In 1849, when Emerson was preparing *Representative Men* for the press, he listed in his journal TU the six figures he had chosen to represent the composite great man; beside each he wrote the name of a friend and contemporary (including himself):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bigendians</th>
<th>Littleendians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plato</td>
<td>Alcott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedenborg</td>
<td>Very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakspeare</td>
<td>Newcomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montaigne</td>
<td>Channing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goethe</td>
<td>RWE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleon</td>
<td>Thoreau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The meaning of this pairing is not completely clear. W. H. Gilman, who edited this volume of the *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, wondered "whether Emerson intended to set up parallels" between the two lists and concluded that there exist "demonstrable relationships between all pairs except Napoleon and Thoreau" (JMN 11:173). More recently, in two papers that explore Emerson's ideas about history, biography, and material culture, Ron Bosco has drawn chuckles from the audience with his reference to the Napoleon-Thoreau connection, indicating that they too wondered at this pairing.¹

The source for Emerson's terminology is not very helpful here. "Big-Endians" derives from Swift's well-known lampooning of religious controversy in *Gulliver's Travels*. He exposes the absurdity of fighting over religious matters by reducing the conflict to a question about which end of the egg one should break before eating it. The Lilliputian Emperor's edict that all must "break the smaller End of their Eggs" is resisted by the people who prefer the "primitive" way of breaking eggs, at the larger end. These reactionaries and resisters of tyranny are called "Big-Endians." ² In 1814 Sir Walter Scott interpreted the allegory to refer to Papists or Jacobites (the "Big-Endians" who flee to the nearby island of Blefuscu, or France) and Protestants (the "Small-Endians," responsible for the beheading of Charles I and the removal of Roman Catholic James II from the throne).³

Swift did not use the corresponding term "little-endians," but Nathaniel Ames of Dedham, Massachusetts, did when he borrowed the terminology to describe the controversy that split Dedham's First Parish in 1818 and resulted in the 1820 Massachusetts Supreme Court's decision that ended the old New England Congregational system and marked the triumph of the liberals.⁴ In Ames's brief diary comments, the "Big-Endians" are the "parish" or congregation, the majority of the Dedham religious society, basically anti-Federalist in politics, who in 1818 chose a young, liberal, recent Harvard product as their minister in defiance of the established, Federalist, and more orthodox members of the "Church"—the smaller body of "saints" who had heretofore controlled such matters as the election of ministers—Ames's "Little Endians." Swiftian language adds to Ames's exposure of the silliness of the controversy, seen in competing meeting houses, competing ministerial salaries, and needless expenses generated by pettifogging lawyers.⁵ Thus Ames reverses, to some extent, Swift's terms: his "Big-Endians" are progressive rather than reactionary, while his "Little Endians" cling to an earlier belief; and it is the "Little Endians" who flee (to a new meeting house). However, his "Big-Endians" still represent the "people" in danger of being tyrannized by a powerful elite.

Because Emerson's use of the terms seems neither satirical nor political, his revision of this list in an unpublished late journal, titled "Auto," may be more helpful than etymology here. Many years later, Emerson returned to the 1849 Journal TU, noting on its flyleaf, "Examined March 1877" (JMN 11:88). Probably at this time he made the following entry:

**Friends.** I find in TU 259 this comic paralogism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Big ends</th>
<th>Good ends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plato</td>
<td>A. Bronson Alcott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedenborg</td>
<td>Jones Very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakspeare</td>
<td>C. K. Newcomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montaigne</td>
<td>W. E. Channing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goethe</td>
<td>Thomas Carlyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleon</td>
<td>H. D. Thoreau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J. Elliot Cabot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S. G. Ward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued on page 2)
Thoreau as Napoleon

(Continued from page 1)

Some significant changes crept up the supposed transcription: the 1849 "Little Endians" became "Good in 1877, possibly reflecting an increased appreciation of society. Even more interesting,

Carlyle and Thoreau have unchained Emerson's own place of "the Writer," and Cabot and Ward have moved into the slot vacated by Thoreau. Emerson's belated appreciation of Thoreau's literary abilities helps explain the first shift. The second change in the line naming who Emerson assigned Thoreau the Napoleon slot in the first place.

The link between Napoleon, Thoreau, Cabot, and Ward becomes more clear if we consider the Napoleonian qualities in the abstract or as universals, as Emerson did, rather than in their particular manifestation in a great military mind. The essay "Napoleon; or the Man of the World" in Representative Men (1850) indicates that though he recognized the historical Na

poleon as neither hero nor saint, because he lacked "generous

mired other qualities in this man. To Emerson, Napoleon was

becomes more clear if we consider the Napoleonic qualities in

of Saml. Cabot. Do you know him? He seems to be a master in

metaphysics prepared Emerson for meeting these two young

years after the Museum opened in 1876.

Both families occupied elegant Boston homes and vacationed at

in a Boston brokerage house before moving to the Berkshires

years, despite his reluctance to follow the family business,

"trade." According to Edward Emerson, one of Ward's last

in this position, at which he was superbly skilled, for twenty

years. (Continued on page 4)
Emerson frequently returned to the Neoplatonic ideal; it was one version of the New American hero, the man who would combine the old world's appreciation for culture with the new world's reverence for character—and an Emersonian update of what Howe called "Unitarian Whiggery." (208). "Artsocracy," the last essay that Cabot compiled for Emerson, defined gentlemen or aristocrats as "model men,—true instead of spurious pictures of excellence, and, if possible, living standards" (W 10:31). In Ward and Cabot, Emerson had found that ideal.

What was Emerson trying to say by lining up his friends against his "great men"? In his late journal, Emerson labeled his list a "comic paralogism." Perhaps he recognized the false opposition set up by the labels "Big" and "little." In Swift's text, as a "scholar" looking at my experiences in the classroom, I have found, as Emerson did, that "the feelings of the child" may be "richer than all foreign parts" (1971, 67) and so I am writing this to share my appreciation for the pedagogical wisdom from which I have found in Emerson's writing. In "The American Scholar" (1971, 62), Emerson says that the scholar is "the world's eye. He is the world's heart." These words have enticed me into reflections on what is called in the language of "educational research" the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology. In the language of the children in the classroom, my reflections have been a search into how the "heart" tells me.

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A child in a kindergarten classroom told me one day that "My heart tells me I feel like I know it. It's there somewhere in my head." This child also told me another day that "My heart is cracking!" At another point, a child emphatically told me that "We can hear you with our hearts too!" A child without language, a "severely autistic" child who was "not supposed to be able to initiate or engage in communication" kissed me one day as I acted on a decision to pick him up from his rest rather than make him walk to the bathroom. Each time, I stopped in the "busyness" of my actions, halted, captivated in surprise and admiration as I acted on a decision to pick him up from his rest rather than make him walk to the bathroom. Each time, I stopped in the "busyness" of my actions, halted, captivated in surprise and admiration. It is among children that I have been "caught by surprise" and "thrown" into puzzlement. In the ordinary acts of organizing for a day, with simply standing watching and listening, I have found myself halted, breathless, caught in a moment without sense of time passing. In this "timeless moment" I grope for words to express what I have seen and heard. Nothing more than "What is this?" emerges as I begin to breathe again. A sensation of awe, wonder and surprise remains. A confusion of breathless tension and whirling thoughts signals these encounters with the unfamiliar, the wonder-full... Our "vision and body are tangled up in one another" (152). He says that "the body's consciousness, but which operates through the living messages to the self are our experience of inhabiting the world by our body, of inhabiting the truth by our whole selves" (28).

Furthermore, when we read Nietzsche with an intelligence tutored by a later phenomenology, we may find that he comes within a breath of recognizing something like a corporeal consciousness... of the body which is anterior to acts of judgement and makes them possible: Before judgement occurs, [he writes] there is a cognitive activity that does not enter consciousness, but which operates through the living body. (35)

"Man is related to all nature" (69). He says that "the body's consciousness, but which operates through the living messages to the self are our experience of inhabiting the world by our body, of inhabiting the truth by our whole selves" (28). Our "vision and body are tangled up in one another" (152). He also tells us that with an acceptance of this tangled condition, "a third dimension seems to open up, wherein their discordance is effaced" (29). Merleau-Ponty's translator describes the opening of vision to this third dimension as the following of a system of "hypotheses which we take as hypotheses" (35). To share reflections on these experiences one must have a community. For me, Emerson's writings form part of my community. In education, we need to know that thoughts of "postmodern" philosophers and "modern" educators are not banished to "the other wagon and fads, but are part of a long and shared tradition. Sharing our understandings of traditions across countries and disciplines helps us to shift boundaries and clear spaces for exploration.

(Continued on page 8)

Mary Kepecy Cayton’s Emerson’s Emergence proceeds from the questions, “How much do intellectuals have the power to act as transformative agents within society, and how much are they inevitably shaped by the circumstances of the age?” (x-xi). Convinced that the individual and the political, social, and religious voices of a particular period inform and shape each other, Cayton pulls together extensive cultural evidence of nineteenth-century Boston and Emerson’s private and public texts to demonstrate the dialectic between Emerson and his time. Cayton finds an Emerson both increasingly dissatisfied with the hegemonic social organism of the Republic and intent on reforming society through a natural organism of morality. Her Emerson is not the isolated figure of previous studies, but one both of and apart from his time.

Cayton’s examination of Emerson’s dispute with his times centers on Emerson’s early acceptance and subsequent rejection of the social organism of a Federalist Boston. His restant formulation of a natural organism of morality, and his ambivalent retreat to a domestic organism of family and friends. In all cases, Cayton correlates Emerson’s philosophical responses with his own evolving sense of vocation and calling as a moral reformer. Cayton begins by placing Emerson in the Boston of his father’s generation, a Boston concerned with maintaining the hegemonic order of merchants and the proper elite. Unfortunately for the Federalists, the emerging industrialization and democratization called into question the authority upon which their control depended and spawned both political and religious voices of a particular period informing each other. Cayton sees Emerson as a transforative agent within society, and how much are they inevitably shaped by the circumstances of the age?” (x-xi).

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A Glimpse of Emerson in Old Age

JOEL MYERSON
University of South Carolina

Emerson’s loss of memory in his later years is well documented, particularly the aphasia that caused him to forget the names of things. The letter printed for the first time below shows that in his last years even copying had become impossible for the man who once mined his journals as his “savings bank.” Written on 5 March 1880 by Ellen Emerson to Edwin Percy Whipple, who was preparing an article on Emerson’s poetry, it is a sad testimony to Emerson’s mental state two years before his death:¹

I don’t think Father can copy “Bacchus”, it is so long. Perhaps he will try, and possibly he will succeed, but I think he will dread the undertaking, and defer it, and forget it, or he will make mistakes, and begin again till he is discouraged. It has become very difficult for him to write. I will ask him occasionally whether he has done it, but I wish to prepare you to expect nothing. He is rather surprised to hear of your proposed paper, he says “I haven’t much pride in the poems. I wish they were a great deal better.”

¹The letter is in the Collection of Joel Myerson and printed by permission of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association. Whipple’s article was “Emerson as a Poet,” North American Review 135 (July 1882): 1-26.

The World’s Eye
(Continued from page 5)

References


Status Report on Emerson Editions
(Continued from page 6)

Volume 2 of The Topical Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Ronald A. Bosco, Editor; Ralph H. Orth, Chief Editor) has been published by the University of Missouri Press.

The typescript of English Traits, Volume 5 of The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Robert E. Burkholder, Philip Nicoloff and Douglas Emory Wilson, Editors; Joseph Slater, General Editor) has been submitted to Harvard University Press.

Annual Meeting

The 1993 annual meeting of The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc. will be held during the American Literature Association conference in Baltimore, Maryland. (See “PROSPECTS.”) The exact time and location will be announced at both sessions presented by The Emerson Society.