



R.W.C.

Volume 34, Number 2

Fall 2023

EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

RWES Distinguished Achievement Award

Alan Hodder, Professor Emeritus of Comparative Religion at Hampshire College

Alan Hodder is among the early scholars to take up the traditional hermeneutics of American Transcendentalism and reveal the global scope of their implications. His many articles and essays on puritan pulpit rhetoric, Unitarianism, and American Romanticism situate his scholarship at the intersection of religious studies, philosophy, and literary studies, and his influence in each of these fields as they relate to the life and work of Ralph Waldo Emerson specifically and the Transcendentalists more broadly has been one that emphasizes both the ecstatic nature of life and the interconnected influence that culture has on the curious. As Hodder puts it in an early reading of the famous transparent eyeball section of Emerson's *Nature*, "New self generates itself in the form of a globe, a giant eyeball, which rises out of the ashes of a vanished ego. Once again, the movement of revelation repeats itself. The seer realizes his fullness in order to sacrifice it" (*Emerson's Rhetoric of Revelation* 99). It is an apt analysis of a famous passage, and one that presaged the career to follow.

His first two monographs, *Emerson's Rhetoric of Revelation: Nature, The Reader, and the Apocalypse Within* (Penn State UP 1989) and *Thoreau's Ecstatic Witness* (Yale UP 2001), each explore the correspondences between nature and religion and outline an interdisciplinary approach to a historically situated reading of the aesthetic and ethical perspective of the Transcendentalist movement's major figures. Some of his articles include "In the Nick of Time: Thoreau's 'Present' Experiment, as a Colloquy of East and West" (*Religion and the Arts* 2005), "Christian Conversion, the Double Consciousness, and Transcendentalist Religious Rhetoric" (*Religions* 2017), and "The Gospel According to this Moment: Thoreau, Wildness, and American Nature Re-

ligion" (*Religion and the Arts* 2011) in which he demonstrates "the potential of wildness as an important, timely and timeless, spiritual category" in Thoreau, John Muir, Edward Abbey, and Annie Dillard, three writers who stand "to some extent in Thoreau's literary lineage."

Among his many contributions, Hodder's study of American interests in the philosophy and religious traditions of south and east Asia have perhaps been his greatest and most influential contribution to the field of American literary studies. In his essay, "'The Best of the Brahmins': India Reading Emerson Reading India," Hodder uses a postcolonial lens to consider the importance of Indian leaders, such as Vivekananda, Tagore, Gandhi, and P.C. Majumdar's readings of Emerson's interest in eastern thought as an example of how "Emerson becomes a site of contestation, a sort of posthumous pawn, in the larger colonial struggle" (171). In this sense, Hodder's scholarship can be taken as an assessment of Emerson as a global, rather than merely and American, author. His chapter on "Asia in Emerson and Emerson in Asia" in *Mr. Emerson's Revolution* (2015), edited by Jean McClure Mudge, represents the summation of his study of the ways Emerson relied on eastern writings to expand his world view through a series of ever widening circles. "While Emerson has often been viewed as the most American of writers," Hodder writes, "formulator of such a reputedly distinctive American ideal as self-reliance — it is important to recognize that he was at the same time an unprecedentedly cosmopolitan thinker, drawing on a far-flung range of sources, Eastern as well as Western. Our first public intellectual, he was at the same time our first global intellectual... The most conspicuous expression of Emerson's international outlook was perhaps his precocious and, in retrospect, quite

(Continued on page 8.)

2023 Emerson Society Donors

Emerson Society members continue generously to join at various “patron” levels of membership. All donations above the \$20 annual regular membership go to support special programs of the Society. Dues categories are Life (\$1,000), Sustaining (\$75), Regular (\$40), and Student (\$10). Contributing, Sustaining, & Life members will receive physical copies of Emerson Society Papers; Regular and Student members will receive digital copies. You may pay by PayPal or by check, payable to The Emerson Society (U.S. dollars only) and mailed to Peter Balaam, Carleton College, 1 N. College St., Northfield, MN 55057. For further details, see emersonsociety.org/membership. Thank you for your support.

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EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

The newsletter of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society
Published at The University of South Carolina

www.emersonsociety.org

Editor: Michael Weisenburg

Book Review Editor: Kristina West

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Emerson Society Papers is published twice a year. Subscriptions, which include membership in the Society, are \$40 a year. You may subscribe using PayPal by visiting us at emersonsociety.org/membership. Send checks for membership (calendar year) and back issues (\$10 each) to Peter Balaam, Carleton College, 1 N. College St., Northfield, MN 55057

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 Street, Columbia, SC 29208, or emersonsocietypapers.editor@gmail.com (email submissions are much preferred).

Review copies of books on Emerson should be sent to book reviews editor Krissie West at Kristina.west@btopenworld.com; please email regarding address for physical copies.

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PROSPECTS



ALA Call for Papers

The Emerson Society will sponsor two panels at the 35th Annual Meeting of the American Literature Association, to be held at The Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, from May 23-26, 2024. For more information, visit <https://americanliteratureassociation.org/>

Emerson and William James

This panel is co-sponsored by the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society and the William James Society. It is well known that William James considered himself to be Ralph Waldo Emerson's spiritual heir. Their lives were intertwined: Emerson was James's godfather, and Emerson was so close with the James family that one room in their New York house was designated as "Mr. Emerson's room" due to frequent visits. James also took an intellectual interest in Emerson. Even early on, as Robert Richardson describes, Emerson "was certainly vividly present in [James's] imagination." While James disagreed with many of Emerson's more transcendental claims, in 1903 William wrote to his brother Henry to exclaim, "Emerson is exquisite!"

This panel seeks papers exploring the interconnections between Emerson and William James. Topics may include their shared philosophical, religious, or literary perspectives; their transnational influence; biographical connections; philosophical disagreements; or blended comparisons (e.g. "Emerson's pragmatism" or "James's transcendentalism"). Papers with interdisciplinary perspectives—philosophy, psychological, ecology, religious studies, etc.—are especially welcome.

Please send a title and an approximately 250-word abstract to Thomas Howard (thomas.howard@wustl.edu) and Bill Scalia (BScalia@stmarys.edu) by January 12, 2024.

Emerson & Varieties of Religious Experience

Emerson read and thought broadly across religious texts and traditions. He studied the Bhagavad Gita, the Qur'an, the Analects of Confucius, St. Augustine's Confessions, and the works of Emanuel Swedenborg. He read the Quakers, the Stoics, and the Mystics, and he drew inspiration from individuals as diverse as William Ellery Channing, Germaine de Staël, Sampson Reed, and Mary Moody Emerson. This panel invites papers on Emerson and varieties of religious experience from the nineteenth-century until now. Topics might include, but are not limited to, texts and traditions that influenced Emerson's religious thought; Emerson's influence on later religious thinkers; the scholarly reception of Emerson's religion; connections between religious experience and aesthetics; and the role of religion in social justice movements.

Please send a title and an approximately 250-word abstract to Thomas Howard (thomas.howard@wustl.edu) and Bill Scalia (BScalia@stmarys.edu) by January 12, 2024.

Thoreau Society Annual Gathering, July 2024

The Emerson Society sponsors a panel at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering each summer in Concord, Mass.

Transcendentalist Legacies of Resilience

"Resilience" is not a word that Emerson used. The usage of the term, which had originally referred to physical elasticity, to describe one's character and constitution by its ability to recover, did not appear in print until 1857. Nevertheless, Emerson's work offers numerous examples of how the self, society, and the natural world can right themselves in response to wrongs and losses. For instance, essays such as "Self-Reliance," "Circles," "Experience," "Power," "Fate," "Courage," and "Character" contain lines of argument that can be read as analogous and perhaps even foundational to our contemporary notions of resilience. As he states in "Courage," if "perfect will, which no terrors can shake, which is attracted by frowns and threats or hostile armies, nay, needs these to awake and fan its reserved energies into a pure flame, and is never quite itself until the hazard is extreme; then it is extreme and fertile, and all its powers play well."

This panel seeks papers that explore Emersonian resil-

ience and that consider how the Transcendentalists responded to personal, political, religious, societal, and technological change in their own time as well as how they influenced later thinkers and movements. Topics might include, but are not limited to, political and social movements such as abolitionism, civil rights, environmentalism, and labor reform, and existential and ethical concerns about personal trauma, virtue, emotion, and self-culture.

Please send a title and an approximately 250-word abstract to Thomas Howard (thomas.howard@wustl.edu) and Bill Scalia (BScalia@stmarys.edu) by January 12, 2024.

Upcomming Conferences

PAMLA, October 26-29, 2023, Portland, Oregon Emersonian Perspectives

- Harrison Dietzman (George Fox University), “‘All men divine’: Gnostic Political Theology in Emerson’s Antebellum Essays
- Jeonghun Choi (Harvard University), “National Literature as a Transnational Affair: Iwano Homei’s Reading of Emerson and Wang Yangming”
- Susan Dunston (New Mexico Tech), “Emerson on Making Shift”

SAAP, March 28-30, 2024, Boston, MA

Emerson & the Future of Philosophy: A Conversation

- Branka Arsic (Columbia University), “Emerson’s Materialisms”
- David LaRocca (Author, editor; Ithaca, NY), “The Questions of the Times”
- John Lysaker (Emory University), “Philosophy After Emerson”
- Albert R. Spencer (Portland State University), “Emerson’s Global Significance”

C19, March 14-16, 2024, Pasadena, CA

The End(s) of Originality?:

The Transcendentalists and AI

- Jason de Stefano (University of Chicago), “The Nature of Artifice and the Use of Intelligence”
- Jenna Gersie (University of Colorado Boulder), “Alexa—Shall I not have intelligence with the earth?: Sustainability, Surveillance, and Nineteenth-Century Smart Homes”
- Maurice Lee (Boston University), “Prediction and Originality: AI and Emerson”

- Mark Noble (Georgia State University), “Spiral Tendencies, Electric Elements: Emerson and Fuller on General Intelligence”

Past Conferences ALA, May 2023, in Boston

This past spring, the Emerson Society sponsored three panels at ALA and held its annual meeting (meeting minutes & reprints appear later in this issue).

Emerson in Conversation I: Poetry

Chair: Bonnie O’Neill, Mississippi State University

1. “Audre Lorde is Emerson’s Poet, Fully Realized,” Christina Katopodis, City University of New York
2. “‘Cool Starry Nights’ and Fanciful Female Flights: Sarah Helen Whitman and Julia Deane Freeman on Emerson,” Catherine Kunce, University of Colorado-Boulder
3. “Du Bois as the American Poet,” Amy Yue-Yin Chan, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
4. “Disillusionment and the Loss of Transcendental Peace in Sylvia Plath’s Bee Poetry,” Adyson Ross, East Tennessee State University

Emerson in Conversation II: Emerson Now

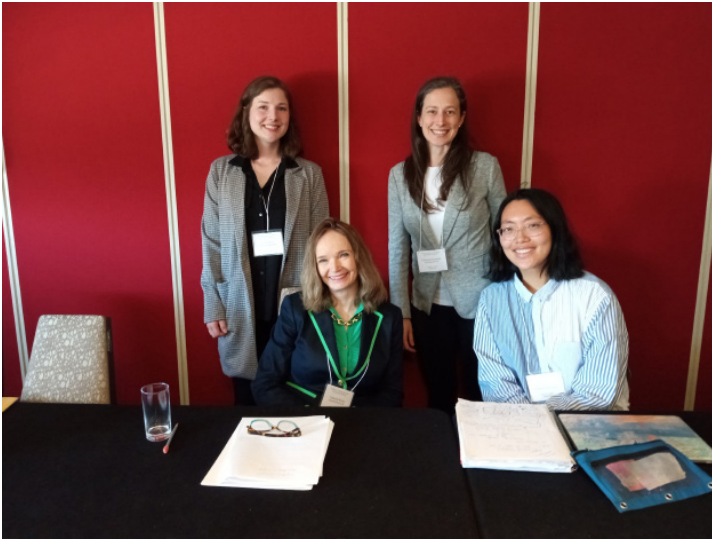
Chair: Randall Fuller, University of Kansas

1. “Emerson, Motion Pictures, and the Poetry of Things,” Bill Scalia, St. Mary’s Seminary & University
2. “Emerson, Brady, and the Uses of Monumental Portraiture,” Nicolas Bloechl, Boston University
3. “What It Means to Be an American: The Conversation from Emerson to Baldwin,” Anthony P. Pennino, Stevens Institute of Technology
4. “Organic Scholars, American Intellectuals: R.W. Emerson’s Critical Consciousness in Dialogue with Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire,” Daphne Orlandi, Sapienza – University of Rome Technische Universität Dortmund

Editing Emerson: A Roundtable

Chair: Prentiss Clark, University of South Dakota

1. Noelle Baker, Independent Scholar
2. Leslie Eckel, Suffolk University
3. Christopher Hanlon, Arizona State University
4. Sarah Wider, Emeritus, Colgate University



Emerson in Conversation I

Left to right: Adyson Ross, Christina Katopodis, Catherine Kunce, and Amy Yue-Yin



Emerson in Conversation II

Left to right: Bill Scalia, Daphne Orlandi, Nicolas Bloechl, and Anthony P. Pennino



Editing Emerson

Light to left: Ron Bosco, Leslie Eckel, Sarah Weidner, Chris Hanlon (on screen: Noelle Baker)

Letter to RWES Membership

Fall 2023

Dear Emerson Society members and friends,

“[D]o your work, and I shall know you” (CW II: 32). Emerson Society officers, board members, committee members, and supporters have been busy. I write to share with you and to celebrate several recent developments and endeavors, one of which requires your vote (see paragraph four).

The Society has aimed during the past few years to converse with broader audiences—scholars and students of Emerson both within and outside of academia. This aim continues to find form in the Transparent Eyeball Blog (including six series of short essays that explore topics ranging from Emerson and the pandemic, to Emerson and race, to Emerson and pedagogy); the Undergraduate Essay Prize (now in its fourth year); a redesigned website thanks to Emily Clark (an advertisement-free and accessible home for Emerson Society communications, including an improved membership page with an automatic renewal option); and involvement in a wider range of conferences. For instance, in 2022 and 2023 the Emerson Society organized panels for PAMLA, C19, the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy (SAAP), the American Literature Association, and the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering.

I’m especially delighted to announce the upcoming launch of *The Dial: A Journal of the Emerson Society*, co-founded by Chris Hanlon and Michael Weisenburg, sponsored by the Emerson Society, and supported by a generous donation from the Emerson Memorial Association. The initial proposal for this journal sparked larger conversations about the mission and health of the Emerson Society. These discussions focused on the role of the Emerson Society Papers, the state of Emerson studies, RWES finances, the relationship between RWES and *The Dial*, and the resources needed to ensure the health of both RWES and an ambitious new journal.

Conversations lasted for several years: the RWES Officers gathered and reviewed feedback from members and from past Society leaders, Chris and Michael drafted multiple versions of *The Dial* proposal, and ad hoc committees worked on everything from finances to The

Dial’s mission statement. Thanks to the work of Chris, Michael, past-President Bonnie Carr O’Neill, Secretary/Treasurer Peter Balaam, Randall Fuller, Christina Katopodis, Nick Guardiano, Anita Patterson, Austin Bailey, and Georgia Walton, and thanks to a unanimous vote in June 2023, *The Dial* will launch this year. The mission statement reads as follows:

“A biannual publication of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, *The Dial* publishes essays, reviews, review essays, and creative works on Emerson, transcendentalism, and the cultures of nineteenth-century America and beyond that shaped and were shaped by both. As Henry David Thoreau remarked of the original publication (1840-44), *The Dial* serves as a “circular” connecting leading and newer scholars while engaging the various, often competing exchanges and explorations that energize the wider fields of American literary, philosophical, and cultural studies. We invite scholarship that engages and intersects a variety of fields, forms, and geographical locations.

In keeping with the history of *The Dial*—which, during the 1920s, was an important venue for debate and daring innovation among the avant-gardes—the editors also seek to engage creatives and the broader public of readers and thinkers who are influenced by and interested in the Transcendentalists and how they relate to our own cultural moment and personal lives. In addition to traditional academic essays, the editors are interested in roundtable fora focused on discrete aspects of what Emerson called “The Times”—cultural, professional, national, or global. As a means of responding to emergent and topical lines of inquiry, *The Dial* also welcomes submissions in nonacademic genres, poetry, experimental nonfiction, and audio-visual works that are inspired by the work of Emerson or other transcendentalists.”

This journal is a peer-reviewed, online, open-access journal indexed in Project Muse. In order to guarantee regular communication between *The Dial* and the Emerson Society, the Board voted to establish a new Emerson Society Officer Position—Dial Correspondent—to be held by the Editor of *The Dial*. **A vote from you, the Society membership, is needed to approve**

this position. Please see the enclosed ballot, also sent to you via email. If you would like to learn more about *The Dial* and/or are interested in contributing work or serving as a book reviewer, please contact Dr. Chris Hanlon (Christopher.Hanlon@asu.edu). Donations to support this venture are greatly appreciated <https://emersonsociety.org/membership/>.

In response to the Society's increased activity, Emerson society leadership and members present at the May 2023 Business meeting approved two amendments to the Society Bylaws:

- A Program Committee, replacing the Program Chairs, not only better distributes the labor needed to support multiple events but also invites persons working in various areas of Emerson studies to propose and organize Society programs.
- The Media Committee, extant and active for several years, is now formally included in the Bylaws. This committee consists of representatives from diverse institutions in the U.S. and abroad.

The individuals on these committees bring a range of interests and perspectives that will help the Society to open new circles of conversation.

Finally, a special thank you to Peggy Isaacson, now retired, for her inestimable decades-long service to the Society; to Bay Bancroft, now retired, for her long-time service as representative of the Emerson Memorial

Association and for her recent donation to the Society; and to Michael Weisenburg, upcoming RWES President, for his years of work as both web editor and editor of ESP. Welcome to Leslie Morris, our new Emerson Memorial Association representative on the Advisory Board, and here's to the incoming ESP leadership: Mark Gallagher and Kathleen Crosby (Co-Editors) and Todd Richardson (Book Review Editor).

It's been a pleasure and privilege to serve the Emerson Society and to work with fellow Emersonians from around the world. 2024 looks promising. Serge Grigoriev and Nick Guardiano finalized a panel for SAAP in March—"Emerson & the Future of Philosophy: A Conversation," with Branka Arsić, David LaRocca, John Lysaker, and Albert R. Spencer—Thomas Howard and Kathleen Crosby are editing an "Emerson and Artificial Intelligence" series for the Transparent Eyeball, and perhaps in the new year we will celebrate the publication of *The Oxford Handbook of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (edited by Chris Hanlon) and *The New Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (edited by Michael Jonik).

"Onward and onward!"



Prentiss Clark
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Associate Professor, University of South Dakota
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(Continued from page 1)

prescient interest in the classical religious and literary traditions of China, Persia and, most especially, Hindu India” (373-4).

Given the theme of the two “Emerson in Conversation” panels at this past American Literature Association conference in Boston, perhaps it is fitting to listen again to Hodder’s account of Emerson, Fuller, Thoreau, and traditions of religious experience. These transcendentalists, in Hodder’s terms, “would have conceived their various episodes of heightened religious experience explicitly in universalist and perennialist terms, particularly as they became better acquainted with Asian religious and philosophical sources....Nevertheless, the particular rhetorical form in which they presented them...continues to bear the distinctive stamp of an older Christian sensibility and style...In short, in viewing the expressions of these Transcendentalists’ religious experience as a whole, we are as much struck by the variations and change in the literary record, as by the affinities, parallels, and continuities” (18-19). It is with great joy that we thank Alan Hodder for scholarship that cheers, raises, and guides conversation within and beyond the circles of American Transcendentalism.

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RWES Board Meeting Minutes
Friday, 26 May 2023 / 9:00 am Eastern
via zoom

Prentiss Clark, presiding. In attendance: Austin Bailey, Peter Balaam, Bonnie Carr O'Neill, Randall Fuller, Serge Grigoriev, Nicholas Guardiano, Christopher Hanlon, Thomas Howard, Christina Katopodis, Anita Patterson, Michael Weisenburg

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Prentiss acknowledged out-going and new members of the Board. Thanks went to Randall Fuller, Christina Katopodis, and Bay Bancroft, now cycling off the Board; special welcomes to Leslie Morris (Emerson Memorial Association representative); Daphne Orlandi, Kathleen Crosby, and Thomas Howard (Media Committee); and to Mark Gallagher, Serge Grigoriev, and Bill Scalia (Program committee).

Board Members introduced themselves briefly in the Zoom call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (Peter)

Acknowledging that we currently have no standard means for circulating Board Meetings Minutes (May and October each year) to Board members for approval, Peter promised imminent innovations involving a Shared GoogleDrive for the RWES Board which will make such things easy. For this year, he briefly summarized the contents of the May and October Board Meeting Minutes and the Board approved his verbal account.

TREASURER/SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT (Peter)

Discussion: In response to Peter's acknowledgment of standard PayPal fees of about 4.7% of gross donations, Christina suggested that the Society, as 501c3, might qualify for PayPal's reduced fees for non-profit entities.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Annual Awards

Graduate Student Award to Amy Yue-Yin Chan, "Du-bois as the American Poet"

Research Grant to Jeonghun Choi, "The Sage from Concord Travels to Tokyo: Japanese Readings of Emerson in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries"

Pedagogy/Community Project to Carolina Maciel, "Faith, Loss and Emerson through the Americas"

Undergraduate Essays (two winners):

Steven Gaunt "Emerson and Self-Improvement: where poetry can take us" Dayne Patillo, "The Emersonian Relationship Between Universals and Particulars in Whitman's Free Verse"

Barbara Packer Fellowship to Alice de Galzain for a book project based on her dissertation, "Rewriting the Life of an 'Ultra-Radical': Margaret Fuller, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli (1852)."

Distinguished Achievement Award to Alan Hodder (Professor Emeritus of Comparative Religion, Hampshire College)

On behalf of Leslie Morris, Prentiss announced that the Houghton Library at Harvard University would like to draw the Society's attention to the Ralph Waldo Emerson Fellowship, one of several Houghton Library Visiting Fellowships supporting opportunities to undertake in-depth research on Houghton Library holdings. Leslie asked that RWES help to publicize this award, which has not been receiving applications. <https://library.harvard.edu/grants-fellowships/houghton-library-visiting-fellowships>

2. Program Chair Report (Prentiss for Yves Gardes)

PAMLA: Oct 26-29 in Portland, OR / Conference title: "Shifting Perspectives"

TAG: July 12-16 in Concord / An RWES-sponsored panel, "Fates, Fortunes, and Resources in the Postbellum Republic," moderated by Peter Balaam, scheduled for Friday, July 14, 7:30-9:00

A new Program Committee strategy: To make more tractable the Program Committee's work of organizing for the annual round of conferences, each member on the committee will take responsibility for a single conference in 2023-24—TAG, PAMLA, C19, ALA, etc. Yves has begun a chart/calendar for committee members to contribute to.

Joel Myerson Memorial Lecture (Michael)

In a joint venture, the Emerson, Fuller, Thoreau, and Alcott Societies and the Association for Documentary Editing have launched an annual lecture series to be held at the Concord Free Library each year in memory of Joel Myerson.

- The lectureship covers the costs of travel and housing for both the lecturer and a representative of the sponsoring society, and offers the lecturer a modest honorarium.
- The annual lecture should offer innovative scholarly approaches for a general audience, highlighting the archival, bibliographic, and textual editing emphases of Joel Myerson's legacy.
- The inaugural lecture, this past April, was delivered by Megan Marshall and well attended.
- From here on out, on a rotating basis, the lecturer will be named by one of the conjoined societies and it was agreed in April that the Emerson Society shall go next, naming a lecturer for April of 2024. More soon, but we will need to propose 3 candidates.

3. Media Committee (Michael & Christina)

The Society holding steady in its presence on Facebook and Twitter among shifting platform algorithms and the constant need to push content. We continue to see results in the form of increased traffic to the Website and the Transparent Eyeball blog. Both numbers and quality of submissions to ESP are up and seem in some ways to stem from social media traffic.

An on-going need for greater clarity about roles on this committee and ways to share labor.

BUSINESS/DISCUSSION

1. Discussion of new website restructured and designed by Emily Clark. General approbation mixing with agreement to hire Emily for another guided clean-up and another quarter year (at cost of \$200) to hone the redesign achieved so far.

2. Amendments to the RWES bylaws

[Board needed to vote to approve a general membership vote in response to two proposed changes at the Business Meeting on Saturday]

a. New structure for the Program Committee

b. Adding the Media Committee to the RWES bylaws

There was some discussion/debate about the necessity and desirability of a specifying tendency of these amendments: is it too much and counter-productive?

Is the work of such a committee always enhanced by greater specificity in the creation of new bureaucratic roles with titles and in the specifying of numbers for minimal make-up of the committee? On one hand: if the committee is functioning adequately, a more limber and pragmatic approach may be desirable; on the other, we see from growing annual workload on committee members that the Program Committee needs to be knit into the structure of the Society, as well as both more people and more clearly specified roles.

3. Discussion of Revised Proposal for The Dial

Chris Hanlon offered a quick overview of last year's deliberations at the ALA in Chicago and developments since as conveyed in the latest revision to The Dial proposal (20 May 23). The major topics of discussion were: 1) the necessity of placing The Dial with Project Muse since there are other platforms such as Scholar Commons and 2) the Society's meeting the expense of doing so:

On the necessity of Project Muse (PM):

- The value of the labor that PM would offer for that annual expenditure is considerable—PM can do at scale with ease a lot of the back-end work associated with publication that we would find impossible to maintain ourselves on Scholar Commons.

- The prestige we would want to develop around The Dial would depend upon its being known, cited, researchable—and PM offers this

On the Society meeting such an annual expense, a few possible changes:

- Redirecting funds from prizes that no longer get much traffic [Subvention & Pedagogy/Community] as a better use of \$1000

- Revisiting the Membership Levels cost-structures, which are way behind inflation and have never been changed in the Society's 30+ years

Other facets of the discussion of the revised Dial proposal:

- Some were unconvinced that the unplugging of the current array of annual prizes and their cash awards would not be a significant loss to the Society's public presenting face

- Some expressed concern that there be more significant overlap of the Society on the Editorial Board of The Dial and of the Editorial Board on the Society than the current proposal calls for

In the interest of time, we approved a motion to continue this conversation in early June.

NEW BOARD MEMBER NOMINATIONS

Prentiss announced nominations of John Lysacker and Alice de Galzain as at-large Board Members and Christina Katopodis as Web Editor.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Additional \$100 for awarding of a second Undergraduate Essay prize--- Approved

\$250 annual donation to TAG—Approved

Additional \$200 to hire services of Emily Clark for some fine-tuning and one more quarter of work—Approved

Forwarding proposed Amendments to the Bylaws to Business Meeting for Membership approval—Approved

Proposal to table further discussion of the revised Dial proposal until a date in June [tbd]—Approved

Nominations of John Lysacker and Alice de Galzain to the Board and of Christina Katopodis as Web Editor-- Approved

Emerson Society October 2023 Board Meeting 20 October 2023 On Zoom

(In attendance: Prentiss Clark, presiding; Austin Bailey, Peter Balaam, Bonnie Carr O'Neill, Alice de Galzain, Mark Gallagher, Christina Katopodis, Daphne Orlandi, Anita Patterson, Michael Weisenburg.)

Introductions and news of new board members, John Lysaker and Alice de Galzain

1-- Emerson bust donated by the Little family

(A Vote required / postponed for now to gather more information)

--the proposal: to move the bust of Emerson (given by David Little's family) currently housed at Gianetti Studio in Maryland to the Emerson House in Concord.

--a question: who pays Gianetti's fee of \$400 for the creation of the cast (a surprise to us)

The Board discussed the partial awkwardness and surprises of our current situation:

First, for a society with no bricks-and-mortar offices or location to receive the gift of, and proudly display, a marble bust, we have not quite known how to receive this donation from Members. The thought developed a few years ago that the gift could be a potential fund raiser. The thinking was, the donated original could be

used to create a cast for producing (at Gianetti's) subsequent copies and interested Society Members able to order such for a fee, with some extra amount of each going to the Society.

It turns out that, even before we know about the price of copies, we have some doubts about how many people or institutions or anyone will actually want a copy of a marble bust.

Meanwhile, the cast has been made and Gianetti is looking for \$400 for that already accomplished labor.

The donor, David Little's father has died, so an announcement of the gift in ESP is warranted, and that announcement could include indications that copies are available and at what prices.

Speaking as Treasurer, Peter indicated that the Society has over \$9000 in liquid assets and we could probably afford to eat this \$400 surprise expense. Instead of a vote, we discussed contacting Joseph Urbas again as well as Greg Gianetti and researching whether the organization at Bush, the Emerson house in Concord, would be interested in receiving the original bust from the Society. We ended this discussion with hopes that with more information we should be able to sort out the best next steps. After the meeting adjourned, Mark Gallagher's expression of no confidence in Gianetti's services, led to further discussion of whether we should cut our losses and simply pay the \$400 owed to Gianetti, and seek to get the bust from Gianetti Studios (in Maryland) to Bush.

2—Website update Christina Katopodis, Web Editor)

Discussion of following up with Emily Clark, whose website redesign is in the final stages. Once launched, Christina will propose to the Board a "clicking" party, by which traffic brought to the new website will promote it in Google searches.

3—Program Committee (Mark Gallagher)

Update on upcoming conference panels

PAMLA, October 26-29, 2023, Portland, Oregon
Emersonian Perspectives

- Harrison Dietzman (George Fox University), "All men divine": Gnostic Political Theology in Emerson's Antebellum Essays

- Jeonghun Choi (Harvard University), "Nation-

al Literature as a Transnational Affair: Iwano Homei's Reading of Emerson and Wang Yangming"

- Susan Dunston (New Mexico Tech), "Emerson on Making Shift"

SAAP, March 28-30, 2024, Boston, MA

Emerson & the Future of Philosophy: A Conversation

- Branka Arsic (Columbia University), "Emerson's Materialisms"

- David LaRocca (Author, editor; Ithaca, NY), "The Questions of the Times"

- John Lysaker (Emory University), "Philosophy After Emerson"

- Albert R. Spencer (Portland State University), "Emerson's Global Significance"

C19, March 14-16, 2024, Pasadena, CA (if the panel is accepted)

The End(s) of Originality?: The Transcendentalists and AI

- Jason de Stefano (University of Chicago), "The Nature of Artifice and the Use of Intelligence"

- Jenna Gersie (University of Colorado Boulder), "Alexa—Shall I not have intelligence with the earth?: Sustainability, Surveillance, and Nineteenth-Century Smart Homes"

- Maurice Lee (Boston University), "Prediction and Originality: AI and Emerson"

- Mark Noble (Georgia State University), "Spiral Tendencies, Electric Elements: Emerson and Fuller on General Intelligence"

Yves Gardes is unable to organize panels for ALA. Austin Bailey volunteered to assist Thomas Howard who is organizing "Emerson and William James" as part of his attempt to welcome the William James Society into ALA. The second ALA panel is "Emerson and Varieties of Religious Experience"

4—Media Committee

T. E. Blog (Transparent Eyeball) numbers now in the works on Emerson and AI (Thomas Howard and Kathleen Crosby will co-edit)

Those who submitted proposals in response to the CFP for C19 conference but were not accepted to the panel were immediately offered a spot in the blog for their work. Nine potential submissions

5—Awards Committee

Georgia Walton has had to step down from Awards Committee, leaving Austin. Anita Patterson offered to serve with Austin on the Awards Committee.

Discussion and confirmation of May 1 deadline for submissions for awards; of adding awards information for 2023-24 to the Fall number of ESP; and of asking those who convene the ALA and TAG panels to join Austin and Anita on Awards committee as the judges for the Graduate Student Conference Paper Award (given to a grad student who will present on a RWES panel at ALA or TAG)

6—ESP

Krissie West, slated to become the new editor of ESP, has had to withdraw for health reasons

Michael Weisenburg will stay on for another year. Past-President Bonnie Carr O'Neill, also asked to help out, expressed willingness as well as underscored the need for a successor, and generally the ongoing needs for a deeper bench of people willing and able to undertake such tasks in the work of the Society.

Discussion: of setting clear limits to Editor's term; of whether to put out a call to the Membership.

Mark Gallagher expressed interest. Kathleen Crosby's and Todd Richardson's names were floated. While we have never had co-editors of ESP, Christina reported that co-editors currently turn out the Fuller Society newsletter

7—Other Issues?

Michael Weisenburg reported a little on The Dial launch in the works and Prentiss reported to the Board the gift received of \$1000 from the Emerson Memorial Association for off-setting the first year's annual subscription to Project Muse

Peter Balaam commented on the Membership season, renewals season approaching, and put out a general appeal for doing more reaching out and recruiting new members. A suggestion that we reach out to all contributors to new anthologies of Emerson criticism edited by Michael Jonik and Chris Hanlon.

Brief discussion of Peter's hosting our storing, accessing, and sharing documents relevant to Society business in Shared Google Drives.

Meeting adjourned at about 4:00 pm (Central)

REVIEWS

Writing Pain in the Nineteenth-Century United States. Thomas Constantinesco. Oxford University Press, 2022. 266 pp. £60.00 paperback.

Considering the ubiquitousness of pain in the nineteenth-century United States, Thomas Constantinesco's monograph is devoted to rethinking literature's relation to pain but also reads as an invitation to reframe our relationship with pain, which is so "familiar and yet strangely ungraspable" (2). In this thorough and original contribution to pain studies, Constantinesco looks at pain from a specific viewpoint—"Writing Pain is concerned with the intermingling of suffering, writing, and thinking" (21). He thoughtfully engages with the existing scholarship while proposing a refreshing outlook on pain, which he views as somewhat "productive."

Pain is generative because it forces the writer to create new language, Constantinesco explains, but it soon becomes evident to the reader that it is also methodologically generative for the critic, who is able to read canonical works from new perspectives and establish original links between well-known texts and other lesser-known works from the nineteenth century. Henry James' "A Most Extraordinary Case," which was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1867, is among the texts that most readers probably won't have read before; Alice James' diary might similarly be new to some—overshadowed by her two brothers Henry and William, Alice's writings were long forgotten by posterity, a fate which resembles that of so many other nineteenth-century female intellectuals.

Writing Pain's six chapters each focus on a different author: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Harriet Jacobs, Emily Dickinson, Henry James, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and Alice James. Constantinesco's analyses are firmly anchored within the texts they consider; each close reading ensures that pain is viewed as a literary, complex entity. While chapter 1 (on Emerson) is "intended as an introduction to thinking the problems of pain with literature" (21), chapters 2 and 3 (on Jacobs and Dickinson) and chapters 4 and 5 (on James and Phelps) function as diptychs. Constantinesco's focus on Alice James, in chapter 6, rejoins the monograph's initial analysis through a "diaristic account of feminine pain" (26), while the Coda "returns to the ways literary

forms produce and circulate our thinking about the function of pain in individual and social formations" (26).

Considered as movement, Constantinesco's reading of pain as a notion that circulates allows him to alternate between theoretical insights and socio-historical analyses of pain in literature. Race, gender, and class are among the factors that make up the complexities of the authors' relationship to pain and determine their engagement or resistance to sentimentalism. While analyzing the authors' subjective relationship to pain, the monograph simultaneously considers texts about pain as theorizations of pain.

In chapter 1, Constantinesco examines the internal paradoxes that constitute Emerson's philosophy of pain, which evolved through the years, as he reflected first on the notion of grief and then on the physical pain of slavery. He also considers Emerson's stance a paradox of sorts: "the fiction of pain-free disembodiment reveals a sense of white masculine privilege which testifies to the continued centrality of embodiment in Emerson's racialized and gendered thinking about pain" (3). Despite the highly problematic nature of Emerson's approach, Constantinesco's analysis is not aimed at passing a moral judgment. Rather, and in a more productive manner, he utilizes Emerson's approach to pain as an echo chamber for the rest of the work.

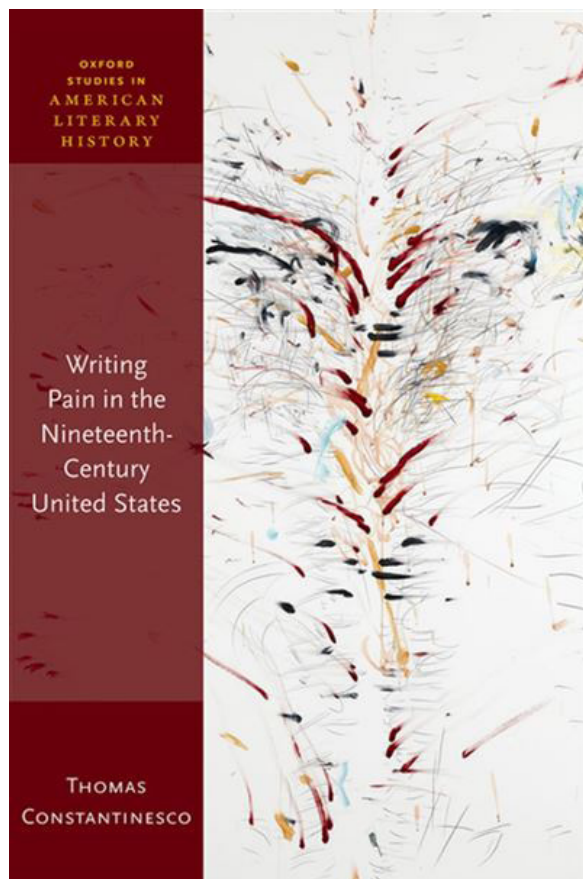
Indeed, chapters 2 and 3 "provide complementary responses to the problems and paradoxes that Emerson's economy of pain contributes to identifying, while re-articulating many of the binarisms on which this economy hinges" (57-58). For Jacobs and Dickinson, just like for Emerson, the trajectory of pain goes from individual to community (although pain doesn't disappear). Each section is engaged in a dialog about what pain is and how it is written about: for Jacobs, pain becomes a way of reclaiming her individuality. And while she uses pain to recuperate self-identity, "the writing of pain is inextricable from the pain of writing" (82). In Dickinson's poetics, the solitude of the poet is juxtaposed with the Civil War and the collective dimension of grief.

Also focused on the Civil War, James' "Most Extraordinary Case" introduces queerness as a model of resistance to predominant, collective interpretations of pain. Constantinesco's take is compelling as he showcases how the story "queers the veteran's pain, imagining it as the touchstone for a community of men to come into being, however fleetingly" (135). Phelps' *The Gates Ajar*, another tragic narration of wartime

suffering, offers a testimony of the emotional reality of subaltern people “as it foregrounds the corporeality of pain for women and queries the material consequences of their embodied grief” (147). The last chapter of *Writing Pain* is devoted to Alice James, whose “diary appears as a site where the intimate and the social life of pain are constantly being negotiated and problematized” (174). In it, Constantinesco emphasizes the power of James’ stoic self-positioning: “She both is and refuses to be simply a being in pain” (178).

Constantinesco’s focus on and acceptance of “pain’s messiness and indirection” (207) in *Writing Pain* feels honest and compelling. The book’s structure, as well as its dynamic argumentation, constitute a particularly productive reading experience, one that encourages the reader to keep thinking and keep adding to Constantinesco’s fascinating catalog of expressions of pain in nineteenth-century American literature.

Alice de Galzain
University of Edinburgh



NORDIC INFLUENCE ON EMERSON’S SELF-RELIANCE. Elizabeth S. Scofield. Janaway Publishing, Inc. 2021. 188 pp. £24.54 hardcover.

Nordic Influence on Emerson’s Self-Reliance, by Elizabeth Scofield, examines the Sage of Concord’s inheritance of Scandinavian and Nordic culture and mythology—in particular, medieval Norse culture’s role in shaping Emersonian self-reliance, which, Scofield speculates, may have derived from Emerson’s encounters with Viking-Age myths. Scofield’s book is unlike any book I have read. Rather than presenting her research in the expected format of a traditional scholarly monograph, Scofield offers an autobiographical account of her experience pursuing a Ph.D. at Roskilde University in Denmark, which coincided with her time as a visiting researcher at Harvard under the tutelage of some big names in transcendentalist scholarship: Lawrence Buell and Ronald A. Bosco. Scofield also includes her research proposal to Roskilde University, as well as an unfinished draft of her dissertation. Thus, much of the writing in the book retains its unfinished form—a point Scofield herself disarmingly remarks on: “My prose in this book, both past and present, is not perfectly written. However the research is solid” (iv). Indeed, one of the remarkably frustrating aspects of Scofield’s experience that emerges in her narrative retelling is the extent to which she as a beginning scholar was let down by institutions that could have done more to support her development. Scofield’s narrative is useful in that it offers a vulnerability of access, i.e., an inside look at the equally exciting and challenging vicissitudes of pursuing a career in academia.

The bulk of Scofield’s research is archival and concerns items located at the Old Manse: the famed Concord home built by Emerson’s grandfather. Scofield details a few key examples corroborating her thesis about the Viking origins of Emerson’s thinking, such as the book *Travels into Norway, Denmark, and Russia, in the Years 1799, 1789, 1790, and 1791* by Andrew Swinton, a travel narrative distilling Scandinavian lore and culture from an English point of view. Scofield notes that this item was marked with an 1822 auction notice, which suggests its having belonged to the estate of William Emerson and thus circulating within the Emerson family. Scofield also points to items like the *Encyclopedia Britannica* that the Emerson family owned and used—one volume in particular, as she notes, containing “a leaf found on the page of Saxony and Scandinavia”—as well

as books on the ancient Danes Emerson checked out from the Harvard library in 1847 (49, 68). These examples, among several others, make a compelling case for Emerson's active interest in Nordic culture and underscore the extent to which nineteenth-century America took a widening interest in "Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse" (69).

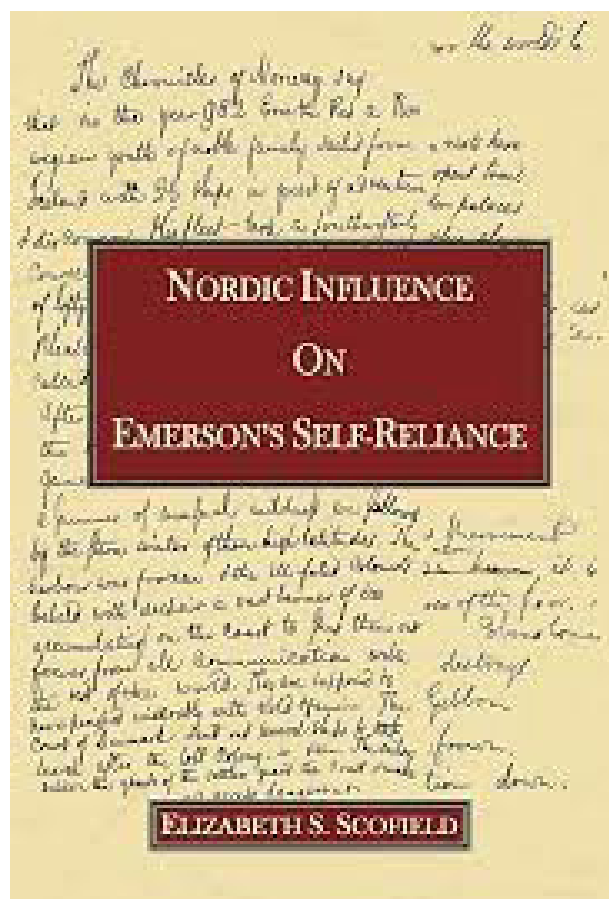
Scofield's book is at its best when it is able to capture the élan of intellectual discovery, that is, when the reader moves along with its narrator to mimetically uncover what she uncovers. Scofield's ideas are undeniably unique, yet the book's unfinished, processual nature raises certain questions. For instance, why exactly were Emerson and his circle so taken with Viking and Nordic cultures, and what might such investments on their part suggest about the Transcendentalist movement's iterative conceptions of race, especially whiteness and Saxonism? Scofield alludes to this question, claiming that "Emerson was concerned about the issue of race, and hereditary traits" (142), yet leaves such allusions largely suggestive.

Scofield's project is noticeably empirical, which is partly what makes her narrative exciting, as we are transported to the Old Manse to find what has been hiding in plain sight the whole time. Yet in their current form her archival investigations remain preliminary, as when Scofield writes: "If the Viking Age belief was self-reliance (as was noted by Andrew Wawn), and consequently a British/English trait was also self-reliance (as noted in Barbara Packer's essay), then that may have also been the then identified source of self-reliance that helped shape the entire philosophical backbone which infiltrated all of Emerson's works" (44). If this is true, for instance – and we have no particular reason to doubt that it is – then how does such new information complicate, contest, or redefine our current receptions of Emersonian self-reliance?

The question that kept popping up for me as I read about Scofield's interesting research was: How do these Nordic influences on, or origins of, self-reliance reshape our conception of self-reliance in relation to the way self-reliance has been understood as both a philosophical and political theory by critics and intellectual historians over the past 20-30 years? Also, it was my sense while reading that Scofield's research—which is indeed unique as well as richly suggestive—opens the door to broader historiographical conversations about the implications of the nineteenth century's interest in and reconstruction of medieval Scandinavian sources. To me, this seems like an equal parts important and under-examined aspect of nineteenth-century

American (and Anglophone) identity formation, one in which Emerson sits right at the center. Scofield identifies her book's purpose as presenting her research in order to, perhaps, lay the groundwork for future projects. One hopes that in the future Scofield, and possibly others, will continue to examine this under-served topic.

Austin Bailey
CUNY Graduate Center



“Emerson and Self-Improvement: where poetry can take us”

Stephen G. Gaunt

Than anytime before
More, better
When different, somehow
Than anytime before
Birds like, leaves like, water like
Drowning
Than anytime before
The levee broke, the bomb dropped down, the
rumor
More, better
When hidden, somehow
Bedridden, but breathing, and sleeping, getting
Better, more so
Than anytime before
Richer, thicker, deeper in mind
Unhidden like
Owls in holes in trees, like moles poking out,
like the first sliver of moon
Promising more
Than anytime before
The first kiss, running faster
Forward, whole, like
Statues, like ideas, not like you, who
Better, more now
Since you, now flesh, now here, now you
Arisen through words
Richer, thicker, full of life
More so, and more so, and more so
Speaking, different, somehow, saying
Trying here to say
Better, you, like you better
Than time, better you
Than anytime before

There is a lesson we never learn for good, no matter how many times it's taught: we are capable of richer, fuller lives. In poetry, we find frequent reminders—that the lows of human ex-

perience do not add up to nothing; that, everywhere, there is growth from our limitations. It is precisely because we cannot reach out and grasp eternal truth in a lasting way that we can also improve ourselves. There is no growth without fault, no correction without fallibility. What links Emerson's writing is this constant push towards improvement, whatever state we are in. Though he often goes to our lows, he cannot resist the urge to push us towards something better. Accordingly, this paper will both consider the drive towards self-improvement in Emerson's work, and highlight how poetry helps provide it.

In the same span of time where his son died and he wrote “Experience,” Emerson also finished “The Poet.” In his biography of Emerson, Richardson says, “Waldo's death may have permanently saddened Emerson by removing part of his capacity for hope, but the evidence of ‘The Poet’ is that the loss of Waldo forced Emerson back into a kind of activity that heals” (375). In Emerson's essay on Montaigne, he says, “Let a man learn to look for the permanent in the mutable and fleeting...though abyss open under abyss, and opinion displace opinion, all are at last contained in the eternal Cause” (*Collected Works* IV, 105). In other words, even in the darkest moments, there is a connection to something larger. With an orientation towards the “gods still sitting around” us, even when we cannot see them, there is a path out of the cyclical lows; there is a path to new knowledge, to an improved self (Emerson, *Essays and Poems*, 414).

What is so special about Emerson is that throughout his work, he keeps the highs and lows. He expresses both without dismissing either. Both have their standing in the course of our lives, so any philosophy which is to apply to human experiences lying even hours apart

must cover similar breadths. It is not enough to be a skeptic or poet alone, so Emerson writes of Montaigne and Shakespeare; it is not enough to live by general or particular views alone, so Emerson engages both separately, and writes of them together in “Nominalist and Realist.”

Importantly, in all these pursuits, Emerson is never idle. There is never a dead thought. When we are in a numbing stasis, he does what Lysaker says Emerson wanted from all writing—he provokes us (23-24). And when we are soaring to new heights, he still provokes us, but not to bring us down. The greatest thing we can ask of any philosophy, of any poetry, of any company, is that it improves us, from whatever state we are in. When we are too anxious or uncertain, we need new directions and perspectives to stabilize us; when we are too care-free and certain, we need a jolt that pushes us into deeper questioning. Great writing reaches us like a friend who suggests ways to improve, and recognizes that the way to that improvement isn’t always criticism. It is in this push for improvement that the highs and lows, and the effort to write about them, reconcile themselves.

Still far from “The Poet,” Emerson’s “Circles” takes a more positive view on our limitations—one that gives greater depth to the last line of “Experience” (“the true romance which the world exists to realize will be the transformation of genius into practical power”) (Emerson, *Essays and Poems*, 254). Here, Emerson once again returns to our powers of expansion. Accordingly, the main point of “Circles” is this: though we constantly run into our limitations, we also confront them and grow through new generalizations. Each generalization is vulnerable to being overturned by a new one, yet it is in that process that we improve. Explaining why we read Emerson, Lysaker says, “[W]e keep the company we do...because it promises a deep-

ened self-knowledge whose translation into practical power provides a life more fully lived, that is, one with richer and deeper relations” (17). At the base of it all, no matter what point the reader is at, lies the potential for self-improvement, human growth, human flourishing.

Thus, the relation of growth and personal improvement to poetry is one, like all writing, of provocation and the breaking of habits. Emerson says, “People wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them” (*Essays and Poems*, 211). And this is exactly what The Poet does. Emerson says, “He smites and arouses me with his shrill tones, breaks up my whole chain of habits, and I open my eye on my own possibilities” (*Essays and Poems*, 207). When we find ourselves caught in the monotony described in “Experience,” Poetic writing can carry us out. By working through human lows in a way that engages the imagination, poets open our minds to possibilities we hadn’t considered.

In contemporary poetry, there is an unprecedented expansion of voices, such that people who had fewer of their particular conditions recognized in the past can now experience elevation specific to their hardship. The twenty-fourth Poet Laureate of the United States, Ada Limón, for instance, deals specifically with womanhood and Latina identity. In a poem entitled “Wife,” she balances the connotations of the word with her lived feelings as someone who’s been labeled with it:

Housewife,
fishwife, bad wife, good wife, what’s
the word for someone who stares long
into the morning, unable to even fix tea
some days, the kettle steaming over
loud like a train whistle, she who cries
in the mornings

(Limón, lines 13-19)

Limón remains fully aware of where she comes from, all-the-while opening a world that all readers can share in and improve from. She does this both by complicating the more straight-forward message with the resultant feelings of inaptitude that wifehood brings on, and by creating a poetic harmony that hits at our shared humanity.

To improve from poetry, however, readers cannot fully rely on brilliant poets like Limón. Though poems really can and do change our lives for the better, the ability to create that change relies on the reader's prior efforts, and on their fully engaging in the transition from the poem to practical concerns via action. The former involves, among other things, education that teaches critical thinking, informs us of what references may appear, what symbols are commonly used, and how to go about reading a poem. This education may or may not take place through school, and is often informed by cultural knowledge. The latter, however, is partially mediated by the poem insofar as it creates a push towards a real-world application. This is because poetry, to varying degrees of success, assists in the disposition change that determines how the reader will move forward in their life.

The new disposition formed by the poem is analogous to what William James calls the "strenuous mood." In "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," he says, "The deepest difference, practically, in the moral life of man is the difference between the easy-going and the strenuous mood" (James 214). While James goes on to focus on religion's ability to create the strenuous mood, we can just as easily expand the concept out to poetry. After all, "the contemplation of a work of great art," Emerson says, "draws us into a state of mind which may be called religious" (*Collected Works* VII, 26).

In this way, poetry can achieve Emerson's chief desire from writing. Whether we are in an elevated state or a low one, poetry can point to a new direction and help facilitate the change in disposition that keeps us there. It can act like a friend, consoling us when necessary, and provoking us to an improved sight.

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The Emersonian Relationship Between Universals and Particulars in Whitman's Free Verse

Dayne Patillo

In his address to the Phi Beta Kappa society at Cambridge College, Emerson says that men are not scholars or tradesmen or thinkers. Instead, men give meaning to these words; one is not a blacksmith in essence but rather a man who performs the work of a blacksmith. Moreover, the work of a scholar is not passive; the scholar must be a "Man Thinking" and not merely a bookworm. The poetry of Walt Whitman exemplifies Emerson's literary theory. In his poem "To You," Whitman addresses a universal "you" in the language of particulars. In this poem, Whitman fulfills Emerson's ideals of the active scholar. However, he departs from Emerson's vision through his use of prophetic tone. Through his use of prophetic tone, Whitman assumes the position of a Messiah and Master. While this position as prophet allows Whitman to freely flow between universals and particulars and, therefore, adequately illustrate their Emersonian relationship, it raises questions of poetic authority that Emerson himself raises in the aforementioned address.

One can describe Emerson's "The American Scholar" as an intellectual declaration of independence. In this oration, Emerson calls for a rebirth of education. Scholars should not "accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that they were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books" (II.13). Emerson implores the young students of Cambridge to question arguments of authority that are based upon antiquity; not everything that is old is valuable. In fact, to Emerson, "the one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul." Similarly, Whitman prioritizes this Emersonian action over antiquated academia. In fact, "To You" is a poem characterized by Whitman's actively intimate, physical, and democratic embrace. He makes a universal address to "Whoever," that is, to anyone and everyone,

and then moves into a personal, familiar, and particular conversation with the reader. Through this active conversation, Whitman preaches his gospel of progressive democracy and individualism. He says, "Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that you be my poem" (1). The conceit of Whitman's poem is you, not only the collective, universal you of the world but also as the individual you that is the reader. The fusion of the universal and the particular "you" reflects the American ideal of individualism and egalitarianism working in union with one another. Both Emerson and Whitman believe that, in this way, the poet and the reader foster sympathy between each other and grow an invaluable, distinct relationship based on universals that will in turn inspire sympathy among all men.

Emerson also believes that this call to action will inspire a genius that "looks forward" (12). Emerson writes that "when the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold illusion" (19). The scholar should crave experience "if only for a vocabulary" (25). The more one lives, the more versed he becomes in the language of life itself. Anyone can sit in a library and put words on paper, but not everyone is well-versed in experience, for "[living] is a total act. Thinking is a partial act" (27). Because of this, Emerson would approve of Whitman's visceral dialogue with and insistent entreaties to his reader.

Continuing with the idea of action as a catalyst for art, in a surprisingly Whitmanian fit of passion, Emerson writes "I run eagerly into this resounding tumult. I grasp the hands of those next to me, and take my place in the ring to suffer and to work, taught by an instinct that so shall the dumb abyss be vocal with speech. I pierce its order; I dissipate its fear...I extend my

being, my dominion" (22). It is clear that Emerson also values the democratic notion of man being his own master. As long as man continues to be his own master, the relationship between universals and particulars is preserved. Autonomy connects man with universals while also granting him access to particular experiences, and in order to achieve this relationship, action, specifically the total act of living, must be the motive.

It is evident that Emersonian ideals abound within Whitman's poetry and that Whitman's poetry fulfills Emerson's vision of art. However, Whitman's innovation goes beyond mere free verse; Whitman carefully establishes a Leader/Follower relationship between the poet, the leader, and his reader, the follower. In doing so, Whitman intentionally elevates himself to the status of prophet. This places Whitman in a role of authority, and with this authority, Whitman creates his own type of poetry, that is, free verse. This form of poetry allows Whitman to best explore the relationship between universals and particulars, for free verse is the poetry of universals. Free verse's more liberal form lets the poet imitate natural rhythms in a sort of heightened prose. Free verse is not prose, but rather an elevated imitation of the rhythms of nature. A particular example of this natural rhythm in "To You" occurs in the third stanza. The repetition of "None" keeps both the reader and poet on task during Whitman's explanation of what a poet/reader relationship should be while simultaneously generating a distinct rhythm that gradually gathers force, carrying the reader through the stanza. In this way, the formal aspects of "To You" matches its content; free verse's universal and natural rhythms perfectly correspond to Whitman's portrayal of the universals that man shares with nature and his fellow man.

Whitman uses the language of particulars to point to universals. For example, in "To

You," Whitman uses the particular pronoun "you" to point out universal qualities of human beings in general. Throughout the poem, Whitman shifts his addresses from particular addresses to universal addresses. An instance of this shift occurs in lines 31-33. Here, Whitman "pursues" a particular you, which he describes as having "the shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion" (32). This description of particulars leads Whitman to a list of universals. He describes "the pert apparel, the deformed attitude, drunkenness, greed, premature death" (33). In line 33, Whitman abandons the definite article and turns the reader's attention towards the universal notions of drunkenness, greed, and premature death. Here the reader sees Whitman cleverly use particulars as a segue into a discussion of universals.

But, in order to put himself in an authoritative position to speak about such universals, Whitman takes on the persona of a new Messiah. He will be his readers' fearless leader into the new and uncharted territory of modern American poetry. Rather than a "Man Thinking," Whitman presents himself as a "Prophet Leading." This relationship may be seen as rather ironic; for the amount of emphasis Whitman puts on equality and having an intimate, meaningful relationship with his reader, he takes care to elevate himself just enough to be perceived as an important authority. That being said, readers should not condemn Whitman entirely. He does not claim to be a god. Rather, he claims to be a literary leader. Someone has to step up and lead the public through the wilderness of free verse, and who better to do it than the father of free verse himself?

The radical individualism that Whitman preaches conveys the distinctly democratic spirit of America. However, one could argue that Whitman turns his prophetic tone and literary identity into a type of spiritual identity. This

comes as no surprise from a distinctly American poet, as it reflects America's freedom of religion. In America, one is free to practice any religion, so long as it does not cause harm to one's neighbor. Regardless of whether one views Whitman's prophetic tone as something that creates a spiritual identity, it is important to note that Whitman does not want to create a new religion; he merely exercises his freedom of speech and press to preach his literary gospel, and people have the freedom to practice it. In many of his poems, Whitman rejoices in this precious, beautiful, and idealistically democratic reality. Despite this defense, Emerson may believe that Whitman's literary gospel comes dangerously close to being a new spiritual identity rather than a mere literary movement.

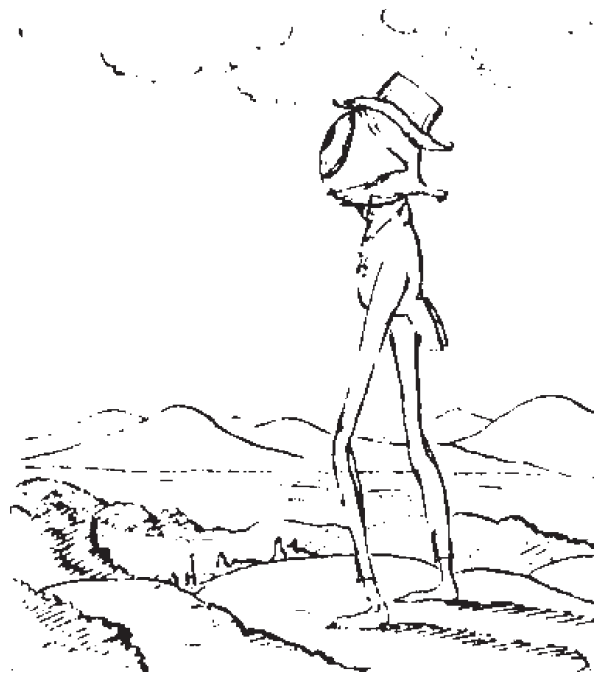
Whitman's poetry is a fulfillment of Emerson's ideals. His uniquely American poetic voice is bold and implores people to foster a spirit of unity with nature and each other. Despite this democratic and American call, Whitman places himself in a position of prophetic authority, allowing him to experiment with many innovative formal aspects. At the time, free verse was a creative and revolutionary form of poetry, and, in his poetry, Whitman achieves the Emersonian ideal of the active scholar through the use of free verse. However, free verse also allows Whitman to forge a literary identity that borders on a spiritual identity by moving between universals and particulars. Even though both Whitman and Emerson have hope for the future of American literature, Emerson gives his listeners a clear warning: America must be careful with exciting innovations. She must be careful who she appoints as literary leaders. Just as "the English dramatic poets have Shakespearized now for two hundred years," American poets must be careful and avoid "Whitmanizing" every piece of literature

that springs forth from the imagination (16). The abuse of free verse and other innovations may very well become America's way of "Shakesperizing" its own literature. So, does America need a literary prophet? Does America need a movement that precariously skirts the line between literary movement and spiritual identity?

Works Cited

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "The American Scholar." American Literature Supplementary Course Packet, compiled by Sarah Berry, Spring 2022, University of Dallas, pp. 8-25.

Whitman, Walt. "To You." American Literature Supplementary Course Packet, compiled by Sarah Berry, Spring 2022, University of Dallas, pp. 88-89.



The Emerson Society 2024 Awards Announcement



Graduate Student Conference Paper Award

Provides \$750 of travel support to present a paper on an Emerson Society panel at the American Literature Association Annual Conference (May 2024) or the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering (July 2024). All proposals should address the 2024 CFPs posted at emersonsociety.org. Please submit a carefully crafted 1-2 page single-spaced conference paper proposal to **Thomas Howard** (thomas.howard@wustl.edu) and **Bill Scalia** (BScalia@stmarys.edu) by **January 12, 2024**. Presenters must become members of the Emerson Society.

Research Award

Provides \$500 towards the completion of outstanding scholarly work on Emerson and the influence of his ideas. The award supports archival research, costs associated with publishing an article, book, or other project-related expenses. We welcome applications from junior scholars and independent scholars as well as established scholars. Please submit a confidential letter of recommendation, and a carefully crafted 1-2 page single-spaced project description, including, where relevant, a summary of project expenses. Please submit applications to **Austin Bailey** (abail@hunter.cuny.edu) **May 1st, 2024**.

RWES Outreach Award (formerly Pedagogy/Community Project Award)

Provides \$500 to support projects that further Emerson's relevance to the broader public. We welcome projects that involve learners of all kinds and communities in all forms. Recipients also will be invited to submit for publication in the Emerson Society Papers a reflection on their completed projects. Please submit a confidential letter of recommendation and a carefully crafted 1-2 page single-spaced project proposal, including a description of expenses, to **Austin Bailey** (abail@hunter.cuny.edu) **May 1st, 2024**.

Undergraduate Student Essay Prize

Undergraduate students are welcome to submit 1,000-1,500-word academic essays on any topic relevant to the study of Emerson—his life, work, national and transnational reception, importance within and beyond U.S. literature and culture, and/or contemporary relevance. Winning essays will demonstrate originality, clarity, and rigorous engagement with Emerson. Selected essays may be returned to applicants with suggested revisions. The winning essay will be published in The Emerson Society Papers and the writer awarded \$100.

- Submissions should be 1,000-1,500 words and follow the 9th edition of MLA style.
- Submissions should include an informational cover letter containing the applicant's name, essay title, academic status and affiliation, e-mail address, and postal address.

Please submit documents by email—with the subject line “Emerson Society Student Essay Prize”—to **Austin Bailey** (abail@hunter.cuny.edu) **May 1st, 2024**.

The Society welcomes and encourages submissions on Emerson and his circle from diverse perspectives and critical methodologies, as well as by marginalized and/or traditionally underrepresented groups. All proposals will be evaluated based on the general strength of the submission and clearly articulated relevance to the individual award or grant.

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A handwritten signature of Ralph Waldo Emerson in cursive script, appearing to read 'R.W.E.'.

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