Albert J. von Frank received the Emerson Society’s Distinguished Achievement Award on 29 May 2004 at the American Literature Association meeting in San Francisco in recognition of his many contributions to Emerson studies. The Edward R. Meyer Distinguished Professor of English at Washington State University, von Frank has served on the Emerson Society’s advisory board (1990-1994). His work has been recognized by the American Antiquarian Society, which elected him to membership in 2003; by Washington State University, which chose him to deliver the Distinguished Faculty Address in 1996; and MLA, which awarded him the Richard Beale Davis Prize in 1994 for the best article in *Early American Literature*.

After receiving his A.B. degree from Amherst College in 1967, von Frank went on to receive an M.A. from the University of Wisconsin in 1968 and the Ph.D. from the University of Missouri in 1976. He spent a year as an instructor at the University of Rochester, then was an assistant professor at Harvard University from 1977 to 1983, during which time he helped support his wife Jane while she received her law degree. He joined the faculty at Washington State in 1984.

Von Frank’s career began with an annotated secondary bibliography of John Greenleaf Whittier (1976). He then went on to help edit Emerson’s *Poetry Notebooks* (1986), for which he completed the bulk of the critical work in the volume, particularly the “Analysis of Poems” section. From here, he put together a team to edit (in four volumes, 1989-1992) Emerson’s *Sermons*, a masterful edition that thoroughly located the development of Emerson’s early thought in these seminal writings, and that has changed the way we look at Emerson’s development as a thinker and his ultimate break with Unitarianism. His *Emerson Chronology* (1994) is a valuable day-to-day account of Emerson’s life, one which every real Emersonian keeps close at hand.

His two critical books demonstrate von Frank’s ability as a literary historian. *The Sacred Game: Provincialism and Frontier Consciousness in American Literature, 1630-1860* (1985) looks at literary provincialism and how American authors tried to compensate for their lack of cultural security in their writings. *The Trials of Anthony Burns* (1998) is a masterful tracing of the Emersonian influence on the people involved in Burns’ trial and return in a book that is a combination of shrewd literary history, reception study, and cultural work. The many favorable reviews of this book show its impact, and the breadth of reviewing media demonstrates its interdisciplinary value.

When von Frank went to Washington State, he became the book review editor for *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*. He became co-editor in 1987 and editor in 1994, taking over a publication in transition and engaging in a redesign of the journal. His own critical eclecticism can be viewed in the choice of selections for *Critical Essays on Hawthorne’s Short Stories*, which he edited in 1990. For many years von Frank has encouraged Emerson studies by assisting colleagues with their work in many ways, from his insightful readings of their scholarship prior to publication to providing facts about Emerson’s life and times, and it is therefore appropriate that he was chosen as the eleventh individual to receive this highest honor from the Emerson Society.

—Joel Myerson
EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

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Conference Chairs

Joel Bratin writes that in Northern Borders, Howard Frank Mosher’s 1994 novel about coming of age in rural Vermont, the central character is “Big Aunt”, Maude Rose, has a matched team of Morgan horses. The horses are named Henry David and Waldo saldo.


Prospects.

Call for Papers—ALA 2005

The American Literature Association announces that its sixteenth annual conference will be held at the Westin-Copley Place Hotel in Boston, Mass., on 26-29 May 2005. For details see www.americanliterature.org. Abstracts are invited for the two Emerson Society sessions below.

Please note that the Emerson Society’s new Graduate Student Paper Award can provide up to $500 to support travel to ALA to present an accepted paper.

Session I: Reconsidering The Conduct of Life.

This panel celebrates the recent publication of The Conduct of Life as Volume 6 in the ongoing scholarly edition of the Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Harvard University Press). The Conduct of Life (1860) is increasingly recognized as a key text in Emerson’s corpus. Papers could address issues in any of its essays, the contribution of this new edition to Emerson studies, or the importance of Conduct itself, in Emerson’s work or more generally in 19th-century letters and culture. 300-word abstracts by 15 December to Elizabeth Addison (addison@email.wcu.edu).

Session II: Emersonian Dilemmas: Individual and Community

The complex relations between Emerson’s philosophy, his sense of his own intellectual vocation, and his allegiances to social reform have been widely discussed in recent years. Individualism and communalism have been, and will continue to be, important touchstones in these discussions. Papers for this panel could address ways in which Emerson and Transcendentalism negotiated the competing demands of individualism and communalism in reference to, for example, utopian social movements, women’s rights, abolition, or the intellectual’s role in public life. 300-word abstracts by 15 December to James Thomas (jthomas@caltech.edu).

New Emerson Awards and Grants

The Emerson Society announces four new awards for projects that foster appreciation for Emerson:

• A Research Grant
• A Graduate Student Paper Award
• A Pedagogical or Community-based Project Grant
• A Subvention for books or articles on Emerson

Each carries up to a $500 award. The awards emerge from the 2003 Emerson Bicentennial initiative and were discussed and voted on by the Emerson Advisory Board and the general membership at the 2004 annual meeting. The Society is especially eager to foster work by graduate students, junior faculty, and Emerson admirers outside of the academy. We encourage all members of the Society to apply or to help publicize these awards by sharing a copy of the flyer with potential members.

For more information about the awards, including deadlines and application procedures, see the announcement elsewhere in this issue of ESP or contact Roger Thompson (thomsporc@vni.edu). Information is also available on the Society website, www.emersonsociety.org.


The Emerson Society—in collaboration with the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society and the Poe Studies Association—will be hosting the Atlantic for a special conference on Transatlanticism in American Literature: Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe on 13-16 July 2006. The conference will be hosted by the Rothermere American Institute of Oxford University (www.rai.ox.ac.uk) and accommodations are available at Oxford’s Christ’s College (www.scctar.ox.ac.uk). Specific topics and a call for papers will be announced.

Emerson Sightings/ Citations

Maxine Kumin’s poem “Being Asked During a National Crisis to Write a Poem in Celebration of the Bicentennial of Ralph Waldo Emerson” appears in The Nation (27 September 2004, p. 37). Clarence Burley, who sent this item, also points out that The Mentor’s Book of Days, a calendar for 2005 by Peter H. Spectre (Sheridan House), has three Emerson items. Allam Holtzmann reports that in Living a Life That Matters (Knopf: 2001, p. 157) Harold Kushner credits Emerson with the familiar inspirational passage about “success”—a common misattribution, as shown by Joel Myerson (“Emerson’s ‘Success’—Actually, it is not.” Emerson Society Papers 11 [Spring 2000]: 1-8). Joel Bratin writes that in Northern Borders, Howard Frank Mosher’s 1994 novel about coming of age in rural Vermont, the central character is “Big Aunt”, Maude Rose, has a matched team of Morgan horses. The horses are named Henry David and Waldo saldo.


Emerson's Poetry — "Rival of the Rose"

SAUNDRA MORRIS, Bucknell University

I show how Emerson's poems, conventionally underplayed among his tests, resonate with current critical and historical exchanges about language and politics. I stress the importance of reading Emerson's poetry in light of contemporary political issues, delineating what I have come to term a "politically ethical aesthetics" as a mandate inherent in Emerson's prose and poetry and crucial for readers today. Emerson's poetry, I suggest, catalyzed a modernist dislocation of the "aesthetic" and the "political." The question of the relation between the poetic and the political, I explicate, is central to Emerson's poetry and his poetic theory. Rather than separating the two realms, Emerson's tests bring them into a necessary, even if also impossible, dialectic. I argue that Emerson's poems with historical and current issues of social justice and global survival in mind. I propose that the tests raise, then resolutely refuse, the option of ignoring or basing political change upon it. Later, as the twentieth century opened, printer Marc Arletley Hartley carried a copy of Emerson's Essays (First Series) in his pocket and likened his canvases to Emersonian "apologies for the green Aesopus, for the dance of language that Emerson's poetry "was a search for the dance of language that Emerson's poetic language to be found not in his verse but in his prose." —Henry Wadsworth Emerson as Poet (1974)

"The truth behind these charges is that he never mastered the poetic line as he did the prose sentence. Too much filler, too much reliance on cliché, too much semantic and syntactical contortion to fit rhyme and meter." —Lawrence Buell, Emerson (2003)

2.1 In addition, critical studies of Emerson's poetry tend to conclude that the poetry is a failure.

2.2 Some examples:

- "The poetry failure and the prose triumphs were inseparable." —David Porter, Emerson and Literary Change (1978)
- "[Emerson]...decended not, to an unworid, but to a middle region where poetry is a little power and the poet a man of common size or less." —R. W. Emerson, and the Orphic Poet in America. (1978)
- "The paradox of Emerson's career is that his failure as a poet derives from his brilliance as a theorist." —Elia Nott, The Regenerate Lyric (1993)

3.1 To read Emerson's poems we must first abandon our ideas about Emerson and his poetry.

3.2 This would require something like a phenomenological approach to the poems themselves: a careful listening to what they say, and a close scrutiny of what they do.

3.2 Poems are events, not tests.

3.3 One has read Emerson's poems and we must recall all our previous critical readings of them.

3.4 Having now thought about Emerson's poems, we should go on thinking about them.

3.5 To read an Emerson poem is to discover something we didn't know was there.

Emerson's Poetry: A Bicentennial Roundtable

Chair, Joseph M. Thomas (Caldwell College)

Thinking About Emerson's Poetry

PAUL KANE, Vassar College

1.1 We have not yet read Emerson's poems.

1.2 We have interpreted the poems in the light of three primary reflections:

1.2.1 The prose (mainly the essays)

1.2.2 Whitman and modern poetics

1.2.3 Conventional or normative aesthetics

1.3 Here is an example of each approach:

"Much of the failure to interpret Emerson's poetry arises because his poems are historically shaped..." —Lawrence Buell, Emerson (2003)

Reading Emerson's Poems: The Harvard Edition

TOM WORTHMAKER, U.C.L.A. Abstract not available at press time.

SESSION II: Engendering Transcendentalism: A Panel Discussion

Chair, Sarah Ann Wider (Colgate University)

Emerson, Vocation, and the Problem of the Female Intellectual

Tiffany K. WAYNE, Stanford University

This paper explores how women thinkers took up the Transcendentalist idea of vocation and responded to Emerson's conceptualization of "Man-Thinking" as a model for intellectual life. The pursuit of self-knowledge and an understanding of one's true calling prompted Transcendentalist men to take up vocations outside of institutional frameworks as well as outside of the motivations of the marketplace. For women, however, vocational choice was less a matter of commitment to an idealistic pursuit and more an issue of access and of the right to put one's talents to use. The Transcendentalist feminist understanding of vocation thus incorporated both a call for reform of self (in discovering one's true purpose) and a clear social reform agenda (in opening up professional paths of criticism). Charles Ives raised a question... —Eliza Nott, The Regenerate Lyric (1993)

Abstractions of San Francisco ALA Papers

The following panels were presented by the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society at the fifteenth annual conference of the American Literature Association on 27 and 28 May 2004 in San Francisco, Calif.
New scholarly works on Emerson and Transcendentalism for 2003, including items missed in the 2002 bibliography. This section will continue to consult the periodical Thoreau Studies and the merged section "Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller and Transcendentalism" in the annual American Literary Scholarship (Duke University Press).

An Emerson Bibliography, 2003

David M. Robinson
Oregon State University

Fall 2004

Emerson Society Papers
With the passing of Roger L. Gregg on 3 August, the Emerson Society lost one of its earliest and most consistent friends. A great-great-grandson of Ralph Waldo Emerson and a founding member of the society, he served continuously from 1990 as the ex officio member of our advisory board representing the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association (RWEMA). With RWEMA president Margaret Emerson Bancroft, he was involved several years ago in the initial discussions about how the Emerson Society and RWEMA could collaborate on the major bicentennial celebration “Emerson in 2003.”

Born in Cambridge, Mass., Mr. Gregg was a graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy and Harvard University (Class of 1956). A noted conservationist—especially in the Milton, Mass., area—he was a charter member of the Friends of the Blue Hills and a member of the Neponset River Watershed Association, which honored him with the Founders Award in 2004. He was a founder of the Hillside Neighborhood Association and a Trustee of First Parish of Milton (Unitarian). He was also active in Milton town government, serving for twenty-four years as a Town Meeting member and for more than twenty years on the Zoning Board of Appeals. Mr. Gregg was a partner in J.M. Forbes Company in Boston for more than twenty years and had been a Trust Officer at the Bank of New England.

A skilled cross-country skier and sailor, Roger Gregg was also an avid fisherman. On my weekly commute from Martha’s Vineyard to Worcester, a frequent but always surprising pleasure was encountering Roger on the island ferry, lugging his gear but animated by the prospects of the newest fishing expedition. All of us on the Emerson Society Board will miss his counsel and his friendship.

—Wesley T. Mott

“Walking with Emerson at Walden”

In honor of the 2003 Emerson bicentennial, the Thoreau Society devoted its Annual Gathering in Concord, Mass., last July to the theme “Thoreau and the Emersonian Influence.” This summer, the Emerson Society returned the honor as our Thoreauvian friends celebrated the sesquicentennial of the publication of Walden. Several Emersonians joined dozens of Thoreauvians on 8 July in a marathon twelve-hour reading of Thoreau’s masterpiece by the shores of Walden Pond. And on Friday evening, 9 July, W. Barksdale Maynard presented a highly original lecture, “Walking with Emerson at Walden,” before a full and lively hall at the Masonic Temple. Sponsored by the Emerson Society, the lecture, accompanied by slides, explored Emerson’s love of Walden, defined his role in Thoreau’s famous experiment in Transcendental living, and celebrated the role of Emerson’s descendants as stewards of the treasured and vulnerable pond and woods.

During discussion that followed, conservationist Walter Brain, of Lincoln, Mass., suggested that a cove on the south side of the Pond be called Emerson’s Cove in lasting tribute to Emerson’s love and care for Walden. We hope to present a full account of this proposal in a future issue of ESP.

2004 Annual Business Meeting

President Phyllis Cole presided at the 2004 annual meeting of the Emerson Society at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco on 29 May 2004. Bob Habich reported on current membership in the society to date (188 members from 35 states and 5 foreign countries). Current assets total $21,474. Major expenditures since May 2003 include support for the MHS conference ($16,000), a subvention for Jean Mudge’s documentary film ($2500), and production of ESP ($1135); major credits include dues ($4191) and interest on investments ($201). Among those elected to office were Roger Thompson and Barbara Packer (Special Projects Committee), Todd Richardson and Leslie Perrin Wilson (Advisory Board), Richard Grossman (Distinguished Achievement Award Committee), and Joe Thomas (Program Co-chair). Elizabeth Addison and Joe Thomas were thanked for their service on the Board. Doug Wilson reported on the progress of Collected Works and announced that he was stepping down as general editor, to be replaced by Ron Bosco. (Doug will remain the textual editor of the series.) Doug and Ron were thanked with a round of applause. Other major items of discussion included the Oxford 2006 conference to be held the second week of July at St. Catherine’s College; the 50th anniversary of ESQ; the progress of Jean Mudge’s film; the status of Emerson Bicentennial Essays (still planned as a book publication, according to Joel Myerson); and program ideas for 2005. The amended Special Projects proposal was approved and will be announced on the Society’s web site. Al von Frank received the 2004 Distinguished Achievement Award for his many contributions to Emerson studies. The Secretary/Treasurer Report for 2004 may be obtained by request from Professor Habich, Department of English, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306 or via email: rhabich@bsu.edu.