal Conversing

FRITZ FLEISCHMANN, *Babson College*

"I knew none who was so truly a man," Margaret Fuller wrote after meeting John Neal, whom she had invited in 1838 to address her students at the Green Street School in Providence "on the destiny and vocation of Woman." When Elizabeth Oakes Smith heard him speak on women's rights, he "fired my enthusiasm. What he said of women responded to what had so long been fermenting in my own mind that I was deeply affected."

John Neal (1793–1876)—athlete, provocate the vote and equal pay. Echoes of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* can be found in his work as late as 1864, but his typical stubbornness also led him to disagree with Fuller (and later leaders of the woman's

rights movement) on key issues. In 1845, after she sent him a copy of *Woman*, he wrote to Fuller, "I tell you there is no hope for woman, till she has a hand in making the law ... But enough – we must have a talk together, if I am ever to persuade you into a right view of the subject."

Helen Thoreau's Brother Henry and Lucretia Mott

AUDREY RADEN, *Independent Scholar*

During his six-month ordeal on Staten Island in 1843, Henry Thoreau wrote to his sister Helen on July 21st that he had been to "the Quaker Church in Hester Street" to hear Lucretia Mott speak. One can surmise from his other letters home that he had gone to hear Mott at Helen's request because in his letter to their mother of August 6th, he has a message for Helen—"Tell her I have not seen Mrs. Child or Mrs. Sedgwick."

Much has been written about Henry's relationship to his brother John and his younger sister, Sophia, who became his literary executrix, but scholars have only recently begun to talk about Helen, his quiet, methodical older sister, who was a passionate abolitionist and feminist. Helen and Henry had a warm correspondence, both directly and through the aegis of other family members. They clearly respected one another's interests and intellect, frequently corresponding in Latin.

I find it telling that though Henry chose to relate to Helen through their mother about not seeing Child or Sedgwick, he chose to write directly to her about his experience of Mott. His response to Mott and the Quakers lacks all irony or paradox. Famous for "signing off" from the Unitarian Church and organized religion generally, he says of the Quakers, "On the whole I liked their ways, and the plainness of their meeting house. It looked as if it was indeed made for service." Of Mott herself, he speaks glowingly about her "self-possession" and related her discourse to "transcendentalism." He tells Helen, "Her subject was abuse of the Bible—and thence she straightaway digressed to slavery and the degradation of woman."

In 1849, the year Helen died, Mott delivered a sermon in Philadelphia, titled "Abuses and Uses of the Bible," through which one can get a sense of what Henry heard that Sunday morning six years previously. Sounding much like a Thoreau, Mott says, "But also, my friends, has there not been an unworthy resort to this volume to prove the rightfulness of war and slavery, and of crushing woman's powers ... indeed of all evils under which humanity has groaned from age to age?"

Referring to the scholarship of Carol Faulkner, Robert A. Gross, and Sandra Harbert Petrolionus, I intend to show in this paper that the admiration Helen and Henry Thoreau held for Lucretia Mott typified their mutual devotion to one another and to the causes of antislavery and equality.

Darkened Domesticity: The Sturgis Sisters in Dialogue with Emersonian Poetics

KATHY LAWRENCE, *Georgetown University*

It was a striking fact that Emerson included the work of both Ellen Sturgis Hooper and Caroline Sturgis Tappan in his late poetry collection *Parnassus* (1874). The inclusion was especially significant in light of the fact that Emerson rejected poetry by celebrated contemporary American poets Emma Lazarus and Walt Whitman, both of whom noticed their exclusion with consternation. It was a seemingly ironic outcome from the prophet who inspired new American poetry with “The Poet” (1844) and “The American Scholar” (1854). Even stranger, Emerson’s ‘Preface’ mentioned only obscure Americans Forsythe Willson, the cryptic “lady who contents herself with the initials H. H.,” and the poet of “Sir Pavon and Saint Pavon,” rather than the Sturgises or his circle of poet-followers Ellery Channing, Henry David Thoreau, Jones Very, and Samuel Gray Ward. Yet, the ‘Table of Contents’ reveals that Emerson printed a total of seventeen poems from these acolytes, added to five from the Sturgis sisters combined, totaling twenty-two verses from the transcendental band. Emerson also used one poem of his own: “The Last Farewell,” bringing the tally to twenty-three with a particularly personal note.

As this paper will argue, *Parnassus* is far from a repudiation of American poets; rather, *Parnassus* presents a buried memoir of Emerson’s affective life, a private palimpsest under the veneer of Shakespearian and Victorian British writers. Close examination of exactly which poems he chose from his transcendental disciples, and how he categorized them, uncovers the submerged text within *Parnassus*, a record of Emerson’s dialogue with his past, with the *Dial*, and especially his female disciples. Most important, Emerson’s decision as to which poems of the Sturgises to use and where to place them discloses his recognition of their darkened domesticity, their struggle to live up to Emersonian idealism in the face of trauma. Against his own poetics, Emerson validated their Corinne-like mantle.

Emerson had confided his reason for *Parnassus* in journal ST (1870–77), “I wish a volume on my own table that shall have nothing that is not poetry.” Ronald Bosco affirms in his “Introduction” to the new edition of *Letters and Social Aims* (2010), that *Parnassus* was the fruit of Emerson’s own hand. He further asserts that “Poetry and Imagination” of 1872 from *Letters and Social Aims* provided the foundation for the idea of *Parnassus*—to show the ideal poet and ideal poetry. As Emerson specified in that essay, the ideal poet must be an ideal man: “He is the healthy, the wise, the fundamental, the manly man, seer of the secret; against all the appearance, he sees and reports the truth, namely that the soul generates matter.”

But this definition has little overlap with the words of the Sturgis sisters, and indeed contrasts with much of the language in the verses of his circle of male devotees. As early as 1866, Emerson recorded he wanted to use Ellen Sturgis’ poem “Sweep Ho!” in *Parnassus*. Yet this poem is as dark in tone and meaning as the

soot on the chimney sweep’s face. He added Caroline Sturgis’ “The Poet” to his roster in 1870, a poem that begins, “Thou hast learned the woes of all the world/From thine own longings and lone tears ...”. This paper will explore the discrepancies between Emerson’s idealist propositions and the reality of his past and that of his followers as expressed in the encapsulated sub-text of *Parnassus*. What were the Sturgis sisters saying to Waldo?

Transcendentalism: Men and Women Conversing (S2)

Organizer: Phyllis Cole / Chair: Sarah Wider

Rewriting the Life of an “Ultra-Radical”: Ralph Waldo Emerson on Margaret Fuller in *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*

ALICE DE GALZAIN, *University of Edinburgh*

Cowritten by James Freeman Clarke, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William Henry Channing, *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* disappointed the expectations of many of its contemporary readers when it was published in 1852. Built along a succession of letters and quotes, *Memoirs* “gave us little satisfaction when first read,” reported the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1854. However, although Fuller’s biography was criticized for its general lack of narrative fluidity, it is precisely in its fragmented nature that I like to locate its literary and historical value.

Indeed, I believe *Memoirs* deserves critical reappraisal for allowing us to perceive Transcendentalism’s eminent thinker under a new light: as co-writer of Fuller’s *Memoirs*, Emerson appears in the more unusual role of editor. Thus, I plan to investigate how his editing, as well as his re-writing, of Fuller’s life is problematic: more particularly, I wish to analyze how Emerson’s chapter on “Conversations in Boston” betrays his intentions of minimizing Fuller’s social reformism and mitigating her contentious early feminism. Narrating the life of an “ultra-radical” mustn’t have been an easy task. Yet rather than being the narrator of Fuller’s story, Emerson saw *Memoirs* as a way of giving voice to “Margaret and Her Friends” (original title of the work): his use of single quotation marks for Fuller’s writing—as opposed to double ones for other accounts—formalizes that intention.

However, Emerson did not recount Fuller’s Boston Conversations through word-to-word transcriptions of the records available to him at the time. Thanks to Nancy Craig Simmons’ findings, Elizabeth Peabody’s accounts of the Conversations (first series) enabled me to play “spot the difference” and expose Emerson’s attempts to polish her recollections of Fuller’s feminist discussions. On the one hand, many of Emerson’s cuts were simply the result of conventional editorial choices: numerous corrections were made to erase traces of oral discourse from records of Fuller’s Conversations in order to improve their readability. Nevertheless, Emerson also altered the content of certain records by erasing significant terms from Peabody’s version. I believe these visible modifications to be extremely resourceful to our knowledge of Emerson himself and to our understanding of the gendered rhetoric of his times—how did midnineteenth-century language convey gendered social norms?

Yet another important aspect of Emerson’s rewriting of the Conversations lies in his emphasis on Fuller’s appearance. The insistence on her beauty, on her grace and charm, contrasts with other accounts of Fuller’s real-life physical presence. Adjectives

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EMERSON SOCIETY PANELS

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such as “beautiful” and “sumptuous” pervade Fuller’s description and recall the myth of “true womanhood” – a popular vision of woman in the first half of the nineteenth century which promoted ideals of passivity, self-sacrifice, and femininity. Although Emerson explained Fuller’s beauty as the pure reflection of her genius, his depictions remain nonetheless gendered and reductive. Emerson’s rewriting of Fuller’s posthumous image places her within the boundaries of social norms: is it in order to protect her or to conform her that Emerson tried to diminish his friend’s radicalism?

“Woman Conversing: Feminine Philosophers at the Concord School of Philosophy

TIFFANY K. WAYNE, *Independent Scholar*

This paper will trace the role of women as lecturers and attendees at the Concord School of Philosophy summer sessions between 1879 and 1888.

Who was conversing? Women were active in a variety of post-Civil War Transcendentalist sites and organizations. Amos Bronson Alcott, founder of the Concord School, purposefully drew on his decades-long intellectual friendships with women in inviting thinkers such as Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Julia Ward Howe, and Ednah Dow Cheney to lecture at the School. Of these major figures, Cheney is the only one to have lectured every summer of the Concord School’s existence, although Cheney rarely figures in any significant way in histories of the Transcendentalist movement. Women’s presence at the Concord School of Philosophy was so apparent that one commentator was moved to describe the summer lecture series as “a torrent of feminine ethics and woman’s wit.” This was at a time, in the late 19th century, that the broader American intellectual culture was shifting away from an emphasis on the intuitive and subjective, toward more “masculine” social sciences and materialism. Indeed, by the 1880s, the Transcendentalist movement itself was characterized as not only declining, but as “feminized,” as the popular press portrayed women (and elderly men, such as Bronson Alcott) as the last remaining adherents, attempting to memorialize the earlier glory days.

What were they talking about? The men and women involved in the Concord School, however, were not merely holding on to a dying philosophical outlook, but rather vigorously emphasizing the continued value—even necessity—of “feminine ethics” or ways of knowing. In her Concord School lectures, Cheney sought to promote a Margaret Fuller-inspired philosophy of androgynous humanity, emphasizing that both men and women could (and should) embody both feminine and masculine characteristics. Much attention has been paid to the role of women—Fuller’s disciples—in maintaining and defending Fuller’s legacy through the end of the 19th century. The women philosophers who lectured at the Concord School, however, continued to actively promote Fuller’s *ideas*, providing an alternative arc of the movement from Fuller’s conversations for women of the 1840s to the conversational space of the Concord School of Philosophy in the 1870s and 1880s.

Let It Be Known: Fuller’s Voice in Emerson’s Work on Women’s Rights

JENNIFER DALY, *Drew University*

Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson frequently debated women’s rights and women’s equality during their friendship, and even in death they continue to converse about this particular topic. It is clear that Fuller had a standing impact on Emerson’s work, particularly his work on the equality of women, and this can be observed in the rhetoric of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s lecture at the Women’s Convention of 1855. This lecture reflects Fuller’s ideas and influence, and many of the ideas seem to be pulled directly from Fuller’s *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. While I have previously thought the similarities were due to the influencing nature of their friendship, there are discrepancies particularly in a lack of citation. While Emerson often cites male writers, or at least references the original writer, he does not acknowledge that the ideas he shares in his lecture are influenced by Fuller and, in some cases, come directly from her and her previous work on feminism and women’s rights. It may be thought that Emerson’s speech at the Women’s Rights Convention was a eulogy for Fuller, but it is still problematic that Emerson’s lecture lacks any citation for Fuller’s ideas. Drawing on the rhetoric of the texts and the previous scholarship of Christina Zwarg, Phyllis Cole, and Armida Gilbert, among many others, I intend on revealing not only that the influence of Fuller is clear in this lecture, but that these are Fuller’s original ideas.

Standing Her Ground: Caroline Healey Dall and the Male Transcendentalists

HELEN R. DEESE, *Tennessee Technological University*

Caroline Healey Dall enjoyed one of the longest periods of interaction with the Transcendentalists of any of the movement’s adherents. She began by hearing Emerson lecture when she was only twelve, discovered Elizabeth Peabody and her bookstore as soon as it opened in 1840, attended Margaret Fuller’s conversations when she was eighteen, wrote a revisionist history of the movement in her seventies, and when she died in 1912 at age ninety had outlived just about all of the Transcendentalists, her frenemy Frank Sanborn being perhaps the lone exception. During nearly eight decades of encounters with many of the movement’s principals, she engaged with them in a variety of ways—in person, through letters, through lectures and sermons (as both speaker and auditor), and in publications. Among the subjects of her conversations, broadly defined, with the male Transcendentalists, religion, abolitionism, and gender roles were the most significant. This paper highlights Dall’s interchanges with a few of her male peers: Emerson, Samuel Osgood, Frederic Henry Hedge, and Thoreau, making clear that Dall was both influenced and an influencer. Emerson and, to a lesser extent, Thoreau were important to Dall not only in introducing her to inspiring and life-transforming thinking, but also as affirmers, persons who took seriously her own opinions and ideas. On the other hand, in daring to take on Osgood and Hedge, both high in the Unitarian hierarchy, Dall was acting boldly and self-reliantly. I think we can assume that they had been put on notice that any public pronouncements from them on the woman question would be closely examined and vigorously responded to from a woman’s perspective.

Roundtable

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society at 30

American Literature Association 30th Annual Conference, Boston, May 25, 2019

Opening Remarks by Wesley T. Mott

Joel Myerson organized a special Roundtable session for the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society to celebrate and reflect on our thirtieth birthday. It seems barely a decade since we celebrated the Society's twentieth birthday. Our panelists today were selected on the basis of seniority. All were present at the Society's creation. Photos in early issues of *Emerson Society Papers* poignantly testify to our youthful radiance in those halcyon days.

Each panelist was a founder of the Emerson Society. Each has been an officer or board member, served frequently on our panels, and contributed to *ESP*. And each has made major contributions to scholarship on Emerson and His Circle. I'll identify each speaker now with very selective mention of their substantial achievements, and after the brief presentations I encourage everyone to join the discussion.

Ron Bosco, after dallying with the works of Michael Wigglesworth, edited volumes in Emerson's *JMN*, *Topical Notebooks*, *Sermons*, and *Later Lectures*; with Joel Myerson authored *The Emerson Brothers: A Fraternal Biography in Letters*; and was general editor of the final four volumes of the *Collected Works*.

Phyllis Cole is author of *Mary Moody Emerson and the Origins of Transcendentalism: A Family History*. This acclaimed biography revealed a brilliant and influential woman who we now know as much more than Waldo's Aunt Mary, and it spurred study of what is often called "relational Emerson." Phyllis also coedited *Toward a Female Genealogy of Transcendentalism*.

Helen Deese edited the poetry of Jones Very. And she wrote *Daughter of Boston: The Extraordinary Diary of a Nineteenth-Century Woman*, *Caroline Healey Dall* and edited Dall's *Journal*, opening new vistas on Transcendentalism and on women's life, rights, and culture.

Len Gougeon is the author of *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Reform, and Antislavery*, in the wake of which no responsible scholar can ever again deny Emerson's substantial role as reformer. Len wrote the equally provocative *Emerson & Eros: The Making of a Cultural Hero* and coedited Emerson's *Antislavery Writings*.

David Robinson is the author of groundbreaking works on early Emerson, *Apostle of Culture: Emerson as Preacher and Lecturer*, and on late Emerson, *Emerson and the Conduct of Life: Pragmatism and Ethical Purpose in the Later Work*, as well as works on Unitarian-Universalist history.

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Panelists, from left, David Robinson, Len Gougeon, Helen Deese, Phyllis Cole, Ron Bosco, and Wes Mott — Joel Myerson was in the audience; Al Von Frank's paper was read in absentia.

ROUNDTABLE

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Al von Frank was an editor of Emerson's *Poetry Notebooks*; Chief Editor of the four-volume *Sermons*; author of the stirring *Antislavery in Emerson's Boston*; edited volume 9, Poems, in the *Collected Works*, and has issued an augmented edition of his indispensable *Emerson Chronology*. Al is unable to be with us today, and his paper will be read by David Robinson.

Our Respondent, **Joel Myerson**, widely known as the Dean of Transcendentalist studies, wrote the definitive history of *The Dial* and coauthored the recent *Picturing Emerson: An Iconography*; has edited or co-edited approximately five library shelves of important texts, including Emerson's *Antislavery Writings*, *Later Lectures*, and *The Emerson Brothers: A Fraternal Biography in Letters*, as well as bibliographies, collected essays, handbooks, and guides; and served as Textual Editor of the final three volumes of the *Collected Works*. Rumor has it that Joel ceased editing *Studies in the American Renaissance* after twenty years because Harvard officials were alarmed that he was on track to publish the entire nineteenth-century Americana collection of the Houghton Library, threatening to put that august institution out of business.

Ronald A. Bosco

I am delighted to participate in this celebration of the Emerson Society and, particularly to recognize the contributions of the Society's members in their various but significant contributions to new or genuinely first authoritative editions of Emerson's writings as well as biographical, critical, and/or editorial studies highlighting the intellectual achievement of Emerson family members' and their individual or collective contribution's to Ralph Waldo Emerson's reputation.

When the Society was founded in Washington, D.C., at an annual MLA meeting, the *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* edition (1960–82) had already been completed with the appearance of volume 16 and was complemented by the appearance of three volumes of the *Collected Works* edition from the early 1970s to 1987, three volumes of Emerson's *Early Lectures* (1959–72), the publication of Emerson's *Poetry Notebooks* in 1986. The annual appearance of *Studies in the American Renaissance*, edited by Joel Myerson (1975–95), was already demonstrating the ways that editorial, critical, and biographical scholarship would make a difference in late-twentieth century appreciation of Emerson's far-reaching influence and literally created the conditions for a surge in Emerson editorial, biographical, and interpretative scholarship for both elders in and relative newcomers to the academy.

Although many of us could not have imagined it when we gathered in Washington to establish this Society in 1989, that surge was already well under way and, in fact, has continued without interruption to the present day. In 1989, Albert von Frank created the conditions through his own research into the preparation of the 4-volumes of *The Complete Sermons of*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, found a publisher in the University of Missouri Press, and completed volume 1 himself while recruiting editors for the three additional volumes that would follow in short order. By that time, Harvard University Press reneged on the last clause in the original *JMN* contract and reduced the number of volumes drawn from Emerson's notebooks from four to zero. Never one to shirk a challenge, Harry Orth followed von Frank's lead and negotiated with Missouri for a three-volume edition of Emerson's *Topical Notebooks*, which were all completed and in print by the mid-1990s. During this period, Nancy Craig Simmons produced a scholarly edition of *Selected Letters of Mary Moody Emerson* (1993), Eleanor Tilton added another four volumes of *Letters* to Ralph L. Rusk's previous six-volumes of *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, while Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson produced a ground-breaking edition of *Emerson's Anti-Slavery Writings* (1995). It is fair to say that without this editorial scholarship in print by the mid-1990s, the centrality of figures such as Mary Moody Emerson to the intellectual legitimacy of Emersonian Transcendentalism could never have been so thoroughly examined as it is in Phyllis Cole's *Mary Moody Emerson and the Origins of Transcendentalism* (1998); without the anti-slavery writings in print, I doubt that the ensuing preoccupation of Emerson scholars with his commitment to social reform, as well as their disposition to expand the list of contributors to Transcendentalism, would never have been able to be so thoroughly established.

In the 1960s and '70s, the *JMN* edition was housed at the University of Rochester in offices familiarly referred to as the "Emerson Factory." As the twenty-first century opened, the present writer and Joel Myerson produced the previously thought impossible *Later Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson* in two volumes in 2001, but what excited many Society members was the prospect of the Society serving as one of the central designers of the Emerson Bicentenary celebration in 2003 along with the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association, Massachusetts Historical Society, Houghton Library, and Concord Free Public Library. Also at this time, a new variety of "Emerson Factory" was developed by practicing and independent scholars. It is at that point, for instance, that Noelle Baker and Sandy Petrulionis began designing the methodology of what deserves to be considered a monumental achievement in their edition of Mary Moody Emerson's *Almanacks*; at this time, the present writer and Joel Myerson were able through the generosity of William Emerson's descendants to have the lifelong correspondence among the Emerson brothers deposited at the Massachusetts Historical Society, which has proven to be a boon to fresh Emerson scholarship and also the basis to *The Emerson Brothers: A Fraternal Biography* (2006). The year 2003 brought many changes, including Harvard University Press's challenge to *The Collected Works* edition that it be finished in timely fashion or they would find other editors to take it over. Well, it was completed in timely fashion of sorts, with the "of sorts" dependent upon what one thinks of the overall production history of that edition; with a new editorial board established and the outstanding four volumes assigned to new

editors, those last four volumes appeared between 2007 and 2013.

When considering how editions of Emerson's writings and Emerson family papers have been produced since 1989 and the impressive body of scholarship those editions have supported, I believe it appropriate to recognize also how the cordial intellectual and personal relationships encouraged by the formation of this Society among Emersonians assembled in this room have been indispensable.

Phyllis Cole

I first met the Emerson Society at the San Diego ALA meeting of 1990. Wes Mott had invited me to join the board and Len Gougeon to give a paper, but I didn't know either one well. After several years as an independent scholar and now in my first semester of teaching undergraduates at a Penn State campus, I found an invaluable resource, a way of drawing us together into a national community. So much has depended upon it since then.

That first paper was on the relationship of Ralph Waldo and Mary Moody Emerson as manifest in their letters and journals. Already I was part of what Larry Buell had named the "Emerson Industry" of archival recovery, because I was reading MME in manuscript at Houghton Library, putting her in dialogue with her nephew, and out of the dialogue claiming an originating point of the Transcendentalist movement. This was also feminist recovery work, then a major industry as well. The new Emerson Society welcomed such perspectives: Christina Zwarg was interpreting the dialogue of RWE and Margaret Fuller; Nancy Simmons was editing MME's letters (and sharing her texts with me); since then Sarah Wider and Ron Bosco have been constructing the dialogue in letters of RWE and Caroline Sturgis. In his twentieth anniversary recollection of founding the society, Wes Mott recalled that the climate at MLA in 1989 was not favorable to author societies; instead, in the words of a Calvin and Hobbes cartoon, scholars were offering such abstract topics as "Psychic Transrelational Gender Modes." When I read this I realized that I had been doing both things at once, author-centered work and "transrelational gender modes," for a truly engaged audience.

Among the new people I met in 1990, I'd like to single out Barbara Packer, whom I met at the first board meeting; of course I already knew her great study of Ralph Waldo Emerson, but we lived a continent apart. In the years following we worked along with the other founding members and were also mutually supportive both personally and professionally, through her death in 2010. Al von Frank was instrumental in creating the Barbara Packer Fellowship in her memory, and I had the honor of serving on the committee that chose James Finley as its first recipient in 2012. So people and organizations intertwine.

The arrival of email soon made that conversation accessible on the international level. It seemed a miracle in the early nineties to send a message to Nikita Pokrovsky in Moscow and have him respond within the hour. But it soon became the way

we did business. Most memorably, I sent out a cfp in 2000 for an ALA panel in San Francisco that might draw members across the Pacific: "Emerson in Asia/Asia in Emerson." I was met with a flood of responses and difficult choices to make, but excellent papers and personal connections with Shoji Goto and Yoshio Takanashi were the result. Remote and direct contact have come together in this society.

Helen R. Deese

I am not an Emerson scholar, but I am a reader, former teacher, and admirer of Emerson, and it has been my great pleasure to associate with the distinguished members of this Society. As my colleagues in the larger field of Transcendentalist studies, you have served as my encouragers, readers, critics, and friends. Your work in biographical research, editing, analyzing, and interpreting Emerson has been invaluable to my work, which has intersected with yours. For the past several decades I have looked at Emerson and many other members of the circle through the lens of the second-generation Transcendentalist Caroline Healey Dall. Emerson in particular loomed large in the consciousness of Dall from a very early age, and he continued a major figure in her thought and life until his death and beyond. When Emerson delivered his first extended series of public lectures in the winter of 1835, there was a child in the audience: the twelve-year-old Caroline Healey, who listened attentively and made sketchy notes afterwards of what she had heard. Several years later, at age eighteen, Healey encountered Emerson and other Transcendentalists in Margaret Fuller's conversation series. As the youngest member of the class, she might have been expected to sit in awe and listen to her elders and betters. But Healey was characteristically vocal, fearlessly inserting herself into the conversation. When Elizabeth Peabody scolded her for her audacity, telling her that Emerson had looked at her askance, Healey remained unintimidated. Clearly, Caroline Healey did not need to learn self-reliance from Emerson.

This rocky start to their personal relationship fortunately did not derail it, and through the remaining forty years of Emerson's life Caroline Healey Dall's voluminous papers disclose striking dimensions of both the public and, perhaps more poignantly, the private Emerson. Her references to him reflect a respect for the man whose central position in the intellectual circles in which she moved was assumed, as well as an appreciation for the private graciousness that was characteristic of Emerson. If he had not welcomed her warmly in her youthful audacity, his lectures and books helped develop her Transcendental consciousness early on, and his personal encouragement of her own work was often crucial in her maturity. In his 1867 Phi Beta Kappa speech Emerson named the new woman's movement as one of the signs of the progress of culture, and as he paid tribute to this movement, he "turned slightly" toward Dall, acknowledging her leading position in the movement. This compliment by Emerson on a public occasion in Cambridge was for Dall perhaps the supreme tribute. She continued to follow Emerson into his declining years, and while she found

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ROUNDTABLE

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it painful to observe his debility, she found his gracious courtesy undiminished. And thus as I have lived with Emerson through Caroline Dall, I have developed an appreciation for his character as well as his mind.

When Dall attended Emerson's lecture, titled "Boston," in 1877, believing she was hearing him for the last time in public, she remarked that it seemed that "the whole of cultivated New England, as well as of cultivated Boston, was present It was surprising how many white haired and pallid people were gathered to hear."¹ It is a phrase that might describe many of us, the survivors of thirty years of Emerson Society fellowship. Many of you, especially those of you on this roundtable, have been my go-to people for advice, sympathy, critiques, and consolation. You are readers of Emerson. You believe in truth. You believe in moral responsibility. You believe in the centrality of the life of the mind. I could not have spent my professional life in better company.

¹Manuscript journal, April 16, 1877,
Caroline Healey Dall Papers,
Massachusetts Historical Society

Len Gougeon

Before there was an Emerson Society, there were Emersonians. There are several people on this panel more qualified than I am me to recount the founding of the Emerson Society, and so I thought I would recount the process of becoming an Emersonian. We have all followed our own drummers in our journeys but, to echo Thoreau in *Walden*, today I will talk about myself because there is nobody else whose story I know as well.

Despite growing up in Massachusetts (Northampton), I really knew nothing about Ralph Waldo Emerson before starting grad school at UMass, Amherst. I had graduated from a Jesuit university in Canada where I majored in English literature and covered the usual spectrum from Beowulf to Virginia Woolf. American literature was not on the menu.

I arrived at UMass thinking that I would continue my study of English literature and eventually do a dissertation on John Milton. The graduate program at UMass, however, required a knowledge of both English and American literature, and so I signed up for a course in the American Romantics taught by A. W. (Bill) Plumstead. Emerson and Thoreau were included.

It was a good time to study American literature at UMass. I did not know this before hand, but Bill Plumstead was editing two volumes (7 & 11) of Emerson's *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* at this time. Also, David Porter, author of *Emerson and Literary Change*, *The Art of Emily Dickinson*, and *Dickinson: The Modern Idiom*, was teaching seminars on those subjects, and Mason Lowance and Everett Emerson were co-editing the journal *Early American Literature*.

This was in the early '70s. The Civil Rights Movement and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert

Kennedy were recent events. The Viet Nam war was still raging and demonstrations against the war were common. All were non-violent until the spring of 1970 when the Kent State Massacre happened. Among the student demonstrators, four were shot dead and nine wounded by Ohio National Guardsmen. Campuses across America exploded. There were large and volatile demonstrations just about everywhere, including UMass Amherst. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Apathy and indifference were unheard of. Everyone was compelled to spit out the butt ends of their days and ways.

It was in this context that I first read Emerson. It felt like he wrote "Self-Reliance" just for me, and then handed the pen to Thoreau so he could scratch out that clarion call to action known at the time as "Civil Disobedience." I was hooked. I became addicted to Emerson and the Transcendentalists. I wrote my dissertation on Emerson, not Milton. After leaving UMass with PhD in hand, I began my teaching career. Two years into it, I applied for and was accepted into an NEH Summer Seminar on the Transcendentalists taught by Walt Harding. My seminar subject was Emerson and reform. I have been writing about that subject ever since.

Eventually, I found there were others like myself, people who were obsessed with Emerson for one reason or another. In 1989, in a hotel room in Washington, D.C., several of us came together, answering the Messianic call of Wes Mott who heard a voice telling him, "If you build it, they will come." He did, and the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society was born. The rest, as they say, is history.

David M. Robinson

The first edition of the American Literature Association Newsletter, published in December 1989, provides much useful information on the origin and purpose of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society. I learned this when I discovered a forgotten copy of the four-page leaflet while cleaning out forty years of dusty files before my retirement in 2017. The Newsletter announced the founding of the ALA, which would quickly become an addition, or for some an alternative, to the Modern Language Association as the representative organization for scholarly communication and the presentation of research in American literature. The ALA was "a collation," as it described itself, "that will provide specialists in American literature with new opportunities for scholarly interaction."

As the announcement explained, the ALA would be less an organization in and of itself, than an umbrella under which "various societies devoted to American authors" could operate, bringing author-focused groups together for an annual conference. Such author groups had of course existed in the MLA at this time, but these were principally devoted to British authors. The Thoreau Society, organized in 1941 and led by Walter Harding, was one of the few author societies dedicated to a US author, and as the lengthy current roster of ALA author societies suggests, there was clearly a need, and sufficient enthusiasm, to support this new scholarly coalition—especially

since it planned to hold its annual meetings in May—and in San Diego.

While the ALA “Statement of Purpose” stressed “the importance of encouraging a wide variety of approaches, both established and innovational, to the study of American authors,” it noted in particular its inclusion of “biographical and historical studies of an author’s life and times,” and also “bibliographical examinations and close readings of literary texts.” While the 1980s are most frequently remembered as the period in which “theory” was the dominant concern of literary scholars, the formation of the ALA shows that several other critical practices in literature were undergoing remarkable development. This was the period in which many of the texts, biographical and bibliographical, were beginning to reshape our understanding of Emerson and the transcendentalist movement as a whole. Editions of Emerson’s *Journals*, *Collected Works*, *Sermons*, and other papers were underway, as were similar editorial projects for Thoreau and Fuller. *Studies in the American Renaissance* became an authoritative resource for new editorial, biographical, and historically oriented work. A biographical surge in academic literary studies was also brewing, eventually giving us groundbreaking works by Robert D. Richardson, Phyllis Cole, and Charles Capper, and more recently, Megan Marshall and Laura Dassow Walls.

It was in this energized atmosphere that the newly founded Emerson Society thrived. The ALA Newsletter carried a notice that “Wesley Mott and others are attempting to form a society devoted to Ralph Waldo Emerson,” a successful project as we know. Emerson was well represented in the first ALA Conference, in San Diego, May 31–June 3. Thinking of the Emerson Society as part of little noticed but clearly significant turn in American literary scholarship enhances both our understanding and our appreciation of its thirty years of productivity.

Albert von Frank

The Emerson Society’s founding in 1989 was prompted by the decision of the MLA not to make further room for author societies at its convention, and by the coinciding establishment of the ALA, originally a coalition of author societies. The MLA’s exclusionary policy was likely not ideological at first, but merely an acknowledgment that session-time was finite—and yet the de facto ban on what amounted to scholarship of a certain sort soon hardened into a theoretical opposition to authorship as an organizing principle in literary studies. That position has over the years had its most pronounced effect on graduate students and junior faculty—that is, on those who felt least free and who naturally looked to their professional organization for guidance and preferment. The discouragement of author societies influenced the content of papers read in late December and now in early January, and so turned the tide against single-author critical studies. This had much to do with the MLA’s being a sort of employment-agency monopoly. Its clientele was clearly more job-worthy if their advertisements for themselves didn’t too overtly suggest a limitation of their expertise. To make an allegory of it, MLA was professional and arranged job interviews; ALA was renegade and amateur. The

former was all about the workplace; the latter had room for play. The MLA has long coveted the prestige of a scientific vocabulary; from the start the ALA was admirably conservative of the English language. The one was serious if not positively grim; the other was sociable and collaborative. It valued the stray from purposefulness, as the MLA could not afford to do. The MLA had winter to itself; ALA claimed the spring.

Author societies were pioneers in their devotion to genetic texts, of which the *JMN* is the most conspicuous example. By foregrounding writing as compositional process it supplied directionality to the author’s meanings, revealing not only what Emerson came finally to mean, but from what starting point his meanings developed. It was Emerson in 3D. Access to this enhanced, hyper-meaningful writer demanded and rewarded an uptick in the reader’s own shiftiness. The “barbed wire” were the 3D glasses that some traditionalist readers might have put to good use, but more often chose to resent and disuse. All this coincided with a culture-wide erosion of reading ability (and a related coarsening of the motives to reading) that had nothing to do with the challenge of genetic texts, but everything to do with computers, Google, Wikipedia, Instagram, and the proliferating seductions of social media, newly reimagined as a machine culture.

Good critical work on Emerson has of course appeared over the last three decades, but most of it involves a compromise with an MLA-style animus against the single author, the maintenance of which has become a marker of currency in modern scholarship. If Emerson’s self-reliant writing project increasingly constitutes an intimidation to students, or seems wide of the mark to his latter-day readers in general, then the alternative to giving him up is to associate him with a “something else” in which, plainly, we are interested—antislavery, for example, or pragmatism, the ecological imagination or the transatlantic turn. Wai Chee Dimock recently referred to this kind of duplex inquiry as a “hybrid humanities.” Emerson’s first reputation was for sagacity (quickly and fatally downsized into the patronizing “Sage-of-Concord” cliché), but readers today are quite undazzled by virtues of that hoary sort and look for something more transactional or STEM-relevant. Our criticism tends to register this problem by resort to special pleading, offering one new pretext or another for taking an interest in this disappearing writer. And he is disappearing. As Maureen Corrigan recently observed, “Great white literary fathers are not in vogue right now.” Should they be?—as once they were? How so? At what cost? For what benefit? Is the restoration of Emerson as a great white literary father what the Emerson Society aims at—as its more progressive critics imply or forthrightly allege? It must be admitted that the man still wears the Matthiessen albatross, and nothing will be of much help until that snowy bird is fairly gone. The needful exorcism must focus on the premise that claims of canonical status (akin to what Peggy Noonan nicely calls “the habit of importance”) can never be a substitute for knowing why on any given day you teach this or that writer. Cui bono? indeed.

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ROUNDTABLE

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Joel Myerson

One of the most disappointing trends in the past 30 years has been the shift from single-author dissertations to ones that cover multiple authors or books in rather brief detail. The result is that there are fewer “Emersonians” but, rather, people using their dissertation chapter on Emerson for professional advancement before moving on to another subject. There’s nothing inherently wrong with this, given the current trends in the job market, but there is now a smaller and smaller cadre of people devoting themselves to studying Emerson and his circle. At the same

time, because people working on Emerson do so only for a brief period of their graduate student or professorial lives, they don’t buy books, preferring instead to check out from libraries basic works like the *JMN* or obtaining the older ones online. Last month, for example, a set of Rusk’s edition of the *Letters* went unsold on eBay at \$19.95. (In their defense, though, used volumes of the *JMN* and *CW* pop up at \$100+ per volume, the same cost as the Harvard UP’s POD volumes.) Because so much material is online now, and because some faculty are too lazy to walk to the library, it’s also now possible for someone to go from graduate school to retirement without ever handling a first edition of a work by Emerson, which I think is sad.

2019 Emerson Society Advisory Board Meeting

May 24, 2019, Fairmont Copley Hotel Lobby, Boston

1. Called to order: 7:17 p.m.
2. Approval of 2018 Minutes and committee reports:
 - Distinguished Achievement Award to Sandra Morris
 - Graduate Student Paper Award to Benjamin Barasch
 - Subvention Award to David Faflik, Research
 - Grant to Zachary Tavlin
 - Community Project Award to Lakeside Lab
 - Pedagogy Award to Paul John Rudoi
 - Packer Fellowship to Ittai Orr
 - Distinguished Service Award to Peggy Isaacson
4. Secretary/Treasurer’s Report and Discussion of Budget
 - Thompson presented estimated balance at \$10,500
 - Major expenses over the last year included the Heidelberg Conference
 - Income relatively steady, with 3 new Life Members and revenue from Heidelberg Conference
 - Question about possibility of raising membership fees. All agreed fees as currently structured are appropriate, but future discussion warranted.
5. Discussion of Membership
 - Currently (as of 10 May 2019) membership totals 116:
 - 12 institutional members
 - 39 life members
 - 65 all other categories combined
 - Members come from 22 states and 9 foreign countries
 - Notable increase in members from Ohio
 - 2 new Life Members, 41 total Life Members, 7 new student

members (growth of student members promising)

- Member recruitment: continue to need more active recruitments. Several ideas discussed, including sending invitations to authors of articles in the annual bibliography, sending ESPs to recent members who have not renewed with a reminder, send reminders before SP issue (not just fall), consider establishing auto-renewal system.
 - Donations: idea of actively seeking end of year donations. Dan Malachuk as president will consider the creation of a letter to this effect to be included with membership reminders.
6. RWE Society Awards Discussion
 - 5 Research Awards, 2 Pedagogy Awards made this year
 - Award Committee requested more latitude in determining how “research” is defined so that promising projects that may extend beyond simply primary research or archival research can be included. The Board agreed with granting this to the Award Committee.
 - Acknowledgement of membership help: the Awards Committee extends its appreciation for the very active contributions of Joel Myerson and Phyllis Cole in forming panels in recent years for the ALA Conference.
 7. Thanks to outgoing Board members David Dowling and Michael Weisenburg.
 8. Approval of annual donation of \$250 to support AG
 9. Adjourned: 8:15

Respectfully submitted,
Roger Thompson, Secretary/Treasurer

Emerson Society Panels at the American Literature Association, 2019

The Emerson Society presented two panels at the 30th Annual American Literature Association Conference, which was held from May 23 to 26, 2019, at the Westin Copley Place in Boston, Massachusetts.

The sessions were arranged by David Greenham. Abstracts appear below.

Emil Haloun. “Amity and Enmity in Reading Emerson and Wordsworth”

The main aim of my paper is to examine and analyse the figural languages of strength and weakness in the work of the American literary theorist and critic Harold Bloom and the Italian hermeneutic philosopher Gianni Vattimo, respectively, in relation to the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Wordsworth. In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom associates figures of strength with poetic greatness: his provocative theory holds that the relationship between literary texts and between generations of writers is one of violent Oedipal rivalry and that literary excellence must be measured by each writer’s success in overthrowing the authority and influence of predecessors. On the other hand, although it does not focus primarily on the realm of imaginative literature, Vattimo’s project of “weak thought” offers an inverse path and associates weakness—acceptance, love, gentleness, and gratitude—with cultural and intellectual success.

My paper will look closely for evidence of the Oedipal rivalry that Bloom finds in the relationship between Emerson’s American Adam in “Self-Reliance” and Wordsworth’s Romantic self in the “Intimations of Immortality” ode. I will argue that, rather than enmity, Bloom could equally well have found in Emerson’s relationship to Wordsworth an instance of amity between two poets and their peoples: Emerson wished to extend Wordsworth’s project, with grateful acknowledgment, to the New World. In a Vattimean charitable reading, I will show how the term humanities should and can come to imply humane theory and humane practices in which we can free the discourse about poetry from the assumption that every human act is one of aggressive self-assertion. Without an extension of this sort, I will argue, the work of the humanities amounts, at its best, to war reportage and, at its nadir, to fantasies of aggression, where evidence of *caritas*, humility, and gratitude is available in plain sight.

Ethan J.H. Knight. “‘The American Scholar’ in First-Year English”

Emerson’s 1837 speech “The American Scholar” instructs the members of Phi Beta Kappa that “the scholar is the man who must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future [...] in yourself is the law of all nature, [...] in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason; it is for you to know all, it is for you to dare all.” This quotation makes up part of the final question to the introduction to the University of South Carolina’s 2018 edition of the Carolina Reader, an in-house textbook I edited and wrote that all incoming students use in their first-year writing course. In the Carolina Reader, students are challenged to question what it means to be a scholar, and to explore how their own expectations and goals align or clash with this foundational member of the American literary canon’s own conception

of what it means to be a distinctly American scholar. In his speech, Emerson challenges the valorization of both books and the past, a claim that still resonates today, particularly in the realm of first-year English courses that increasingly have shifted towards the multimodal and the cross-disciplinary, rather than the canonical and traditional. Further, Emerson champions the power of the individual to curate and “contain multitudes,” to use Whitman’s words, a notion that perhaps no longer holds the same weight in the age of the collaborative, cross-disciplinary present state of the university in America. This paper explores how Emerson’s conception of the American scholar still resonates in the curation, execution, and pedagogical approach of first-year English textbooks and the archive of texts contained therein, and how and why such a curation continues to hold value in a first-year English course.

Tobias Berggruen. “There is no original sin”: Stanley Bosworth as Emersonian Teacher

While much attention has been paid to Emerson’s writings on the scholar, comparatively little work has been done on Emerson on the teacher. The task of constructing the Emersonian teacher is admittedly a difficult one: Emerson spent little time actually teaching; the years he did teach—immediately following his graduation from Harvard—came before he had reached maturity and were not particularly enjoyable ones. Fortunately, Emerson’s vast writings, if seldom explicitly about teaching, allow us to convincingly put together an image of what Emersonian teaching looks like. It is the aim of this paper to explore Stanley Bosworth—the founding headmaster of Saint Ann’s School in New York—as the archetypal Emersonian teacher.

On Bosworth’s view, education is the chance to expose children to the “forest of symbols,” to impart to them an understanding of the world as a text rich in correspondences and meanings, much as for Emerson a proper reading of nature leads to self-discovery, eternal truths. As Emerson sees “in the heavenly bodies, the perpetual presence of the sublime,” Bosworth speaks of the “sheer exhilaration of touching life,” and conceives of teaching as a means to communicate that experience to students, to orient them to the transcendent. Education is therefore the process of drawing out what ultimately resides in all people: a latent divinity, a capacity for original thought and creation. Both thinkers are furthermore deeply distrustful of institutions and of dogma: “Regulation,” Bosworth argues, “is the greatest threat to teachers, students, and the abstract concept of truth,” while for Emerson, the compartmentalization of knowledge, and a reliance on the thinkers of the past, endangers “Man Thinking.” As such the two are “untimely,” in the Nietzschean sense of the word—that is, they share an orientation towards the aesthetic and to the intangible that is at odds with the forces of modernity.

(Continued on page 16)

EMERSON SOCIETY PANELS

(Continued from page 15)

Kristi Cassaro. "Systems-Gazing: Seeing Self-Reliance through *A Treatise on Astronomy*"

Given the state of our politics, there is a dire need to protect the Emersonian ideal of self-reliance, vulnerable, as it is, to confusion with the sort of exceptionalism implicit in our hashtag foreign policy, "America First." Indeed, there is a history of hearing macho-individualism in Emersonian self-reliance, as if its purport were to champion proud rejection of interconnectedness with others. This view has been contested and revised by such scholars as Lawrence Buell, Stanley Cavell, Joan Richardson, Sharon Cameron, and Branka Arsić, each of whom has contributed aspects to a more accurate picture of Emerson that includes his materialism, ecological sensibilities, fascination with science, and radical philosophical aspiration. While many scholars have treated Emerson in the context of history of science, no one has considered the significance of John Herschel's *A Treatise on Astronomy* (1833) to Emerson's imagination. I argue that Herschel's *Treatise* led Emerson to reconceive not only the structure of the universe itself but of the social "universe" — how it is that we imagine ourselves being in relation to one another across domains of intimacy, spanning the familial to the public. When considered in the context of Herschel's *Treatise*, Emersonian self-reliance becomes immune to the kind of criticism that would dismiss it as yet another of the great problematic ideals in our intellectual history, rather than one of the best attempts — as I understand it to be — at true reform. My contribution to this panel is to show how Herschel's *Treatise* can be used to clarify the potential in Emersonian self-reliance.

21st Century Emerson, Chaired by Krissie West

Michael C. Weisenburg. "Uses of Great Men: Donald J. Trump, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the Limits of Self-Reliance in Twenty-First Century Popular Culture"

Donald J. Trump likes Ralph Waldo Emerson. Whether he understands Emerson is an entirely different matter. While it is difficult to verify exactly how or if Trump has actually read any of Emerson's essays, he has often referenced, cited, quoted, and misquoted Emerson in a variety of contexts and across media. This paper will concern itself with two points: 1). Trump's appropriations of Emerson's words and ideas and 2). the potential limits of Emerson's notions about the "Uses of Great Men," "Quotation and Originality," and "Self-Reliance" within the context of a 24 hour news cycle, internet cultures such as blogs and discussion boards, and social media platforms such facebook and twitter. While I will briefly discuss the similarities between 19th-century newspapers and the lecture circuit with 21st-century media, I am not so much concerned with what Emerson has to teach us in today's world as I am interested in the manner in which 21st-century media outlets have responded to Trump's uses and abuses of Emerson, and what these responses teach us about our own beliefs, assumptions, and prejudices. I will argue that the current popular and political understanding of Emerson's thought, of which Trump is an unknowing participant, is a result of 20th-century New Critical and neo-liberal readings of Emerson's major works, and that the predominantly ahistorical, "Hallmark-esque" tradition of Emersonian thought is in fact the dominant tradition in which his philosophy

has been deployed and consumed. Finally, I will end by reckoning with the deep existential problem posed by the very real possibility that Donald Trump is a logical, if horribly distorted, result of the American intellectual tradition. I realize that this is a potentially fraught position to propose, but I believe we have an ethical responsibility to entertain and address the very terrifying possibility that all of American history may have been leading to this presidency and that a systematic misreading of Emerson's philosophy may be at the core of it.

Benjamin Barasch "Emerson's 'Doctrine of Life': Embryogenesis and the Ontology of Style" Graduate Student Paper Award Winner

I'm completing my dissertation, "The Ontological Imagination: Living Form in American Literature," on the human imagination as a material force in American literature and thought of the 19th and early-20th centuries (from Emerson through the Jameses). My work closely engages with Romantic-era aesthetics and science, and with the current ontological/materialist turn in literary studies. My paper distills a dissertation chapter in which I argue that Emerson developed a life-affirmative practice of writing out of an engagement with the thought of German thinker Lorenz Oken, a collaborator of F. W. J. Schelling whom Emerson read enthusiastically in the late 1840s, and with the new science of embryology of Everard Home, K. E. von Baer, and others. I argue that Oken's conception of nature as the transformations of a basic "archetype" and the germ-layer theory of embryogenesis of the 1820s allowed Emerson to imagine a new model of natural generation: neither mechanical nor teleological but rather what he describes in terms of an unconscious "tendency" in things toward an unknown future.

Diverging from the Coleridgean Christian perfectionism of his earlier writing, Emerson developed a radically open-ended organicism that produced not merely a metaphoric but, I argue, an ontology that manifested as his unique practice of essayistic writing. Emerson's style of what he calls "exaggeration" or "excess" is meant as a literal embodiment of (not a formal allegory for) his philosophy of life. This paper aims to present Emerson as a crucial thinker for our moment: his

essays not only theorize but exemplify the inseparability of thought from the living forms of the natural world in an era in which we desperately need to reimagine our place in nature. Emerson is a powerful resource for thought because—unlike both Romantic humanism and the recent post-humanist turn, to both of which he has been linked—his work presents human world making not as a mark of human distinctiveness but as the capacity that unites us with the nonhuman world. I would be delighted to share this perspective on Emerson's importance for twenty-first century thought with the Emerson Society.

Alex Moskowitz. "Radical Emersonianism and the Politics of Literary Form"

Although Emerson is typically understood to be one of the more conservative figures of the Concord circle, there is nevertheless a politically radical strain that runs through his writing. In this paper, I bring together key moments from "Politics" and "History" with Agamben's work on impotentiality and messianic time to discuss how Emerson's radical politics depends upon his use of literary form. In "History," Emerson suggests that there is a problem with how we understand and make sense of historical facts:

instead of becoming fuel for the production of new ideas, historical facts too often “encumber” and “tyrannize” us. I take this moment as a starting point to excavate a more radical Emerson that has important resonances for literary studies today. As Christopher Castiglia has argued, literary studies “remains dominated by a faith in facts” that too often surrenders up the literariness of literature to history. In part, this paper discusses how a politically radical return to form and aesthetics helps unburden us from the dedication to historical facts, making use of them instead. I argue that Emerson understood very well that essential to the writing of revolutionary form is a radical ungroundedness—what Arsić identifies as “becoming” in Emerson—that in “Politics” shows up as the importance and necessity of fluidity. This refusal to land squarely on an ontologically positive object resonates with Agamben’s concept of impotentiality, which prizes the ability to not do and to resist positively actualizing that of which we are capable. History, then, must not be treated as a really existing object to which we are beholden, but rather as generative of the “ever new,” as Emerson puts it—or, as Agamben would argue, as an intersection of *chronos* and *kairos* in the service of a new radical and fundamentally unstable conception of non-linear time.

David Greenham. “Emersonian Forms, Formalists and the New Formalism”

When Emerson’s step-Grandfather, Ezra Ripley, died in September 1841, Emerson presented his death as part of the end of an epoch: “[t]he fall of this oak of ninety years makes some sensation in the forest old & doomed as it was” (JMN 8:53). Ripley had ministered in Boston’s First Church for over sixty years. In 1838 his duties

had been taken up by Barzillai Frost, the unwitting inspiration for Emerson’s attack on preaching later that year in the ‘Divinity School Address’ (‘I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say, I would go to church no more.’ CW 1:85; cf. JMN 5:463-4). The ‘Divinity School Address’ is Emerson’s effort to construct a perpetual beginning. In this paper I want to consider the parallels between these two moments, the end of an old faith and the beginning of a new one, using the twenty-first century methodology of New Formalism, as recently expressed by Caroline Levine in her 2017 *Forms*. A form that interests Levine is the ‘institution’—something Emerson has told us is the ‘lengthened shadow of one man’ (CW 1:35). For Levine institutions retain their forms while changing their parts, and as historical processes can be contrasted with periods (or epochs). The Christian church is such a form—the lengthened shadow of Christ—and its preachers, like Ripley and Frost and (for a time) Emerson, make up its changing parts. These changes, Levine argues, allow an institution to evolve while maintaining its form. For Emerson, Ripley ‘identified himself with the forms...of the New England Puritans’ (JMN 8:53) and Frost exemplified ‘hollow, dry, creaking formality’ (CW 1:87). Emerson, on the other hand, wants to ‘remedy their deformity’ with language, ‘the most flexible of all...forms’ (92). I shall use Levine’s New Formalist methodology to consider these ‘forms’ of Christianity, but I shall also refocus Levine’s abstract approach to form with a more typically nuanced New Formalist attention to Emerson’s ‘remedial’ form: language. In particular, I shall consider the ways in which Emerson’s language, in his Ripley eulogy and the Address, cuts across the periodic understanding of history, presenting instead what Levine calls an institutional rhythm.



Emerson Society president Daniel Malachuk and 2019 Graduate Student Paper Award winner Benjamin Barasch

Reviews

Emerson and the History of Rhetoric. ROGER THOMPSON.
Southern Illinois University Press, 2017. 174 pp.
\$35.00 paperback.

In 1804, the German inventor Johann Maelzel debuted what he called the “panharmonicon,” which was a kind of orchestra in a box: “Effectively a pipe organ with percussion elements, the mechanism could imitate the sounds of any instrument in an orchestra and created a notoriously haunting set of harmonies” (110). As Roger Thompson explains in *Emerson and the History of Rhetoric*, the panharmonicon became for Emerson a symbol of the perfect style of democratic rhetoric. According to Thompson, Emerson believed “that true rhetoric is more than simply democratic accessibility to the means of persuasion,” but rather comes into being when “a radically expansive and inclusive set of voices moves an audience toward truth and reconciliation with divinity” (118). Emerson’s ideal of rhetorical panharmony thus represents, for Thompson, the effort to bring together and then join diverse voices into a chorus out of which an immanent democratic truth emerges.

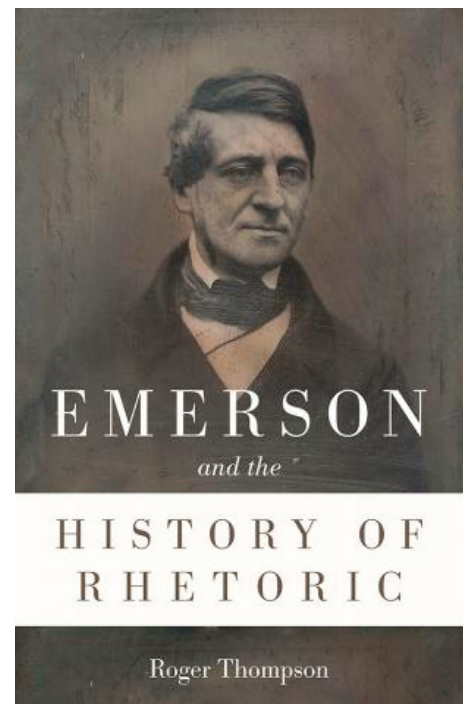
Although advocacy for a rhetorical “panharmony project” in the composition classroom clearly animates his book, Thompson dedicates most of his study to a more traditional inquiry into how Emerson drew from and adapted the Western rhetorical tradition for his own transcendental aims. The body of the book is broken into five chapters that interrogate separate lines of rhetorical influence. The first chapter, “Bend to It or Die of It,” argues that Plato was one of Emerson’s greatest influences, but that Emerson in turn sought to democratize Plato’s understanding of rhetoric by making the Greek aristocrat “a man of the streets (or, at least, someone who can speak meaningfully to the man of the streets) and a representative of democracy” (24). The second chapter, “Emerson, Burke, and the Limits of Ciceronian Eloquence,” continues this line of investigation by showing how Emerson adapted the insights of Edmund Burke and Cicero to balance two competing aims of rhetoric. On the one hand, a transcendent rhetoric should aim for a higher complexity that would “discern a unity that would give meaning to science, natural history, and the practical craft of statehood” (35). On the other hand, a democratic rhetoric should develop a “humble style, which aimed to deliver straight-talking, down-home wisdom” (45). Thompson argues that these two elements constituted for Emerson an eloquence “whose function is the formation of a just society” (33).

If the first two chapters argue for an Emersonian democratization of classical rhetoric, then the subsequent two chapters argue for an analogous democratization of Christian preaching. In his third chapter, “Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Submission,” Thompson makes the bold claim that Emerson is the American heir of Augustine in so far as he “posits a hermeneutic that leads to submission to divinity as prerequisite to rhetorical acts” (62). The major difference, Thompson argues, is that for Emerson, nature itself is a divine book that continually offers a source of new divine inspirations. Nature thus allows him a way of “reconciling a belief in the need for submission to something holy and a desire to break from the liturgical features of church that he believed limited the genuine expression of God” (68). Thompson’s fourth chapter, “Habit of Heat,” shows the effects that this type of Augustinian submission have on orators when they abandon themselves to the power of the

“universal fire running beneath the surface of the things” (82). A true orator channels the heat from the passions and expresses it through the creative imagination in a way that shatters old modes of action and points to new possibilities. This “new rhetoric would foster new ways of being in the world, and to do so, it must undermine the systematic and formal rhetorics of belletristic America” (89). In other words, the rhetoric of the street must also channel a rhetoric of heat.

Thompson’s most original contribution, however, appears in his final chapter, “Emerson’s Panharmonicon and the Sounds of a New Lecture,” before being made explicit in the conclusion. The previous chapters offer a careful historical treatment of Emerson and his rhetorical influences and will be of interest to those wishing to find a place for him within the Western rhetorical canon. However, not until encountering the symbol of the panharmonicon does one feel the author’s own “heat.” For Thompson, the panharmonicon does not simply represent a useful way to interpret Emerson; it symbolizes the ethics and aims of an Emerson-inspired pedagogy in composition. For him, this type of pedagogy is especially relevant today “when writing instruction within our educational systems has been hijacked by those who would have us believe that language is nothing more than a standardized system of signs to be mastered or a set of lessons to be memorized and mimicked” (14). The “panharmony project” that Thompson envisions, in contradistinction, places rhetoric “at the nexus of cultural change and individual empowerment” and calls upon teachers “to recognize the music in each individual’s voice, even when others don’t” (130). Thompson did not give himself enough room to communicate this project with the scope, imagination, and heat that it clearly deserves; but he discovered the symbol that will provide the poetic foundation for the eloquent book to come.

—Nathan Crick
Texas A&M University



Emerson and Environmental Ethics. Susan L. Dunston.
Lexington Books, 2018, 152 pp. \$90.00 hardback.

In *Emerson and Environmental Ethics*, Susan L. Dunston situates Emerson as a foundational figure in a lineage of environmentalist writers and thinkers, including Aldo Leopold, Loren Eisley, Rachel Carson, Gary Snyder, and Michael Pollan, among others. At the same time, she maps indirect continuities between Emerson's environmentalism and a range of other environmentalist philosophies drawn from Indigenous perspectives, Ecofeminism, and Eastern religion. Her methodology derives naturally from Emerson's own: to study the rays of relation among things. While deftly interweaving brief, shining passages from Emerson's journals and notebooks into a much larger web of relations, Dunston is careful not to over-generalize connections or skirt problematic moments. The intersections are all the more successful for this level of nuance. The focus on philosophy, particularly on ethics, ties the five chapters together as she makes a convincing case for the relevance of Emerson's work to issues in environmentalism today.

At the center of Dunston's study is "relation at once ontological, ethical, and aesthetic" (1). For both Emerson and Dunston, these categories are inseparable and comprise the basis of what Dunston calls Emerson's "nature literacy": an "awareness, appreciation, and informed participation in a living, life-sustaining and dynamic composition" (8). "Composition" here takes on three corresponding connotations: emergent processes in natural systems; Emerson's own sense of relation—"how much finer things are in composition than alone"; and the process of writing. For Emerson, nature's processes are themselves moral and aesthetic, and his goal, like the poet's, is to help us "re-attach" ourselves to these (11). For Dunston, this is the heart of environmental ethics: a relation grounded in embodied and empathetic receptivity.

The wide range of material in this book is the result of a long career studying, writing about, and teaching Emerson. Dunston's previous monograph *The Romance of Desire: Emerson's Commitment to Incompletion* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997) considers Emerson's philosophy in relation to feminism and an ethics of care. This study informs her engagement with Ecofeminism in her new work. More broadly, Dunston's previous work on incompletion and antifoundationalism undergirds her argument about Emerson's environmental ethics as relational and contingent, what she calls "this edge of unknowing intimacy" (6) as part of "an ongoing practice, never culminating in a compendium or credential" (10). Dunston practices this same philosophy throughout her own work.

The book is divided into five short chapters. The first two, "Emerson and Environmental Literacy" and "Emerson Valuing Nature: Aesthetics and Ethics" work in tandem to lay the foundations for Dunston's central claims. Dunston begins with an analysis of Emerson's *Nature* (1836), as well as intimate moments from his journals, including his famous declaration that he would be a naturalist. She also offers a rich reading of the poem "Each and All." The second chapter situates Emerson in the American Romantic tradition with a focus on the reciprocal relation with nature he emphasized.

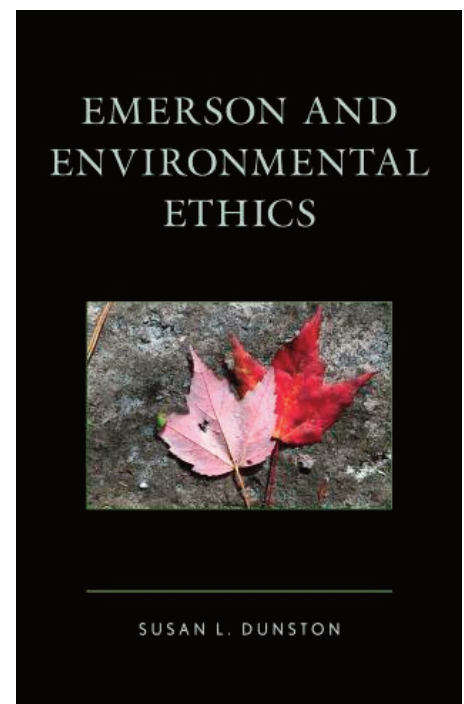
The third chapter offers brief sketches of intersections between Emerson's work and contemporary environmentalist movements, what Dunston calls "*croisements*" ("crossings, crossbreedings, and crossroads") (xvi). Spanning Ecofeminism, Systems Thinking, and Indigenous environmental philosophy, the chapter attempts to find

an Emersonian "Unity in Variety" that retains important differences while highlighting shared interests. As Dunston claims later in the book, "Emerson's philosophical method was characteristically syncretic, and from this record he drew what he saw as universal traditions and truths with diverse origins" (94). The sketches in this chapter offer generative possibilities for scholarship that could be devoted to Emerson and any one of these topics.

The fourth chapter affords the most tightly focused ecocritical analysis of Emerson's work through the paired tropes of the garden and the wilderness. Beginning with a critique of "The Young American," Dunston moves into Emerson's journals about his relationship to gardening from which he learns that "yield requires yielding" (83). The fifth and final chapter situates Emerson in a tradition of Eastern philosophy centered around the concept of "non-harm" in Hinduism and Buddhism to demonstrate how Emerson crossed boundaries like East/West in his time. The book concludes with a coda that points to ways forward in environmentalism based on Emerson's contributions.

Emerson and Environmental Ethics is a timely study that lays important groundwork on Emerson and environmentalism. It is responsive to the critical canon and theoretical turns in Emerson studies, but not explicitly so. Beautifully and carefully written, the work itself feels Emersonian with startling turns of phrase and insight. The trade-off for breadth over depth may leave the reader wanting more sustained readings of Emerson's longer works, rather than the more frequent snippets from the journals, but these swim and glitter throughout the chapters. The book's range of material opens up avenues of inquiry for established and junior scholars alike. Further, the short sub-sections in the chapters can serve as excerpts to teach alongside Emerson's texts in relation to environmental issues. This volume affirms that there is still much to learn from Emerson in our own time of environmental crisis.

—Kaitlin Mondello
The Graduate Center, CUNY



(Continued on page 18)

REVIEWS

(Continued from page 17)

Literary Celebrity and Public Life in the Nineteenth-Century United States. BONNIE CARR O'NEILL. University of Georgia Press, 2017, 244 pp. \$64.95 hardback.

Opening with Henry James's pronouncement that Emerson drew large crowds to his lectures in part because he captured the *zeitgeist*, Bonnie O'Neill uses the complexity of Emerson's fame to illustrate an explicitly nineteenth-century understanding of celebrity culture. Moving deftly through scholarship on the public sphere, she builds on the Castiglian civic sphere to outline what she calls a "personal public sphere" with carnivalesque contours accounting for the commercial and affective functions of public life. Although her focus is on the middle of the century, she examines a wide range of public figures to show how the aesthetic and philosophical judgments of the audience "subverted and democratized a traditional model of cultural authority" (7). Thus, the relocation of interpretive power with the audience engenders greater participation in the civic discourse and widens our concept of "public," both underscoring its "fictive nature" and illuminating its pluralism (14). This use of the audience as a heuristic, much like the cultural work of literary texts, uncovers more about the culture that created them than the celebrities themselves.

O'Neill traces the shifts in celebrity culture and literary production, noting a move away from anonymity and rationality yet toward exposure and embodiment. Her methodology invites important questions about celebrity culture such as "the significance of audience authority, strategies authors developed in response to it, and the relevance of both to other social concerns, such as majoritarianism, social inclusiveness, and participation" (3). Her main figures of study, P.T. Barnum, Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederick Douglass, and Fanny Fern, are representative of debates about national identity, while their varied positionality within the dominant culture allows for nuanced explorations of race, class, gender, and able-bodiedness.

Considering the explosion in periodical culture, widespread urbanization, and the Jacksonian market revolution, we need cultural criticism that matches the dynamism of the period. O'Neill's incorporation of classical approaches to mass culture, such as those of Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu, and reader-response theory, is bolstered by recent work on celebrity studies. Despite the many strengths of her theoretical framework, its reliance on the eighteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first centuries exposes the inadequacy of applying these ideas to the nineteenth century. Many of us working alongside her studying mass culture, material culture, and print culture have sought era-specific theories other than those she references or those of Veblen, Benjamin, and Marx. Fortunately, O'Neill's book makes significant contributions to this area of study. Her curiosity and appreciation for mass culture differentiates her work from many others by revealing the range of affective, economic, and civic pleasures generated by the celebrity culture of nineteenth-century American literary production and reception.

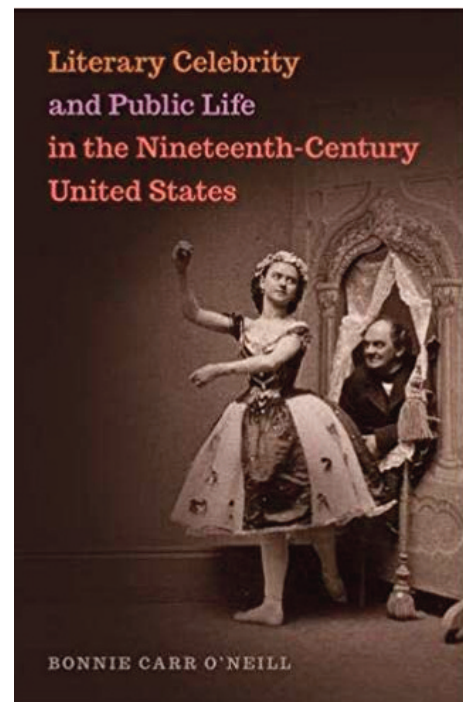
At the center of her comparative study, and of particular interest to Emersonians, is her third chapter, "The Impersonal in the Personal Public Sphere." She begins by revising the long-standing deliberations over Emerson's participation in a commodified culture of spectacle that was antithetical to his ideals of scholarly contemplation and self-reliance. O'Neill contextualizes the

"impersonal" in Emerson studies in two new ways. Using multiple reports of attendees like Nathaniel Parker Willis, O'Neill explains that Emerson's "philosophy of impersonality gets converted into personality," paradoxically increasing his fame (97). Despite the potential for obfuscation in his lectures, Emerson continued to be regarded as a genius. The (mis)understanding of his rhetoric, she explains, is not the point, rather it is the audiences' "reading" of his physiognomy and demeanor as well as the visual necessity of the experience itself. Second, the abstraction of Emerson's public self gave the audience a sense of unmediated insight and self-reliance.

Throughout the five chapters, O'Neill stresses the affective and corporeal connection that fused the personal and the public in a moment of understanding. However, she is careful to note that audience authority did not lead to unity or consensus but became a conduit for emerging ideas about selfhood. Her other chapters address Barnum's commodification of bodies and establishment of expectations for celebrity culture, a Lacanian reading of Whitman's transition from authoritarian editor to object of public desire, and Douglass's savvy creation of a public persona for consumption through revisions to his autobiography, crafting distinctive images of subjectivity. O'Neill concludes with a chapter on Fern, analyzing her rise to fame through the exploitation of the tension between prescribed and subversive gender roles.

Outlining the reflexivity of Emerson's philosophies and audience interpretation, O'Neill provides fresh readings of his literary development through the 1830s. Her analysis deepens our understanding not only of Emerson's public image, but also of the potential for political and moral activism in his work. There are possibilities for extending her work in many areas, including periodical studies, queer theory, visual culture, and performance studies. Overall, her innovative work addresses and answers the need for a nineteenth-century approach to mass culture, reminding us, "celebrity is a metaphysical, even transcendental condition" (88).

—Monica Urban
College of the Sequoias



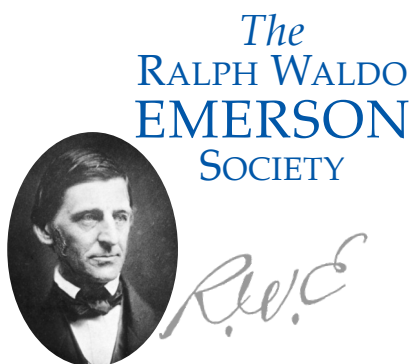
An Emerson Bibliography, 2018

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

Readers should also consult the Thoreau bibliographies published quarterly in the Thoreau Society Bulletin and the chapters "Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller, and Transcendentalism" and "International Scholarship" in the annual American Literary Scholarship (Duke University Press).

- Adams, Stephen J. *Patriotic Poets: American Odes, Progress Poems, and the State of the Union*. McGill-Queens. [Maintains, in a chapter devoted to Emerson's poetry of the 1840s, that the "erasure of politics ... is absolute" in his quest for spiritual elevation.]
- Aherne, Philip. *The Coleridge Legacy*. Palgrave Macmillan. [Contextualizes Emerson's reception of Coleridge in the larger history of Coleridge's far-reaching transatlantic influence.]
- Bădulescu, Dana. "On Emerson's Dream of Eating the World." *Linguaculture* 9.2: 13–24. [Maintains, using Emerson's dream, that "literature not just embraces the world but also ... ultimately transforms it."]
- Bailey, Austin. "'Man Himself is a Sign': Emerson, C. S. Peirce, and the Semiosis of Mind." *ESQ* 64: 680–714. [Argues that "Emerson's work refigured Peirce's theories about the sign."]
- Bregman, Jay. "From the Neoplatonizing Christian Gnosticism of Philip K. Dick to the Neoplatonizing Hermetic Gnosticism of Ralph Waldo Emerson." *Platonic Pathways: Selected Papers from the Fourteenth Annual Conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies*. Ed. John F. Finamore and Danielle A. Layne. Prometheus Trust. 261–276. [Examines such disparate figures to give a glimpse of Neoplatonic influence in post-Enlightenment America.]
- Bronson-Bartlett, Blake. "From Loose Leaves to Readymades: Manuscript Books in the Age of Emerson and Whitman." *J19* 6: 259–83. [Considers how changes in writing technology led to the "variations of philosophical and poetic experimentation we know as transcendentalism."]
- Brownlee, Peter John. *The Commerce of Vision: Optical Culture and Perception in Antebellum America*. Pennsylvania. [Considers in one section "the practical conceptions of the eyes invoked by Emerson in Nature" as "characteristic of a broader cluster of discourses ... in the antebellum decades."]
- Constantinesco, Thomas. "The Dial and the Untimely 'Spirit of the Time.'" *American Periodicals* 28: 21–40. [Makes the case that the Dial did in fact capture, in the words of Emerson, the "spirit of the time."]
- Da, Nan Z. *Intransitive Encounter: Sino-U.S. Literatures and the Limits of Exchange*. Columbia. [Characterizes Emerson's engagement with China as "provisional," "self-erasing," and of "limited transmission."]
- Dahl, Adam. *Empire of the People: Settler Colonialism and the Foundations of Modern Democratic Thought*. Kansas. [Concludes, in the chapter section devoted to Emerson, that "native elimination cleared the way for the cultivation of the democratic ethos" in Emerson's thought.]
- Davis, Clark. "Emerson's Telescope: Jones Very and Romantic Individualism." *NEQ* 91: 483–507. [Holds that Yvor Winters's 1938 reading of the delusional Jones Very as a "saintly man" and Emerson as a "fraud and sentimentalist" is illustrative of the historical moment.]
- Davis, Ryan W. "Frontier Kantianism: Autonomy and Authority in Ralph Waldo Emerson and Joseph Smith." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 46: 332–59. [Avers that both Emerson and Joseph Smith are "Frontier Kantians."]
- Di Leo, Jeffrey R. "Who Needs American Literature?: From Emerson to Marcus and Sollors." *American Literature as World Literature*. Ed. Jeffrey R. Di Leo. Bloomsbury. [Contrasts the panic of 1837 and Emerson's appeal for an American life of the mind with the terrorist attack of 9/11 and its call for global reckoning.]
- Dowling, David O. "Literary Circles." *Herman Melville in Context*. Ed. Kevin J. Hayes. Cambridge. 95–105. [Gives a brief overview of Melville's "mixed response" Transcendentalists including Emerson.]
- Dumler-Winckler, Emily. "Can Genius Be Taught? Emerson's Genius and the Virtues of Modern Science." *Journal of Moral Education*. 47.3: 272–88. [An edifying discussion of Emerson's conception of genius.]
- . "Personal Responsibility in the Face of Social Evils: Transcendentalist Debates Revisited." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 38: 147–65. [Promotes a Transcendentalist remedy for the spiritual sickness that defines the Trump era.]
- Dunston, Susan L. *Emerson and Environmental Ethics*. Lexington. [Discusses the "overlooked common ground" shared between Emerson's thought and "Indigenous science and ethics, Sufi poetry, feminism, and systems thinking," among others.]
- Fortuna, Agnese Maria. "Nature and the Transatlantic Idealism: The Sources of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Romantic Symbolism." *Vivens Homo* 29.1: 99–123. [Posits that Emerson's reading of European Romanticism informed his creation of the poet-prophet in Nature.]
- Fountain, Anne. "Martí and Emerson: Close Reading, Context, and Translation." *Syncing the Americas: José Martí and the Shaping of National Identity*. Ed. Ryan Anthony Spangler and Georg Schwarzmann. Rowman & Littlefield. 81–94. [Draws inferences about Emerson's influence on Martí based on the latter's translations of him.]
- Gallagher-Ross, Jacob. *Theaters of the Everyday: Aesthetic Democracy on the American Stage*. Northwestern. [One chapter posits Thoreau and Emerson as "opposing tensions" in Thornton Wilder's work.]
- Gatta, John. "Sacramental Communion with Nature: From Emerson on the Lord's Supper to Thoreau's Transcendental Picnic." *Religions* 9.2: 1–9. [Explores Emerson's "attraction toward other ... concepts of communion" after abandoning the Lord's Supper in 1832.]
- Georgi, Karen L. "Summer Camp with William J. Stillman: Looking at Nature, between Ruskin and Emerson." *American Art* 32.3: 22–41. [Compares Stillman's painting *Philosopher's Camp in the Adirondacks* with Emerson's Nature.]
- Goodson, Jacob L. *Strength of Mind: Courage, Hope, Freedom, Knowledge*. Cascade Books. [Employs such Emerson standards as "The American Scholar" to establish an educational philosophy for Christian institutions of higher learning.]

- Greenham, David. "The Work of Metaphor: Ralph Waldo Emerson's 'Circles' and Conceptual Metaphor Theory." *ESQ* 64:402-34. [Infers a theory of metaphor that activates Emerson's intellectual life.]
- Hanlon, Christopher. *Emerson's Memory Loss: Originality, Communality, and the Late Style*. Oxford. [Includes the useful insight that standard readings of Emerson's early-career self-reliance must be mitigated by his late-career reliance on collaboration.]
- Hardack, Richard. "Dream a Little Dream of Not Me: The Natures of Emerson's Demonology." *symploke* 26: 329-59. [Characterizes "Demonology" as a "dark, racialized, feminized, and materialized 'real' limit on established conventions."]
- Hicks, Stephanie. "Thomas Carlyle, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and History." *Thomas Carlyle and the Idea of Influence*. Eds. Paul E. Kerry et al. Fairleigh Dickinson. 35-51. [Declares that Emerson revised his theory of history because "a Carlylean biographical understanding of history" would not allow for "Emersonian self-reliance."]
- Hosseini, Reza. "Emerson and the 'Pale Scholar.'" *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review/Revue Canadienne de Philosophie* 57: 115-135. [Concerns the optimal relationship between efficacious thought and action for Emerson.]
- Insko, Chester A. *History, Abolition, and the Ever-Present Now in Antebellum American Writing*. Oxford. [Argues in one chapter that Emerson's renunciation of the past in the 1830s paved the way for his immediatist abolitionist activity beginning in the 1840s.]
- Jones, Gavin and Judith Richardson. "Emerson and Hawthorne; or, Locating the American Renaissance." *Cambridge Companion to the American Renaissance*. Ed. Christopher N. Phillips. Cambridge. 52-65. [Emerson's ideas lead to wider global networks while Hawthorne's lead to "ingress" for "spiritual and historical shadows."]
- Keohane, Oisín. *Cosmo-nationalism: German, French and American Philosophy*. Edinburgh. [Proffers in one chapter that Emerson is critical of American exceptionalism while revealing America's debt to European philosophy.]
- Kirsch, Geoffrey R. "'So Much a Piece of Nature': Emerson, Webster, and the Transcendental Constitution." *NEQ* 91: 625-50. [Suggests that, for Emerson, "Webster's moral failure ... could only be redeemed ... through the antinomian violence of John Brown."]
- Long, Mark C. and Sean Ross Meehan. *Approaches to Teaching Ralph Waldo Emerson*. MLA. [Includes twenty-seven essays with eminently useful strategies for teaching Emerson. Intended for newcomers and seasoned veterans alike.]
- Lysaker, John. "Giving Voice to Philosophy." *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 32.1: 131-50. [Notes that Cavell "lionizes" Emerson but on "narrow terms."]
- Miguel-Alfonso, Ricardo. "Teaching through Others: Sigourney, Emerson, and the Didactic Culture of Transcendentalism." *Lydia Sigourney: Critical Essays and Cultural Views*. Eds. Mary Louise Kete and Elizabeth Petrino. Massachusetts. 210-25. [Detects notable similarities and differences in Sigourney's and Emerson's use of biography as an educational tool.]
- Miller, Jesse. "Medicines of the Soul: Reparative Reading and the History of Bibliotherapy." *Mosaic* 51.2: 17-34. [Traces bibliotherapy to Samuel McChord Crothers, a Unitarian minister influenced by Emerson.]
- Robinson Jr., Mixon. "Bell, Book, and Locomotive: Communicating Abolition in and out of Concord, Massachusetts." *NEQ* 91: 448-82. [On the occasion of Emerson's "Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies," abolitionists appropriated Concord's town bells to create a soundscape underscoring demands for immediate emancipation.]
- Sanders, Trent Michael. "The Promethean Form: A Poet's Ontological Metamorphosis in Emerson's 'Self-Reliance' and 'The Poet.'" *Philosophy and Literature* 42.1: 222-29. [Identifies progression in Emerson's conception of the human subject from receptor of undefined Promethean fire to disciplined engine of divine creation.]
- Schober, Regina. "Transcendentalism." *Walt Whitman in Context*. Ed. Joanna Levin and Edward Whitley. Cambridge. 189-197. [Provides an overview of "interconnectedness" as a spiritual and aesthetic aspiration that Whitman and Emerson hold in common.]
- Schwarzmann, Georg. "Creating Superman: R. W. Emerson, José Martí, Friederich Nietzsche, and Walt Whitman." *Syncing the Americas: José Martí and the Shaping of National Identity*. Ed. Ryan Anthony Spangler and Georg Schwarzmann. Rowman & Littlefield. 95-111. [Holds that Martí and Nietzsche, following Emerson, promoted a new individual character to master the demands of modernity.]
- Stanley, Kate. *Practices of Surprise in American Literature after Emerson*. Cambridge. [Maintains that Emerson's conception of "surprise" and the "states of spontaneity and responsiveness" it engenders is a central experience of modernism.]
- . "Unrarified Air: Alfred Stieglitz and the Modernism of Equivalence." *Modernism/modernity* 26: 185-212. [Avers that Stieglitz, in the spirit of Emerson, "looked to the clouds ... to ground himself more fully in the place where he found himself."]
- Sommer, Tim. "Shakespearean Negotiations: Carlyle, Emerson, and the Ambiguities of Transatlantic Influence." *Thomas Carlyle and the Idea of Influence*. Eds. Paul E. Kerry et al. Fairleigh Dickinson. 129-143. [Posits that Carlyle and Emerson employ Shakespeare's genius for diverging cultural purposes.]
- Tawil, Ezra. *Literature, American Style: The Originality of Imitation in the Early Republic*. Pennsylvania. [Decades before Emerson, American authors defined their writing styles against those English to capture a "larger share" of a "transatlantic literary market."]
- Trudeau, Lawrence J., ed. *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* vol. 353. Gale Cengage. [A reference volume concerning Emerson generally (section one) and "Self-Reliance" specifically (section two).]
- Vestal, Allan W. "'In the Name of Heaven, Don't Force Men to Hear Prayers': Religious Liberty and the Constitutions of Iowa." *Drake Law Review* 66: 355-451. [Contextualizes the religious liberalism of Iowa's constitutional conventions in the sensation surrounding Emerson's "Divinity School Address" and Abner Kneeland's blasphemy trial.]
- Weisenburg, Michael. "Teaching Emerson in the Archive." *Emerson Society Papers* 28.1: 1, 6-7. [Details a strategy for immersing students in archival materials to create a sense of immediacy in Emerson's life and career.]
- Wieland, Jeff. "The Artist as Prophet: Emerson's Thoughts on Art." *Philosophy and Literature* 42.1: 30-48. [Contends that Emerson's essay "Thoughts on Art" is "central to his position" that the artist "must act as a prophet" to encourage audiences to "seek original inspiration and insight" themselves.]



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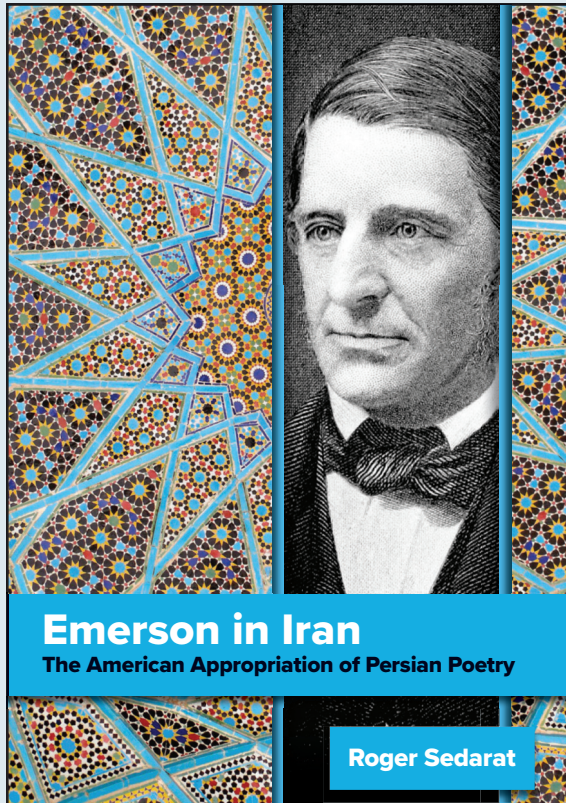
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