

The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson

Robert N. Hudspeth

On 26 July 1869, Ralph Waldo Emerson sent to his Boston publisher, Fields and Osgood, his six volumes of prose works to be published as a “collected works.” The next day he sent Fields a short letter naming the order that the two-volume work should take: “1. Miscellanies [later and always after titled *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*] 2 & 3 Essays 4. Representative Men 5. English Traits 6. Conduct of Life,” the order in which his works had been published. This became an established precedent, for all subsequent editions of his “collected” works have followed his organization. Fields and Osgood published the edition on 27 October 1869, with a copyright date of 1870 (Emerson, *Letters* 6:78, 10:349-50).

Emerson lived to publish one more edition of his works, the “Little Classic” edition published by James R. Osgood in Boston in 1876, by adding to the 1869 edition three subsequent volumes: *Society and Solitude*, *Letters and Social Aims*, and *Poems*, bringing the total volumes to nine. Then, after his death, Emerson’s literary executor, James Elliot Cabot, expanded the collected works to eleven volumes by adding *Miscellanies* and *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*, volumes that consisted mainly of essays and lectures that Cabot himself had created from the mass of lecture material Emerson had left. The now eleven-volume edition was published by Houghton, Mifflin in 1883-1884 as the “Riverside Edition” of Emerson’s collected works. Houghton, however, was not satisfied with the eleven volumes and persuaded Cabot to round out the edition with a twelfth, *Natural History of the Intellect*, which the

editor finally supplied, again by ransacking Emerson's papers to create a series of essays. The book was published a decade after its fellows, in 1893.

There things stood for another decade until Emerson's son, Edward Waldo Emerson, published the Centenary edition, again in twelve volumes, but with some changes in the contents of the works Cabot had created and with the addition of several heretofore unpublished poems in the *Poetry* volume. Houghton, Mifflin was again the publisher for the set that appeared in 1903-1904. This editorial work firmly placed Emerson in the ranks of American literature. The Centenary edition in its sober green cloth was the edition of record, the one from which a careful and serious scholar quoted, an edition all young Emersonians longed finally to be able to buy, long after it had gone out of print.

Then, in 1965 a group of Emerson scholars began to confront the limitations of the Riverside edition. They met, consulted, and drew up plans for a scholarly edition based on current, more rigorous and transparent editorial standards. The first fruit of their work was published in 1971 by Harvard University Press under its Belknap imprint as *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*, the first of ten projected volumes of *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Now, after almost a half century, the edition is complete with the publication of the tenth and final volume, *Uncollected Prose*, edited by the edition's General Editor, Ronald Bosco, and the Textual Editor, Joel Myerson with notes by Glen M. Johnson. It has indeed been a long time coming, but the wait is more than well worth it.

At first, the Harvard edition looks surprising. In the nineteenth century, Emerson's collected works expanded from six to nine, to ten, to twelve volumes; the new edition, the combined work of seventeen distinguished editors, now is reduced back to ten. Therein lies a fascinating story, one that will occupy us at some length later in this review essay. Quickly stated, the Harvard edition is based on the principle that only those works are included that Emerson himself saw into print, those over which he exerted control. All the essays, lectures,

and poems created by Cabot (often in collaboration with Emerson's daughter Edith) and Edward Emerson are excluded. This is a rigorous standard, one clearly defensible and long overdue, given the fact that, for the last decade and more of Emerson's life, he was not competent to create new work or to reuse what he had previously written to make new publications. It is a painful, complicated story, one that Bosco has clarified and illuminated in his editorial introductions to *Letters and Social Aims* (CW 8) and *Uncollected Prose* (CW 10), and one that we will take up in order at their appropriate places. It should be noted that every volume in the series is a genuine collaboration. The editors of each volume say they reviewed each other's work, and inevitably they thank many others whom they consulted. Though the edition has been created by a series of senior, distinguished Emerson scholars, it is the work of many contributors.

Each volume of *Collected Works* has a substantial historical introduction that, if taken in order and as a whole, provides the reader with a history of Emerson's writing career from the publication of *Nature* in 1836 to and through his mental decline. The editors chart the history of each volume from its inception in Emerson's lectures, and they account for the contemporary reception of it.

The textual introductions lay out clearly in detail the principles upon which the editorial decisions are made. Each volume is thoroughly annotated: quotations are identified (referring the reader most often to the edition that Emerson owned or was known to have read); historical events are clarified, people are identified, and appropriate contexts for Emerson's comments are supplied. The notes are consistently full and accurate, especially in the later volumes. Following the explanatory notes are textual notes that provide lists of collations, of end-line hyphenations, of emendations accepted and rejected, and of variants in the copy-text. The aim is to provide the reader with all the information one would need to judge the editorial decisions.

In addition to the notes and textual apparatus, each volume has a section that I find of special value – tables of parallel passages. Given

Emerson's life-long habit of drawing heavily on his journal to write his lectures and his essays, it is useful to be able to work back and forth between the published journal and the *Collected Works*. The parallel passages also draw on the *Topical Notebooks* and *Early Lectures*, as well as on the *Later Lectures* when they became available. Now, for the first time, readers can understand in detail how Emerson's ideas grew from first jottings to matured ideas. Later volumes contain added textual apparatuses, which will be noted when they appear. Each volume is, of course, indexed.

The editors of the *Collected Works* clearly define their editorial principles. Working from the theory of Walter Gregg, they choose as their copy-text, "that text closest to the author's initial coherent intention" (CW 2:xxxiv).¹ In practice, this is usually the first printed version of the text, though when manuscript forms exist the editors are willing to use them (always explaining in detail their rationale for so doing). This choice presumes the smallest number of non-authorial changes in the text, notably in the "accidentals." This copy-text is then emended conservatively by correcting obvious printing errors or by substituting authorial intervention to arrive at a final intention. The last category can be the author's handwritten corrections and revisions, authorial instructions about the text, and subsequent authorial published variants.² At each step of the editing, the editors present their evidence, often in great detail. Whenever the circumstances of a volume dictate the need to alter these editorial principles, the editors revise them to solve their problems. I will note those changes as they occur, but the primary principle remained always the same: to present Emerson's final intention based on an emended copy-text of his first "coherent intention."



I. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*, ed. Robert E. Spiller and Alfred R. Ferguson (Belknap-Harvard UP, 1971), xxxviii + 333 pp., \$115.50.

"I also will essay to be"

After he had published four books and four pamphlets Emerson made his first "collected works" edition by gathering some of his previously-published prose into one volume, *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*. The 1849 volume contained the short book *Nature*, four addresses ("The American Scholar," "The Divinity School Address," "Literary Ethics," and "The Method of Nature") and concluded with three "Lectures on the Times" ("Introductory Lecture," "The Conservative," and "The Transcendentalist") and a lecture previously published in the *Dial*, "The Young American." The arrangement of the individual pieces was chronological, thus making a straightforward introduction to Emerson's first appearance as a published intellectual. It is, of course, the seminal writing that made him the influential figure that he became and remains. His declaration "I also will essay to be" (CW 1:103), first spoken to an audience at Dartmouth College, first published in "Literary Ethics," but first written to himself in mid-June 1838 (see *JMN* 7:13), was being fulfilled. To be a published essayist was indeed a new form of "being" for Emerson. After a brief career as a preacher, he became a lecturer in November 1833, a secular vocation that was to bring him attention and respect. The thirty-year old young man felt he had insights into nature that compelled him to reach out to an audience because "we have all a presentiment of relations to external nature, which outruns the limits of actual science" (Emerson, *Early Lectures* 1:71). Those "presentiments" took their first concrete, published form in *Nature*.

The book has always been a foundational text for understanding Emerson. Its first sentence makes a judgment that conditions all else that follows: "Our age is retrospective"; it sets up Emerson to challenge unstated assumptions about our culture's understanding of authority and

power. The question that follows quickly remains the guiding question of his essaying to be: “Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs [i.e., our “foregoing generations”]” (CW 1:7). In very specific ways, *Nature* developed Emerson’s first insights into philosophy, into the nature of language, and into the crucial relationship between the individual and the cosmos. It was in *Nature* that he first announced the primacy of the self that rested on a divine reality.

The collected 1849 volume was the work of a young revolutionary, work written in his early thirties when he tried to disabuse his readers of their misperceptions, their complacencies, and their faith in what they had learned from the past. Of course there are ironies abounding: just as Emerson complained that “We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe,” he had five sentences earlier quoted approvingly Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, the Swiss educational reformer (CW 1:69); as he denies the power of the past in the opening sentences of *Nature*, Emerson twice quotes scripture, the culture’s most revered form of past knowledge. But these ironies are corrective, not destructive. They remind the reader that the point is not the value of the past but of its power. The need as Emerson sees it is the need to free oneself from the tyranny of past ideas, to unfreeze the conceptions of what we are and how we might be better. In *Nature* Emerson first showed that we mis-perceive *what* we are because we fail to heed a better form of knowing. His often-quoted distinction between our “understanding” – our sensory and rational abilities to perceive the world – and “Reason” – intuitive, immediate perception – made it possible for him then to claim that “we learn that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator in the finite” (CW 1:38). From his first book, Emerson boldly repudiated the separation of man and “God”; creativity in its most profound sense was now located in human experience. The young man was nothing if not daring.

Emerson did not delay his development of the implications of both the epistemology and the metaphysics of these claims. The very next

year, in his address to the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard, he obliquely defined his own purpose by saying that Man Thinking has a specific office: "to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances" (CW 1:62), the very thing he was attempting for the young men at Harvard and that he would continue to do for almost four decades. He located himself in the immediate world of nineteenth-century New England, knowing that, should he truly capture that world he captured all worlds: "I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into to-day, and you may have the antique and future worlds" (CW 1:67) (thus, for us, prophesying Whitman's appearance eighteen years later).

He went even further in 1838, when he boldly rejected the tradition of the Christian church, which he called a "Cultus." Christianity, to Emerson, is wrongly based on the divinity of Jesus, though he was one of "the true race of prophets." Jesus, Emerson says, "saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his world." In a bitter comment Emerson says that the "understanding," by which term he means to include the historical church, says of Jesus: "'This was Jehovah come down out of heaven. I will kill you, if you say he was a man'" (CW 1:81). Then, as was his life-long habit, Emerson defines his own role as preacher/lecturer/essayist: "It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake. The true Christianity, – a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man, – is lost" (CW 1:89). He here pushed even further the claims he had made in *Nature*. The reality of divine experience was not for him an historical fact; it was immediate. From the very first, "The infinitude of man" was the primary Emerson topic, one that extended into questions of religion, philosophy, psychology, and social reform.

After he resigned his pulpit at Boston's Second Church, Emerson found his lectures to be both profitable and intellectually stimulating. He found audiences willing to pay to hear him organize his thoughts from his rapidly growing journal. But he also felt the need to go beyond the lectures, useful though they were in allowing him to revise his ideas from

performance to performance. There was also the need to make a more permanent statement, one backed by the authority of print. A book, after all, was a serious thing to be read more widely than a lecture audience, one that would and did provoke responses in print from his peers. *Nature* was born as a book with no intermediate life as a lecture. The usefulness of print was obvious enough to Emerson so that he quickly turned his subsequent “orations” into printed pamphlets immediately after their delivery. As a result, “The American Scholar,” “The Divinity School Address,” “Literary Ethics,” and “The Method of Nature” did not have a history of being repeated lectures that might have undergone revisions. They moved directly from one performance into print. The final triad of the volume, “Lectures,” represent well-used lectures that had outlived their usefulness on the lecture circuit. Here in embryo was what was to become his life-long habit: first he thought to himself in his journal; then he turned journal entries into lectures, and finally he revised the lectures into print for the widest possible audience, but in so doing took a more or less final stand on a topic, though for Emerson “final” was never quite the end.

What was “new” in 1849 was the gathering of these pieces into one volume, so that they inevitably were to be read in succession. *Nature* (first published anonymously) was now published under Emerson’s name. The principles in that book now clearly led to the plea for a national literature in “The American Scholar” and to the rejection of institutional religion in the address to the divinity students. The following orations and speeches dramatize more specific, detailed explorations of the workings of the “infinity of man,” and the “moral law,” of the possibilities of language, of the inadequacies of sacred and secular institutions, of the troubled place where a person committed to a law of insights rather than of traditions found himself an object of ridicule. Speaking of “the transcendentalist” (which, of course, meant Emerson himself), he said: “no doubt they will lay themselves open to criticism and to lampoons,” but he had the firm conviction that “the strong spirits overpower those around them without effort” (CW 1:215).

The 1849 volume closes with Emerson's easy assurance that even social reform can emerge from his transcendentalist ethos: "If only the men are well employed in conspiring with the designs of the Spirit who led us hither, and is leading us still, we shall quickly enough advance out of all hearing of other's censures, out of all regrets of our own, into a new and more excellent social state than history has recorded" (CW 1:244).

Robert Spiller's introduction to *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures* sets the several pieces in their historical context and briefly describes Emerson's use of his journal to create his published prose. Spiller emphasizes a "crisis of the years 1838-1844," one that he "masked ... from his family, his friends, the public, and even from himself" (CW 1:xxiv). Spiller claims that the 1849 volume was Emerson's first attempt to solve that crisis which lay in the question of whether or not an idealism such as his could find a life in ante-bellum America. Spiller goes on to give a brief account of Emerson's reading that underlay the writing of the essays. Unlike subsequent historical introductions to the volumes in the Harvard edition, the first one does not take note of how the volume was received by reviewers, nor does it provide a full biographical setting for the volume. Each essay in the volume has its own introduction that puts the writing into a specific context, especially for the lectures. These introductory essays track the history of Emerson's lecturing in detail. Finally, these shorter introductions are followed immediately by the publishing history of the piece.

Nature, Addresses, and Lectures presents the editors with problems. Though Emerson himself nominated it for volume one of his collected works, it appeared *after* the publication of *Essays: First Series* (1841), *Essays: Second Series* (1844), and *Poems* (1847). It was (not counting the 1836 *Nature*) his third, not his first book. Second, Emerson himself was his first editor, for he revised the individual texts he gathered together into the volume. The 1836 text of *Nature*, for example, was not the one he published in 1849. Therein lies the problem for editors.

Alfred R. Ferguson's textual introduction begins with a clear, straightforward statement that the edition "provides for the first time

established texts of Emerson's works which were originally published in his lifetime and under his immediate supervision." The resulting edited text is "critical and unmodernized. It neither provides a reprint of any single earlier edition, nor is it limited to the authority of those editions" (CW 1:xxix). The copy-text for each selection is the original published version, there being no extant pre-publication version of the finished work. The textual introduction goes on to describe Emerson's process of revision for the 1849 volume. Ferguson argues that the revised text "left us a retouched version of his first philosophy in which the sharp edges are softened and blurred." As a result the now older thinker "was ready to modify his excesses subtly" (CW 1:xxx).

So far, so good, but at this point the editors of *Nature*, *Addresses*, and *Lectures* make an unsatisfactory decision about emendations because they are unwilling to decide whether the first intention or the latest is to be the desired result. Unlike the editorial principle later adopted for *Essays: First Series*, the editors say that "Our principle is to present the fullest version of the early writings. Hence when later corrections cut the copy-text they are refused, although the variants, of course, are recorded.... When the revision added to the original by expansion or clarification, it is accepted. When the change was of a word or phrase substituted for precision of diction or to avoid clumsy repetition, it is adopted, as are later authorial corrections to eliminate proof errors or visible flaws in grammar or syntax." One can heartily accept the need to correct "proof errors or visible flaws in grammar or syntax," but the rest of the claim is doubtful. Ferguson closes simply by saying: "Broadly speaking, then, revisions in later editions which increased the original or clarified it without excision are accepted; revisions which reduced the original are refused" (CW 1:xxxii-xxxiii). The very logic of this editorial principle is unacceptable, for it privileges one kind of authorial revision at the expense of another. It also puts the editor in the awkward position of having to make quite subjective decisions. While it is the nature of editing to make decisions, the fewer purely subjective ones the better. One can argue that the 1836 text is desirable because it was Emerson's

first major statement; one can equally argue that the 1849 text is desirable because it was his mature judgment. What one cannot argue is that some of one and some of the other is preferable. As it turns out, a large number of the 1849 Emerson revisions are rejected, and the resulting *Collected Works* text is mostly the 1836. The most striking example is in the volume's last essay, "The Young American." The *Dial* text was much revised and reduced by Emerson in 1849, but the editors of the new volume wisely print the original version. Admittedly, whatever objections one might have about emendations, the editors record their decisions, both those to emend and to reject emendation. The edition, however, got off to a rough start.

II. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: First Series*, ed. Joseph Slater, Alfred R. Ferguson, and Jean Ferguson Carr (Belknap-Harvard UP, 1979), 1 + 368 pp., \$115.50.

"I simply experiment, an endless seeker, with no Past at my back"

Eight years later the second volume of the new *Collected Works* appeared, *Essays: First Series*, Emerson's 1841 book. It contains 12 essays, many of which are central to Emerson's status as a major writer: "Self-Reliance," "Compensation," "Friendship," "Heroism," and "Circles," to name the most prominent. The editors make the point that the twelve are really six sets of paired performances. *Essays*, as the book was first named, was an extension of Emerson's intensely productive early creative life. After the publication of *Nature* in 1836 and the two ground-breaking orations in 1837 and 1838, Emerson began to plan seriously for a volume of essays, even though he was devoting almost half of each year to his necessary lecturing. The twelve pieces in *Essays* are in fact prose writings designed to be read, not heard, but each, save perhaps "Circles," existed in some form first as a lecture. That he persisted in publishing in the essay form is a testament to Emerson's

understanding that the lectures, though they were better suited for immediate revision from occasion to occasion, had neither the gravity of the essay nor the highly-desired wider audience. If published prose became “fixed,” it ‘compensated’ (a theme in *Essays*) by reaching first a national and then an international audience.

Like his lectures, Emerson’s essays were opportunities for instruction, analysis, prophecy, and exhortation. They were “personal” in that they read as if a person were talking to the reader and in that they draw, even if obliquely, on the experience of the writer, but they never became confessional. The essays depend on an ease of language, often couched in powerful figures of speech. Emerson is really at his best in these shorter pieces, for, important as *Nature* was to his thinking and to his subsequent reputation, it is in the shorter, more focused essays that he was most effective. In many ways each of the essays in the 1841 book took themes he had announced earlier. In “The American Scholar” Emerson had confidently claimed that “Each philosopher, each bard, each actor, has only done for me, as by a delegate, what one day I can do for myself” (CW 1:66). Now he ventured a complete essay on “Self-Reliance,” in which he claimed, in a line often-quoted: “Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string” (CW 2:28), a line he first wrote to himself in his journal in November 1839 as a conclusion to a paragraph about the destructive power that society exerts over the individual. The assurance of *Nature* that “Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable” (CW 1:7) or the paradox in “The Divinity School Address” that “The Man who renounces himself, comes to himself” (CW 1:78) lead directly to his claim in the 1841 “Heroism” that “Heroism is an obedience to a secret impulse of an individual’s character” (CW 2:149). The examples can be multiplied throughout the book.

That very self reliance led inevitably to putting the Emersonian individual into conflict with the surrounding society, for self reliance rests on the validity of intuition and on the reality of the moral law, that is, on our ability to perceive our relationship to pure and benevolent being. Having within the past three years been the object of a great deal

of public controversy over his address to the divinity students at Harvard, Emerson knew first-hand what it meant to trust his intuitions. As he found out, this creed made for isolation and public calumny: "For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure," but he knew a deeper, more hidden truth: "the sour faces of the multitude, like their sweet faces, have no deep cause, but are put on and off as the wind blows, and a newspaper directs" (CW 2:32-33). He had seen sour faces enough and read the Boston newspapers often enough to exactly judge their shallowness.

The principle that underlies the essays is the direct claim in "Self-Reliance" that "The soul raised over passion beholds identity and eternal causation, perceives the self-existence of Truth and Right, and calms itself with knowing that all things go well" (CW 2:39-40). The connection between the "soul" and an encompassing reality comes through "perception," that is through a direct revelation (recalling the old New England antinomian crisis), not through logic or through ordinary empirical evidence. Emerson's faith lay in his "involuntary perceptions," those that came as they came, not at his bidding. He knew full well that this reality was little known among his fellow citizens: "Thoughtless people contradict as readily the statement of perceptions as of opinions.... They fancy that I choose to see this or that thing. But perception is not whimsical, but fatal" (CW 38). Throughout *Essays* the Emersonian themes merge and divide, remake themselves with new figures of speech, but always make bold claims about how the individual might be more complete, less wounded and fragmented.

One final thematic thread needs to be noticed. Throughout *Essays* Emerson repeatedly cautions the reader that fluidity, not fixity, should characterize our mind and our understandings. This idea is most completely worked out in "Circles," an essay he composed without having a previous lecture to draw from. "There are no fixtures in nature" Emerson says early in the essay, and then claims that the poet best represents this truth, for he "claps wings to the sides of all the solid old lumber of the world" (CW 2:179, 185). Emerson, himself, is, of course,

his “poet,” for his essays repeatedly offer disguised versions of his vocation. In “Circles” he speaks in the first person: “I am only an experimenter. Do not set the least value on what I do, or the least discredit on what I do not, as if I pretended to settle anything as true or false.” Then Emerson makes his clearest statement of purpose: “I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker, with no Past at my back” (CW 2:188). There could hardly be a more exact description of this nineteenth-century American prophet. Life exists to be made; the past is a fiction; the great role of the writer is to “unsettle,” whether it be an unsettling of literary tradition, of religious dogma, or of political practice. Emerson always wanted to keep open the possibilities of new understandings in the places where we are most certain of the “truth.”

And unsettle Emerson did. Reactions, as the editors note in detail, fell into two sharply divided groups. Where the one found him a true prophet, one who freed the reader from a slavish attachment to tradition, whether it be social, religious, or literary, the other camp found rebellion and blasphemy, as voiced by his aunt Mary Moody Emerson, who called the book a “strange medley of atheism and false independence” so rank that she could “regret that he had not gone to the tomb amidst his early honors” (Emerson, Mary Moody 426). Carlyle was so pleased that he quoted himself (from *Heroes and Hero-Worship*): “It is an Infinitude, the real vision and belief of one, seen face to face: a ‘voice of the heart of Nature’ is here once more” (Emerson *Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle* 295). Overall, what Emerson had said about “friendship” in the essay of that title, that it is “better be a nettle in the side of your friend than his echo” (CW 2:122-23), applies more generally to his work, for it was clearly provocation that he sought, a “tart cathartic virtue,” as he put it in “Heroism.” There is, he acknowledged, enough trouble in life, pain, disappointment, despair enough to need “the arming of the man,” a role he was eager to assume (CW 2:147,148).

To help the reader through this bounty of poetic, evocative prose, the editors’ Historical Introduction traces the evolution of the book from

early 1837 through its publication on 20 March 1841. They provide the biographical background that shows how Emerson balanced his need to write the book against his need to lecture each year, how he sometimes despaired of finishing it, and how frustrating the process of publishing could be for him. They show that all the essays save "Circles" had substantive existence previously as lectures, but that Emerson habitually revised and polished his work as he turned them into essays. The Historical Introduction gives an account of the reception of the book, both in the United States and in England, though the section is short.

One very interesting part of the Historical Introduction is the editor's detailed discussion of how Emerson used his journal entries as he wrote the essays. While it is widely known that he had such a process, the detailed examination of "how Emerson spun a single cord out of his thousand and one raveled strands" (Emerson's image) is illuminating (CW 2:xxv). Joseph Slater uses the opening sentences of the book to demonstrate how Emerson fitted the parts together. He notes that "Parts of 'History' and 'Self-Reliance' had been read in lectures as early as 1833" and that "Ninety-five percent of 'History' was drawn from the pages of the journals" and that "Circles," though written expressly for the volume, "is more than half made up of passages written in the journal as early as 1835" (CW 2:xxv). The Historical Introduction then closes by saying that the essays are interrelated, that each essay in the pair should be read against the other ("History" against "Self-Reliance," "Prudence" against "Heroism," and "Intellect" against "Art," e.g.).

Textually, *Essays* presented the editors with the same problems that arose with the preceding volume, for again Emerson substantially revised his 1841 book. This time, however, the editors made a better choice: they adopted the practice that became the guiding principle for the edition, and in so doing they acknowledged the shortcomings of the first volume. Thus, *Essays: First Series* adopts the 1841 edition as copy-text but emends it to include Emerson's 1847 revisions.

III. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: Second Series*, ed. Joseph Slater, Alfred R. Ferguson, and Jean Ferguson Carr (Belknap-Harvard UP, 1983), lxi + 305 pp., \$115.50.

“Where do we find ourselves?”

This was no idle question for Emerson, no matter which meaning one takes of the question (Where do we go to find ourselves? v. Where are we currently?), for in his second volume of essays he seemed less sure of an answer. *Essays: Second Series* continues Emerson’s exploration of individual power in its relation to the moral law, but the book’s overall tone is markedly less celebratory. While he ends each essay with an affirmation, that conclusion is earned with more difficulty. Every essay save for “Nature” and “New England Reformers” opens with a negation or with a somber recognition of limitation. It is as though the Emersonian speaker has resolutely set problems for himself to be solved, has made finding oneself a challenge. The book is now best known for two central essays that open *Essays: Second Series*, “The Poet” and “Experience.” The first is the most important theoretical discussion of poetry to be written by an American before the Civil War, an essay that again prophesied the poetry of Walt Whitman; the second is a profound meditation evolving from the death of Emerson’s five-year-old son, Waldo, in February 1842.

In many ways “The Poet” takes up where Emerson left off in his discussion of language in the 1836 *Nature*. There, in the section “Language,” he had noted that “The moment our discourse rises above the ground line of familiar facts, and is inflamed with passion or exalted by thought, it clothes itself in images” (CW 1:20). He had, of course, in that essay and in all his subsequent ones, demonstrated the truth of the claim in his own highly imagistic prose. Now, in “The Poet,” Emerson extends his argument. Beginning with the proposition that he “stands among partial men for the complete man,” the poet is the one “who re-attaches things to nature and the Whole” and thus poets become

"liberating gods" (CW 3:4, 11). Emerson elaborates this idea in his overtly Platonic language: "We are like persons who come out of a cave or cellar into the open air. This is the effect on us of tropes, fables, oracles, and all poetic forms. Poets are thus liberating gods" (CW 3:17). He ruefully acknowledges that he looks "in vain for the poet" he describes because he cannot find the one who dares "chaunt our own times and social circumstance." And to prove the point offers a catalog of images from daily-life absent from American poetry. Every reader now knows that there was a poet living in 1844 in Manhattan who become exactly the one Emerson sought.

"The Poet" ends with an ecstatic affirmation; it is a shock to immediately find "Experience" opening with the question posed at the beginning of this discussion: "Where do we find ourselves?" The essay's opening images are forbidding, somber admissions of powerlessness: "We wake and find ourselves on a stair: there are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight"; "Ghostlike we glide through nature, and should not know our place again"; "We are like millers on the lower levels of a stream, when the factories above them have exhausted the water" (CW 3:27). Two paragraphs later Emerson makes it clear that his inability to see and feel flows from his son's death: "The only thing grief has taught me, is to know how shallow it is" (CW 3:29). After naming Waldo's death "more than two years ago," Emerson goes on to say, in the most painful line he ever wrote: "So is it with this calamity; it does not touch me: something which I fancied was a part of me, which could not be torn away without tearing me, nor enlarged without enriching me, falls off from me, and leaves no scar" (CW 3:29). Grief appears unreal at a time when he expected it to be most oppressive. He truly does not know where to find himself.

This sets the stage for an exploration of what Emerson calls "the lords of life," that is "Illusion, Temperament, Succession, Surface, Surprise, Reality, Subjectiveness" (all aptly capitalized), abstractions which he also calls "threads on the loom of time" (CW 3:47). Emerson takes up each of his "lords" and acknowledges its full power, power that

looks to be inescapable. As a result, individual passages in the essay appear to deny all he has been writing and preaching in the previous decade: Temperament is “a prison of glass which we cannot see”; “Life itself is a bubble and a skepticism, and a sleep within a sleep” (CW 3:31, 38). But these moments are just that – moments of recognition of the powerful forces arrayed against the human self; they are not the final perception. In “Experience,” Emerson begins to write in a way that came later to characterize his essays: he offers a full recognition of limitation and then counters it with an affirmative claim of human capability, a form of what he later will call a “double consciousness.” “Experience” closes with a shift to the future tense: “Patience and patience, we shall win at the last,” he says in his closing exhortation, the final words of which are, “there is victory yet for all justice; and the true romance which the world exists to realize, will be the transformation of genius into practical power” (CW 3:48-49).

“Will be” may seem chilly comfort, but the essays that follow take up particular forms of “practical power.” “Character,” the very next essay, champions a “resistance of circumstances” that flows from the inherent force of character in some individuals (an idea that he explores more fully in *Representative Men*) (CW 3:57). In “Manners” our foolish obedience to false distinctions can fall away in the recognition of “truth and real force,” and the word “gentleman” “denotes good-nature or benevolence: manhood first, and then gentleness” (CW 3:73), and even in “Politics,” “We must trust infinitely to the beneficent necessity which shines through all laws” (CW 3:124). In that essay Emerson again writes a self-portrait: “with the appearance of the wise man, the State expires. The appearance of character makes the State unnecessary” (CW 3:126). He most often casts these creative souls as third-person actors. They appear to be creations of his imagination, but in fact they are projections of himself – or projections of the self that he most wanted to be, projections of what he might become.

Essays: Second Series was one essay short when he reached what he thought was its final form. He had two lectures at hand, one his

speech on the emancipation of the West Indies that he had delivered in Concord in the summer of 1844, and the other a lecture on reform he had read in Boston in March. The editors of *Essays: Second Series* astutely note that inclusion of the abolition lecture would "have been to alter both the tone and the meaning of the book. To have ended with such a fortissimo crash of passion and violence would have overwhelmed the nuanced complexities of earlier chapters" (CW 3:xxxi). Instead, *Essays: Second Series* concludes with "New England Reformers: Lecture at Amory Hall," but on first glance, it too seems to violate the tone of the previous essays, for it starts as a spirited satire that ingeniously calls into question the very nature of the vigorous reform movement that flourished in the mid-1840s. The editors quote one of the funniest lines when Emerson's narrator says with mock gravity, "Even the insect world was to be defended, – that had been too long neglected, and a society for the protection of ground-worms, slugs, and mosquitos was to be incorporated without delay" (CW 3:150). The very cogent annotation to this passage informs the reader that Emerson was perhaps not hyperbolic, for, many years later, Bronson Alcott, one of the unnamed targets of Emerson's satire, was reputed to say: "Even the canker-worms that infested the apple-trees were not to be molested. They had as much right to the apples as man had" (CW 3:228). It is hard to exaggerate true believers.

Satire, however, was not finally the point of "New England Reformers," for midway through the essay Emerson acknowledges that reform of the mind is necessary, and that is the province of "the scholar," another of his assumed guises, and he acknowledges, yet again, the disconnection from the world around him that he occasionally felt: "We are weary of gliding ghostlike through the world, which is itself so slight and unreal" – language that echoes "Experience" (CW 3:161). It is here that the example of the over-zealous, narrowly focused and sometimes foolish reformers challenges Emerson, for they exhibit energy, focus, and purpose while his speaker sometimes feels lethargic and distracted. However, when Emerson

observes the “difference between the wise and the unwise: the latter wonders at what is unusual, the wise man wonders at the usual” – he sees that the reformers and he are working from the same principle (CW 3:167). Emerson offers comfort to himself and to those who would do “honest work”: “no matter how often defeated, you are born to victory” (CW 3:166). That comfort is a revision of a journal passage: “I am *Defeated* all the time; yet to Victory I am born,” written in April 1842, barely three months after Waldo’s death (JMN 8:228).

Joseph Slater’s Historical Introduction sets the cultural and biographical context of Emerson’s work in the 1840s and points out the influences of Waldo’s death, of Emerson’s work on the *Dial*, and of his frequently intense friendships, most notably with Margaret Fuller. The Introduction also has a more complete summary of the contemporary reviews of the book than is found in the earlier volumes. It is the most extensive Introduction thus far in the edition. Slater makes the point that in *Essays: Second Series*, Emerson “had written something different from any of his earlier works.” Not only did he include the satire of “New England Reformers,” but his style became more colloquial, and he had written something like a “stream of consciousness” in “Experience” (CW 3:xl-xli). Slater attributes the change to the fact that most of the material in *Essays: Second Series* was drawn from journal entries and preliminary sketches that Emerson wrote after the publication of the previous book.

The Textual Introduction by Alfred Ferguson provides the reader with a more complete account of the publishing history of the book, drawing on Emerson’s surviving account ledger books than the previous volumes had done, with special attention to the English edition, whose proof sheets he could not read, a fact that caused him a great deal of unease. Ferguson details the close control Emerson kept over the publication of his books, for he retained “ownership of the stereotyped plates and periodically issuing orders to his printer to print and bind a set number of his essays” (CW 3:li). Ferguson then goes on to give a printing history of *Essays: Second Series*.

The textual apparatus for the volume follows that already established in the Harvard edition. In addition, this volume has a series of appendixes. Appendix A is a transcription of the two-page manuscript fragment for "Nature"; Appendix B gives a collation of the essay "Gifts" and "Tantalus" (incorporated as part of "Nature" in the book), both of which had appeared first in the *Dial*; Appendix C is Emerson's list of *Errata et Corrigenda* for the London Edition of *Essays: Second Series*. The explanatory notes are, as usual, useful identifications, but this volume has more expansive notes that set a wider context and that quote more fully from material germane to the text. This reviewer finds the fuller notes welcome. Equally welcome is an apparently more complete Index that indexes the material in those notes. These changes are subtle and perhaps minor, but they make already excellent editing even better.

IV. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men*, ed. Wallace E. Williams and Douglas Emory Wilson (Belknap-Harvard, 1987), xcii + 409 pp., \$115.50.

"It is natural to believe in great men"

Biography long interested Emerson, for as early as August 1832 he was writing notes to himself in his journal: "The British Plutarch & the modern Plutarch is yet to be written. They that have writ the lives of great men have not written them from love & from seeing the beauty that was to be desired in them." He goes on to challenge himself: "I would evoke the spirit of each and their relics might rot" (*JMN* 4:35). Not surprisingly, he began lecturing on great men in Boston in January 1835 (the third lecture series of his new vocation). He had five biographical subjects: Michel Angelo, Luther, Milton, Fox and Burke. The following November his series on English literature included individual lectures on Chaucer, Bacon, Ben Jonson and two on Shakespeare. Then, in the 1840s, he began a more serious attempt to be the American Plutarch,

when he began to lecture on “Representative Men,” a series that was intended to become a book. After an introductory lecture on “The Uses of Great Men,” he spoke on Plato, Swedenborg, Montaigne, Napoleon, Shakespeare and Goethe, the topics that comprise *Representative Men*, published in 1850.

The idea of “Great Men” was natural to Emerson, given his faith in the individual and in his notion that “character” meant the force of personality. From *Nature* onward, Emerson’s writing assumed the fact that “A man is a centre for nature, running out threads of relation through everything, fluid and solid, material and elemental” (CW 4:6). There was always the implication that “ordinary” men could and should be “great,” but it was a word he used carefully – greatness was needed, and that became the subject of the opening essay. The book, however, substituted “Representative” for “Great.” In the title of the introductory lecture and essay, “The Uses of Great Men,” “Uses” is more important than “Great,” for “Other men are lenses through which we read our own minds”; some can “answer questions which I have not skill to put”; “great men are a collyrium [eyewash] to clear our eyes from egotism, and enable us to see other people and their works” (CW 4:4, 5, 15). These “uses” work for Emerson because he had such a fundamental faith in the power of symbols, and thus he concerned himself with the representative possibilities of his subjects as well as their “greatness.” It is a common observation and true that where Emerson’s friend Carlyle had titled his book *On Heroes and the Heroic*, Emerson chose *Representative Men*. Each man stands for a class – Plato is the philosopher; Swedenborg the mystic; Montaigne the skeptic; Shakespeare the poet; Napoleon the man of the world; and Goethe the writer.

At this point in his writing, that is by the late 1840s, Emerson structured his essays to allow him to be affirmative yet to acknowledge the harshness of human life. He later described this developing style as a “method of taking up in turn each of the leading topics which belong to our scheme of human life, and, by firmly stating all that is agreeable to experience on one, and doing the same justice to the opposing facts in the

others, the true limitations will appear" (CW 6:2). This strategy allowed him to dramatically acknowledge fears and horrors and yet bring his essays to an affirmative, if chastened close. He had found a way to make his work have the "tart cathartic virtue" that he so admired (CW 2:147). This "double vision" worked well for him in his portrait of Napoleon, a figure whom Emerson saw as perfectly representative of all that troubled the nineteenth century: "if Napoleon is Europe, it is because the people whom he sways are little Napoleons," Emerson says as he opens his essay. Then, after a quick summary of Napoleon's attributes, Emerson bluntly says, "precisely what is agreeable to the heart of every man in the nineteenth century, this powerful man possessed" (CW 4:129, 130). Unfortunately, all that agreeableness for Emerson added up to mere "sensual success" (CW 4: 130). Then he undertakes a detailed account of Napoleon's successes in politics and war. Time upon time Napoleon outwits and outfights his opponents, his mind leaping before them and his will unshakeable. "He risked everything, and spared nothing," says Emerson without flinching from the implications through an audacious figure of speech: "We like to see every thing do its office after its kind, whether it be a milch-cow or a rattlesnake" (CW 4:135).

There is a good deal of dismay about American politics behind this apparently enthusiastic praise of Napoleon's successes. In a catalogue that would have done Whitman proud, Emerson summarized the love the middle class had for the Frenchman, the people "who fill the markets, shops, counting-houses, manufactories, ships, of the modern world, aiming to be rich." For them, Napoleon "was the agitator, the destroyer of prescription, the internal improver, the liberal, the radical, the inventor of means, the opener of doors and markets, the subverter of monopoly and abuse" (CW 4:144). Such a success he was, such a thorn in the side of conservatives and royalists: but "I am sorry that the brilliant picture has its reverse," says Emerson as he pivots from defining Napoleon's successes to pointing out his fatal flaws: "Bonaparte was singularly destitute of generous sentiments," "He is a boundless liar"; "he was intensely selfish; he was perfidious." "In short, when you have

penetrated through all the circles of power and splendour, you were not dealing with a gentleman at last, but with an imposter and rogue” (CW 4:145, 146). This Emersonian “Man of the world” was just that and no more: a representative of the debased aspirations of sensuous living, of the party that stands “on the one ground of the supreme value of property,” whether one calls it “Democrat” or “Conservative.” To Emerson both parties show forth in Napoleon because his life “was an experiment under the most favorable conditions, of the powers of intellect without conscience” (CW 4:146, 147). All the brilliance, all the effectiveness Emerson showed in Napoleon are negated in that lack of “conscience.” The essay’s dialectic serves only to prepare us for Emerson’s prophetic conclusion: “Our riches will leave us sick, there will be bitterness in our laughter, and our wine will burn our mouth” (CW 4:148).

That Plato should be prominent in *Representative Men* is unsurprising, for Emerson’s mind had a natural neoplatonic cast. Though he used Coleridge’s conceptions of the “understanding” and “Reason,” his idea of the “moral law” was Platonic, very like the pure Ideas of Plato. Emerson, however, focuses not so much on Plato’s idealism as on the originating effect he had on Western thought. “Plato is philosophy, and philosophy Plato, at once the glory and the shame of mankind; since neither Saxon nor Roman have availed to add any idea to his categories” (CW 4:23). Emerson found that Plato’s success lay in his “Dialectic, – which is the Intellect discriminating the false and the true” (CW 4:35). In a ringing passage that all but merges his voice with Plato’s, Emerson says: “I announce the good of being interpenetrated by the mind that made nature” (CW 4:36). In what is almost a self-portrait, Emerson notes Plato’s fondness for couching abstract truth in a strategy that represents two poles of thought, the abstract and the concrete and makes the writing “selfpoised and spherical” (CW 4:31).

One would think there is no counterstatement to be made to this acknowledgement of the importance of mind and of the man who taught us how to think – but Emerson finds at least a small one: “It remains to

say that the defect of Plato in power, is only that which results inevitably from his quality." That is, "he is intellectual in his aim, and therefore in expression literary," thus again dropping for a moment his own mask, for if this be limitation in Plato, so too is it in Emerson. He can do little better than name the missing quality a "vital authority," one that Emerson finds in "the screams of prophets and the sermons of unlettered Arabs and Jews" (CW 4:42). There is a gap between the literary performance and the reader. In a stunning figure, Emerson says that Plato "clapped copyright on the world," but nevertheless, "Nature lives on, and forgets him." As perhaps all thinkers must, Plato finally falls prey to "philosophical exertions"; not he, not any of his followers, not any writer "ever yet had the smallest success in explaining existence" (CW 4:43, 44). As the second pole of Emerson's own dialectic, this recognition of Plato's limitations does not dismiss him; Emerson aims for a just assessment, not for hagiography. Moreover, by so doing, he silently assesses himself.

The cynosure of *Representative Men* was not, however, "The Philosopher," or even "The Writer," but rather "The Skeptic": Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, the essayist whom Emerson modeled, was an example of what non-fiction prose might accomplish, of how the ordinary experiences of life could be turned into thought. This study of Montaigne extends the earlier, more tentative exploration of skepticism that Emerson had begun in "Experience." In "Montaigne," for the first time (but hardly for the last), he confronts the question Montaigne was fond of asking: "What do I know?" (CW 4:91). Emerson begins with an apparently straightforward renunciation of his previous position: "Who shall forbid a wise skepticism, seeing that there is no practical question on which anything more than an approximate solution can be had" (CW 4:89), which was not at all his claim in 1836, where he says in *Nature*, "Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable" (CW 1:7). Skepticism rejects a "blind" faith, but for Emerson it is not "unbelief." His skeptic, represented in Montaigne, is "the Considerer, the prudent," the one who husbands his means (CW 4:91). Such a skepticism

is a form of “checks and balances in nature,” a “natural weapon against the exaggeration and formalism of bigots and blockheads” (CW 4:97). But it is to be neither a bigot nor a blockhead to look steadily at our condition: “there is the power of moods,” again echoing “Experience”; “beliefs and unbeliefs appear to be structural”; and, most powerfully, “The word Fate, or Destiny expresses the sense of mankind in all ages” (CW 4:99, 100). No wonder that Emerson’s speaker laments, “What can I do against the influence of *Race* in my history? ... I can reason down or deny everything, except this perpetual Belly: feed he must and will, and I cannot make him respectable” (CW 4:100). It is here that Montaigne, the most attractive of writers, the soundest and most subtle of skeptics no longer will serve Emerson’s needs.

And so the essay pivots, for it is not the mind that turns over the questions of fate and freedom, or any of the other binaries Emerson has named, that leads to truth. It is revelation: “Reason, the prized reality, the Law, is apprehended now and then for a serene and profound moment,” even if it “is then lost, for months or years, and again found, for an interval, to be lost again” (CW 4:101). Skepticism does not penetrate to this level; “The final solution in which Skepticism is lost, is, in the moral sentiment, which never forfeits its supremacy” (CW 4:103). Montaigne shows how hard it is to know something, but Emerson has experienced, literally experienced, something that trumps skepticism. He *knows*. But in this book he knows, too, that our hold on pure reality is fleeting, that there is a near-tragic “chasm” in every individual “between the largest promise of ideal power, and the shabby experience” (CW 4:104). Montaigne was the writer who spoke so deeply to Emerson that it seemed as if he had written the essays in a previous life. Each Montaigne essay is “an entertaining soliloquy”; his writing so immediate that Emerson says, “Cut these words, and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive” (CW 4:95). Emerson’s essay is homage and criticism at once, and although none of his “Representative Men” was completely satisfactory (one of the book’s obvious themes), the healthy skepticism in Montaigne was, for Emerson, a salutary correction to enthusiasm, a

reminder that the essay could be an act of power, both for writer and reader.

As was his habit, Emerson was given to using his subjects to write brief definitions of his own vocation and aspirations, and none is so clear, perhaps, as the one that opens his essay on Goethe, "The Writer": "I find a provision in the constitution of the world for the writer or secretary, who is to report the doings of the miraculous spirit of life that everywhere throbs and works. His office is a reception of the facts into the mind, and then a selection of the eminent and characteristic experiences" (CW 4:151). This surely describes the intent of *Representative Men*, as does his later claim, also a self-portrait, that society always is in want "of one sane man with adequate powers of expression to hold up each object of monomania in its right relations" (CW 4:153). One can readily see one's own twenty-first century American society in Emerson's deadpan statement: "It is believed, the ordering a cargo of goods from New York to Smyrna, or the running up and down to procure a company of subscribers to set agoing five or ten thousand spindles, or the negotiations of a caucus, and the practising on the prejudices and facility of country-people to secure their votes in November, is practical and commendable" (CW 4:154). *Plus la change* etc. Like Goethe, his model here, Emerson was a writer to make us see through our fantasies. One wonders if Emerson might not have recognized himself in his description of Goethe, the writer was "an encyclopædia of sentences," a phrase meant as criticism, though surely an apt description of Emerson's own prose compositions (CW 4:165).

Representative Men was a new kind of book for Emerson, for it published an entire lecture series. While many of his previous essays drew heavily on lectures, and some were actually revisions of lectures, he had not before published a series intact. Beginning in January 1845 and continuing into 1847, "Representative Men" was a staple Emerson series from which he drew individual lectures as late as December 1848, when he lectured on "Plato" in Boston. Although the lectures seem from the first to have been planned as a book, other projects came first:

Emerson gathered a selection of his poetry into *Poems*, published in December 1846; he revised his 1841 *Essays* in 1847 as *Essays: First Series*, and he published his collection of early writing, *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures* in 1849. So, when *Representative Men* appeared in December of that year, it closed a very busy period of Emerson publishing.

Wallace Williams, the editor of *Representative Men*, traces the evolution of the lecture series, beginning with Emerson's early interest in "great men." He notes that the new biography lectures were "not so much a return to his early interest in biography as a development of ideas far beyond the 1835 lectures" (CW 4:xxvii). Now Emerson was interested in significant men as "types," especially types that could shed light on nineteenth-century life. That angle of vision was confirmed by his interest in Napoleon, the first representative man whose essay Emerson wrote. Williams notes that "Plato" gave Emerson quite a bit of trouble, for his thinking about the Greek philosopher was changed by his reading in Victor Cousin's *Oeuvres de Platon*, a translation quite different from Thomas Taylor's 1804 edition that Emerson had earlier read off and on. Williams closes his Introduction with an account of the book's reception. It was "reviewed widely but not generously in Great Britain" he says (CW 4:lix). The old charge of "inscrutability" rose again in the press, though Emerson was praised by his friends. At home the reviews fell along predictable lines: more conservative reviewers found fault; more liberal Unitarians liked the book. Williams quotes at length the complex review from Theodore Parker, who admired much of the book but criticized Emerson's view of Plato, a predictable response from a man who prided himself on his Greek scholarship. Williams closes his introductory essay with an assessment that *Representative Men* "preserves as no other of his books the freshness and freedom of the spoken word he aspired to." The book "displays Emerson at the height of his powers and freedom as a lecturer" (CW 4:lxv).

Not only was *Representative Men* different because of how Emerson created it, it represents a new editorial situation for the editors

of the Harvard edition, for here, for the first time, they have a manuscript upon which to base their work. Douglas Emory Wilson, the textual editor of *Representative Men*, presents a full explanation of their choice to use the manuscript as the copy-text, primarily because it is the closest the editor can come to Emerson's spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, items most often regularized by the printer following a house style. Wilson details Emerson's interest in punctuation and spelling. He rightly concludes that Emerson's "commas and dashes, which, though sometimes a little eccentric, are more alive than those of his printers" (CW 4:lxv). Wilson takes particular care to admit that he has supplied missing end punctuation and that he has turned ampersands into "and", silent emendations that seem unexceptional, given the fact that Emerson was sending the manuscript for publication; it was not a free-flowing private communication, such as would be a letter. Wilson also explains the problems raised by Emerson's orthography, especially the difficulty of distinguishing between capital and lower-case letters. These parts of his Textual Introduction are what one expects from editors working from manuscript.

Wilson's discussion of the editors' emendation policy is more thorough and comprehensive than the editors of previous volumes have offered the reader. Not only does he account for the subsequent American editions over which Emerson had at least possible supervision (1857, 1870, 1876), as well as the posthumous Riverside and Centenary editions, he addresses the complicated problems in choosing between the Boston and London editions. Emerson sent the London publisher John Chapman a fair copy of his manuscript. Chapman published his edition from this copy, but there was a competing edition published by Henry Bohn, one set from proof sheets sent to him by Phillips, Sampson, Emerson's Boston publisher. Wilson explains the rationale for inspecting variants among the Boston and two English editions. The discussion is by far the most detailed explanation of decision making in the edition so far. It is refreshing to find Wilson acknowledging that these judgments "reduce themselves ultimately to the editor's judgment (or hunch) about

what agency was the cause of each variation” and to remind the reader that with the apparatus provided by the edition that “each reader may make his own decision,” an invitation freely offered but seldom accepted, I am sure (CW 4:xcii).

If the explanatory notes for *Essays: Second Series* represented an expansion over the previous ones, those for *Representative Men* are a further expansion. Not only are the customary facts presented but also more elaborate historical and biographical details relevant to each essay’s individual subject. These notes are especially useful for Swedenborg, where the reader may not be wholly familiar with the intellectual world that matured him. The editors provide an extensive list of his scientific works and of a long discussion of the European setting for them.

In addition to the customary Textual Apparatus, this volume has an “Annex A,” a bibliographic description of the manuscript and two appendices, a list, description, and analysis of the compositors who set the book from the manuscript, based on the printers’ annotations. Here are data useful in understanding nineteenth-century printing habits as well as the raw data upon which the editors based some of their emendation decisions. Following this is a second appendix, this one showing revisions to the manuscript, a chance for the reader to watch the way Emerson revised his manuscripts. These data are quite valuable, given the paucity of Emerson’s revised manuscript copy of his essays. Journals, letters, and lecture manuscripts we have, and they are published, but this is the first look at how he worked over a manuscript of his essays. It is worth more attention that it has received. For instance, in “Montaigne,” after acknowledging that “the affirmative impulse” is impeded by customs and sciences, Emerson originally concluded that “In fact we may come to say God is a substance, and his method is illusion.” But he then revised it to be more comprehensive and exact by saying “we may come to accept it as the fixed rule and theory of our state of education that God is a substance, and his method is illusion” (CW 4:357, 100). The inserted phrase is a larger claim that gives a ground for him to

Robert N. Hudspeth, "*The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*"

"say" something about God. Some revision tightens, some expands, but Emerson clearly was still thinking as he worked his manuscript into printable form.

The index is skimpy on information in the notes, which is troublesome as the notes become more and more informative. For instance, the index sends the reader to Emerson's quotation from Pierre Jean George Cabanis, a French physiologist and philosopher, but not to the corresponding note, which explains his work. If one looks for "hell," one finds it in the index and is taken to Emerson's description of Swedenborg's conception, but not to the note which elaborates in detail the many hells described by Swedenborg. One must then assume that there exists a note for the corresponding material in the text, which is not a wholly unreasonable assumption: still, it would be helpful if the index sent us to the notes as well.

V. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *English Traits*, ed. Philip Nicoloff, Robert E. Burkholder, and Douglas Emory Wilson (Belknap-Harvard, 1994), lxxiii + 433 pp., \$115.50.

"England subsists by antagonisms and contradictions"

English Traits is unique in Emerson's oeuvre, for it is a travel book that flowed explicitly from his direct experience. To be sure, like all its predecessors, *English Traits* depended heavily on his reading, for he supplemented his two trips to England (in 1833 briefly and again in 1847-1848 at length) with a good deal of book work. Equally surely, his earlier essays were products of his "experience," but they are much less directly autobiographical.

In this book Emerson uses the English as a collective "Representative Man," whose culture bears scrutiny, whose habits of daily life as well as whose history reveal much to the inquisitive visitor. In many ways, the book depends on Emerson's interest in the Saxon

“race,” one that was, of course, his own. At the very end of the book, in a speech at Manchester, he says bluntly: “That which lures a solitary American in the woods with the wish to see England, is the moral peculiarity of the Saxon race, – its commanding sense of right and wrong, – the love and devotion to that, – this is the imperial trait, which arms them with the sceptre of the globe” (CW 5:176). Emerson was writing at a time when race theory was rife, though he quickly disavows the scientific definition of the number of races (see CW 5:24). He did, however, believe that nations evolve, and that England had a specific evolution out of successive influences of Celts, Germans, and Norsemen, of Saxons and Jutes, and of the “twenty thousand thieves” who “landed at Hastings” (CW 5:33). Throughout the book he uses this initial portrait of a people molded out of several stocks to develop a standard of “character,” so that he can see their genius in their mental habits. From there, Emerson can judge them as a whole in the several abstract categories that interest him: manners, truth, character, religion, and literature; or in cultural specifics, the London *Times* or Stonehenge, e.g. It is, after all, as the title says, “traits” that interest him, and he can do this only by lumping together the English population.

One way to see *English Traits* is to see it reversing the familiar pattern of English travel books that were hostile to the American life they found, such as Frances Trollope’s *American Manners* and Charles Dickens’ *American Notes*. The Britons came, conscious of their cultural superiority, only to find the preconception fulfilled. Emerson made the reverse journey knowing himself to be a product in part (but certainly not in whole) of the culture he observed abroad and was more anxious to understand it than to denounce it because it is unfamiliar. He tries to be balanced in his judgments. At the end of a short essay on the extensive power of the London *Times*, he says that “like every important institution, [it] shows the way to a better. It is a living index of the colossal British power,” but the paper also “shares all the limitations of the governing classes, and wishes never to be in a minority.” Were it more willing to “cleave to the right” rather than the expedient, it “would

be the natural leader of British reform," a position Emerson certainly knew it would never assume (CW 5:152-53).

Sometimes, however, Emerson could not resist satire. At first he found the Church of England to be aesthetically pleasing, which is understandable for a writer whose ear was so attuned to sixteenth-century prose rhythms he found in the *Book of Common Prayer*, and he thought the Church of England, "this slow-grown church," had had a "humble effective service in humanizing the people" (CW 5:123). He is unstinting in his praise of what the Church has in the past accomplished – but that's the rub: it is in the past. "The spirit that dwelt in this church has glided away to animate other activities; and they who come to the old shrines find apes and players rustling the old garments" (CW 5:124). Dickens himself had hardly been less forgiving. But Emerson was just getting warmed up: "Their religion is a quotation; their church is a doll"; "The gospel it preaches, is, 'By taste are ye saved'"; "England accepts this ornamented national church, and it glazes the eyes, bloats the flesh, gives the voice a stertorous clang, and clouds the understanding of the receivers" (CW 5:125, 126, 128). Perhaps no foreign visitor can refrain from finding faults, for all cultures have them. Emerson had boldly and thoroughly rejected the polite Unitarianism that was his personal legacy, but never had he resorted quite so much to satire.

The penultimate chapter, "Result," feels like the book's conclusion, though following it Emerson added a speech he made in Manchester. He opens "Results" with a ringing claim: "England is the best of actual nations," and follows with a catalog of virtues, praising English solidity, love of family, and tender heartedness, but no sooner has he said these things than he begins to pile up counter-examples of English failure: their public dishonesty, their mistreatment of their colonies. Their democracy is artificially limited, their churches repressive – and the list goes on and on (CW 5:169-70). One begins to see that being the "best of actual nations" is faint praise at best, for under it all, property rules. And yet: as the essay unfolds itself, Emerson moves again and again from English limitation to English triumph. His method of summing up his

experience of England is to dramatize ambivalence. There is no one fact that determines all; no one representative moment answers all questions. For instance, just as Emerson ends a discussion of the “shop-rule” mentality that characterizes English life, he immediately acknowledges that “It extends its cold unalterable courtesy to political exiles of every opinion, and is a fact which might give additional light to that portion of the planet seen from the farthest star.” Emerson then in the next sentence undercuts that virtue by saying, “But this perfunctory hospitality puts no sweetness into their unaccommodating manners, no check on that puissant nationality which makes their existence incompatible with all that is not English” (CW 5:170). It is not that he cannot make up his mind; it is rather that he cannot, as he acknowledges, “go deep enough into the biography of the spirit” of the culture (CW 5:171). An essay must, however, come to an end, and Emerson chose to end this indecision, this dramatized “double consciousness” with unalloyed praise: “The English have given importance to individuals, a principal end and fruit of every society,” he says in his final paragraph. “It is the land of patriots, martyrs, sages, and bards, and if the ocean out of which it emerged should wash it away, it will be remembered as an island famous for immortal laws, for the announcements of original right which make the stone tables of liberty” (CW 5:173, 174).

Philip Nicoloff, the editor of *English Traits* begins his Historical Introduction with a biographical account of Emerson’s two trips to England (including his side trip to Paris in the spring of 1848 just after the revolution had broken out). He emphasizes the success of the 1847-1848 trip for Emerson, who “had seen the nation broadly, had given his full attention to what England did best in the modern world” (CW 5:xxxvii). Nicoloff also says that the trip made Emerson a “much more social creature” (CW 5:xxxviii), an evaluation that Thoreau also unhappily made.³ Nicoloff concludes this part of the Introduction with the comment that the one “sorrow” on the trip was “his troubled relationship with Carlyle,” which is certainly true (CW 5:xxxviii).

Then Nicoloff turns to the uses Emerson made of the trip after his return to the United States. It was a busy time for him: he had books to see through the press, new lecture series to write, trouble in the public life with the passage of the Fugitive Slave law, and trouble privately with the death of Margaret Fuller. Nicoloff notes that Emerson's lectures, which often included the one on "England," were now taking him much farther from home, into the American heartland. It was not until the summer of 1852 that Emerson began seriously to gather reading notes and journal writings about his experience in England. By 1853 he was referring to a book on England, though his reading was still expanding. Nicoloff cogently makes the point that Emerson was not making himself a scholar on England but that he was looking for "vividness, compression, and vitality." What he most valued was "epigram and anecdote" (CW 5:xliv). His work started to emerge as *English Traits* when, in October 1855, he sent the first chapter to his publisher, Phillips, Sampson, & Company with the promise that the rest would follow soon. But it was not to be, for it was not until June 1856 that he sent the final chapters to Phillips, Sampson. *English Traits* was published on 6 August 1856.

Nicoloff describes the book's reception by readers, especially that of Carlyle, who wrote Emerson "a model of harmonized diplomacy and exuberance" (CW 5:l). Nicoloff samples the American response to *English Traits* but rightly attends more to English reviewers. He concludes, rather abruptly, that Emerson had written a popular book, one that his readers could understand. The Introduction seems truncated, for Nicoloff does not go on to set *English Traits* in the context of either *Representative Men* nor with *The Conduct of Life*, with both of which it shares concerns. This might be too much to ask for a biographical introduction, but some assessment would have been welcome.

The Textual Introduction, again written by Douglas Emory Wilson, describes both the American and English printings, as had become the format for the Harvard edition. The only editorial "problem" to occupy Wilson is the choice of copy-text, a decision he carefully and fully

explains. Like all but *Representative Men*, *English Traits* lacks any holograph authority, for no manuscript or proof copy survives. Normally, given the editorial principles already established, one would expect the first printing of *English Traits* to be the copy-text, but Wilson chooses instead the fourth printing of the first edition. His reasons are straightforward. That printing incorporated emendations that Emerson quickly made, though the remainder of the text remained unchanged from the first printing. This decision allows this edition to capture the authorial changes without introducing the possibility of new errors.

There are more, many more, explanatory notes: 185 pages in this volume as compared to 86 in *Representative Men*. This is caused mostly by the fact that Emerson mentions more books and more people in *English Traits*, which is in many ways a very bookish book. As was true in the notes for *Representative Men*, the notes here, written by Robert E. Burkholder, are full and quite informative. Burkholder gives the basic information, but he puts it into an Emersonian context and also explains the necessary English one, as for example the note explaining Emerson's professed reluctance to go to England. Burkholder explains the offices of Alexander Ireland, Emerson's Manchester friend, and of the offer from the Yorkshire Union, both of which helped to make the trip a success (CW 5:200 n13, 17). The notes are a solid addition to the volume.

VI. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life*, ed. Barbara L. Packer and Douglas Emory Wilson (Belknap-Harvard UP, 2003), xciii + 455 pp., \$110.

"Thought dissolves the material universe"

The decade of the 1850s was a time of intellectual growth for Emerson, who dramatically showed that not only did he preach transformation, he practiced it as he increasingly faced and faced down the cruelties of human life. It is well to remember that from the very opening of his

writing career he was a man who knew grief and pain first hand. Not only had he himself when young been ill, his eyes threatened, and his lungs suspect, but he lost his wife and two brothers to tuberculosis and a young son to scarlet fever. These are pains deep enough to mark the sunniest of optimists, and yet, other than "Experience," little in the first five volumes of his collected prose would count as direct encounters with the dark and turbulent side of life. There was an acknowledgement in "Heroism" that commonly life "wears a ragged and dangerous front," that "no man exists who has not in his own person become, to some amount, a stockholder in the sin, and so made himself liable to a share in the expiation" of existence (CW 2:147, 148), but Emerson's way of seeing and saying did not call for direct confrontations of that reality. His method was to offer an alternative mythos that rested on the power of a benign spirit. The flat ugliness of some, even much, experience was not useful to his writing until his return from England in 1848.

The causes for the new, somber, even bitter tone of *The Conduct of Life* probably cannot wholly be known, but some few are obvious: American political life was increasingly violent and, to Emerson's mind, immoral. Daniel Webster, who had stood in Emerson's imagination as a great man, betrayed the anti-slave principles of New England in championing the Compromise of 1850; his close friend Margaret Fuller died in a shipwreck later that same year; another deep friendship, this one with Thoreau, distinctly cooled; near-civil war broke out in Kansas, and it was increasingly clear that no solution to slavery was at hand. Although it was a tense time, Emerson continued to lecture and write. *English Traits* became the long-promised book on England; he had to take time from it to write his share of the *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, the memorial volume he, James Freeman Clarke, and William Henry Channing published in 1852. Neither book, however, really advanced Emerson's ideas.

Those advances were taking place in his lectures during this time. Beginning with his series "Mind and Manners of the Nineteenth Century" in June 1848 in London, continuing with "The Conduct of

Life” that began in 1851, and finally with “Natural Method of Mental Philosophy” in 1858 in Boston, Emerson began to confront questions that other men called “evil” and to work out responses that increasingly led him to speculate on what he thought was a new system of philosophy – a task he apparently long had considered. Not all of this lecture material found its way into the 1860 volume *The Conduct of Life*, but it was nevertheless the substratum of that book.

The Conduct of Life opens with “Fate,” the best of Emerson’s later essays. It seems different in many ways, yet remarkably recognizable as a product of his mind. Throughout the essay – and throughout the book – the tone is often angry or somber, close to resignation: “the world is rough and surly, and will not mind drowning a man or a woman”; a ditch digger “has but one future, and that is already predetermined in his lobes, and described in that little fatty face, pig-eye, and squat form”; “the German and Irish millions, like the Negro, have a great deal of guano in their destiny” for they are “ferried over the Atlantic, and carted over America, to ditch and to drudge” (CW 6:3, 6, 9). He even goes so far as to rewrite a remarkable figure of speech he had used in 1836 near the conclusion of *Nature*. There he had said, “Every spirit builds itself a house; and beyond its house, a world; and beyond its world, a heaven” (CW 1:44). In 1860 the same image is drastically revised: “Every spirit makes its house; but afterwards the house confines the spirit” (CW 6:5). This is a new Emerson speaker, one who has been cruelly used and who seems on the brink of despair and renunciation.

Then comes the rhetorical move that has become familiar in Emerson’s essays. As we have noted before, his speaker has learned the power of pain and disappointment by “harping, or, if you will, pounding on each string” and so has learned its power (CW 6:2). He then is ready to give equal reality to an alternative vision, one that relies on “thought,” which “dissolves the material universe” (CW 6:15). The mind becomes a solvent that counters the brute claims of physical life; the mind is now overtly Emerson’s agent to effect a transformation, to be the power of “conversion” he has so many times championed. Of course he has a

figure of speech ready to make his point: "History is the action and reaction of these two, – Nature and Thought; – two boys pushing each other on the curb-stone of the pavement" (CW 6:23). The method of responding to this grappling comes in yet another figure, where "A man must ride alternately on the horses of his private and his public nature" as do circus performers who leap from horse to horse. It is a concrete sign of what Emerson calls a "double consciousness" (CW 6:25). This opening essay and the eight that follow it are performances of the shoving and pushing, of the leaping – the acting out of the Emersonian "double consciousness."

The claim Emerson makes near the end of *The Conduct of Life*, in the closing essay, "Illusions," is an affirmation of a writer's faith: "The intellect is stimulated by the statement of truth in a trope" (CW 6:173). The essay posits the ubiquitous problem of illusions in life, from those that are purely physical to those that are metaphysical: "There are deceptions of the senses, deceptions of the passions, and the structural, beneficent illusions of sentiment and of the intellect" (CW 6:170). But that fact is not the last fact for Emerson, who closes the essay with a brilliant mini-fable: a young person enters the great hall of the gods but finds that just as they beckon to him "On the instant, and incessantly, fall snow-storms of illusions." Those illusions themselves are "real" in that the youngster must confront and experience them. But they are not the last fact, for "when, by and by, for an instant, the air clears, and the cloud lifts a little, there are the gods still sitting around him on their thrones, – they alone with him alone" (CW 6:174). This is as close as Emerson came to despair. The human faculty of perception almost fails, but "reality" has not changed. He has had to work very hard in *The Conduct of Life* to show the intellect finally triumphing; the process has been harder than ever before, the emotions more taut and painful. It is not by chance that the last word of this complex book is "alone."

In her Historical Introduction, Barbara Packer points out that the lectures preceding those of "The Conduct of Life" were "exuberant lectures, even ecstatic ones," as Emerson first tried out his developing

ideas about the power of the mind and the possibility of a genuine faith in an increasingly scientific world (CW 6:xviii). Again, as with all of his books, Emerson had depended on his lectures. As a result, the several editors of the Harvard edition focus on his lecture career. His work as a published writer cannot be severed from his life as a popular lecturer. The lectures could and were reshaped from performance to performance; they were fluid productions that responded to Emerson's wish to change emphases, to reorder the importance of sub-topics, to add or omit examples as he saw fit. But he always thought it important to take the next step and publish the lectures for a wider, anonymous audience.

To set the background of the lectures and the emerging essays of *The Conduct of Life*, Packer provides the reader with a detailed account of Emerson's reactions to the world of the 1850s – a world dominated by slavery. She goes over the creation of the Free-Soil Party of 1848, the subsequent election of Zachary Taylor, and the events leading to the “compromise” in 1850 that proposed to admit California as a free state but that revived the legitimacy of the fugitive slave provision of the constitution. She gives a full, nuanced account of Daniel Webster's defense of the new fugitive slave provision and of Emerson's furious reaction. However, as she says, he “felt his own helplessness acutely” (CW 6:xxix).

It was just at this time that Emerson began to write his “Conduct of Life” lectures that initially showed “his interest in the destinies of worldly prosperity” (CW 6:xxx). The series took its form in Pittsburgh, in March 1851 when Emerson delivered five lectures, “Laws of Success,” “Wealth,” “Economy,” “Culture,” and “Worship.” “Fate” came into the series later that year. “Beauty,” “Considerations by the Way,” and “Behavior” came even later. “Illusions” was written as an essay, published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and then revised for the book. Packer goes on to discuss how the lectures shifted and grew, merged and were separated in typical Emerson fashion. She focuses on the way that the essays responded to the political and social world of the 1850s. This Historical Introduction is critically the most astute to this point in the

edition. Packer not only gives a full account of the genesis of the essays, she interprets Emerson's developing notion of a "Conduct" of life.

Packer pauses at the appropriate spots to fill out her description of the events that were shaping the lectures: the 1851 arrest of Thomas Sims, which followed the earlier arrest of the fugitive slave Shadrach Minkins in Boston. Emerson responded to Sims' rendition by lecturing against slavery; the Kansas-Nebraska act of March 1854 opened yet again the question of the extension of slavery; a third fugitive, Anthony Burns, was arrested in Boston a few months later; finally in October 1859 John Brown attacked the army garrison at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. These events are the backdrop for *The Conduct of Life*.

Packer then turns to the creation of *The Conduct of Life*, noting that the success of *English Traits* led him to think rather quickly about a new book. By late 1858 Emerson had eight essays taken from the lectures and the *Atlantic* essay. To that he added "Behavior" based on an 1859 lecture, "Manners." In November 1859 he signed a contract with Ticknor and Fields. By March 1860 the publisher had begun setting type for the book, though Emerson was still making changes. It was not until 8 December 1860 that the book was published.

Packer concludes her essay with a brief account of the book's contemporary reception. Carlyle praised it heartily; Thoreau, according to Bronson Alcott, thought the book lacked Emerson's accustomed fire; Aunt Mary desponded that her nephew seemed to think "there was no other world but this," which was a reaction to the tone not the substance of the essays. Packer says few reviewers found much unity in the book, though many found powerful writing. She quotes a Baptist journal that claimed that "a susceptible reader is frequently prompted to clap his hands over a magnificent utterance, or shout 'Amen!'" (CW 6:lxiii, lxiv). English reviewers were cool toward this Emerson book.

Douglas Wilson's Textual Introduction makes a full account of the special textual situation of *The Conduct of Life*, for the copy-text is a composite of manuscript authority, magazine publication, and the first edition of the book. Manuscripts exist that were the printers' copy for six

of the essays in the book: “Power,” “Wealth,” “Culture,” “Behavior,” “Considerations by the Way,” and “Beauty”; as we have noted “Illusions” first appeared in the *Atlantic*. The final two essays, “Fate” and “Worship,” are based on the first edition of *The Conduct of Life*. Wilson makes a cogent argument for the tri-partite copy-text, for each of the portions represents the genuine “first coherent state” of Emerson’s writing. He reminds the reader that the resulting text before them is a composite in its punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, of Emerson’s definable practice in the manuscripts and of whatever house styling the printers overlay at the magazine and at Ticknor and Fields. Wilson’s summary is solid: “Better a text which is two-thirds Emerson’s and the rest only one remove from his than one which is one or two removes from his throughout, however consistent it might be” (CW lxxxviii). One hears the familiar line in the background: “A foolish consistency,” etc.

The explanatory notes continue to be a strong point in the edition; Joseph Slater continued the practice of identifying and explaining, and was willing when the occasion demanded, to write fully. For example, a passage in “Fate” that derives from the journal, where it is entered as an un-attributed quotation, calls from Slater a long but concise discussion of quotation standards in the nineteenth century and of the grammatical construction of the passage under discussion. Alas, the reader probably would not find it unless he or she were reading the notes as a body (a practice I would strongly recommend, given the amount of information in the notes). Readers should note specifically that with this volume, the Harvard edition changes its system of notation for the explanatory notes. No longer do they refer to page and line numbers; now each paragraph in an essay is numbered. The reader is referred first to the number of the essay in the book (1-9) and then to the number of the paragraph. It is a cumbersome system, but it solves the obvious problem that exists when the dust jacket with its handy line ruler on the flap has disappeared. If the new system is “cumbersome,” it is a better aid to the reader than the previous. The notes are, glad to say, indexed.

Robert N. Hudspeth, "The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson"

VII. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Society and Solitude*, ed. Ronald A. Bosco and Douglas Emory Wilson (Belknap-Harvard UP, 2007), xcii + 449 pp., \$100.

"Nature delights to put us between extreme antagonisms, and our safety is in the skill with which we keep the diagonal line"

The Conduct of Life was the high-water mark for Emerson's essay writing. Neither *Society and Solitude* (1870) nor *Letters and Social Aims* (1876) attains the intellectual power of the 1860 volume. That is not to say that the following volumes are of no interest – quite the contrary. It only means that the poles of his "diagonal line" never were so provocative as in *The Conduct of Life*. *Society and Solitude* names the extremes of its diagonal: the public and the private lives that individuals live, but this is less ambitious than one finds in *The Conduct of Life*. There is no strict order to the book, no clear, defining movement between the two, but the "diagonal line" is apparent. There are two obvious pairings of opposites in the pairing of "Civilization" with "Art," and "Books" with "Clubs," but these are perhaps less important than the movements in the individual essays between outer and inner life. Emerson never loses sight of how the one influences the other. This is a less sharply-defined "double consciousness" than that in *The Conduct of Life*, for there genuine oppositions exist, where in *Society and Solitude* Emerson seems more interested in integrating his oppositions.

A change of tone and subject matter most sets *Society and Solitude* apart from its predecessor. The Emerson voice in *The Conduct of Life* is often angry and everywhere somber, viewing limitations and frights at every turn. In the next book he plays out his own admonition in "Success" that "we must begin by affirming," and affirm he does. There are, to be sure, moments in the essays when he grows angry, as he does a few pages earlier in the essay, when he bursts out "I hate this shallow Americanism" and launches on a catalog of fatuousness (CW 7:156, 147). The affirmative tone is easier to attain in *Society and Solitude*

because the subject matter is more nearly that of ordinary life, more “domestic” as one can see quickly from several of the titles: “Domestic Life,” “Farming,” “Works and Days,” “Clubs,” and “Old Age.” Even the essays with the by-now expected abstractions, “Courage” and “Success,” actually probe the more ordinary moments of existence. As he so frequently has done in his essays, Emerson draws a self portrait when he says, “We owe to genius always the same debt, of lifting the curtain from the common, and showing us that divinities are sitting disguised in the seeming gang of gypsies and pedlers” (CW 7:89). As usual, he finds startling tropes to make his point as he lifts the curtain for us. A few pages later he claims that “Everything in the universe goes by indirection” (CW 7:91), and here he makes clear what has always been assumed in his writing – nothing is truly seen directly; all is open to interpretation; the writer writes through the indirection of tropes, so the role of the lecturer-essayist is ever to master and exploit rhetorical devices, to create the imaginative language, which was for him the end product of a “higher style of thought” (CW 7:45).

Two themes that run through *Society and Solitude* were familiar Emerson concerns: power and the mind. One might go a long way in claiming that “power” was a central Emersonian theme from first to last. In a world beleaguered privately by death and pain, by illness and frustration, and publicly by slavery and imperialism, the individual finds it hard to grow and respond ethically. For himself and for others, language was one specific source of power, for as in “Eloquence” it had the power to take “sovereign possession of the audience” (CW 7:32).

Language was for Emerson not only a source of power, perhaps *the* source, but language was also the last emanation of the human mind, and the theme of the intellect is prominent in this volume, as Ronald Bosco ably points out when he says that for Emerson, “the mind can rewrite the tragedy of today’s moment by reading it against the accumulated experience and wisdom of the ages, or interpret what seem to be the meaninglessness of today’s tragic events by reading the events as the fulfillment of ultimately hopeful prophecies from the past” (CW 7:lviii).

This was not a new idea, for "The mind" was prominent not only in *The Conduct of Life* and in many of Emerson's lectures in the 1850s, but in "Intellect" in *Essays: First Series*. Though Emerson persists in appealing to the Universal Mind and to an absolute moral law beyond the Maia of our ordinary perceptions, in the last decades of his work he repeatedly returns to the intellect, for "the powers of this busy brain are miraculous and illimitable" (CW 7:150). In part, this accounts for the bookishness of these late essays, for Emerson is fond of quoting or referring to older writers whose command of language was exceptional. Like this reviewer, he was fond of quotation. It is, however, a terrible irony that at the moment that *Society and Solitude* champions the mind, Emerson himself was losing his. We will defer a full discussion of this for our examination of *Letters and Social Aims*, but it needs to be noted here that Emerson's powers of concentration and original thought began badly to deteriorate in the late 1860s.

Of the essays some bear little re-reading – "Domestic Life," "Farming," "Books, and "Clubs," for instance – though in each, one finds, as ever with Emerson, arresting figures of speech, telling exempla, and surprising turns of mind. More solid matter, however, is to be found in "Eloquence," "Courage," and "Success," essays that stand up well to his earlier standards of provocation. "Eloquence" is yet another essay on "Power," the power of the personal as expressed in public performance. The power of publicly spoken words is a practical power that ends in another familiar Emersonian theme, "conversion." In a typically inspired figure, he says that the eloquent speaker "mobs the mob," and that he is not just to neutralize opposition but "to convert them into fiery apostles and publishers of the same wisdom" (CW 7:49). The essay reminds us again of how fundamentally important language was to Emerson. Words can "dishearten" the prosperous man, but just as surely "there is no calamity which right words will not begin to redress" (CW 7:31). For good reason he could say that "Language is a quite wonderful city," for as he says in "Eloquence," nothing so works on the human mind, barbarous or civil, as a trope" (JMN 11:232; CW 7:45). Eloquence is language in action.

The essay “Courage” is a defense of human will, and its immediate context is the instability and anxiety of the Civil War. In the essay Emerson uses John Brown as an exemplar of courage. A deleted paragraph (reproduced in the notes) turns a general statement (“we have a snappish criticism”) into a scathing attack on the South: “We intend to set and keep a *cordon sanitaire*, all around the infected district, and by no means suffer the pestilence to spread” (CW 7:252). The essay repeatedly invokes harsh facts to highlight the need for courage, determination, and clear-headedness. Emerson assumes a teleology of success that rests on a godly ability of the individual to work for the good. As always, he engages us with his verbal wit: “Everything feels the new breath, except the old doting, nigh-dead politicians, whose heart the trumpet of resurrection could not wake” (CW 7:137). Language is indeed a wonderful city.

If eloquence is the means, and courage the strength, “success” is the aim, but a “success” redefined by Emerson. After noting recent American successes in technological inventions, he reminds us that all of this is a sort of “insanity,” that “we are great by exclusion, grasping, and egotism,” and our success is but a “careworn running for luck” (CW 7:146). Invoking his own dictum from “Self-Reliance” to “Do your work,” Emerson appeals again to a teleology that works out of public sight, quietly aiming ever for the better but free of a mean egotism. It is his reliance on a higher power that uses human intelligence (CW 7:147). Once more he appeals to “the powers of this busy brain” that are “miraculous and illimitable” (CW 7:150). It is through our mind that we exert a power in the world and that allows us to discover more “affinities” and “potencies” than we otherwise know. True success lies in our ability to “watch and tenderly cherish the intellectual and moral sensibilities” that Emerson calls “fountains of right thought.” Ever his and our challenge is to “woo them to stay and make their home with us” (CW 7:152). I think this last need, the wooing and staying, captures Emerson’s understanding of his vocation. It was more than a personal inspiration; it was his life’s work, on the lecture platform and in print, to succeed on these terms.

As Bosco notes in his Historical Introduction, "Emerson thought of himself primarily as a public intellectual whose forte was the speaker's platform, and secondarily the printed essay (CW 7:xxi). As Emerson says in "Eloquence," there was no recovering the power of a speech, for "what is best is lost, – the fiery life of the moment" (CW 7:48). The particular "moment" of *Society and Solitude* is, according to Bosco, rather elongated: some of the lecture material Emerson first used in the 1840s, including parts of "Domestic Life" (iterations of which lasted from 1840 to 1859) and one of his most repeated lectures, "Books" (under many names and many forms from 1847 to 1872). A preponderance of the essays grew from lectures given in the 1850s, others in the 1860s. Like most Emerson books, *Society and Solitude* had a long textual genealogy. Seven of the twelve essays derive specifically from published essays, though the essays had lecture origins; the remaining five essays went from lecture to book form with no intervening magazine publication. All of this is clearly explained in the Historical Introduction.

Bosco then turns to an interesting discussion of the ways in which *Society and Solitude* was specifically autobiographical, though most often masked. In both the Historical Introduction and in the volume's explanatory notes, he identifies the specific individuals who stand behind Emerson's descriptions as well as the specific events of his life that are woven into the text. Using the opening essay, "Society and Solitude," as an example, Bosco says: "Emerson is himself the disguised figure who balances precariously between the advantages and disadvantages of society and a preference for the written as well as the literal anonymity of solitude in 'Society and Solitude'" (CW 7:il). Bosco then goes on to provide similar examples from other essays, concluding with an interesting discussion of "Old Age," of which both the lecture and the essay made from it "are classic Emerson performances" (CW 7:li). He then expands the discussion of that essay into a broader account of Emerson's reaction to the Civil War and his continued need for "affirmations." The discussion is a good example of how close attention

to a lesser-known essay brings us a better understanding of Emerson's later work.

The Textual Introduction, drafted by Douglas Wilson shortly before his death in 2005, accounts fully for the complicated textual situation of *Society and Solitude*, for again three different forms of copy-text are present: manuscript, magazine publication, and the first edition of the book. Here, however, four of the manuscripts are printers' copy for magazine publication and one is a surviving manuscript for an essay with no previous publication. Wilson proceeds on the sound principle that manuscripts are desirable copy-texts over first printed states because of the inevitable introduction of changes printers make according to their house style. As a result: "the MSS of 'Civilization,' 'Eloquence,' 'Domestic Life,' 'Clubs,' and 'Old Age,' then, are more suitable as copy-texts than their first printings" (CW 7:lxv). Likewise, the magazine publications are preferable to the book versions. "Farming" presents a particular problem because it was printed earlier in two places that Emerson could not have controlled. Thus, the book version is the logical copy-text.

In addition to the usual parts of the textual apparatus, *Society and Solitude* has additional annexes: the text of "American Civilization"; the "Pre-copy-text Variants in 'Farming'"; a description of the manuscripts and a complete table of alterations to them; and Emerson's own corrections and emendations. The annex devoted to "American Civilization" is caused by the unusual circumstances surrounding "Civilization," the second essay in *Society and Solitude*, which is a truncated version of "American Civilization," first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in April 1862 at the beginning of the dark second year of the Civil War. In that essay Emerson furiously denounced the South and slavery, words that he thought in late 1869 no longer relevant. He then used the first twenty-six of the essay's forty-five paragraphs as "Civilization." The *Collected Works* editors use the appendix to present the excised nineteen paragraphs (the entire *American Monthly* essay is included in volume 10, *Uncollected Prose Writings*).

Robert N. Hudspeth, "The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson"

The explanatory notes for *Society and Solitude* are rewardingly full. Bosco not only identifies the people, books, and terms that are the normal aids to the reader, but he often provides extensive biographical information. For instance, to gloss Emerson's masked comment on a man who planted trees upon buying a house, Bosco gives a detailed, almost page-long note about Emerson's planting of trees at his home and of his involvement of many of his friends in the project – a useful note, even for readers who know the facts. Bosco is also willing to venture on interpretation, as when he explains the relevance of an Emersonian reference to *Jane Eyre* in the essay on "Books." "From Emerson's point of view here, Jane is not a fit heroine for fiction, nor is she a fit heroine for life as it ought to be lived" (CW 7:235-36). The reader of *Society and Solitude* should keep the notes well in mind.

VIII. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Letters and Social Aims*, ed. Ronald A. Bosco, Glen M. Johnson, and Joel Myerson (Harvard-Belknap UP, 2010), cclxiv + 397 pp., \$103.

"All minds quote. Old and new make the warp and woof of every moment"

The past and present were ever in Emerson's mind, even when he inveighed most strenuously against the past. From the first page of his first essay he quotes himself by using his journal, and he alludes to the Bible. There is no escape from the past, only a right use, and quotation is one of them. But how the "old and new" made the "warp and woof" of *Letters and Social Aims* is a very tangled story. This volume is by far the most complicated production to understand, and the decisions the editors make, here and in volume 10, have profound implications for interpreting Emerson's last years as a writer. Furthermore, the Historical Introduction is strikingly unlike any of the seven that precede it, for it is a 194-page biographical monograph in which Ronald Bosco

recreates the somber story of Emerson's mental decline and how that affected his work. It is an impressive account that draws on unpublished letters between Emerson's children and James Elliot Cabot, Emerson's literary executor and biographer, and others. Anyone interested in Emerson must attend to Bosco's account of the years from about 1866 to the publication of *Letters and Social Aims* in late 1875 and, perhaps even more importantly, of the years following when Cabot and the Emerson children continued to assemble essays from Emerson's lecture pages. It is at every turn, a tortured story that defies an easy summary.

Before we discuss the contents of *Letters and Social Aims* we need to review its background and composition, for it was a book "written" by Emerson but assembled by others. By the time the book was published in mid-December 1875, Emerson had completely descended into a severe aphasia that had made it impossible for him to continue working. Drawing on unpublished sources Bosco is able to push back the date of the first appearance of this decline to 1866 or 1867, when Emerson's daughter Ellen began to see signs of his inability to remember and to concentrate. Though he kept up a busy schedule for the next several years, he was increasingly hard-pressed to complete his tasks. He was able to complete them as late as 1870 with the publication of *Society and Solitude*, but the trouble he had in bringing the manuscript to press was itself a manifestation of his declining powers.

Things got worse that year when Emerson delivered a series of sixteen lectures at Harvard from April to June 1870 on what he considered his "New Metaphysics," or "The Natural History of the Intellect." Those lectures were a failure because he could not satisfactorily bring order to his thoughts. He tried again in the second series of the Harvard lectures from February to April 1871 when he gave seventeen lectures, but again felt them to be failures. At the same time he was distracted by the work he needed to do on his poetry anthology, *Parnassus*, as well as his role in Carlyle's large gift of books to the university. Finally, he was harried by the need to write an introduction to

William Goodwin's edition of Plutarch, a commitment that he tried unsuccessfully to ignore.

The most significant other pressure in 1870 that directly caused the creation of *Letters and Social Aims*, was the news from England that a publisher, James Hotten, had, with the encouragement and help of Moncure Daniel Conway, begun assembling a collection of Emerson's uncollected essays for publication. The news greatly upset and angered Emerson, for he wanted no publication of old works without his revisions and supervision. The situation, as Bosco says, "could not have been worse for Emerson's already precarious state of mind" (CW 8:lxix). In September 1870, after an attempt to stop the book, Emerson proposed instead that he make such a volume for Hotten to publish in England and he in the United States. The book was to become *Letters and Social Aims*, but it was an incubus to Emerson for the next five years. He worked on an essay, "Poetry and Imagination," for inclusion in the book, but he made little headway.

The next calamity had nothing to do with his public life: his house caught fire and was severely damaged on 24 July 1872, an event that markedly affected Emerson to the point that he burned a quantity of keepsakes and manuscripts connected to his first marriage and to the death of his son Waldo. It "signalled the beginning of his end," says Bosco (CW 8:clx). Emerson lectured only occasionally after this, and then with great difficulty and only with Ellen's help, for she was the one who tried to focus him and to help him sort his manuscripts into presentable order.

Though James Hotten died on 14 June 1873, Emerson was not off the hook, for Chatto and Windus had bought the firm and expected Emerson to fulfill his agreement. He worked off and on for the next two years without making progress. Joel Myerson, the textual editor of *Letters and Social Aims*, says that Emerson's last work was only to compile a list of possible contents. It was his "last major independent effort at working on the book" (CW 8:ccxxii). At that point the family stepped in and had Ellen approach James Elliot Cabot to seek his

assistance in completing the book. Cabot was an amateur naturalist, a lawyer and architect as well as an intellectual interested in philosophy and literature. Emerson knew and liked him.

Cabot agreed to help the Emersons and went to Concord on 27 August 1875, worked for a long weekend and began to bring order to the book. He continued his visits until mid-October when the work was done. Cabot's work (and that of Ellen and others) is central to an understanding of *Letters and Social Aims* for it was he, not Emerson, who assembled it, though he had Emerson's approval, whatever that meant given his mental state in 1875. One must first understand what lay before Cabot: for years Emerson had, as Myerson says, "assembled" his lectures "from sentence- or paragraph-long single leaves or bi-folio leaves" (CW 8:ccxlvii). Those sentences or paragraphs were then made, according to Nancy Craig Simmons, into "bundles of loose leaves – gathered under their last title."⁴ Whenever Emerson wanted a lecture he assembled whatever leaves he thought useful at that time, though at other times a lecture with the same name might well have different leaves or ones in a different order. There are reports that he shuffled his manuscripts at the lectern while giving the lecture. Cabot, then, had to choose what paragraphs to include under what title. He had lists of essay topics Emerson had made, but he did not follow them closely. While four of the essays in *Letters and Social Aims* had been previously published and thus can be seen as wholly Emerson's work, the remaining seven were Cabot compilations, none of which, says Simmons, were taken from a single lecture.

Aided by Ellen Emerson, Cabot not only selected the material to be included, but he revised it somewhat, as Simmons explains: he "made a number of minor changes in punctuation, spelling, and paragraphing; and occasionally he eliminated a phrase, sentence, or example from the new version" (Simmons 346); he eliminated repetitions, and he read and corrected proofs. At times he asked Emerson to add a sentence or phrase, but otherwise Emerson had no hand in the final product. Cabot took care later to say that nothing was in the book that Emerson "did not write"

and that he gave his "full approval" to what Cabot did. Emerson, he said, "was pleased, in a general way, that the work should go on, but it may be a question exactly how far he sanctioned it" (CW 8:ccxlii).

At this point it is impossible to go further (though there will be much more to say when we arrive at the final volume of *The Collected Works*). The reader can, I think, safely assume that "The Comic," "Quotation and Originality," "Progress of Culture," and "Persian Poetry" are essays compiled by Emerson in his usual manner and presented as he wished, for they are based either on manuscripts that were printers' copy or on the resulting printed versions of essays he published before his decline. The remaining seven essays are Emerson's words, his ideas, but organized by Cabot. How far they are "Emerson's" must depend on the judgment of each reader. On the one hand Emerson never relied overly much on the structure of his essays; on the other hand he paid close attention to the essays, which had, in a real way, to be his "final" statement – at least "final" for that publication.

There are some reasons to read "Poetry and Imagination" as the Cabot (and Ellen) production closest to Emerson's because the first fifty-eight paragraphs (roughly two-thirds of the essay) correspond closely to the surviving manuscript that was the printer's copy for the version whose proofs Emerson had in hand in 1872. One can read here with a great deal more confidence than any of the other Cabot-assembled essays. And that's fortunate, for the essay is the most substantial in the volume. It is a great pity that Emerson's mental health deteriorated just as he was able to conceive, and in some ways begin to essay, a major work on "The Natural History of the Intellect," or, as he also put it, his "New Metaphysics." The two-part Harvard philosophy lectures of 1870-1871 would have given him the opportunity to think through, produce, and organize a book's worth of prose on the subject. Though he had lectured in the 1840s and '50s on topics that took him in that direction, he never wrote the book.⁵ "Poetry and Imagination" is one of those lectures, and the material gathered into the essay that opens *Letters and Social Aims* reveals the direction and nature of his thought.

The essay opens with a blunt assertion that “the perception of matter is made the common-sense,” and that it hardly can be avoided (CW 8:1). Quickly, however, he claims that “this magnificent hotel and conveniency we call Nature is not final,” that “The ends of all are moral, and therefore the beginnings are such” (CW 8:1, 2). Again, as before, “the mind” is the agent that mediates between the physical and the transcendental, for it has an “independent action.” It is the mind that makes “resemblance, affinity, identity,” and thus shows the power of analogizing that frees the mind from the trap of empiricism (CW 8:3). From here he goes on to claim that poetry represents a high use of language: “The primary use of a fact is low: the secondary use, as it is a figure or illustration of my thought, is the real worth” (CW 8:5). Sure enough, he quickly practices what he preaches when, after saying that “Conversation is not permitted without tropes,” he goes on to say, in one of his typically imaginative figures: “God himself does not speak prose” (CW 8:6), and loads the following paragraph with trope upon trope.

Emerson calls imagination a “second sight” and says that the mind’s ability to unite the first sight of the material world with the second of the imagination inevitably “reads nature to the end of delight and of moral use” (CW 8:9, 11), a conclusion he had been drawing in one form or another since the 1836 *Nature*. By the early 1870s, however, Emerson was more persistently locating the perception of unity and the moral law in the mind’s ability to use language, to engage in a creativity that breaks through to the unseen by a skillful analogy with the seen. In another of his familiar masked self-portraits he says: “A poet comes, who lifts the veil; gives them glimpses of the laws of the universe; shows them the circumstance as illusion” to “deal with nature and history as means and symbols and not as ends” (CW 8:20). Emerson here uses an image quite similar to the one that ends “Illusions” in *The Conduct of Life*. There, however, there is no agent that “lifts” the snowstorm of illusion. Here, in “Poetry and Imagination,” the poet is an active presence. The earlier essay is poised between liberation and confinement; the later one is explicitly affirmative.

The essay at this point rather drifts into discussions of prosody with copious quotations, but he has made his point: nature exists as symbols; the mind can create the language to use those symbols; the material substance surrounding mankind is a fact but not the last fact. Emerson knows full well that "brains are so marred, so imperfectly formed, unheroically, – brains of the sons of fallen men, – that the doctrine [of correspondence] is imperfectly received," but nevertheless we are not by our natures trapped in a meaningless universe but rather, by our natures full of potential, no matter how imperfectly realized (CW 8:42).

Beyond this essay are two more of interest, both undoubtedly "Emerson's," for he published them previously: "Quotation and Originality" and "Persian Poetry." While neither seems to me anywhere up to the mark of the great work of the first two decades of Emerson's writing, each has its moments. "Quotation and Originality" is an attempt to harmonize "Old and new," and so "All minds quote" (CW 8:94). Of course they do, and Emerson did it all his life by quoting from his extensive, catholic reading and then by quoting himself as he turned his journal sentences into lectures and the lectures into essays. The sentence I just quoted expands the idea by noting, "Old and new make the warp and woof of every moment," though he goes on to emphasize how fundamental is imitation (CW 8:94). From mythology to politics, from religion to children's stories, Emerson shows quotation, imitation, and correspondence, to the degree that he can suggest that "all literature is eavesdropping" (CW 8:99).

That quality has its own corresponding and consenting partner in the fact that writers love to be quoted, that quotation is preservation, and that it becomes an honorific. Quotation becomes a high form of reading when we read out of a work "better things than the author wrote," and it even becomes, following Swedenborg, a participation in a "society of souls," among whom ideas circulate like blood (CW 8:103, 104). Then, near the close, after he has all but disowned originality, Emerson makes his familiar rhetorical move by reversing himself. Individuality and its necessary creativity are facts that finally

trump the persistence of quotation: "To all that can be said of the preponderance of the Past, the single word Genius is a sufficient reply." Then Emerson writes a figure of speech destined to be quoted, a very example of the doctrine of creativity he has just named: "The divine never quotes" (CW 8:105).

And so, unsurprisingly, "Persian Poetry" is loaded with quotations. The last sixteen of its twenty-five pages are little more than a small anthology of Emerson's English translations of German translations of several Persian poets. Like Thoreau, Emerson highly valued the poetry that flowed from Persia as well as from the scriptures of Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian texts. Though steeped as he was in European writings and history, Emerson had a distinct ability to encounter a world radically different from his own and to find much to admire. While he could and did fall into stereotypes when describing cultures ranging from Persia and Arabia through India into China, he felt a kinship with their writers, even though it was in an English translation of a German translation of the original. One comment he makes about the Persians shows one reason why he valued them, for what he says of them might well describe his own work: "Gnomic verses, rules of life, conveyed in a lively image, especially in an image addressed to the eye" (CW 8:127). Emerson's best paragraph in the essay describes himself in describing Hafiz. It might be read as a creed defining his three decades of writing. It is worth quoting in its entirety:

The other merit of Hafiz is his intellectual liberty, which is a certificate of profound thought. We accept the religions and politics into which we fall; and it is only a few delicate spirits who are sufficient to see that the whole web of convention is the imbecility of those whom it entangles, – that the mind suffers no religion and no empire but its own. It indicates this respect to absolute truth by the use it makes of the symbols that are most stable and reverent, and therefore is always provoking the accusation of irreligion. (CW 8:132)

This paragraph is so sharp, so accurate that one would hate to have missed it. There are, I fear, fewer of this kind spread out through *Letters and Social Aims* than one would want, though Emerson is never without his moments of impressive, arresting figures of speech. For instance there is a long, very long, paragraph in "Eloquence" that has within it a compact, penetrating description of a moment in which a town is called on to debate conscription in the Civil War. The townsmen are cold toward further conscription, but one man overcomes their hostility by his eloquence. He is "put together," says Emerson, "like a locomotive just finished at the Tredegar works" (CW 8:62). "Inspiration" has a witty comment on a Darwinian understanding of human history: "The aboriginal man in geology, and in the dim lights of Darwin's microscope, is not an engaging figure.... They combed his mane, they pared his nails, cut off his tail, set him on end, sent him to school, and made him pay taxes, before he could begin to write his sad story for the compassion or the repudiation of his descendants" (CW 8:150-51). One cannot but be startled at Emerson's vehement rejection of the common notion of immortality in an essay devoted to championing that very idea. After scornfully reminding the reader that Jesus never mentions immortality, though Plato and Cicero stoop to do so, he bursts out: "How ill agrees this majestic immortality of our religion with the frivolous population! Will you build magnificently for mice?" (CW 8:192).

The Textual Introduction to *Letters and Social Aims* is important, for not only does it pick up information that in earlier volumes would have been in the Historical Introduction, but it clearly describes the relationship between the published essays and the manuscript remains that bear the same or nearly the same title. Myerson provides the reader with a concise summary of the lecture history preceding the essay and the relationship between any surviving manuscripts and *Letters and Social Aims*. He traces the history of the book's origin and development with specific detail about Emerson's relationship with James Hotten. There is little about the book's reception upon its publication, but Myerson has an informative section on the correspondence between

Cabot and the Emerson family concerning their attempt to “hide from the public the real circumstances behind the composition of *Letters and Social Aims*” (CW 8:ccxxxvii). Drawing heavily on unpublished letters, he tells the tale of the discussions back and forth, not only those referring to *Letters and Social Aims* but that of subsequent publications that Cabot and Edward Emerson supervised. No one has before showed so clearly what lay behind the publication of a large quantity of Emerson’s essays from 1875 to 1903.

The editors explain the rationale for the selection of copy-text for this unusual volume, relying on surviving manuscripts for two essays, for previous magazine publication for two others, and on the 1876 book publication for the remaining seven. The fact that Emerson had little or no authorial control over the publication makes it impossible to judge his “intention.” Finally, the textual apparatus is like that of previous volumes, including a list of corrections made to the surviving manuscripts of “Quotation and Originality” and “Progress of Culture.”

IX. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Poems: A Variorum Edition*, ed. Albert J. von Frank and Thomas Wortham (Belknap-Harvard UP, 2011), cxlvii + 705 pp., \$95.

“The rhyme of the poet Modulates the King’s affairs”

Volume 9, *Poems: A Variorum Edition* is the jewel of the *Collected Works*. It brings to the reader an entirely new Emerson volume and one that ought to be read extensively. Emerson’s poetry has never attracted the attention the prose has received, though Emerson himself insisted on his vocation was to be a “poet.” One hopes that this *Poems* will entice a new generation of critics to take this substantial body of poetry more seriously. Ronald Bosco, the edition’s Editor in Chief, explains the decision to edit a variorum edition, and one is thankful

for that decision. As Bosco says, the presentation of the historical record of the variants authorized by Emerson "is the evidentiary heart of the volume, and it is the evidence that makes this volume, this edition, unique" (CW 9:ix). *Poems* presents the texts of Emerson's three books of poetry, *Poems* (1847), *May-Day and Other Pieces* (1867), and *Selected Poems* (1876), as well as the poems he published but did not collect into book form. The volume does not reprint the poems Edward Waldo Emerson published from his father's manuscripts in the Riverside (1893) and Centenary (1904) editions of *Poems*. This latter decision is in keeping with the editorial practice of the *Collected Works* to omit works that were organized and edited after Emerson's death. In the case of the poetry, this decision is made easier by the fact that not only do readers have available the sixteen volumes of *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, in which one finds drafts and fragments of poems, but also the three volumes of *Topical Notebooks* and, most importantly, the volume of *Poetry Notebooks*, which publishes Emerson's poetry notebooks and thus includes the poems and drafts he never published.

Poems: A Variorum Edition contains the 191 poems Emerson published from his first in 1829, "William Rufus and the Jew," to "Boston," his last, in 1876. By any measure this is a substantial body of poetry, some of it distinguished, some of it less so (as is true with any "complete poems" edition of a poet). Many of the poems are familiar from anthologies; others will undoubtedly be new to many readers. Emerson's ideal was an "artful thunder" in a poetry that could "mount to paradise/ By the stairway of surprise," but unfortunately his actual work was too often encased in strong four-beat lines that hewed to a confining rhyme scheme and often avoided enjambment. He did avoid a "jingling serenader's art" and a "tinkle of piano strings," but he could not avoid the impression of declamation (quotations from "Merlin I," CW 9:224, 223). But that limitation should not warn off a reader, for at his best Emerson impresses, especially when he writes in pentameter, as he does in his early "The Rhodora."

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew;
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me there brought you.

Emerson's imagistic representation of the flower sets the scene for his meditation on the "Power" that moves both flower and man. The flower answers a question he had not even thought to ask, but once asked, seems self-evident.

Another poem from 1834, "The Snow-Storm" has the same imagistic precision as Emerson sees the result of "the fierce artificer" who "On coop or kennel" "hangs Parian wreaths;/ A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn" and "at the gate,/ A tapering turret overtops the work." The closing lines convey Emerson's notion that nature's easy creation mocks the labor of man's, as the artificer

Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,
The frolic architecture of the snow. (CW 9:90)

That "frolic architecture" precisely defines the mystery of nature's creativity.

These examples have been in pentameter, but one of his best poems is in tetrameter (accompanied by paired two-beat lines), the "Ode,

Inscribed to W.H. Channing," an 1846 poem. Here Emerson concisely and concretely defines a society in which "Virtue palter; Right is hence;/ Freedom praised, but hid." All of New England "Would serve things still; – but "Things are of the snake." Worse, "Things are in the saddle,/ And ride mankind." This condemnation of the public life of his times is done with Emerson's familiar imaginative creation of figures of speech. Here, as in his prose, he is concrete and surprising. But the point of the poem is to resist the temptation to join his voice in a public war against slavery and materialism. He is quite clear that

I cannot leave
My honied thought
For the priest's cant,
Or statesman's rant

because, should he succumb, "The angry Muse/ Puts confusion in my brain." There is no doubt that the times call for reform, but his calling is poetry, not propaganda. At the poem's conclusion Emerson makes it clear that there is a world-spirit working that will ultimately put the poets on the side of victory:

The Cossack eats Poland,
Like stolen fruit;
Her last noble is ruined,
Her last poet mute:
Straight, into double band
The victors divide;
Half for freedom strike and stand; –

The astonished Muse finds thousands at her side. (CW 9:146-49)

This is Emerson's strong assertion that poetry has an absolute claim on him. It was a guiding principle that the individual did his own work, that to leave a "calling" was to betray principles that had to be honored. Of course, the poem also demonstrates that poetry has a public role, that it can define and object to the "evil times." Poetry was not retreat.

Poems: A Variorum focuses on the individual poem and thus calls for a new format. Rather than group the apparatus following the

complete body of texts, this volume presents the supporting material with each poem. Thus, the reader has in succession these elements: the factual background to the poem, its composition and its biographical context; second, the text of the poem itself; third, a chronological list of the various texts, both manuscript and printed, as well as pre-copy text forms and a history of variations in the poem's format; fourth, an historical list of variants from the copy-text; and fifth, the explanatory notes. Taken together, this editorial apparatus provides the reader with a wealth of information that can be used to whatever depth one desires. There is no impediment to simply reading the poems, but one would do well to read more, for the work of Thomas Wortham in establishing the texts is impressive. His decisions are clearly presented, and the reader can readily see how Emerson subtly changed his poetry by comparing the variants.

Albert J. von Frank's Historical Introduction recreates Emerson's poetic career. The early poems were the declamatory products of a boy trained in the rhetoric of the times, but there was an early sign that, as von Frank puts it, "His ideas about poetry and its place in the world would be continuously in dialogue with his feelings about what presented itself as *not* poetry" (CW 9:xxxiii). The transition period to a mature understanding of what a poet might accomplish came in the 1830s as Emerson admitted his profound antinomianism, as he read deeply in European writers, and as his own life went through the crises of his wife's death and his departure from the church. Then, in 1834, he began the first of his poetry notebooks and in doing so signaled a new understanding of his own need to write poetry. Von Frank pays close attention to the way that poetry was offering Emerson a metamorphosis into a new life. Poetry had become life.

Emerson's new emphasis on poetry was signaled by a central concern with language, which von Frank illustrates through a discussion of the "Language" section of *Nature*, the 1841 lecture "The Poet," and the 1844 essay of the same name. Throughout the first half of the 1840s Emerson began to publish his poems in the *Dial*, his first published

poetry (save for a couple of commissioned poems and four others published in James Freeman Clarke's *Western Messenger*). During the four years of the *Dial*'s existence Emerson published two dozen poems, several of which are his best known. And then he stopped. He published no poems in magazines until the founding of the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1857.

Emerson did, however, publish his first book of poetry during this hiatus: *Poems* was published in December 1846 (with an 1847 copyright), first in London so that he could secure a British copyright, and then a few days later in Boston. Though he had published in the *Dial*, it was probably his inclusion in anthologies edited by Rufus Wilmot Griswold that had created a wider audience for the poetry. *Poems* had sixty poems, almost half of which were new, though as von Frank notes, several had been written much earlier, as far back as 1830. He emphasizes the importance of Emerson's interest in the Persian poets, especially Hafiz. The Persians and other "Eastern" writers helped, says von Frank, "to recover the widest possibilities, creative and spiritual, inherent in the religious sensibility" (CW 9:lxviii). The discussion is an informative exploration of an important part of Emerson's mind. Emerson's enthusiasm for Eastern thought helped to stir up yet again a controversy about his unorthodox, even heretical religious beliefs. If his essays were no longer causing this distress, his poems certainly were, even among younger Unitarians who otherwise were favorable to Emerson. For example Cyrus Bartol singled out Emerson's refusal to acknowledge "the Christian doctrines of a Father and a particular Providence" and his unwillingness to prefer "Jesus over any other great and good man" as examples of limitations (CW 9:lxvii).

Emerson returned to magazine publication with the founding of the *Atlantic* in 1857 under the editorship of James Russell Lowell. Despite his heavy lecture schedule and his work on *The Conduct of Life*, Emerson continued to publish in the *Atlantic*, but he agreed with James T. Fields to a new printing of *Poems*, this one in Ticknor and Fields'

prestigious “Blue and Gold” edition, thus putting him in the company of Whittier, Longfellow, and Lowell, and earning Emerson the subsequent long-standing identification as one of the “Fireside” or “Schoolhouse” poets.⁶

Emerson’s second volume of poetry began to emerge in the fall of 1866, as he tried to finish work on “May-Day” and thought to publish it with a gathering of his other poems. After a certain amount of delay, *May-Day and Other Pieces* was published in April 1867. The reviews this time were more positive. Von Frank quotes at length the assessment by young William Dean Howells, who was not at all put off by Emerson’s rugged prosody. It was, according to von Frank, the only truly discerning review. The ones from England were no more favorable or understanding than they had been in 1847. The British never warmed to Emerson’s poetry.

Emerson’s final book of poems was his *Selected Poems*, published in 1876. He apparently very much wished to have a volume that reflected what he thought best of his work, so he labored to choose and to revise. But the reader will remember that this work occurred in the midst of his growing aphasia and thus raises problems for the editor. Von Frank reviews the evidence carefully and concludes that first, some forms of aphasia leave intact the ability to respond clearly to poetry and song, and second, there is little evidence of any interposition from Ellen, Edward, or Cabot. In short, *Selected Poems* was his actual work, unlike that of *Letters and Social Aims* (CW 9:xcvi-xcviii). The *Collected Works* edition prints the eight poems in *Selected Poems* that were previously unpublished. The editors include an Appendix listing the full contents of *Selected Poems* with notations identifying their publication in *Poems* and *May-Day*.

Von Frank concludes his Historical Introduction with a discussion of the posthumous *Poems* published first in the Riverside edition by Cabot, though edited by Edward Emerson, and then revised and republished by Edward in the Centenary edition in 1904. Edward published all but twelve of the poems Emerson had published and

added to it "a 62-page Appendix of drafts and fragments drawn from the notebooks" (CW 9:xcix). Von Frank notes that Edward did his work well for the most part, save for one "spectacular instance" in which he "manufactured a single gerrymander monster out of numerous granular fragments on the subject of 'The Poet'" (CW 9:xcix). The Centenary edition expanded the book even further with the addition of seventeen more unpublished poems. Von Frank, like Bosco and Myerson before him, acknowledges the usefulness of Edward Emerson's notes in the posthumous volumes. These notes have now become the sole value of the edition so long quoted by Emerson scholars.

Von Frank's Textual Introduction clearly lays out the rationale for the copy-text selection of *Poems*, which usually means the first printed version, save for those times when a manuscript printers' copy exists. There are a few, clearly defined, instances for which manuscript alone provides the copy-text. The editor goes on to detail at length the publication of Emerson's three books, and in so doing gives the reader an insight into Emerson's interest in and skill at supervising his publication (a fact also noted in the previous volumes of the *Collected Works*). Von Frank reviews Emerson's dealing with his publishers, focusing on the 1847 publication of *Poems* in both London and Boston, for though the London printing occurred first, Emerson had no control over the proofs and thus did not make the corrections and revisions that he made on the proofs for the Boston edition. As a result, the two differed in unexpected ways, causing Emerson to ask Chapman to make corrections in any subsequent printings.

After a discussion of the uncomplicated publishing history of *May-Day*, von Frank turns to the more vexed question of *Selected Poems*. Here he lays out his evidence for Emerson's authority, though he takes care to detail the one intrusion that Ellen Emerson made in re-working "May-Day" itself. Emerson had thought to omit the poem because Howells had criticized its lack of structure. Ellen wanted the poem included and so she heavily revised it herself, though it was badly done.

Von Frank and Thomas Wortham fully detail the revisions in their notes. It is the most complicated textual problem in the volume.

As is true throughout the Harvard edition, the editors' notes in *Poems: A Variorum Edition* are quite helpful. Von Frank's introductory note to the "Ode" makes it clear that the poem sprang from a specific event, not from a generalized response to Channing. On 13 May 1846, the United States declared war on Mexico, which led to Emerson's lines about "the famous States/ Harrying Mexico/ With rifle and with knife!" (CW 9:147). Beyond that obvious fact were others less well-known. On 19 May, at the highly politicized funeral of the Rev. Charles Turner Torrey, who had died in a Maryland prison after his conviction for helping a fugitive slave, Channing delivered a blazing speech that Emerson, who was in the audience, heard. Then on 29 May, Channing and others spoke at a meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in Boston. These are the specifics that underlie the poem, that document the nature of the tension Emerson felt between his public and private responsibilities.

There are no "parallel passages" per se for the *Poems*, but von Frank and Wortham always cite the drafts and incomplete versions of poems by referring the reader either to the *JMN* volumes, the *Topical Notebooks* or the *Poetry Notebooks*, so that the pre-copy text versions of a given poem are readily accessible. The notes also provide the publishing history of each poem, so it is easy to be surprised to find that Emerson did not include "Ode" in *Selected Poems*, a decision that is puzzling. There are concluding appendices: an inclusion of Thoreau's *Journal* musings on "The Sphinx," (nice to have but hardly essential to the volume); the later versions of the vexed "May-Day"; the contents of *Selected Poems*; and a list of stanza breaks that fall at the end of the page in *Poems: A Variorum Edition*. At every level, the editorial apparatus is impeccable.

Robert N. Hudspeth, "The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson"

X. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Uncollected Prose Writings*, ed. Ronald A. Bosco, Joel Myerson, and Glen M. Johnson (Belknap-Harvard UP, 2013), cxxiii + 970 pp., \$95.

**"I find it a great & fatal difference whether I court the Muse, or the Muse courts me. That is the ugly disparity between age and youth."
(*Journal* July 1866)**

The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson closes with *Uncollected Prose*, a volume that contains 110 prose pieces Emerson published but never re-used. It is the volume destined to generate the most discussion, for it makes significant changes in the Emerson "canon." The first nine volumes of the edition follow the order and titles set by the Riverside edition of 1883-1893 (save for the addition of "A Variorum Edition" to the title of volume nine). *Uncollected Prose*, however, takes the place of the final three volumes of the Riverside and Centenary editions. The editors keep faith with the controlling editorial principles that have guided the edition through its first nine volumes: they present only those works over which Emerson had editorial control.

We have seen already how the Emerson family enlisted the aid of James Elliot Cabot to bring *Letters and Social Aims* to its publication in 1875, and we have seen how he, with the help of Ellen and Edward Emerson, created essays from Emerson's vast trove of lecture manuscripts.⁷ The editors of the Harvard edition base their judgment that the book was Emerson's on the fact that he had at least nominal control of it and that he was alert enough to make decisions when requested, even to write the occasional sentence needed to complete a transition. Beyond that date, the evidence is conclusive that he was incompetent either to write anything original or to make a meaningful decision about the creation of a lecture or essay from what he had written earlier. For that reason, Cabot and the Emersons continued to work as they had to create lectures for Emerson to read and essays that could and would be published under his name, though he had no part in their final shape. In

addition to the pamphlet *Fortune of the Republic*, Cabot and the Emersons created and published in magazines, “Demonology,” “Perpetual Forces,” “The Sovereignty of Ethics,” “The Preacher,” “Impressions of Thomas Carlyle in 1848,” and “The Superlative.” Cabot published all of these in *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*, save for *Fortune of the Republic*, which he saved for *Miscellanies*. None is accepted into *Uncollected Works*.

Cabot continued his work after Emerson’s death in 1882 when he edited the Riverside edition and added to the nine volumes of Emerson’s already in print, a tenth, *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*, and an eleventh, *Miscellanies*. Then, ten years later in 1893 Cabot made his last contribution to the Emerson canon by creating and publishing *Natural History of the Intellect*. In each of the three new volumes Cabot mixed essays and lectures that Emerson had published with those that Cabot had compiled, often with the help of the Emersons. *Lectures and Biographical Sketches* contained eighteen essays, only six of which are now counted as Emerson’s alone. *Miscellanies* had twenty-three essays, seven of which had been published by Emerson; and *Natural History of the Intellect* had thirteen essays, ten of which are Emerson’s. So, by 1893 fifty-four new “Emerson” essays had come into print since his death, though only twenty-three of them are included in the *Collected Works*.

Cabot died in 1903, but the story of Emerson’s canon was not yet complete, for Edward Waldo Emerson took on the responsibility for editing the 1903-1904 Centenary edition for Houghton Mifflin. Edward accepted the twelve volumes as defined by Cabot, but he added to each of the three posthumous volumes: to *Lectures and Biographical Sketches* Edward added one short essay; to *Miscellanies* he added seven, only two of which were completed by his father; and finally, and most importantly, he added five essays to *Natural History of the Intellect*, none of which we can now accept as Emerson’s. As Ronald Bosco points out in the Historical Introduction to *Uncollected Prose*, the expansion of *Natural History of the Intellect* by the creation of essays under the rubric of “Natural History of the Intellect” probably

"exerted a greater impact on his father's intellectual reputation than all the new works combined that were created for the Centenary Edition" (CW 10:xci). Cabot had created an essay "Natural History of the Intellect" for his volume, an essay Edward re-titled "Powers and Laws of Thought," and he kept Cabot's "Memory." Edward then created two new essays: "Instinct and Inspiration," and "The Celebration of Intellect." These four essays erroneously created the impression that they were the finished product of Emerson's "New Metaphysics." They were, in fact, scattered pieces from several lectures, all brought together and smoothed by Edward Emerson. Thus, in 1903, the total now stood at sixty-seven new essays. The editors of *Uncollected Works* accept only twenty-five of them.⁸

Bosco and Myerson give a full account of their decision to exclude the essays. The majority of them were demonstrably created by Cabot and the Emersons ("Demonology" and "The Natural History of the Intellect," e.g.); one cannot be confidently ascribed to Emerson at all ("Humboldt"), and a number are published speeches over which Emerson is thought to have had no control ("Abraham Lincoln. Remarks at the Funeral Services of the President" or "Remarks by Ralph Waldo Emerson" at Theodore Parker's memorial service). There is, however, one remaining category of exclusion to mention, a group of prose writings that the editors call "Special Cases." These are candidates for inclusion in *Uncollected Works* that fall outside the previous instances: "Thoughts on Art," a *Dial* piece, was revised by Emerson for inclusion in *Society and Solitude* as "Art"; "Tantalus," another *Dial* essay later incorporated into "Nature" in *Essays: Second Series*; the surviving manuscript for "General Introduction to the Work" for *The Hundred Greatest Men* is entirely in the hand of Cabot and Ellen Emerson Forbes; "Memoir of John M. Cheney," published in 1888, was assembled by Edward Emerson; "Washington in Wartime," published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, was drawn only from Emerson's journal; "Father Taylor," also from the *Atlantic*, was assembled by Edward. There remains but one other exclusion, and it is a notable one: Emerson's two, possibly three,

chapters he wrote for *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, the memorial volume Emerson wrote and edited with James Freeman Clarke and William Henry Channing in 1852. Myerson admits that there is a good argument for including this material in *Uncollected Works*, even though it contains a large quantity of quotations from Fuller's writings. Emerson's chapters would, however, have expanded the *Uncollected Works* volume by some 42,000 words or about 100 pages, an expansion that would be too much for a volume already containing 970 pages. It is, however, the only exclusion not based on a scholarly argument. If regrettable, the decision is understandable.

Before we leave the status of the new Emerson canon, we might pause for a moment to consider where we are. Probably many of the now-excluded essays will scarcely be missed. I hardly think the omission of "Remarks at the Meeting for Organizing the Free Religious Association" will cause much concern, nor the loss of "Walter Scott," both from *Miscellanies*. However, the disappearance of the "Natural History of the Intellect" essays or of "Historic Notes of Life and Letters of New England" probably will be felt as real losses. I accept the editorial principles and practice of the *Collected Works*, but I also know that the now-disfavored works still exist in libraries. How shall we view them? Simply as bogus works and assume they do not exist? As somehow the writings of Emerson? and if so, what kind of "writings"? One is tempted to see them as genuine Emerson paragraphs, much as one would read a journal passage (albeit an undated journal entry divorced from what comes before or after). The trouble with that is that a reader cannot be sure if a given paragraph is Emerson's words alone. Had Cabot, or Ellen, or Edward meddled with the words? Given the evidence cited in the *Collected Works* and in Simmons' essay, there probably is little that is not Emerson; but even the "little" taints the work. Although Cabot and company were much better editors by our lights than many in their century (Clarke and Channing editing Fuller are counter-examples), and though they were doing what Emerson himself did to create his own lectures and essays, they were not Emerson. Our understanding of

principled editing demands that we emend as little as possible and always be transparent when we do. It does us intellectual harm if we do not take this seriously. Still, I will miss the brilliant image from "Historic Notes" that "The young men were born with knives in their brain" (Emerson *Lectures and Biographical Sketches* 329). Nevertheless, it goes.

We need now to turn to the contents of *Uncollected Prose*. When we do, we find 110 pieces ranging from the 1822 "Thoughts on the Religion of the Middle Ages," to the 1875 "Address" at the unveiling of the Minute-Man statue in Concord. Of the 110 items, nineteen of them are printed from a manuscript copy-text. While some of the contents is trivial (advertising blurbs, e.g.), several are substantial essays, not to be ignored: "Michael Angelo" (1837), "Milton" (1838), "War" (1849), "Thoreau," (1862), and "Character" (1866) among them. The volume contains all of Emerson's prose contributions to the *Dial*, as well as several book reviews and biographical sketches. It is useful to have all his *Dial* essays in one place and in the order in which they appeared, and *Uncollected Prose* makes it easy for a reader to consider Emerson as a reviewer of contemporary writing.

A brief examination of four of the essays – on Michael Angelo and Milton, and the essays "War" and "Character" – will give a sense of the value of the collection. The two biographical pieces are revisions of lectures – "Michel Angelo Buonaroti" in 1835 and 1836, and "Milton" in 1835, which he delivered only once. Emerson revised both, albeit reluctantly, for publication in the *North American Review* in 1837 and 1838. Here, in his early work, Emerson dwells only on their virtues, with no hints of either personal or public shortcomings, as he was later to do in *Representative Men*. His Michael Angelo is the master of all the arts – poetry, architecture, painting, and sculpture; his Milton is the embodiment of "manly character" (CW 10:81). Emerson had the advantage of actually seeing Michael Angelo's works when he travelled in Italy, so he was speaking from experience. Despite the advantage, he could not wholly free himself from abstractions in reaching for a right

description of the Italian: “are we not authorized to say, that this man was penetrated with the love of the highest beauty, that is, goodness; that his was a soul so enamoured of grace that it could not stoop to meanness or depravity” (CW 10:72-73). But when Emerson uses detail from Michel Angelo’s life he is concrete and convincing. The narrative is direct and to the point.

Emerson’s “Milton” is a portrait of the man he thought the most accomplished of English writers, perhaps of all the writers in the Western world after the Greeks. Emerson describes Milton’s personal grace and accomplishments as the groundwork for his continued successes with the English language. Most of the discussion centers on Milton’s prose with scant references to *Paradise Lost*. In part it is apparent that Emerson is creating a portrait of Milton that would be most attractive to an American audience. He emphasizes Milton’s defense of religious freedom as well as political, his defense of unlimited toleration, “*literary* liberty,” and “*domestic* liberty.” (Emerson goes out of his way to defend Milton’s support of divorce.) He sought, says Emerson, “absolute truth, not accommodating truth” (CW 10:90). The essay is an homage to a writer who had deeply impressed Emerson. As biography, however, it lacks the depth he attained in his best work in *Representative Men*. His first attempts at biography were not to be his last. The call of greatness was too strong to resist, early and late.

The essay “War,” another re-worked lecture, dates from the same period as the biographical essays (1838), but it was revised and published a decade later in 1848 in Elizabeth Peabody’s one-issue *Aesthetic Papers*. The magazine also contained Thoreau’s “Resistance to Civil Government,” which ought to be read together with Emerson’s “War” as examples of a potent strain of American political thought appearing at the very time that Europe burst into revolution. In “War” one can see Emerson using the rhetorical strategy found lacking in the biographical essays, a strategy prominent in his writings after about 1844: he first lists the advantages war has for a culture (it develops the individual will as well as the body; it values good sense and quick wits, e.g.). But Emerson

quickly shifts to the opposite point of view, the one that is central to the essay: war "is a juvenile and temporary state" (CW 10:354). He takes the stance that civilization, expressed in such things as trade and the decline of piracy, as well as the fact that the "art of war" embodied in gunpowder has made "battles less frequent and less murderous" (CW 10:354). It is now, of course, impossible to read this line without knowing that in only thirteen years the United States was to explode into battles more fierce than any they had ever known and to introduce the world to modern war, the results of which yet haunt us with nightmare visions. Emerson's faith, however, is his familiar one: once entertain the *thought* of peace, once introduce it into the mind, it will at last triumph. This, though, is not quite enough for him, for it is too "passive." Emerson looks for a nation who will *act*, who will refuse to declare war, refuse to bear arms, who will be active for peace. He rehearses the objections to his philosophy (as he often does as a rhetorical strategy in his essays) and finally locates power not in "public opinion," which he scorns, but in private conviction in "private, dear, and earnest love" (CW 10:361). He closes the essay by noting that the large class of young people who show a dedication to intellectual and religious freedom is a foretaste of the possibility of renouncing war. It is a gruesome fact that many of those young men died from 1861 to 1865.

I find "Character" to be the most interesting essay in *Uncollected Prose*. It is a spirited, often acerbic attack on organized and formal religion, a credo of sorts by a man who hated creeds. Little that Emerson says in the 1866 essay is "new," for he had been saying much the same since his electric address to the senior class at the Harvard divinity school in 1838. However, seldom had he been so direct and pungent as he now felt free to be. Myerson tells the story of the unusual progress of the essay that was urged upon Emerson by his good friend James T. Fields, the owner and editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. Emerson undertook a revision of the lecture he had been giving and sent it to Fields in installments in the summer of 1865. Fields set it in type, and Emerson reviewed at least some of the proofs. Then, suddenly, Fields backed out,

apparently deciding that the essay would be read as “blasphemous” and thus ruin the magazine. For the only time in his career, Emerson had been rejected – and by a close personal and professional friend. The story is a startling and gripping one.

After Fields backed out, Charles Eliot Norton and James Russell Lowell, editors of the *North American Review* (which, ironically, Fields also owned) very quickly solicited the essay and then published it in 1866. Myerson quotes from an unpublished letter (a continued virtue of the Harvard edition is the editors’ use of archival manuscripts) in which Norton said that the essay “‘will cause the hair to stand on end of every clergyman in the land’” and that it would “‘bring down the religious press with the most animated rage’” (CW 10:814). Norton may have overstated the case, but probably he was more right than not. “Every nation,” Emerson says, “is degraded by the goblins it worships” and goes on to name the “vindictive mythology of Calvinism” as an example of religious perversion (CW 10:454). Implicit in Emerson’s argument is a rejection of the divinity of Jesus. “Character” for Emerson was a perfect form of self-possession, an absolute reliance on self that occurs only rarely in human experience, so rarely that “the memory and tradition” of such men “is preserved in some strange way by those who only half understand him, until a true disciple comes” (CW 10:453-54). Very specifically “the establishment of Christianity in the world does not rest on any miracle,” says Emerson (returning for a moment to the question that roiled the Unitarian establishment in 1838) (CW 10:455). Finally, in defending the “deeper truth” that Jesus preached, Emerson says that “in his disciples, admiration of him runs away with their reverence for the human soul, and they hamper us with limitations of person and text” (CW 10:460).

Emerson sees in the society around him a tendency to value the individual, a tendency that points toward an attainment of genuine “Character,” which for him is an emanation of the “universal mind,” to which all individuals belong. This is a version of the experience he describes in *Nature*, when he speaks of the “transparent eyeball”; it is the

pure being that lies beyond appearance; it is "God," though Emerson prefers not to use the name because it has too many traditional associations. This universal mind is the true source of power that we approach through our individuality only to learn that there is no individuality: "We belong to it, not it to us. It is in all men, and constitutes them men" (CW 10:448). One regrets that "Character" is not so well known as others Emerson wrote earlier in his life. It is in many ways a summation of his philosophy, one that has the vigor and imaginative reach of the earlier work. Emerson was undoubtedly too modest to claim himself as one of those men who "appear from time to time who receive with more purity and fulness these high communications," but he was such (CW 10:452).

Myerson's headnotes contain a wealth of information about the publication of the several pieces in *Uncollected Prose*. I have already referred to his discussion of the genesis of "Character," but the reader ought to read each note. For example the ten-page headnote to Emerson's "Historical Discourse" delivered on the occasion of Concord's 1835 bicentennial is full of information about the occasion, about Emerson's preparation for it, and the controversy it plunged Emerson into with his fellow townsman and local historian, Lemuel Shattuck. The story is as entertaining as Emerson's essay. Nor should the reader fail to take stock of the textual notes describing the manuscripts which form the copy-text for many of the essays, for they allow the reader to see how hard Emerson labored to polish and make exact his language. I quoted above his condemnation of vindictive Calvinism, but one would not suspect that passage needed heavy alterations of cancelations and revisions, so that Emerson had to resort to a separate page to get the conclusion of the paragraph to satisfy him (CW 10:828).

Uncollected Prose Works is by its nature a miscellany spread across Emerson's entire career. There is no unifying theme, though most of his favorite topics emerge from the book. In many ways, the volume shows Emerson deeply engaged in his contemporary world as he reviews books

for the *Dial*, as he eulogizes dead friends and speaks in support of John Brown. For instance, in the final nineteen paragraphs of “American Civilization,” the paragraphs Emerson omitted from the essay when he published it as “Civilization” in *Society and Solitude*, shows him deeply concerned about immediate events. The restored paragraphs are lively, angry responses to Southern intransigence. “Why,” says Emerson, “cannot the best civilization be extended over the whole country, since the disorder of the less civilized portion menaces the existence of the country?” (CW 10:404). The essay shows clearly how responsive Emerson could be to sectional strife. It is Emerson in an arena of public debate, which we see quite clearly in this volume of otherwise disconnected essays.

Turning to the edition as a whole, I think that all too often the scholarly apparatus goes unremarked and perhaps unused, but that would be a mistake. The value of the Historical Introductions is obvious, and so is that of the Textual Introduction to each volume. The back of the book apparatus, however, ought to concern us, so let us look more carefully at the emendations and at the Parallel Passages. The tables of emendations, both those accepted and those refused, have several sorts of information – changes in the accidentals (punctuation and capitalization), in wording, in phrasing, and by adding or deleting whole passages. The emendations are more extensive for the first two volumes, for those were the ones, as we have previously noted, that Emerson himself edited. As the volumes proceed there are fewer emendations, for there were fewer recorded changes to be made (one exception comes for essays whose copy-text is a manuscript, for then there are likely to be more discrepancies between it and the published text). Before we look at examples it is well to note that the editors do more than list, they sometimes comment, as they do in *Essays: First Series* when they explain the effect of adding or deleting dashes (CW 2:267), or when they discuss the effect that Emerson created in 1847 by his deletion of “strong, absolute adverbs and adjectives, such as ‘all,’ ‘always,’” and the like. This was his “effort to modify somewhat the tone” of the book (CW 2:266). Other emendations have a bigger

effect, and readers should familiarize themselves with the range of differences.

Let us begin with *Nature, Lectures and Addresses*, the volume I find least satisfactory because of its emendation principle. Again, remember that the copy-text is the 1836 *Nature*, emended as follows: "Our principle is to present the fullest version of the early writings. Hence when later corrections cut the copy-text they are refused When the revision added to the original by expansion or clarification, it is accepted." They continue with this caveat: "When the change was of a word or phrase substituted for precision of diction or to avoid clumsy repetition, it is adopted" as well as corrections of obvious flaws in grammar (CW 1:xxxii-xxxiii). How then, does this play out? A few examples from *Nature* will make their work concrete. In an important line in the chapter "Spirit," Emerson wrote in 1836, "Once inspire the infinite, by being admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth, and we learn that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator in the finite." In 1849 he revised the line to read, "Once inhale the upper air, being admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth, and we learn that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator in the finite" (CW 1:287, 38; underscore added to facilitate reading). One cannot quarrel here, for while "inspire" does mean "breathe in," its other meaning easily gets in the way for the reader. The 1849 reading is precise. But, a few pages later in "Prospects," the editors emend from the 1870, 1876 and Riverside editions to present: "In a cabinet of natural history, we become sensible of a certain occult recognition and sympathy in regard to the most unwieldy and eccentric forms of beast, fish, and insect." The copy-text 1836 and the revised 1849 edition had: "In a cabinet of natural history, we become sensible of a certain occult recognition and sympathy in regard to the most bizarre; unwieldy and eccentric forms of beast, fish, and insect" (CW 1:40, 287-88). If their aim is to reject cuts, this emendation fails the test. Emerson's first version is the more careful, and the triple adjectives are parallel with the triple fauna.

Two further examples from emendations they reject are equally interesting. First, in the opening chapter, “Nature,” the editors choose the 1836 reading, “The rays that come from those heavenly worlds, will separate between him and vulgar things,” over the 1849 revision: “The rays that come from those heavenly worlds, will separate between him and what he touches” (CW 1:8, 288). This is a good example of choosing the shorter over the longer choice. It does, however, change the meaning. “Vulgar things” is a general locution; “what he touches” is quite precise, and thus preferable. A more glaring problem emerges from a very well-known passage, the one where he is “Crossing a bare common.” The editors accept the original response: “I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. Almost I fear to think how glad I am.” The 1849 text is the one most often quoted, and, I am sure, the most familiar: “I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear” (CW 1:10, 288). From the clumsy inexactitude of his first try he moves to the exacting, marvelous figure of speech, but the editors reject it.

Let us take a quick look at *Essays: First Series* where, although the emendation principle is sounder and consistently applied, there are still interesting choices. In “History” Emerson wrote in the original 1841 essay: “[A man’s] faculties refer to natures out of him, and predict the world he is to inhabit, as the fins of the fish foreshow that water exists, or the wings of an eagle in the egg presuppose a medium like air. Insulate and you destroy him. He cannot live without a world.” In 1847 he tightened the sentence to read: “[A man’s] faculties refer to natures out of him, and predict the world he is to inhabit, as the fins of the fish foreshow that water exists, or the wings of an eagle in the egg presuppose air. He cannot live without a world” (CW 2:274, 20). The first sentence becomes more compact; the omitted second sentence eliminates a repetition, “He cannot live without a world” says much the same thing. Still, there is a difference. I don’t think the emendation in any way “wrong,” but it is an insight into Emerson to read the original. One more short example of a familiar locution helps us see the differences in texts. In “Self-Reliance” Emerson in 1841 boldly exhorted

his reader to "do your thing," but in 1847 made it less colloquial by urging "do your work" (CW 2:280, 32). Perhaps it is only the several decades of hearing students champion "doing my thing," that makes the prosaic "work" more attractive.

My final example is an extreme one. At one point in "History" Emerson describes the reality that underlies myth. He concludes a list of examples in the emended *Collected Works*: "Apollo kept the flocks of Admetus, said the poets. When the gods come among men, they are not known." This accepts the 1847 revision in place of a long 1841 passage: "Apollo kept the flocks of Admetus, said the poets. Every man is a divinity in disguise, a god playing the fool. It seems as if heaven had sent its insane angels into our world as to an asylum, and here they will break out into their native music and utter at intervals the words they have heard in heaven; then the mad fit returns, and they mope and wallow like dogs. When the gods come among men, they are not known" (CW 2:18, 273). Without doubt the revision makes the prose more concise. The two short sentences are right to the point. The rejected 1841 sentences are aggressive and perhaps digressive, but to lose such startling figures of speech is a shame: "a god playing the fool," "insane angels" who "mope and wallow like dogs"! In 1841 Emerson was willing to say such things, and I'm glad he did. The rowdy language seems quite in keeping with his iconoclastic rejections of conventional piety and his fierce pursuit of a fresh understanding of human existence. He did after all moderate himself in 1847 at some cost.

As I said, the first two volumes, edited by Emerson, have more extensive and potentially interesting emendations, but later volumes have their examples. In the seventh paragraph of "Illusions," the essay that closes *The Conduct of Life*, Emerson originally published a longer paragraph in the *Atlantic Monthly*. For the book he cut a significant use of Thackeray and *Vanity Fair*, which he calls "pathetic in its name," as examples of how men accommodate themselves to a world of illusions and live "practically in homage and obedience to these illusions" (CW 6:353). Again, I have no objection to the decision to use the 1860

revision for the book, but Emerson so seldom refers to fiction that it is a loss to have this use of Thackeray disappear. Unless you read the notes, however, you miss the connection between the two.

One final example, this one from *Society and Solitude*, shows again how Emerson edited his own work. The editors have the manuscript for the essay “Domestic Life,” and their notes show us that the opening paragraph of that manuscript did not make it into print. In the paragraph Emerson boldly says that the real objects of understanding the world are close at hand, that it is the body of facts close by that “most pique the curiosity.” It closes with a question: “Can any topic take precedence in a reasonable mind of the topic of Domestic Life?” (CW 7:298). The published essay dives right into examples of domesticity without a preamble. There is no setting of a line of thought; the thought immediately commences. As with other emendations of extensive passages, this one is worth knowing, if only for the way in which Emerson framed his topic.

The “Parallel Passages” let the reader go below the surface of the published essay to take stock of its origins. The early thoughts and language Emerson caught in his journal and lectures make it possible for a reader to see more clearly how fragmented ideas were developed, and understand a larger context for his ideas as well as to see otherwise masked presences lurk in the essays. I will take for my example paragraph 59 of “Fate,” the opening essay in *The Conduct of Life*. The paragraph begins with typically concise, startling figures of speech:

History is the action and reaction of these two, – Nature and Thought; – two boys pushing each other on the curb-stone of the pavement. Everything is pusher or pushed: and matter and mind are in perpetual tilt and balance, so. Whilst the man is weak, the earth takes up him. He plants his brain and affections. By and by he will take up the earth, and have his gardens and vineyards in the beautiful order and productiveness of his thought. (CW 6:23)

The passage was first conceived in late July or early August 1851 in Emerson's journal "CO" (JMN 11:404).⁹ The wording in "Fate" is only slightly revised: instead of "pavement," Emerson had originally written "sidewalk," though more importantly, instead of "in the beautiful order and productiveness of his thought" he originally wrote simply "in his brain." That change emphasizes the pleasure and potency of thought. It gives more weight to the brain's activity.

The paragraph continues directly:

Every solid in the universe is ready to become fluid on the approach of the mind, and the power to flux it is the measure of the mind. If the wall remain adamant, it accuses the want of thought. To a subtler force, it will stream into new forms, expressive of the character of the mind. (CW 6:23)

This passage comes from the same journal, 118 pages later, probably written in late August or early September 1851. This time Emerson slightly tamed the journal passage, which reads:

I take it to be law <of the universe> that every solid in the universe is ready to become volatile on the approach of the mind; and that the power to volatilize is the measure of the mind. Whilst the wall remains adamant, it accuses the want of thought. To a subtler force, <will> the adamant will peel off in laminate, will exhale in gas. (JMN 11:437; words in angle brackets are Emerson's cancellations)

To make "volatile" become "fluid" and "volatilize" become "flux" is to soften the disruptive power of the mind, but the revision of the closing clause, while more abstract in losing "laminate" and "gas," actually makes a larger claim than that of the journal: the "wall" in its new forms expresses the plastic character of the mind.

Then comes an extended passage apparently composed for the essay, one not in the journal nor in the surviving lecture "Fate":

What is the city in which we sit here, but an aggregate of incongruous materials, which have obeyed the will of

some man? The granite was reluctant, but his hands were stronger, and it came. Iron was deep in the ground, and well combined with stone; but could not hide from his fires. Wood, lime, stuffs, fruit, gums, were dispersed over the earth and sea, in vain. Here they are, within reach of every man's day-labor, – what he wants of them. The whole world is the flux of matter over the wires of thought to the poles or points where it would build. The races of men rise out of the ground preoccupied with a thought which rules them, and divided into parties ready armed and angry to fight for this metaphysical abstraction. The quality of the thought differences the Egyptian and the Roman, the Austrian and the American. The men who come on the stage of one period are all found to be related to each other (CW 6:-23-24).

Here Emerson composes concrete examples of how the mind actually uses the inert natural world to its larger ends. He emphasizes the connection between “flux” and “mind.” His catalogue of human accomplishment defines the power of the mind.

Then, once more Emerson reaches back into his journal for the next part of the paragraph, this time further back, to February 1850. The essay reads:

Certain ideas are in the air. We are all impressionable, for we are made of them; all impressionable, but some more than others, and these first express them. This explains the curious contemporaneousness of inventions and discoveries. The truth is in the air, and the most impressionable brain will announce it first, but all will announce it a few minutes later. So women, as most susceptible, are the best index of the coming hour. (CW 6:24)

For this, Emerson took only one paragraph from a longer journal entry (one that coincidentally follows the journal entry that he used in the opening of the essay):

Robert N. Hudspeth, "The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson"

Certain ideas are in the air. We are all impressionable, for we are made of them. We are all impressionable, but some more than others, & these first express them. So Women, as most impressionable, are the best index of the coming hour.

I am part of the solar system. Let the brain alone & it will keep time with that as the shell with the sea-tide.

We are made of ideas. Let the river roll which way it will, cities will rise on its banks. (JMN 11:218)

While Emerson used the first journal paragraph and passed over the two following, each of the discarded thoughts would easily fit into the ideas in "Fate." Each dramatizes the "brain," each has Emerson's typical imaginative language, yet for whatever reason, only the first was useful, and it had to be expanded by inserting "This explains the curious contemporaneousness of inventions and discoveries. The truth is in the air, and the most impressionable brain will announce it first, but all will announce it a few minutes later." This is a good example of how Emerson revised preliminary thoughts into a larger context. There is a process of discovery going on in the essay that controlled what did and did not get used from the journal.

The paragraph in the essay concludes:

So the great man, that is, the man most imbued with the spirit of the time, is the impressionable man, – of a fibre irritable and delicate, like iodine to light. He feels the infinitesimal attractions. His mind is righter than others, because he yields to a current so feeble as can be felt only by a needle delicately poised. (CW 6:24)

Again Emerson takes part of a journal entry, this one from the spring of 1850, to mold into essay sentences:

The great man is the impressionable man, most irritable, most delicate, like iodine to light, so he feels the infinitesimal attractions. He obeys the main current, that is all his secret, the main current is so feeble a force as

can be felt only by bodies delicately poised. He can orient himself. In the woods, I have one guide, namely, to follow the light, – to go where the woods are thinnest; then at last I am sure to come out. So he cannot be betrayed or misguided, for he knows where the North is, knows painfully when he is going in the wrong direction. (JMN 11:240)

Emerson compresses the journal's description of the "great man" by focusing on the fact that "his mind is righter." The little exemplum that ends the journal passage is interesting, but the rejected sentences would only take the reader away from the main point of the essay's paragraph: the mind is the center of human power in a contest between mind and matter. What one sees in the Parallel Passages is that Emerson revised carefully. He used journal phrases when they fit, edited them when they did not, and carefully resisted the temptation to over-use the journal passages.

This paragraph from "Fate" is a fair example of how Emerson used his journal, and a quick tally of the evidence in the "Parallel Passages" apparatus shows the reader that the essay contains 130 such borrowings from the journal and the *Topical Notebooks*. But the composition process of selecting and revising is but part of the story, and perhaps not the most important, for the context of the journal entries reveal a larger, more challenging understanding of Emerson's mind at work. Of the 130 previously written passages, 62, almost half, come from Emerson's journals *RS*, *TU*, *AZ*, *BO*, and *CO*, written between October 1848 and November 1851 (now published in *JMN* 11), a period unusually turbulent for Emerson. When one examines closely the surrounding journal matter for the entries used in paragraph 59 of "Fate," one sees that much was on Emerson's mind when he turned to his journal. First, Daniel Webster, long a living hero to Emerson, had spoken in the Senate in support of the Compromise of 1850, which reaffirmed the constitutional mandate to return fugitive slaves to their masters. Emerson was outraged by what he thought a betrayal of deep principal. Next, in

July, Margaret Fuller and her family drowned off Fire Island on their return to the United States. Both events were deeply troubling to Emerson, and each found its way into his journal. Then, in April 1851, Thomas Sims, an escaped slave, was arrested in Boston and returned to his owner. That spring, Emerson erupted furiously, first in his journal, then in the first of his "Fugitive Slave" speeches. In his journal he began simply: "Bad times." But he went on and on, page after page, declaring that "All I have, and all I can do shall be given & done in opposition to the execution of the law." Over and over, Webster is his foul example:

The word *liberty* in the mouth of Mr Webster sounds
like the word *love* in the mouth of a courtesan. (JMN
11:343, 344, 346)

Taking them in order, the passages in "Fate" that we have looked at reveal these contexts: the first, from November 1851 is embedded in a running string of acerbic comments on Webster,¹⁰ one entry immediately describes "this stupid iron Whiggery," which can only refer to Webster; two pages later Emerson specifically says of Webster that "morals he has none, but a hole in his head" (JMN 11:404, 405). When, still in November, Emerson again wrote the image of the two boys wrestling, the passage comes five pages after a recorded memory of Margaret Fuller.¹¹ Two pages later he notes "The malignity of parties" represented by "these rich Whigs & these organized vulgarities called the Democracy" (JMN 11:451). The second passage, from late summer 1851 is followed a few pages later by another reference to Fuller. The two journal entries from the winter of 1850 have no specific references to Webster, but the last one dates from the time of Webster's speech.

It is clear that in early 1860, when Emerson was writing "Fate" for the book, he revisited an earlier time, the period from mid-1850 to late 1851, when both Daniel Webster and Margaret Fuller were unacknowledged examples of the working of fate in daily life. In 1860 they became the ghostly presences of "Fate," examples, real if unnamed, of painful truths that fate had inflicted on Emerson. In part the whole of

“Fate” is a defense against the anger and grief he had lived through, an example of how deeply the mind could respond to blows and turn itself to the language of affirmation. The pain Webster and Fuller inflicted helped him build his “altars to the beautiful Necessity” that is fate (CW 6:26). The Parallel Passages information makes it possible to come to these conclusions, and they invite further probing. This is not the only way to understand Emerson, but it is one way that has distinct advantages. As is true for all of the editorial apparatus throughout the *Collected Works*, the editors have opened the way. What remains is to take advantage of the many opportunities.



The *Collected Works* has been scantily reviewed, yet another example of the sad state of book reviewing in the scholarly community. Even the reliable *American Literary Scholarship* missed noting *Essays: Second Series. Nature, Addresses and Lectures* was reviewed briefly by Gay Wilson Allen in *American Literature*, where he mentioned the history of the Cabot and Emerson family activities and briefly described the contents of the volume, concluding that it served both the mythical “general reader” as well as “the most serious Emerson scholar” (Allen 119). John Broderick in *American Literary Scholarship* compared the volume to the then-recently published Princeton edition of *Walden*, though he also noted the textual problems raised by the revised 1849 edition. He concluded by claiming that the Harvard volume “restores the ‘radical’ or ‘infidel’ Emerson of the 1830s,” though that ignores the number of emendations accepted from the 1849 edition (Broderick 4). E.J. Rose, in *Dalhousie Review*, takes exception to the decision to hew to the 1836 edition, citing the loss of his aphorisms as an example of what goes wrong (Rose 699, 701). The longest, most penetrating (and pugnaciously entertaining) review came from Carl Bode in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, where, in a review encompassing the ninth volume of the *JMN* and the third volume of *Early Lectures*, he generally scoffs at textual editing, especially that based on the Gregg principles. Of *Nature, Addresses and Lectures* he is acidly “convinced that the editorial method the editors have worked out

is a persistent attempt to make accurate machinery out of inaccurate humanity. What a waste of human resources!" (Bode 312). Bode is critical of what he sees as the attempt to freeze Emerson at his first printing. Admittedly, the confused textual principles of that volume could lead him astray. He sees the editors' attempt to select some later revisions but not others as an attempt to "improve" Emerson, an idea he likens to Frank Sanborn's editing of Thoreau.

The second volume in the series drew no serious reviews. There were the usual, perfunctory notices in *AB Bookman* and *Choice*, as well as ones in the *Christian Century* and *American Literature* and one by Richard Francis in *Journal of American Studies*. Volume three, however, fared better. Wendell Glick summarized the editing at some length in *American Literary Scholarship* and Philip Gura provided a substantial review in *Resources for American Literary Study*. Gura sets *Essays: Second Series* in its biographical context and discusses briefly their contemporary reception. He briefly describes the edited volume and praises both the Historical and the Textual Introductions. It is, Gura says, "vintage Emerson" (Gura 220).

The best review of *Essays: Second Series* is also one of the best review of any of the ten volumes, the one by David Van Leer in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. It is the sort of review any editor would want, for it not only looks in depth at the actual editing, but it raises philosophical questions about editing and focuses the reader on the need to be aware of what the edited text actually is. "To read this volume without attention to the apparatus," says Van Leer, "may be more dangerous than to accept an earlier, less scrupulously edited text; and only the indolent will treat the Harvard Emerson as the final (or even an easy) solution to the textual problems of the works" (Van Leer 523). Van Leer praises the volume for its apparatus, one that is "convenient and necessary," a "welcome aid to scholars" (522). He looks deeply into the volume to note some minor variants the editors drop, and he examines questions about punctuation and its emendations. One seldom finds such detailed reviewing, and the point is not to fault the editors but

to remind the reader that “this is a scholarly edition and cannot be read innocently” (523). Van Leer takes pains to point out that an edited text is just that: edited, one that cannot be the author’s ideal text. The review combines the *Works* volume with that of the first of the Library of America collection of essays and speeches. Van Leer explores the differences between the two and says that both “fulfill superbly their separate functions” (524).

With some notable exceptions, the reviews of the following volumes of the *Collected Works* thin out dramatically. *Representative Men* got only a descriptive paragraph in *American Literary Scholarship*, and brief notices in *American Literature* and *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, none of which really engaged the volume. Volume 5, *English Traits* fared better. William Vance in *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* analyzed Emerson’s ideas about conversation and contradictions. He takes special note of Robert Burkholder’s notes and says that the volume “demonstrates the survival of humane and disinterested scholarship in an age of self-displaying and tendentious criticism” (Vance 490). Robert D. Habich in *ANQ* also praises Burkholder’s work on the notes, which he calls “miniature essays that lend richness to the text” (Habich *ANQ* 49). Habich also notes at length the nature of the volume, and describes not only the copy-text but the editorial apparatus. It is another review that pays unusually full and welcome attention to the editing.

The next two volumes, *The Conduct of Life* (Volume 6) and *Society and Solitude* (Volume 7) got necessarily brief reviews from David Robinson in *American Literary Scholarship* and more extensive ones in *Emerson Society Papers*. Robinson says of *The Conduct of Life* that it will move forward a reconsideration of Emerson’s later work. He notes Barbara Packer’s positioning of the book in the political life of the 1850s. Jennifer Gurley in *Emerson Society Papers* devotes herself to the editing. She describes the editing principles and says that they enable “us to appreciate this Emerson forever revising his writing and his views” (Gurley 14). Robinson sees *Society and Solitude* also

furthering an interest in Emerson's later work, and he singles out Ronald Bosco's Introduction for praise, while Robert Habich in *Emerson Society Papers* notes the scrupulously edited text established by Douglas Emory Wilson.

Volume 8, *Letters and Social Aims*, was well-reviewed, first by William Rossi in *American Literary Scholarship*, where he summarizes the complicated origins of the book, and then by Helen Deese in *Emerson Society Papers*, by Richard Deming in *Documentary Editing*, and by Laura Dassow Walls in the on-line review site "Review 19." Deese points out the value of Bosco's biographical introduction, which she calls "informative and compelling" (Deese *Emerson Society Papers* 12). Deming calls the volume "the most important" of the edition to date, for it contains "some of the finest, most necessary thinking" of Emerson's career (Deming 120). He also vigorously champions Emerson's "insights into how human beings discover that Nature and human nature are intertwined" (123). Walls, too, points out the accomplishment of Bosco's biographical analysis as well as Joel Myerson's textual work as well as the substance of the Emerson essays themselves. It is, says Walls, "really two books in one – or perhaps even three." She notes for consideration Emerson's "Inspiration," "Social Aims," "Immortality," and most notably "Poetry and Imagination," which she calls the "greatest" of the essays in the book.¹²

Finally, *Poems: A Variorum Edition* was described by R.T. Prus in *Choice*, by Sandra Morris in *Emerson Society Papers*, by Helen Deese in *Documentary Editing*, and by William Rossi in *American Literary Scholarship*, where he defends it as a truly definitive scholarly edition and praises the impeccable scholarship upon which it is built. Morris praises the volume, calling it "the single most valuable contemporary scholarship on Emerson's poetry" (Morris 6). Deese looks at length at the editing in which she reviews the standards and shows how the editors faced difficult choices but made sound choices. Finally, Branka Arsić in the *New England Quarterly* says the volume is a "landmark study" and praises at length Albert J. von Frank's analysis of the "philosophical and

poetic ideas that helped shape Emerson's poetry" (Arsić 550). She describes the copy-text principles at length and shows how a reading of the variants reveals the way in which the poems grew more formal over time. The combined work of von Frank and Wortham is, Arsić says, an "astonishing editorial enterprise" (552). In short, the *Collected Works* have been almost universally praised for its scholarly integrity. After the first, troubled volume, reviewers find few faults and much to praise. Only a handful of reviewers look closely at the editing, and those that do, judge it to be superior.

There is but one "competitor" to the Harvard *Collected Works*: the volumes published by the Library of America. The *Essays & Lectures* volume prints the first six volumes of Emerson's works plus an early sermon and 36 pieces from the *Dial*. The texts are from "the first printings in book form" (Emerson *Essays & Lectures* 1307), save for *Nature; Addresses, and Lectures*, which is printed from the revised 1849 edition, and *Essays: First Series*, which is printed from the revised 1847 edition. Emerson's sermon "The Lord's Supper" is printed from its first appearance in Octavius Frothingham's *Transcendentalism in New England*, and the *Dial* pieces from their appearance there. Joel Porte, the editor, preserves the original spellings and punctuation, but he does not emend the texts save to correct "obvious" typographical errors, which he lists. Following the Library of America format, there is a useful "Chronology" of Emerson's life, but the notes are sparse and thus quite inadequate.

Collected Poems and Translations prints 233 poems published by Emerson and 450 poems, fragments, and translations that were unpublished. The editors use the 1847 *Poems* and the 1867 *May-Day and Other Pieces* as their copy-texts, supplemented by the original sources for several other poems. For the unpublished poetry and translations they present the texts from *The Poetry Notebooks*, the *Topical Notebooks* and the *JMN*. The volume also includes Emerson's translation of Dante's *Vita Nuova* from an edition done by J. Chesley Mathews. It is a work that is little noticed. The Library of America

editors create clear texts from the genetic texts in the originals. Again, the notes are minimal.

The Library of America volumes are good ones for their intended audience, and one is glad to have them, but the *Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* should be the standard for writing about Emerson in scholarly works. There are two obvious reasons: first, they provide the scholar with a wealth of information, some of it biographical, some of it historical, some of it compositional. If we attend closely to these volumes, we come to understand more clearly what was happening in Emerson's life, how he was responding, and the circumstances moving him toward publication of the works. The explanatory notes flesh out Emerson's endless quotations and allusions; they bring the historical setting into focus and return us to the specificity of Emerson's thinking. The parallel passages allow us to return to Emerson's journals. This is the scholarly background necessary for a full reading of the individual works. It seems obvious that if one is genuinely committed to understanding the essays one will want to absorb this material that is directly related to the texts. Second, it is unavoidable that these volumes should be the source of quotations, for the texts have been subjected to exacting standards of accuracy and completeness. The editors have weeded out as many printing errors as possible, and, in the case of the later volumes they have undone the work of other editorial hands. One should not, however, read these volumes "innocently," as David Van Leer has cogently warned (Van Leer 523). What one has is an edited text, aimed at creating as far as is possible the final version of the work that Emerson intended. One might prefer a text that is the first intention, but the transparency of the editorial decisions in the *Collected Works* makes it possible to go back to the first printing. One can read either way: first or final. The Library of America volumes don't allow for that flexibility.

It goes without saying that the only scholarly choice is the *Collected Works* – except that it does need to be said, for too often serious scholars fail to use it. A random sampling of sixteen books devoted to Emerson

published from 2000 to 2013 shows that four of them cite some other edition, most commonly the Library of America (though one used the 1906 Riverside edition). I think 75% is not a respectable figure. Things get worse, however, when we look at books devoted to thematic discussions where Emerson has only a chapter (or less). Eight such books published since 2000 show only three who use the Harvard edition. Three use the Library of America, one uses that volume plus the Penguin paperback, and one uses the Modern Library Emerson. Things are no better with journal publication. Another random examination of 13 essays published in refereed journals between 2007 and 2012 shows seven that cite the *Collected Works*, three that cite the Library of America, and three that cite other editions.¹³ From this I conclude that neither the readers for the journals nor the editors bothered to ask for the best possible documentation. Clearly, those of us working in the nineteenth century need to tighten our standards. I suspect that many a graduate student receives little or no direction about choosing texts from which to work. The easy access to the Library of America volumes, which are themselves quite good and more than ordinarily well done, does not relieve us from the necessity to quote from the most scrupulous source – and that source is now the *Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*.

The problem does not resolve itself quite so easily, however, for there is another somber fact: embarrassingly few research libraries have complete (or even near-complete) sets of the *Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. My on-line search of 60 research libraries shows that only 17 have a complete 10-volume set of the *Collected Works*. Being generous, one might think that it is too soon for everyone to order and catalogue the recently-published Volume 10, we can add another 11 libraries that have the first nine volumes. That, however, does not get the total to 50%. I have earlier made it clear that I think *Poems: A Variorum Edition* (Volume 9) and Ronald Bosco's biographical monograph that is the Historical Introduction to *Letters and Social Aims* (Volume 8), are especially important additions to Emerson scholarship, so it is distressing

to find that 22 of the libraries lack Volume 8, and 29 lack Volume 9. There are good reasons why we find so few citations to the *Collected Works*: the volumes are so expensive as to be beyond the salaries of many professors (the current list price from Harvard University Press is \$1,081). Thus, many have to depend on library holdings. However, if one's library does not have the volumes, how are we to do our work? Interlibrary loan is slow and cumbersome. If we expect to hold ourselves to the best scholarly standards, the faculty need to be sure that our libraries order the books, a tough enough prospect in these days of economic distress.¹⁴



After a half century of first-class editing, where do we find ourselves with Emerson? Does it all matter? Well, of course it does. No other writer in the first half of the nineteenth century had the effect on American literature and thought as Emerson. His writing leads directly to Whitman's poetry and thence to the rest of the free-verse tradition. He articulated and performed a robust theory of symbolism. He is an exemplar of American individualism, at once a stinging critic and a champion of the American culture out of which he sprang. He vigorously defended religious insights while scathingly rejecting the church and all its traditions. He wrote aphorisms that remain fresh and compelling to this day. He urged a new, independent American literature that dared to be bold. Think for a moment on an Emerson essay. It is not a narrative in the strict sense, for it is probably a series of declarative statements: "Life is a search after Power"; "There is one mind common to all men"; "We have a great deal more kindness than is ever spoken." The voice we hear speaks with quiet authority. He is assured, we immediately see, that he is "right." The essay continues, with perhaps rhetorical questions, with perhaps objections from an antagonist voice, with perhaps a quotation, or two, or three. Perhaps we find a personal anecdote, perhaps a small fable or exemplum designed to drive home a point. We do not necessarily find an observable structure moving inexorably to a conclusion, for the voice is likely to bend back to an earlier point and restate it or to provide fresh

examples. He sometimes says “I,” but more often is likely to say “we,” “our,” “us,” thus drawing the reader into the claims. What, we ask, is he assuming here? That we do not “see” what he sees, or “believe” what he believes? Have we forgotten something we ought to remember? The speaker tries always to bring a fresh definition of something familiar or to show us something we have not yet understood. He is always a step ahead of us. He knows; we learn.

The key assumption he makes is that our lives can change. For Emerson we are not of necessity locked into the understanding or opinion or “truth” of the moment; the lives we have brought to the essay might be made better. Possibility exists, and the speaker intends to exploit that possibility, though it is not certain how he intends to accomplish that change. He appears not to rely on logic, on syllogisms. He is not trying to drive us into a corner by reasoning us out of our old ideas. He seems more to be enticing us to think along with him about this or that abstraction – Love, History, Power, Art, there are many – until it is no longer abstract. Most obviously he is “essaying” – that is, attempting something.

We ought to attend to the important fact that he is writing. Even when he was lecturing he was reading his writing aloud – it was not an extemporaneous event. Emerson’s faith in the written word emerged early in his life. When he was 23, he wrote his brother Charles that in writing, one gets “the pure intellect that speaks,” that from the writer you “get the measure of his soul.” Emerson then brashly tells Charles, “write, that I may *know* thee” and thus reveal “the secret history of that sanctuary you call *yourself* (Emerson, *Letters* 1:191). In many ways Emerson was quite a private man who shunned controversy (though he often prompted it) and who was distinctly uneasy with Margaret Fuller’s emotional energy. But: he was willing to open the “sanctuary” of his “self” by writing. Words that were crafted, chosen, arranged, judged, and finally accepted were his means of revelation and stimulation. What he needed above all was readers, individuals who would attend carefully to his language and who would be moved and changed by it. Language was

power, but the language of the written word was most powerful of all.

Despite the existence of artifacts and monuments, the past exists mostly as writing. What we know most about "then" is what we read about it. Emerson had a complicated relationship with the past, understanding as he did that it often exerts a ruinous tyranny over us. He was more interested in the fact that the past contains a wealth of liberating ideas and experiences. He knew that when we hew too closely to the written word (as in a literal interpretation of scripture) we lose our lives. He much preferred a use of the words of the past to enliven our minds. Thus, quotation could be a tool of liberation to counter those who used words to imprison. In such essays as those of *Representative Men* he was "essaying" his own being – and thus tempting us to follow his example – by using the past lives of those men.

The word most often associated with Emerson – to my mind, almost erroneously – is "nature," for not only is it the title of his most famous essay, it is the cliché that swaddles his fellow Transcendentalists, thanks mostly to Thoreau, for whom "nature" was indeed central. Emerson is, of course, devoted to "nature," as he often says, but it is not, finally, the individual's relationship to the material world that most concerns him; it is some form of "power," a power emanating from the individual "self" (another cliché, but one that cannot be avoided) and located most precisely in the human mind or intellect (he seems to use the terms interchangeably). Emerson's claim is that the individual can grow into an increased power insofar as one trusts oneself. This self-reliance is his primary psychological necessity, and one that is subject to the human will that emanates from the intellect. As we think, so we are.

Underneath this human capacity lies another fact, one even more fundamental, the primary perception that drives all of Emerson's writings – the existence of a "universal mind," or to use another of his words, an "over-soul." This universal reality is beneficent, all-encompassing, and divine. Other thinkers would call it "God," but not Emerson, for he was too intent on reforming our language to free it of the associations so long built up around the word "God." To put it

slightly differently, there is a divine reality from which our individuality appears to have been separated, while in reality there is no absolute separation. “We” and “it” are one. Upon this rock Emerson builds a lifetime of lecturing and writing. Rather surprisingly, he does not often appeal overtly to the authority of the “universal mind” for his claims; he just makes the claims. However, taken as a whole, his writing flows from this ecstatic, “mystical” if you will, perception. Here is the final “power” from which we draw ours; here is the final “mind” of which ours is a vital part; here is the ultimate joy in a world dominated by pain and disappointment. “Up again, old heart! – it seems to say, – there is victory yet for all justice” (CW 3:49). Emerson is famous for his optimism, and rightly so: he is unabashedly affirmative. He assumes a teleology that ends in success; he has no truck with skepticism or nihilism. He would not understand Ishmael, though I’ll bet he would understand Ahab!

Let us, however, object. What if he is wrong and there is no “universal mind,” no ultimate benevolence in the universe? What if time is absolute and death a true end? Does that make Emerson unreadable to us who live in an age dominated by real possibilities of annihilation and by the memory of mass murder? Not at all. If this life is all there is, then all the more reason why we should make better use of it. If pain and disappointment come all too freely to each of us, then let us find those places where we can genuinely rejoice. Our culture rather curiously and consistently divides activity into “academic” or “intellectual,” and “real world,” as if there was nothing “real” about reading, writing, and thinking. We easily and wrongly think that to read, say, an Emerson, is to retreat from real life until such time as we must emerge and pay the bills and wash our faces. But reading is living: it is intense activity that changes us both within and without. From the printed page we can be moved to throw a bomb or clasp a foreign hand. Speaking becomes writing (as it habitually did for Emerson); writing becomes conviction; conviction becomes action. Jesus spoke, but wrote not a word; Paul, however, wrote much, and so we have a Christian scripture and from it a

theology. The writing of gospels, of revelations, causes history to move in one direction or another.

But why should an Emerson bereft of his "universal mind" command our attention? Because his language has power. He knew and practiced the art of creating figures of speech that were at once the act of and testimony to the power of creativity. To make language such as he did is to create in the real world. Like a poet, Emerson in his prose makes language command our attention and cause us to re-imagine what we might be. He firmly believed that our imagining had direct results for our lives. Thus, he aimed to make his prose have the "tart, cathartic" quality he knew was needed. He called himself an experimenter, and we ought to take him seriously. Emerson modeled a venturesome mind that thought what a different life would be like. He creates a language commensurate with that vision. He shows us a creative consciousness in action. Despite the fact that a lecture turned into an essay became frozen into a "final" form, that essay is not the last word. There is always the possibility of one to follow and one to follow that. His rebukes of our easy slide into materialism are fresh to us, who slide daily; his criticisms of traditional religion ring true at a time when the perils of fundamentalism among all the world's major religions rise to threaten us. When we fall into the habit of thinking that organizations will save us, it is healthy to be reminded that one must first and last trust oneself. The herd mentality would be less powerful if fewer listened to the herd. Emerson's good friend, occasional handyman and townsman, Henry Thoreau, asked the fundamental question in *Walden*: "Why do you stay here and live this mean moiling life, when a glorious existence is possible for you?" (Thoreau 222). Emerson's essays are built on exactly that question: "why?" He begins by assuming that a question asked can be a question answered, and that questioning itself unites the writer with the reader. Like Thoreau, Emerson envisions alternatives to the "mean moiling life," but those alternatives come into existence only through an exercise of the human mind.

The individual has enough powers to make an affirmative response to Emerson and Thoreau: we too can experiment; we too can learn new ideas; we can by effort assuage the power of the past. There may be no nirvana awaiting us, but there is no excuse for making our present life more difficult because we scare ourselves into submission. Emerson loved to quote, so I will quote William James, the American thinker who was most naturally Emerson's successor:

Our acts, our turning-places, where we seem to ourselves to make ourselves and grow, are the parts of the world to which we are closest, the parts of which our knowledge is the most intimate and complete. Why should we not take them at their face-value? Why may they not be the actual turning-places and growing-places which they seem to be, of the world – why not the workshop of being, where we catch fact in the making so, that nowhere may the world grow in any other kind of way than this? (James 138)

The *Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* is the record of a “workshop of being.”

One must be deeply grateful for a half-century of excellent scholarship that brings us the ten volumes of *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. We now have the works edited into reliable form; we have the historical context laid out for us, and we have the editorial apparatuses to enable us to look as deeply as we wish in several directions. Emerson's developing style, his own judgment about his work in large and small detail, his relationships with editors and publishers – all of this is open for our critical analyses. For no other literary figure do we have the resources that we have for Emerson. With the completion of *The Collected Works*, we now have 50 volumes of his public and private writings.¹⁵ Not only that, but the editing of those 50 volumes is of the highest quality. From Ralph Rusk in 1939 onward, Emerson has been well served by his editors. We must single out the work of *The Collected Works*' last Editor-in-Chief, Ronald A. Bosco, for since assuming the position in 2003, he has overseen the publication of

the final four volumes of the edition (and is the volume editor for three of them). We owe Bosco and Joel Myerson (not forgetting Albert J. von Frank and Thomas Wortham's work on the poems) a deep debt of gratitude for bringing a landmark edition to a superb close.

Claremont Graduate University

Notes

¹ See G. Thomas Tanselle, "Gregg's Theory of Copy-Text and the Editing of American Literature" and "The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention."

² See "Statement of Editorial Principles," CW 2:xxxiv-xxxvii. The editorial principles for CW 1 were different, as we shall note. The principles announced in *Essays: First Series* were the ones guiding the remaining volumes of the edition.

³ "Emerson is too grand for me – He belongs to the nobility & wears their cloak & manners – is attracted to Plato not to Socrates" (Thoreau, *Journal Volume 4: 1851-1852*, 309). The entry is for 31 January 1852.

⁴ Simmons continues: "Often introductions and conclusions were lacking; or one bundle might contain two or more introductions used at different times. The renumberings of the manuscript sheets (some leaves contain as many as six different numbers in ink, pencil, and crayon) helped only slightly in ascertaining the original order" (Simmons 343). Readers should consult her essay to supplement the work of Myerson and Bosco.

⁵ The closest we can come to understanding Emerson on this topic is to read *The Later Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Note specially the 1848-1849 series, "Mind and Manners of the Nineteenth Century" (1:129-89) and the 1858 series, "Natural Method of Mental Philosophy" (2:43-129). See also Bosco, "'His Lectures Were Poetry, His Teaching the Music of the Spheres.'"

⁶ When Mark Twain used the group as a vehicle for his satire in his "Whittier Birthday Speech" in 1877, Emerson was a prominent member of the cast.

⁷ See also Habich, *Building Their Own Waldos* for an extended discussion of the relationship between Cabot and Edward Emerson.

⁸ These are the rejected publications: from *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*: “Demonology,” “Aristocracy,” “Perpetual Forces,” “Education,” “The Superlative,” “The Sovereignty of Ethics,” “The Preacher,” “The Man of Letters,” “The Scholar,” “Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England,” “Mary Moody Emerson,” “Carlyle.” From the expanded *Miscellanies* the editors omit: “The Lord’s Supper,” “Letter to President Van Buren,” “The Fugitive Slave Law – Address at Concord,” “The Fugitive Slave Law – Lecture at New York,” “Theodore Parker,” “Abraham Lincoln,” “Harvard Commemoration Speech,” “Address to Kossuth,” “Woman,” “Consecration of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery,” “Robert Burns,” “Shakspeare,” “Humboldt,” “Walter Scott,” “Remarks at Organization of Free Religious Association,” “Speech at Second Annual Meeting of Free Religious Association,” and “The Fortune of the Republic.” From *Natural History of the Intellect* they omit: “Powers and Laws of Thought,” “Instinct and Inspiration,” “Memory,” “The Celebration of Intellect,” “Country Life,” “Concord Walks,” “Boston,” and “Art and Criticism.”

⁹ The image of the wrestling boys stayed in Emerson’s mind, for he rewrote it a few months later, in November, where it introduces a passage on the “victorious intellect” that Emerson used in “Culture,” another essay in *The Conduct of Life*. The later image of the boys is, however, explicitly political: “Two boys pushing each other on the curb stone, two races contending like Celt & Saxon, two ideas like Feudalism & Democracy, Everything is mover or moved, and each in turn is moved ...” (JMN 11:450).

¹⁰ And not only on Webster but on Henry Thoreau: “H.T. will not stick he is not practically renovator. He is a boy, & will be an old boy.... I fancy it an inexcusable fault in him that he is insignificant here in the town” (JMN 11:404). Emerson shows an all-encompassing anger in this stretch of his journal. Webster’s apostasy seems to have tainted his emotions.

¹¹ He had, in fact, been writing his portion of the *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* the previous summer. She was much on his mind.

¹² Begun in 2009 this on-line review site should become well known, for it serves a need created by the paucity of reviews of scholarly books. One hopes for more genuinely scholarly on-line sources.

¹³ One cites the Riverside edition, one the Modern Library, and one, the worst of all, cites not only the Modern Library, but an anthology of Transcendentalist writings, and quotations from other critics who quote Emerson. Most depressingly, this essay appeared in the *New England Quarterly*, a top journal in the field.

¹⁴ Your reviewer admits with embarrassment that his own university's library has an incomplete set, a situation soon to be remedied.

¹⁵ In addition to the volumes named in the bibliography following, one needs to add *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Albert J. von Frank *et al.*, 4 Volumes (U of Missouri P, 1989-1991).

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