

Emerson and the Gothic

Jason Richards

Early in “Self-Reliance” (1841), Ralph Waldo Emerson recalls asking a trusted advisor the following question: “What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within?” The counselor warned Emerson that such “impulses may be from below, not from above,” and Emerson replied, “if I am the devil’s child, I will live then from the devil” (321). Emerson’s recollection is one of many instances where he becomes darkly romantic, even a little Faustian. A little later, Emerson wages his famous attack on small-minded consistency. “A foolish consistency,” he sniffs, “is the hobgoblin of little minds” (324). This curiously Gothic phrase, haunted by the ghoulish hobgoblin, would have been darker had Emerson expressed his true feelings. Decrying the social taboo on cursing, he wrote in his journal that “Damn Consistency” would have been better, adding that the best reply to “foolish” remarks would be: “The devil you do” or “You be damned” (*JMN* 7:524).

Such sharp-tongued assertions may not immediately come to mind when thinking of Emerson. Devils, damning remarks, and hobgoblins more readily find their way into works by Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville. Yet the New England Transcendentalist, who once blithely envisioned himself as a transparent eye-ball, was not some always-smiling Pollyanna. He did, to be sure, revel in the romantic optimism of his day. He was messianic insofar as he saw himself as Christ transfigured and the guiding light of Transcendentalism.¹ But for all his optimism and spiritual affirmation, Emerson was not immune to darkness – to “grimmiest midnight” as he put it in *Nature* (1836). Not only that, but he once attributed all meaningful creation to the black and yawning void: “There must be the Abyss, Nox, and Chaos out of which all come, and they must never be far

off. Cut off the connexion between any of our works and this dread origin and the work is shallow and unsatisfying" (*JMN* 9:325). Given this unbridled embrace of dark energy, might we infer that Emerson's writings, even the most sanguine, derive from dread origins?

Based on early opinions of the Transcendental leader, the answer would be "no." Due to the supposedly lightsome nature of his works, Emerson was for years pigeonholed as a naively confident, yea-saying Yankee. Contemporaries acknowledged his genius for optimism, but they thought that he could not, or refused to, see evil in the world. Troubled by Emerson's sunny view of nature, Melville once spouted, "I do not oscillate in Emerson's rainbow" (35).² Because Emerson didn't admire Hawthorne's brooding talents, Henry James doubted his moral depth and complexity. "Hawthorne's vision," wrote James, "was all for the evil and sin of the world; a side of life as to which Emerson's eyes were thickly bandaged," blinding him to "the dark, the foul, the base" (627). James was awed by the "accident that made them live almost side by side for so long ... each a fruit of a long Puritan stem" (627). Ironically, it was Hawthorne who perceived an almost Ahab-like darkness in Emerson, portraying him more than once as a ferocious egomaniac who could be Satanic in his influence.³ Yet when Hawthorne, in "The Old Manse" (1846), emphasized that Emerson lived "at the opposite extremity of our village" (606), he was suggesting the philosophical chasm that James would later elaborate.

Early critics also saw Emerson as naively upbeat or, to use George Santayana's words, as "a champion of cheerfulness" (72). But beginning in the 1950s, the conventional thesis about Emerson began to crumble. In the groundbreaking *Freedom and Fate* (1953), Stephen Whicher highlighted a tragic strain in the American sage, thereby rescuing him from the whirlpool of opinion that might have drowned him in his own optimism. Soon Jonathan Bishop was exploring Emerson's literary complexity, and before long Stanley Cavell was calling Emerson "the founder of American thinking" (194). A more recent and powerful reassessment comes from Michael Lopez, who identifies Emerson as a philosopher obsessed with facing and overcoming antagonistic forces, which explains Nietzsche's admiration for

his work.⁴ As these critics were uncovering a more substantial Emerson, others were bringing his dark side to light. Alexander Kern, John Lyndenberg, Louis Salomon, and AnnLouise Keating have all sought to debunk the easy belief in Emerson's "easy optimism," by arguing for an appreciation of Emersonian darkness and depth.⁵

This essay delves deeper into that darkness. It does so by telling the story of Ralph Waldo Emerson and his relation to the Gothic, a literary mode that before the Civil War ran parallel to Transcendentalism but is rarely used in the same breath with Emerson or any other Transcendentalist for that matter. In fact, given their energetic idealism, their self-confidence and self-expansiveness, the Transcendentalists are often said to resist the Gothic influence so pervasive in antebellum America. My desire is not to argue that Emerson is a Gothic writer per se. Although his writing, at times, is grimly pessimistic, his overall work (particularly his early public work) is too idealistic to make that argument tenable. There are also real differences between Gothic and Transcendental ideologies, especially in how they view the natural world: Gothic narratives dramatize the schism between nature and humanity, while Transcendentalism celebrates harmony between the two. Gothic works depict nature as consuming, dark, and corrupting; Transcendentalism greets nature as a salubrious friend. If Hawthorne's nightmarish "Young Goodman Brown" (1835) articulates the Gothic view of the natural world – that nature is evil and "Evil is the nature of mankind" (62) – Emerson's *Nature*, the virtual bible of Transcendentalism, offers a wholly different vision. "In the woods," he rejoices, "is perpetual youth.... In the woods, we return to reason and faith" (127). Yet for all his affirmations of nature, Gothic elements haunt (and sometimes humble) Emerson's work, shadowing the ecstasies of his Transcendental idealism.

Not only have Gothic elements in Emerson been ignored; he has for decades been ritually cast against conspicuously Gothic writers like Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, writers who often worked against Transcendentalism but nevertheless absorbed Transcendental elements into their works. We can make a similar claim for Emerson. During the late 1830s and early

1840s, he struggled against the tide of the day's "negative romanticism" while at the same time absorbing Gothic elements into his work.⁶ Although scholars have acknowledged some overlap between Gothic and Transcendental writers, they more often see them as distinct, nearly Manichean groups. Michael Hoffman was among the first to emphasize the difference between both currents of antebellum writing. He coined the term "anti-Transcendentalism" to describe Hawthorne's and Melville's resistance to Emersonian idealism in such novels as *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *Moby Dick* (1851). Since then, distinguishing between these writers has become almost axiomatic. Using Emerson to stress Poe's bleak vision, Harold Bloom writes that "self-reliance, the Emersonian answer to Original Sin, does not exist in the Poe cosmos, where you necessarily start out damned, doomed and dismal" (284). With broader strokes, Mark Edmundson suggests that Gothic writing and Transcendentalism form enduring antipodes that continue to organize American culture:

Gothic shows the dark side, the world of cruelty, lust, perversion, and crime that, many of us at least half believe, is hidden beneath established conventions. Gothic tears through censorship, explodes hypocrisies, to expose the world as the corrupted, reeking place it is.... Unsentimental, enraged by gentility and high-mindedness, skeptical about progress in any form, the Gothic mind is antithetical to all smiling American faiths. A nation of ideals, America has also been, not surprisingly, a nation of hard disillusionment, with a fiercely reactive Gothic imagination. Ours is the culture that produced both "Self-Reliance" and "The Fall of the House of Usher." (4-5)

That Transcendentalism forms one American tradition and Gothicism another is emphasized also by Eric Savoy who, drawing on Robert Weisbuch, writes, "The transcendentalists – Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman – extended 'the visions of the English Romantics to everyday historical living with an unprecedented literalness,' while the Gothic tradition realized its greatest artistic brilliance in Poe and Hawthorne, who exposed to

‘withering skepticism’ the Romantic faith in ‘the individual ego or self-hood’” (176). Yet while Poe and Hawthorne are seen as antithetical to Transcendentalists like Emerson, the latter’s well-known eye-ball passage – “Standing on the bare ground, – my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, – all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing” (*Nature* 127-28) – a passage that seems anti-Gothic given its exuberant idealism, in a strange way anticipates Poe, who had his own bizarre methods of eliminating the ego.⁷ Intriguingly, the longing to rid oneself of ego can be seen as both a Transcendental and Gothic desire: beneficial when removing the ego leads to harmony with nature, destructive when eliminating the ego results from self-annihilating despair.

1. Shadows at Home

When, in her dazzling *Gothic America* (1997), Teresa Goddu challenges the narrow belief that Gothic American literature is merely popular and escapist, insisting instead that it is tightly yoked to American social concerns and grows indigenously from such historic nightmares as slavery and Indian massacre, she pushes against a critical tradition that situated American Gothic within “psychological and theological rubrics” (9) – rubrics that, she suggests, offer ahistorical readings of the Gothic. By implying that the psycho-religious dimensions of American Gothic are somehow ahistorical, however, Goddu overlooks one vital fact: namely, that Puritan psychology and theology did in fact provide an historical setting for the Gothic. Obsessed as it was with devils, corruption, and doom, the Calvinist ideology of the Puritans had real Gothic consequences for American history. The Salem Witch Trials are one example of how Calvinist thinking left Gothic scars on the American past. Jonathan Edwards, who convinced some of his followers of their inescapable damnation, is another. So while the horrors of slavery and Indian massacre were shaping an indigenous American Gothic, Puritan obsessions were also and simultaneously defining America’s cultural history – the same history Emerson hopes to liberate us from in *Nature* when (with Gothic accents) he pro-

claims: "Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers" (125).

I mention Puritanism's Gothic effect on history because the ideology of Calvinism explains and drives the impulsive darkness of Emerson's earliest work. Before launching his salvo against the patriarchal past in *Nature*, Emerson was under the spell of Puritanism, which still held much of New England in its grasp. Though hardly a Calvinist, a Puritan sensibility nevertheless permeates Emerson's early journals. This permeation can be explained, in part, by his family tree, which grew deeply in New England soil, its American roots stretching back to the first Puritan settlers. More intimately, Emerson followed in a long procession of New England clergymen. Hinting that Emerson's Calvinist impulses were genetic, James Elliot Cabot suggested that "the blood of several lines of 'painful preachers'" (7) entered Emerson through his father. Although Emerson's father William, pastor of Boston's First Church and early Unitarian minister, would work against Calvinism's doctrine of innate depravity, his son struggled in his youth, much as Hawthorne did throughout his life, with the problem of evil, corruption, and sin.

When Emerson began journal-keeping in his teens, he did so under a long Calvinist shadow. Although he would later be scorned for denying evil, as a youth Emerson was asking, "What is evil? and What is its Origin?" (*JMN* 1:93). He also brooded over the looming Day of Judgment, when "the stars fall from heaven and the Sun become darkness and the Moon blood" (*JMN* 1:46). "As for the wicked," he adds, "God shall laugh at them in heaven and the laugh of demons shall scare them from below" (*JMN* 1:48). In the early journals, Emerson's prose contains many instances of the self-righteous denunciations that grow from Puritan Gothic:

People prate of the dignity of human nature. Look over the whole history of its degradation and find what odious vice, what sottish and debasing enormity the degenerate naughtiness of man has never crouched unto and adored? to things animate and things inanimate, to the ghosts of dead men whose lives were bloody and cruel, lewd and

foul. – to beasts and grovelling reptiles, dogs, serpents and crocodiles – they have bowed down and adored – nay with a brutal folly more revolting than this they have prostituted their obedience and worship, they have sacrificed their dearest pledges of life and fortune, fawning in abominable adulation they have abandoned their interests and welfare to the cursed fiends of hell. (*JMN* 1:18)

Using Gothic trappings like degeneracy, ghosts, curses, and hellish fiends to build intensity, Emerson's assault on debased veneration echoes Calvinism's fierce moralizing, his excoriation of false worship rivaling any in the Puritan canon. The emotionally charged rhetoric also owes some of its force to the Puritan revival known as the "Great Awakening," a movement that influenced Emerson's style and vision.⁸ Finally, the passage's preoccupation with base animality, with moral and physical devolution, anticipates the intensified Gothicism of his later work *The Conduct of Life* (1860), which is considered near the end of this essay.

2. Shadows from Abroad

Calvinist shadows were not the only things darkening Emerson's imagination. European romantics like Goethe, Coleridge, and Byron were also shaping his vision. We know Emerson enjoyed being Faustian, but as a young man his writings, as well as his melancholy, echo Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), with such lugubrious moments as: "I will shake hands with Death and hug Despair" (*JMN* 1:82) and "few men ever suffered more genuine misery than I" (*JMN* 3:13). Coleridge's influence is obvious, not only in Emerson's preoccupation with medieval lore (discussed below), but his poetic vision, as Barbara Packer notes, owes much to "Kubla Khan" (1798).⁹ There are also hints of Byron, whom Emerson quotes lavishly, in his preoccupation with base desire: "I have a nasty appetite which I will not gratify" (*JMN* 1:133). More remarkable, perhaps, are his devilish appeals, which bear an uncanny resemblance to the demonic invocations in Arthur Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell* (1873), evidenced by the following occult appeal: "O ye witches assist me! Enliven or

horrify some midnight lucubration or dream ... to supply this reservoir when other resources fail" (*JMN* 1:4).¹⁰ Like the young, tart-tongued French poet, only younger, Emerson wondered if he was demonically inspired: "Have malignant demons possessed themselves of my mind and my pen and my tongue and my book?" (*JMN* 1:15). Much as Emerson would use European materials to build his Transcendental philosophy – Goethe's and Coleridge's impact on his Transcendentalism is no secret – in youth he was imitating, and even anticipating, major European Gothics.

Medieval lore also drove Emerson's dark imagination. Like the Gothic novelists of the eighteenth century, young Emerson hankered after the long-lost days of chivalry, romance, and adventure. Scattered within the early journals are numerous musings and poems, as well as some drawings, fantasizing Gothic medieval scenarios. One poem tells of a knight arriving at a "castle-gate" to encounter "a grisly hag" who plucks from her balding scalp three hairs that turn to snakes, which coil around the knight as the hag morphs into a dragon and flies away, her snake-bound knight in tow. The editors note that a Gothic sketch, replete with "the castle, the witch, and the knight on horseback," accompanies it. The reason for Emerson's flight of medieval fancy is possibly explained by the poem's first line, which is disconnected from the action by parentheses, wherein he snorts, "(I am full sick of life)" (*JMN* 1:103-4). It's ironic that Emerson – who becomes America's philosopher of affirmation and renewal – once escaped his angst through imaginative flights to the land of Gothic romance.

Even more ironic is how young Emerson was enthralled with death. In his dedication in the fourth journal, he boldly proclaims that his previous appeals to poetic inspiration – to "the Muse, the fairies, the witches" – have failed to fully empower his literary talents. Therefore, and in a move that brings him closer to the Faustian bargain, he decides to devote his newest journal "to the dead" (*JMN* 1:91). His morose dedication is attended by more artwork, which is decidedly more Gothic. The editors describe how "The title and the number of the journal are enclosed in an irregularly traced rectangle. Below the framed title is a death's head lightly sketched

in pencil. Sketches of towers are centered beneath 'dedicate' at the bottom of the page" (91). The coffin-like rectangle, death's head, and towers are not just familiar Gothic images; they suggest, especially the post-like towers, a gateway to the underworld, a world the teenager draws on for demonic inspiration. While the Emerson of *Nature* condemns building "the sepulchres of the fathers," his earlier self was often infatuated with the dead past.¹¹

Emerson's Calvinist rhetoric, dark romanticism, and supernatural characters suggest that Emerson, at least initially, may have conceived of himself as a Gothic writer. The following passage illustrates how Emerson held Gothic ingredients at his finger tips:

This night, the worm and reptile are at work, in ten thousand sepulchral grottoes, upon the pitiful relics of human clay. Ever since the Golden Age, and the hour when the royal Saturn descended from his throne, and laid himself down in the tomb, ever since men first left their flocks and herds and the labours of the living for the rest of the dead, – this desolate and disgusting corruption has proceeded. Meantime the living generations have signalized their successive occupation of the globe, by waking within it the fierce voices of Discord, Agony, and Revenge, by staining with blood its laughing fields, by cursing with malevolent passions its human abodes, and helping on, with ready officiousness, the carnage of Nature. The past – in all its grand characters of horror and evil – lies before us. The whole of it amounts to what? The bones of its children which lie about and beneath us, and the monument of its bad example, its terrific wrongs, and its Gothic ignorance, as the inscriptions tell, written on the mausoleum by the genius of its redeeming minds. Amid this hideous picture, the eye traces a few golden lines, writ specially by heaven; but the darkness sits grosser around. (*JMN* 2:75)

By piling up death, revenge, and corruption; by claiming that the evil past will haunt the future; and by lamenting the decline of Greco-Roman civilization, this passage is comprehensively and quintessentially Gothic. It outlines the origins and evolution of the term, which is certainly worth greater elaboration.

While a confluence of literatures ranging from ancient mythology to Dante's *Inferno* to various Shakespeare plays to the "Graveyard School" of poetry contributed to the Gothic aesthetic, "Gothic" as a literary descriptor didn't emerge until British novelist Horace Walpole issued, in 1765, his second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, which he subtitled *A Gothic Story*. Walpole's text, a pretend medieval tale now widely recognized as the first Gothic novel, was followed by occasional imitators. However, its impact didn't fully register till the 1790s, when a wave of dark fiction flooded the market, mostly from the British Isles, but also from Continental Europe and America. As a generic term, "Gothic" didn't gain currency till the twentieth century, when scholars began using the term retrospectively to describe novels of terror and horror that emerged in the eighteenth century. The word "Gothic," on the other hand, evolved through a more complex historical continuum. It began gathering momentum centuries before Walpole attached it to his seminal text, arising through a combination of ancient history, medieval architecture, and the Renaissance longing for Classical style.

The etymology of "Gothic" stretches back to the Goths, a Germanic tribal people who occupied the eastern and northern borders of the Roman Empire. From the Roman perspective, the Goths were a barbaric, ignorant, altogether uncivilized people. Following years of border disputes, they initiated an all-out attack on the empire, precipitating Rome's eventual collapse in 476 AD.¹² After they helped topple the high cultural achievement that was Rome, the Goths came to be seen (inaccurately) as foes of civilization – as ruthless barbarians who plunged the West into a period of darkness that was unrelieved until the Renaissance. During the Renaissance, the Goths came to embody the darkness and superstition of the Middle Ages, an era that gave rise to an architectural style that differed

radically from the architecture of Classical antiquity. Some Renaissance humanists, enamored as they were with Greco-Roman culture, scoffed at the elaborate buildings that had replaced Classical style: those huge and mysterious castles and cathedrals that had sprung up across northwestern Europe and the British Isles from the twelfth century on. With their pointed arches, vaulted ceilings, flying buttresses, gargoyles, and monstrous façades, these buildings appeared rude and excessive to many during the Renaissance.

In European regions turning Protestant, especially in Great Britain, these heavily ornamented structures stood as reminders of a corrupt Feudalism and decadent Catholicism. Those of the late Renaissance championing the revival of Classical architecture began using the derogatory "Gothic" to describe this architecture, which really had nothing to do with the Goths, whose name was only used to connote architectural outlandishness. What is remarkable about Emerson's passage is the way it accumulates the historical tensions that were consolidated by the word "Gothic." His decrying how the "Golden Age" of civilization was swallowed by "Gothic ignorance" reiterates the ascendancy of Gothic as we have come to understand it.

3. Opening the Sepulcher

But the main obsession in the passage above is, once again, death – a subject that does more to illuminate Emerson's Gothic vision than anything else. In her important study of Emerson's neglected early years, Evelyn Barish traces Emerson's life and intellectual development up to the writing of *Nature*, revealing how his earliest journals are marked by an extreme preoccupation with death. In fact, based on the journals' fascination with parricide, cannibalism, funerals, and so on, Barish suggests that Emerson's youthful attraction to "death amounts virtually to an obsession" (76). She wants us, however, to refrain from seeing Emerson's death-driven writings as "mere literary romanticism" for, as she sees it, Emerson's morbid investment is "deeper ... and more important than that," because he treats death not as an "ending" but as something "potentially

generative” (81). Barish believes Emerson’s characters “die in order to gain experience and knowledge” (82). “To cross into death,” she maintains, “is in some sense to grow sophisticated” (82). Death for Emerson is not a dismal dead end, as it often is for a Gothic writer like Poe; instead, it holds the potential for renewal and insight.

Robert D. Richardson, Jr. views Emerson’s morbid desire similarly. His acclaimed Emerson biography opens with the story of Emerson and his first wife, Ellen Tucker Emerson, who died young from tuberculosis. Following her death, as Richardson tells us, a grief-stricken Emerson walked each day from Boston out to Roxbury, where he would ghost around Ellen’s grave. After a year of visitations, the young widower makes a chilling confession: “I visited Ellen’s tomb and opened the coffin” (*JMN* 4: 7). Gruesome as it is, Richardson insists that Emerson’s voyeuristic freak “was not a grisly gothic gesture, not just the wild aberration of an unhinged lover.” Not knowing exactly what prompted Emerson, he suggests the move was at least consistent with his “powerful craving for direct, personal, unmediated experience” (3).

Barish and Richardson intimate that Emerson’s interest in death does not belong to conventional romanticism, that it instead reveals his desire for knowledge and experience, because it should elucidate the roots of his Transcendentalism – or the roots of prophecy, as the subtitle to Barish’s study suggests. This loftier, more philosophical explanation, however, risks romanticizing the romance out of Emerson, whose youthful fascination with death, I would suggest, is wholly consistent with the larger Gothic moment. Before peering into the coffin, Emerson was acting like a typical dark romantic, pining away after an early death. He had written, “O willingly, my wife, I would lie down in your tomb” (*JMN* 3:226). He had spoken of the “sublime attraction to the grave” (qtd. in Richardson 109).¹³ He had, moreover, evinced a kind of Gothic pathology by haunting Ellen’s tomb. Emerson’s behavior echoes Edgar Huntly’s compulsive return to the site of Waldegrave’s murder in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Edgar Huntly* (1799). Cracking the coffin to ogle death anticipates the necrophiliac fascinations in Poe.

Like Barish and Richardson, Mark Edmundson also sees Transcendentalism in Emerson's approach to death. He argues that Emerson, unlike Poe, does not allow himself to get trapped by "Gothic bondage to the past" (161) because he "refuses mourning" (160). "And what is mourning," Edmundson asks, "if not a form of haunting, the Gothic condition?" (160). Edmundson is thinking of Emerson the public intellectual, the elastic Transcendentalist who, he suggests, got over his son's death in "Experience" (1844) by comparing it to a costly piece of property, doing so to transcend mourning. But the Emerson of "Experience" was not the one who obsessively visited Ellen's grave, who groaned with melancholy throughout the early journals. That younger Emerson was gripped by death and anguish, compelled to "shake hands with Death and hug Despair." The Emerson who haunted Ellen's tomb was not yet a Transcendentalist; he was, instead, captive to the Gothic condition.

And what explains Emerson's early obsession with death? Beyond his youthfully romantic fascination, it was the specter of tuberculosis that, more than anything else, contributed to his morbid frame of mind. When Emerson met Ellen in 1827, she was already suffering from the disease, which had claimed several members of her family. Ellen, who had a dog named Byron, was a talented poet, and her sickness, marked by ominous hemorrhages, darkened her best poetry, which brimmed with gloomy references to the disease.¹⁴ Emerson's writings too, his poetry and his sermons, were informed by what he saw as Ellen's inevitable, tragically shortened life. Ellen's death, as Richardson puts it, "left Emerson with a sense of loss and regret that he never entirely outlived" (111), yet her suffering "deepened and matured" him (98). Tuberculosis, one of Emerson's great Gothic antagonists, would haunt him through Ellen's death – but it would also help to build his Transcendental endurance.

For it wasn't just Ellen who suffered from the disease. During the year of his sepulchral intrusion, Emerson was battling symptoms of the very malady that had confined his bride. Like Ellen and her family, the Emerson clan was for generations scourged by TB, which decimated his

family and throughout the nineteenth century laid waste to a large part of New England's population. Emerson's brother Edward died from the illness in 1834. His other brother, Charles, who bewailed the "lake of fire" in his chest, perished two years later. In November 1826, Emerson, hoping to stave off symptoms, had escaped to the warm climates of Charleston and then to St. Augustine, where the tall tubercular dwindled down to 141 pounds. During this emaciating winter, a time David Robinson considers Emerson's "darkest hour" (156), Emerson didn't know if he would live long enough to return home. While symptoms of the disease would harass Emerson much of his life, they appeared to peak again in 1832, a year marked by increasing sickness as well as depression, a year that seemed to pull him toward the sepulcher once again.

Emerson's revived symptoms were then compounded by a spiritual crisis. In December 1832, he resigned his ministry from the Second Church because he disapproved of how his congregation practiced communion. After selling his house and furniture, he boarded the *Jasper*, hoping to find restoration in the warm Mediterranean. Emerson's salvation waited in his journey to Europe, where he met literary heroes Coleridge, Thomas Carlyle, and William Wordsworth, and where he was mentally and physically revived. In Paris he visited the Jardin des Plantes, which, with its spectacular assembly of plant life, inspired and redirected his career as a Transcendentalist. If Emerson's life had become sepulchral prior to his journey, in the lush garden of Paris he was reborn. There he felt a passionate, almost tangible connection to the natural world. There he began to cultivate the more optimistic side of his romantic sensibility, a side that was, in many ways, anti-Gothic in its enthusiasm for the vital relation between humanity and nature that would become foundational to his Transcendentalism. In a profound stroke of irony, after visiting the Gothic breeding grounds of Italy, Switzerland, France, England, and the Scottish Highlands, Emerson returned from the Old World unconcerned with castles and cathedrals, rocky landscapes and black valleys. He was, instead, focused on overcoming the darkness of his own past – and of America's as well.

4. Burying the Sepulcher

If Emerson once saw himself as a Gothic writer, that vision seemed to evaporate after his European tour. To be overtly Gothic would mean he was, at least in part, imitating European models, since the Gothic continued to have strong associations with the Old World, despite the emerging school of American Gothic. Gothicism, or "Germanism" as it was sometimes called, not only sounded a European note; it was used to describe things considered archaic, outmoded, and outlandish; it was, moreover, derided by some American critics as a cheaply imitative form of writing. After returning to a culturally insecure nation, which had been seeking a distinct literary identity, Emerson shunned imitation while forging a philosophy of self-reliance that became central to his Transcendentalism and American nationalism. Yet belying his commitment to originality was the fact that he continued to draw on European (and Eastern) philosophies to assemble what amounts to a globally constructed Transcendentalism.

Still the new Emerson was no longer writing witch poems or obsessing over evil. While Poe and Hawthorne were adapting elements of European Gothic to American situations, Emerson was cultivating a fresh optimism and working against the tide of the day's Gothic pessimism. He didn't like Hawthorne's dark fictions and, according to William Dean Howells, once belittled Poe as "the jingleman," likely in reference to his popular poems "Annabel Lee" and "The Raven." If Hawthorne and Poe painted gloomy tales on the canvas of night, Emerson offered a more affirmative view of darkness. "Night," he rejoiced, "brings no gloom to the heart with its welcome shade. Through the transparent darkness pour the stars their almost spiritual rays" ("Divinity" 231). If Gothic writers embraced a dark and unruly muse, Emerson now marched against it: "let us advance and advance on Chaos and the Dark" ("Self-Reliance" 320). While opium and alcohol sparked the Gothic creativity of Coleridge and Poe, Emerson denounced such toxic inspiration. "The spirit of the world," he wrote, "comes not forth to the sorceries of opium or of wine. The sublime vision comes to the pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body" ("The Poet" 192). A few lines later, he says the poet's "cheerfulness

should be the gift of the sunlight; the air should suffice for his inspiration, and he should be tipsy with water” (192). Such rarefied moments explain why Emerson has been branded Pollyanna, why he has been pitted against the tradition of dark romantics.

But just as Emerson never stopped using foreign materials, he never fully escaped the Gothic. Despite a sunnier disposition, he continued to tap the Gothic lexicon – doing so, this time, to condemn anything that might imperil originality. During the 1830s and 1840s, Emerson blasts imitativeness with the rhetoric of doom, death, and decay. “The imitator,” he insists, “dooms himself to hopeless mediocrity” (“Divinity” 243). Misused libraries become like cemeteries as “the bookworm” creates “grave mischief” by recycling book knowledge (“American” 199). Books about other books are for virtual zombies – they are “books by the dead for the dead” (qtd. in Richardson 220). “[I]mitation is suicide,” and those clinging to petty consistency “drag about [a] monstrous corpse” (“Self-Reliance” 319, 324). For Emerson, imitativeness meant exhuming the dead past. Conformity was like a premature self-burial.

Emerson launched an even harsher critique of religion, which he saw as the very worst veneration of the past. He called Christianity “worship in the dead forms of our forefathers” (*JMN* 4:27), and he spoke of a “corpse-cold Unitarianism” (qtd. in Myerson xxvii). Religion, for Emerson, was both deadening and Satanic. “On Sunday,” he wrote, “we heard sulphurous Calvinism” (*JMN* 7:234). More pungently, he claimed that “Christianity [is] a hobgoblin, the God of popular worship a hobgoblin” (*JMN* 7:240). Drawing on wife Lidian’s sentiments, he railed that “church members are scorpions ... full of wrath and horror” (*JMN* 8:10). Perhaps his fiercest Gothic critique appears in the “Divinity School Address,” where he demonizes “historical Christianity” for what amounts to mummifying the Gospel miracle – that is, for relegating miracles to “ancient history” (235). When Emerson charges that “the very word Miracle, as pronounced by Christian churches, gives a false impression; it is Monster. It is not one with the blowing clover and the falling rain” (235), he attacks a lifeless theology that considered miracles phenomena of the dead past.

The past, Emerson lamented, gripped his age and stifled original thought. In what is arguably Transcendentalism's primal scene, he accuses his generation of constructing elaborate tombs of patriarchal tradition. "Our age is retrospective," he intones. "It builds the sepulchers of the fathers." Emerson's Oedipal rebellion – he desires to bury, not build, the monuments of patriarchy – evinces a basic Gothic impulse. As Jerrold E. Hogle observes, "the Gothic is usually about some 'son' both wanting to kill and striving to be the 'father' and thus feeling fearful and guilty about what he most desires" (5). Hogle's words illuminate Emerson's rebellion against patriarchal authority – only Emerson, who becomes the unrivaled "father" of Transcendentalism, is guiltlessly confident in his Oedipal revolt.

Emerson wants to kill two fathers. The first is the European fatherland, which continued to cast its cultural shadow over the young nation. The second are the Puritan forefathers, whose belief system still haunted the American psyche, convincing people they were powerless over their individual destinies. Determined to trade predestination for *freedestination*, Emerson asks, "why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe?" (*Nature* 125). The Emerson of *Nature* is all about divesting the past of its fateful power. As Edmundson notes, "Emerson is perpetually recognizing how much he is haunted by the past – how fully he's possessed – and then exorcising himself" (161). What's fascinating is that Emerson's exorcism borrows the tongue of his rival. Like Shakespeare's Caliban, who curses Prospero with the magician's own language, Emerson uses Gothic rhetoric to assail Gothic ideology.

5. Emerson's Gothic Naturalism

While Emerson works to exorcise the Gothic past during the 1830s and early 1840s, he later makes a full Gothic return in the often bleak and brutal text, *The Conduct of Life*. Emerson's dark turn enabled Stephen Whicher's thesis that famously postulated two hemispheres of Emersonian thought, a thesis that for decades exerted enormous influence on the direc-

tion of Emerson studies. As Whicher saw it, Emerson's most essential period, spanning from about 1832 to 1844, was characterized by an extraordinary Transcendentalism and revolutionary individualism. But later in life, according to Whicher, Emerson surrendered fatefully – almost tragically – to experience, fate, and “negative power.” The “Freedom and Fate” dichotomy set in place by Whicher has long been used to split Emerson virtually in two: an early radical who worked to break theological and cultural bondage, a later skeptic who bowed before the force of circumstance.

Recent Emerson scholars, however, have chastened Whicher for what they deem an overschematized, evolutionary reading of his canon. David Robinson, for instance, challenges Whicher's claim that Emerson fails to acquire liberatory power in his later years by accusing Whicher of defining power in “distressingly narrow terms” (4). Robinson argues instead that “Emerson's later career might better be described as a widening of his reference for power, an expansion rather than a falling back” (4). In response to Whicher's notion that Emerson later acquiesces to limitation, Robinson asserts, “Emerson's recognition of limit was not a prescription for paralysis” (135). Michael Lopez, after lamenting how the Whicherian paradigm fossilized a divided Emerson in the scholarly imagination, questions whether a chronological division – of an early and a late Emerson – even exists. “So much scholarly energy has been expended,” Lopez stresses, “in determining the precise boundary that is supposed to exist between the naive and the disillusioned Emerson” that little thought has gone into seeing “Emerson's thought ... as a more complex, philosophical whole” (“*Conduct*” 247). And in her assessment of “Fate,” the opening essay in *Conduct*, Laura Dassow Walls notes, “However confining it may seem, [‘Fate’] is a doctrine not of limitation but of liberty, at least to those who know ... how to conduct their lives” (194). Yet, it is worth noting that Walls also acknowledges how “the boyish and confident glee” of a younger Emerson has, by the time he publishes *Conduct*, “curdled into a grim realism” (192). Indeed, while it may be reductive to insist upon an early (dreamy, idealistic) Emerson versus a late (skeptical, fatalistic) Emerson,

one cannot deny that a "grim realism" pervades his later work, especially a work like *Conduct*, Emerson's last truly significant book, which admits the limits of human power while revisiting Gothic horror.

There's no denying that Emerson's Gothic return faces a gauntlet of material forces that seem to batter and bruise his earlier idealism, while his recognition of physical power mirrors the demystification we see at the end of many Gothic narratives. For despite its fascination with supernatural terror, Gothic fiction often dramatizes human helplessness in the face of material reality. Gothic ghosts and other mysterious forces, commonly thought to invade the material realm from the netherworld, are often explained by physical or psychological phenomena. Supernatural occurrences, in other words, end up having natural explanations. The mysterious voices that swirl around, stupefy, and command the characters in Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798) belong not to some supernatural agent but to the sinister, highly skilled bilquist, Francis Carwin; the allegorical ghost of slavery that drives Simon Legree to alcoholic insanity in the chapter "An Authentic Ghost Story" from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) is really the slave Cassy seeking revenge against Legree for his multiple atrocities; and the curse hurled at Colonel Pyncheon by Matthew Maule – that "God will give him blood to drink" (7) – which was used to explain the blood-coughing deaths of several Pyncheon patriarchs is clarified as apoplexy. The way mysteries are unsheated in Gothic fiction to reveal physical realities closely parallels Emerson's philosophical progression from *Nature* to *The Conduct of Life*, insofar as his idealistic, almost supernatural view of the natural world is curbed by a more obvious recognition of physical limitation. "In youth," he writes, "we clothe ourselves with rainbows and go as brave as the zodiac. In age we put out another sort of perspiration, – gout, fever, rheumatism" (*Conduct* 41).

More notably, Emerson's Gothic return, coupled with his empirical turn, contains elements that are characteristic of literary naturalism, a label typically reserved for the literary movement of the fin-de-siècle. Like the term Gothic, "naturalism" does not usually come to mind when thinking of Emerson. Yet, with its focus on "negative power," fate, and nature's cruel

authority, the naturalist vision is remarkably similar to the Gothic vision. Both visions overlap in *The Conduct of Life* – enough so that if we want a term to describe the dark and fateful content of Emerson’s text, “Gothic naturalism” could be that term.

Finding naturalistic elements in Emerson’s later work makes sense. For in 1851, when Emerson began the essays that would appear in *Conduct*, he was working in the era of Charles Darwin, August Comte, and Karl Marx, all of whom, along with modern science, helped lay the groundwork for the naturalist movement. For Darwin, a species conformed to, rather than transcended, its environment; for Comte, truth was found through empirical inquiry; for Marx, people were controlled by socio-economic forces. All three philosophers were challenging romantic idealism as they cultivated a sense of fatalism that the literary modes of realism and naturalism would extend. Adapting to the increasingly popular materialist worldview, Emerson was allowing the fatalistic vision of his youth to return in *Conduct*, a work that – with its emphasis on violence, disease, death, reptilian life, and fatalism – revives the Gothic energy of his early journals, where he not only obsessed over corruption but saw himself restricted by necessity. The younger Emerson conceded, “I am the servant more than the master of my fates” (qtd. in Whicher *Freedom* 13). The older Emerson admits, “Very odious, I confess, are the lessons of fate” (*Conduct* 34).

Naturalism, to be sure, emerges as a logical extension of the Gothic. Naturalistic writing emphasizes how heredity and environment influence us, while Gothic texts stress how the ancestral past haunts or shapes the present. Naturalism is preoccupied with degeneration and devolution, while Gothic dramatizes decline and decay. Naturalism’s notion that humans have little to no control over what happens echoes the Gothic obsession with doom. While the doom of American Gothic often derives from Calvinist fatalism, naturalism, which stresses biological or socio-economic determinism, scientifically concerns itself with the forces that work on people who are either born or tossed into horrible circumstances and, like many Gothic characters, often doomed. While part of Emerson’s early

Gothic impulse derives power from Puritanism, his revived Gothic energies owe much to currents of scientific thought.¹⁵

A pugnacious self-determinism drove Emerson's early work, but in *The Conduct of Life* the environment tends to circumscribe human will. Essays like "Power" suggest the "affirmative force" (57) of individual action, but as a whole Emerson's book exudes a pessimistic determinism and a decidedly Gothic view of nature. The following moment from "Fate," Emerson's last significant meditation on the workings of nature, dramatizes nature's cruel dominion:

Nature is no sentimentalist, – does not cosset or pamper us. We must see that the world is rough and surly, and will not mind drowning a man or a woman, but swallows your ship like a grain of dust. The cold, inconsiderate of persons, tingles your blood, benumbs your feet, freezes a man like an apple. The diseases, the elements, fortune, gravity, lightning, respect no persons. The way of Providence is a little rude. The habit of snake and spider, the snap of the tiger and other leapers and bloody jumpers, the crackle of the bones of his prey in the coil of the anaconda, – these are in the system, and our habits are like theirs. You have just dined, and, however scrupulously the slaughter-house is concealed in the graceful distance of miles, there is complicity, expensive races, – race living at the expense of race. (6-7)

Here nature is not some pampering, maternal power: it is both cruel and consuming. The manly might Emerson once extolled is frozen "like an apple" (suggesting the limits of knowledge), while Emersonian expansiveness is replaced by the constricting anaconda. Fear of constraint and consumption – anything that produces terror by threatening the self – are part and parcel of the Gothic. These fears run contrary to Transcendentalism, which devoted itself to a fearless and limitless self-cultivation. Richard Lehan observes how "naturalism called attention to the social forces that worked against the individual in an era where the industrial scale dimin-

ished the human scale” (xxiv). “Fate” precedes the naturalist era by some forty years, yet it addresses how social forces could restrict individual power. Emerson is not, as older critics of “Fate” argued, acquiescing to circumstance. Like future naturalists, he simply makes the individual less rugged and the environment more antagonistic.

While Darwinian undertones extend through the individualism of “Self-Reliance” back to Emerson’s early journals, the above excerpt stresses the sheer horror of personal survival. If naturalism is right and “civilization is the jungle or wilderness in disguise” (Lehan xxiii), then Emerson is right to imagine us as jungle beasts – dining miles from the slaughter-house yet implicated in the slaughter. In “our habits” we are ferocious as tigers and cold-blooded as anacondas. But it gets worse. With “race living at the expense of race,” we effectively cannibalize each other, implicitly through capitalism and slavery, as powerful races live at the “expense” of exploited races. Emerson later notes, “The German and Irish millions, like the Negro, have a great deal of guano in their destiny. They are ferried over the Atlantic and carted over America, to ditch and to drudge, to make corn cheap and then to lie down prematurely to make a spot of green grass on the prairie” (16-17). A cold look at nature, a sharp questioning of human innocence, “Fate” is an attack on merciless hierarchies; its critique of human brutality toward animals and other men, insofar as it resembles the writings of Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Jack London, makes it proto-naturalistic in fascinating ways.

Biological horror lurks within “Fate,” its author suggesting that “the jaw of the sea-wolf paved with crushing teeth, the weapons of the grampus, and other warriors hidden in the sea, are hints of ferocity in the interiors of nature” (8). That such aquatic predators merely “hint” at nature’s brutality suggests how violence saturates nature to the core. The seasoned Emerson now admits that “the bill of the bird, the skull of the snake, determines tyrannically its limits” (9). He now concedes that “Nature is the tyrannous circumstance, the thick skull, the sheathed snake, the ponderous, rock-like jaw” (15). He now despairs over ancestral influence: “How shall a man escape from his ancestors, or draw off from his veins the black drop

which he drew from his father's or his mother's life?" (9). While the "black drop" evokes the one-drop rule that condemned any American with African heritage to slavery – "Fate," it is worth noting, was written in the angry wake of the Fugitive Slave Law – it also intimates a dark atavism that could hound people through generations. Atavistic anxiety permeates "Fate" as it permeates many Gothic and naturalist texts obsessed with ancestral ghosts and hereditary haunting. "In different hours," writes Emerson, "a man represents each of several of his ancestors, as if there were seven or eight of us rolled up in each man's skin" (10). By sounding the depths of nature and heredity, "Fate" functions as a Descendental counterweight that grounds and frustrates Transcendental yearning: "Once we thought positive power was all. Now we learn that negative power, or circumstance, is half" (15).

6. The Transcendental Gothic

To recognize negative power as half concedes equal power to idealism's solid shadow: the Gothic, which admits the fatalism that Transcendentalism struggled to transcend. Yet while Emerson acknowledges the humbling force of fate, he also weighs power against fate: "If Fate follows and limits Power, Power attends and antagonizes Fate" (22). The negative/positive energies of fate/power are inevitable, intertwining forces of history and culture that Gothic and Transcendental ideologies embodied. Before the Civil War, these forms and forces ran parallel to each other. Sometimes they swerved into and shaped each other. Emerson implies this swerving when he notices the slipperiness of freedom and fate: "to see how fate slides into freedom and freedom into fate, observe how far the roots of every creature run, or find if you can a point where there is no thread of connection" (36). Fate and freedom slide into each other as the Gothic slides into Transcendentalism and as Transcendentalism slides into the Gothic. Like threads on a DNA double helix, these modes twist together, forming the genetic basis of antebellum literature.

For Emerson, "every creature" is made of freedom and fate, the roots of which crisscross, web together, and run deep as origins. The entire Em-

Emerson canon, to a greater or lesser degree, is upheld by this dualism. Contrary to naïve beliefs that he embodied naïve optimism, Emerson welcomed negative energy, welcomed it because it sparked creation and formed the springboard for transcendence. To paint Emerson as someone who avoided darkness is to paint a portrait that is scandalously incomplete. Those conclusions backfire on Emerson's critics, just as they backfire on James, when he myopically pronounces Emerson blind to "the dark, the foul, the base" (627). To deny Emerson's Gothic energies is to fail to see what he ultimately saw: "that negative power, or circumstance, is half" (15).

Gothic power was something Emerson necessarily engaged with, worked against, and used to launch his vision. We can more fully appreciate Emerson's Gothic desire by revisiting his affirmation of dark energy: "There must be the Abyss, Nox, and Chaos out of which all come, and they must never be far off. Cut off the connexion between any of our works and this dread origin and the work is shallow and unsatisfying." With these words Emerson invites the same forces that nourish the Gothic imagination, which thrives on embracing and confronting "the Abyss, Nox, and Chaos" (*JMN* 9:325). Near the end of *Conduct*, Emerson elaborates other dreadful origins, after he makes the following breathtaking assertion: "the first lesson of history is the good of evil" (253). To show how good grows from bad, Emerson lists a string of tyrants and strongmen whose exploits, he argues, resulted in positive gains. William the Norman's despotism, for instance, made necessary the Magna Carta, Henry VIII mitigated Vatican power, the list goes on.

Emerson concludes his good-from-evil meditation by considering how opposition and darkness inspire great artistry. "Art lives and thrills," he exults, "in new use and combining of contrasts, and mining into dark evermore for blacker pits of night. What would painter do, or what would poet or saint, but for crucifixions and hells?" (255). Notice how Emerson carefully puts the "combining of contrasts" to "new use" through the contradictory image of mining into night. Mining means to burrow, usually into the earth; it means digging down for material treasure. But mining into

night suggests digging upward – burrowing into black ether. This clever “combining of contrasts,” in other words, fuses material and ethereal quests; it mixes Descendentalism and Transcendentalism to become the paradox of Gothic Transcendentalism or the Transcendental Gothic. Emerson was a self-acknowledged idealist, but he was rooted in material reality, rooted in dread origins, rooted in the Gothic. These roots gave him something to transcend and something to return to.

Rhodes College

Notes

¹ For a discussion of Emerson’s self-representation as Christ, see Reynolds 15-16.

² Melville admired Emerson but was increasingly skeptical of his optimistic philosophy, which he satirized in such works as “Benito Cereno” (1855) through the naïve New Englander, Amasa Delano, and in *The Confidence Man* (1857) through the mystic Mark Winsome and his disciple Egbert. For insights into Delano as an extreme Emersonian, see McLoughlin 149-61. For a discussion of Emerson as Winsome and Egbert, see Foster.

³ See Reynolds, who argues that Hawthorne “came to see Emerson as an angelic friend and a manipulative idealist, whose influence appeared chilling and often Satanic in its effects” (12).

⁴ See especially Lopez’s *Emerson and Power*. Also see “*The Conduct of Life*.”

⁵ Kern uses the term “easy optimism” to describe what his students find repellent about Emerson. He then insists that “Emerson’s optimism is not easy, but was achieved in the face of difficulties as an answer to his most serious and painful problems” (7).

⁶ The term “negative romanticism,” which suggests the world is devoid of value, comes from Morse Peckham; Michael Hoffman uses it to distinguish between Poe, a negative romantic, and Emerson, a positive romantic. “In American literature,” as Hoffman puts it, “Emerson was the first to attempt a leap beyond Negative Romanticism” (11).

⁷ From “Ligeia” (1838) to “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) to “The Black Cat” (1843) to “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843), Poe uses eye imagery to symbolize the ego or self. The latter story best exemplifies eliminating the ego when the disease-driven narrator slays a bedridden old man, whose haunting “Evil Eye” is an obvious reference to the alter-ego.

⁸ See Perry Miller, who argues that a visionary and ecstatic impulse runs from Puritanism to Jonathan Edwards, the charismatic minister of the Great Awakening, to Emerson. Also see Phyllis Cole, who shows how Emerson’s Aunt Mary Moody Emerson, schooled her nephew in the lingering tradition of the Awakening, to which some of his ancestors belonged. Emerson, as Cole points out, “found power in his ancestors more as images of fervor than representatives of doctrine” (35).

⁹ As Packer writes, Emerson’s poems “‘Uriel,’ ‘Saadi,’ ‘Bacchus,’ and ‘Merlin’ are visionary or emblematic fables loosely modeled on Coleridge’s ‘Kubla Khan’ and on German mythological lyrics like Goethe’s ‘Prometheus’” (736).

¹⁰ The likeness between Emerson’s and Rimbaud’s hellish vocabulary is indeed noteworthy. Notice how Rimbaud begins *A Season in Hell* with a similar occult appeal:

Once, if I remember well, my life was a feast
where all hearts opened and all wines flowed.
One evening I seated Beauty on my knees. And I
found her bitter. And I cursed her.
I armed myself against justice.
I fled. O Witches, O Misery, O Hate, to you has
my treasure been entrusted! (3)

¹¹ One noteworthy creation that springs from Emerson’s morbid obsessions is a fragmented but ultimately coherent Gothic tale about a forest-dwelling witch named Uilsa, an outcast who is loathed for terrifying her neighboring town. For a rigorous psychoanalytic reading of “Uilsa,” see Evelyn Barish 83-87.

¹² The word “Goth,” as Markman Ellis points out, has been used too generally; after all, the German tribes consisted of the Goths, Lombards,

Vandals, and Huns – and later of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. "By the eighteenth century," Ellis wisely notes, "'Goth' was a blanket term for any of the Germanic tribes, as if distinctions between individual tribes were not significant" (22).

¹³ Here Richardson does acknowledge "a sort of romantic longing for death" (109) in Emerson's writing.

¹⁴ For more on Ellen Tucker Emerson, her disease, and her poetry, see Anderson.

¹⁵ Emerson's use of scientific rhetoric begins earlier than *Conduct*. William Rossi, who writes about Emerson's relationship with natural science, notes that "beginning in the mid-1840s, Emerson begins to rely increasingly on metaphors drawn from physics and chemistry, the better to suggest an elemental essence" (135). For a full-length study of Emerson's deep, long-overlooked investment in science, see Walls.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Janet M. "Ellen and the Tubercular Muse." *Literature and Medicine* 18.1 (1999): 39-59.
- Barish, Evelyn. *Emerson: The Roots of Prophecy*. Princeton UP, 1989.
- Bishop, Jonathan. *Emerson on the Soul*. Harvard UP, 1964.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Poetics of Influence*. New Haven: Schwab, 1988.
- Cabot, James Elliot. *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson, vol. 1*. New York: AMS Press, 1965.
- Cavell, Stanley. "Emerson's Constitutional Amending: Reading 'Fate.'" 1995. Ed. David Justin Hodge. Stanford UP, 2003. 192-214.
- Cole, Phyllis. "Ralph Waldo Emerson and His Family." *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris. Cambridge UP, 1999. 30-48.
- Edmundson, Mark. *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sodomasochism, and the Culture of the Gothic*. Harvard UP, 1997.
- Ellis, Markman. *The History of Gothic Fiction*. Edinburgh UP, 2000.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "The American Scholar." 1837. Myerson 195-212.

- . *The Conduct of Life*. 1860. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931.
- . “Divinity School Address.” 1838. Myerson 230-46.
- . *Emerson’s Prose and Poetry*. Ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris. New York: Norton, 2001.
- . *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. William H. Gilman et al. 16 vols. Harvard UP, 1960-82.
- . *Nature*. 1836. Myerson 124-60.
- . “The Poet.” 1844. *Emerson’s Prose and Poetry*. Ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris. New York: Norton, 2001. 183-98.
- . “Self-Reliance.” 1841. Myerson 318-40.
- . “The Transcendentalist.” 1841. Myerson. 366-80.
- Foster, Elizabeth S. “Emerson in *The Confidence Man*.” *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade*. Ed. Hershel Parker. New York: Norton, 1971. 333-39.
- Goddu, Teresa A. *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation*. Columbia UP, 1997.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The House of the Seven Gables*. 1851. Ed. Robert S. Levine. New York: Norton, 2006.
- . “The Old Manse.” 1846. *Emerson’s Prose and Poetry*. Ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris. New York: Norton, 2001. 606-07.
- . “Young Goodman Brown.” 1835. *American Gothic Tales*. Ed. Joyce Carol Oates. New York: Plume, 1996. 52-64.
- Hoffman, Michael J. *The Subversive Vision: American Romanticism in Literature*. New York: Kennikat Press, 1972.
- Hogle, Jerrold E. “Introduction: the Gothic in Western Culture.” *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold Hogle. Cambridge UP, 2002. 1-20.
- James, Henry. *Emerson*. 1888. *Emerson’s Prose and Poetry*. Ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris. New York: Norton, 2001. 615-28.
- Keating, AnnLouise. “Renaming the Dark: Emerson’s Optimism and the Abyss.” *American Transcendental Quarterly* 4.4 (1990): 305-25.
- Kern, Alexander. “The Dark Side of Emerson’s Optimism.” *Emerson Society Quarterly* 10 (1958): 7-8.

- Lehan, Richard. *Realism and Naturalism: The Novel in an Age of Transition*. U of Wisconsin P, 2005.
- Lopez, Michael. "The Conduct of Life: Emerson's Anatomy of Power." *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris. Cambridge UP, 1996. 243-66.
- . *Emerson and Power: Creative Antagonism in the Nineteenth Century*. Northern Illinois UP, 1996.
- Lydenberg, John. "Emerson and the Dark Tradition." *Critical Quarterly* 4 (1962): 352-58.
- McLoughlin, Michael. *Dead Letters to the New World: Melville, Emerson, and American Transcendentalism*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Melville, Herman. "Letter to Evert A. Duyckinck about Emerson as a Lecturer." 1849. *Emerson in His Own Time*. Ed. Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson. U of Iowa P, 2003. 35-37.
- Miller, Perry. "From Edwards to Emerson." 1940. Ed. Lawrence Buell. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Collection of Critical Essays*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993. 13-31.
- Myerson, Joel, ed. *Transcendentalism: A Reader*. Oxford UP, 2000.
- Packer, Barbara. "Ralph Waldo Emerson." 1988. *Emerson's Prose and Poetry*. Ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris. New York: Norton, 2001. 725-38.
- Reynolds, Larry J. "Hawthorne's Labors in Concord." *The Cambridge Companion to Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Ed. Richard H. Millington. Cambridge UP, 2004. 10-34.
- Richardson, Robert D., Jr. *Emerson: The Mind on Fire*. U of California P, 1995.
- Rimbaud, Arthur. *A Season in Hell and the Drunken Boat*. 1873. Tr. Louise Varèse. New York: New Directions, 1961.
- Robinson, David M. "Emerson and Religion." *A Historical Guide to Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Joel Myerson. Oxford UP, 2000. 151-77.
- . *Emerson and the Conduct of Life: Pragmatism and Ethical Purpose in the Later Work*. Cambridge UP, 1993.
- Rossi, William. "Emerson, Nature, and Natural Science." *A Historical*

- Guide to Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Joel Myerson. Oxford UP, 2000. 101-50.
- Salomon, Louis B. "A Walk with Emerson on the Dark Side." *Costerus: Essays in English and American Language and Literature* 6 (1972): 121-35.
- Santayana, George. "The Optimism of Ralph Waldo Emerson." 1886. *George Santayana's America*. Ed. James Ballowe. U of Illinois P, 1967. 71-84.
- Savoy, Eric. "The Rise of American Gothic." *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle. Cambridge UP, 2002. 167-88.
- Silverman, Kenneth. *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1991.
- Walls, Laura Dassow. *Emerson's Life in Science: The Culture of Truth*. Cornell UP, 2003.
- Weisbuch, Robert. *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson*. U of Chicago P, 1986.
- Whicher, Stephen E. *Freedom and Fate: An Inner Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. U of Pennsylvania P, 1953.
- . *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson: An Organic Anthology*. Ed. Stephen E. Whicher. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1957.

