Barbara Packer received the Emerson Society's Distinguished Achievement Award at the American Literature Association conference in Boston on 25 May 2007. The award was especially fitting since 2007 marks both the twenty-fifth anniversary of Emerson's Fall, her landmark first book, and the reprinting as a single volume of The Transcendentalists, originally included in volume two of the Cambridge History of American Literature (1995). The University of Georgia Press was displaying this new book at the publishers’ exhibit throughout the Boston ALA meeting.

Professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles, Barbara Packer received her B.A. from Stanford University and M.Phil. and Ph.D. from Yale (1973). Beginning to teach at Yale, she found her major career at UCLA, where she has received numerous awards, including the Luckman Distinguished Teaching Award. She has been a member of the Emerson Society since its founding in 1989. I remember meeting Barbara at our first session in San Diego, where people from opposite sides of the country, previously known to each other only through their publications, could start talking. Such is the value of our society and its bicoastal conviviality. Since then Barbara has served on the society’s Advisory Board, presented papers often, and co-chaired the effort to award new scholarly and community projects on Emerson.

Her distinguished career as a scholar of Transcendentalism includes literary criticism, literary history, and contribution to the editing of Emerson’s works. In Emerson's Fall: A New Interpretation of the Essays (1982) Barbara offered a nuanced critical reading of both Emerson’s celebrations of unfallen consciousness and his new “fables” for understanding the world’s evil. It won immediate praise and has also stood the test of time, so that Al von Frank, serving on our Distinguished Achievement Award Committee, declares it “still the most important reading of the essays—and the best written.” She followed that book with a series of more culturally grounded articles, drawing on fields of knowledge as varied as Romantic landscape, Higher Criticism of the Bible, nineteenth-century friendship, and decline of American religious community. By the nineties she was also composing two different large sections for the prestigious, multi-authored Cambridge History of American Literature: not only “The Transcendentalists” for volume two, but also a history of American poetry from Neoclassicism to Transcendentalism for the fourth volume. Soon thereafter she took on writing the Historical Introduction to The Conduct of Life in The Collected Works; this involved a new immersion in history of the 1850s as well as close cooperation with Textual Editor Douglas Emory Wilson in what she calls the “great sport of Emersonian life,” locating parallel passages from journal to lecture to essay.

What unites all this work is a fresh and reflective reading of everything relevant to the subject at hand. Her history of nineteenth-century poetry begins with a series of poets unknown to most of us and, alongside Emerson’s best-known texts, newly interprets his Journal verse as well as many poems by others in his circle. Barbara takes delight in the personal and political dramas contained in the Transcendentalists’ informal writing, whether such a major text as Emerson’s Journal or a neglected one as the correspondence of Margaret Fuller and James Freeman Clarke.

Such immersion in private writing is one of the several ways that Barbara Packer’s literary history The Transcendentalists reads in 2007 as the consummate (Continued on page 16)
2007 Emerson Society Patrons

Emerson Society members continue generously to join at various "patron" levels of membership. All donations above the $10 annual regular membership go to supports special programs of the Society. Donations are Life (500), Contributing (350), and Regular ($10). Please send check payable to The Emerson Society (U.S. dollars only) to Robert D. Habich, Secretary-Treasurer, Dept. of English, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306-0460.

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Prospects

Calls for Papers
Program Co-Chairs Todd Richardson announce calls for three Emerson Society panels in 2008:

American Literature Association, 22-25 May, San Francisco

Emerson's Representations of Asia, Asia's Representations of Emerson.

Given the recent interest in Emerson and transnational studies, as well as Emerson's well-known interest in Asian culture, the Emerson Society invites paper proposals on all aspects of Emerson and transnational cultural interchange. Email 300-word abstracts to richardson_t@utpb.edu by 15 December.

Emerson and War

Given our persistently bellicose world, the Emerson Society invites paper proposals on Emerson and war, considered philosophically, historically, or biographically. Possible approaches could, for example, examine the development or disconnect of his thought regarding war or his relation to major conflicts involving the U.S. military or other world powers. Email 300-word abstracts to richardson_t@utpb.edu by 15 December.

Emerson Society Papers

The newsletter of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society Published at Worcester Polytechnic Institute

www.emersonsociety.org

Editor: Wesley T. Mott
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Emerson Society Papers is published twice a year. Subscriptions, which include membership in the Society, are $10 a year (students $5). Send checks for membership (calendar year) and back issues ($5 each) to Robert D. Habich, Department of English, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306-0460.

ESP welcomes notes and short articles (up to about 8 double-spaced, typed pages) on Emerson-related topics. Manuscripts are blind refereed. On matters of style, consult previous issues. We welcome e-mail submissions of notes and short articles;

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PROSPECTS.

The Emerson Society gratefully acknowledges Dr. John A. Orr, Provost and interim Dean of Undergraduate Studies at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Provost Orr has renewed the subscription that supports publication of Emerson Society Papers and enables our editors to attend conferences at which the society presents significant programs and conducts its annual business meeting. WPI provosts have provided this crucial financial support to the Emerson Society since its inception in 1989. Thank you, Provost Orr!

Treasures from the RWES Vault

Before the celebrated blue tie-dye Emerson Bicentennial T-shirt dazzled transcendentalists in 2003, there was the classic "transparent eye-ball" T-shirt. Two of these vintage gems—in unicirculated condition—have just been discovered in the Emerson Society Archives (actually, in the editor's cool, dry storage closet). Both are forest green, XL, and made from Hanes Beefy-T pre-shrunk cotton. These collector's items are offered to members at $8 each—and we'll pay the postage. Because of the extreme limited supply, please email the editor at wsr@wpi.edu to make your claim.

Emerson Sightings/Citings

In a letter to the editor of the Sacramento, Pa., Times-Observer (29 February 2009, p. 10) Len Guenong recalls that Emerson in 1856 was disputed with President Pierce's "using the rhetoric of democracy and freedom" to defend his proslavery policies. Noble words had become "fine names for an ugly thing," declared Emerson. "They call it otoe of rose and laven-der. I call it an alligator's obvious desire that there be another such bilge-water moment in the Bush administration." "For a person who has had an adversarial relationship with the English language for his entire adult life," Guenong writes, President Bush "has figured out how to say 'Stay the course' in at least a hundred different ways. ... We are drowning in bilge-water."

Bob Habich writes that in Robert P. Barker's recent western, Appaloosa (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2005), the main character is considering how to avenge the death of the former town marshal. He quotes "this man Ralph Emerson," whom at his sidekick identifies as "some sort of philosopher": "What I must do concerns me, not what people think." (p. 75). The quote is a close paraphrase of a line from the essay "Self-Reliance." (1841).

Susan Dunston writes: "Emerson's role in Louisa May Alcott's intellectual upbringing and daily neighborhood life, and her adolescent crush on him, emerge in an imagined but historically informed exchange of ideas, experiences, and intimacies between Alcott and Kim Bakke in Bakke's novelistic biography of "The Critics of All Kinds" (Godine, 2006). As a former member of the Weathermen, a radical spinoff of Students for a Democratic Society, Bakke turns to explore the questions of political engagement and radical reform."

Sterling "Rick" Delano writes that in the American Arts Quarterly (Summer 2007, pp. 29-36), Brian Peterson, in "The "Five Silence of Daniel Defoe" (in "Four Embraces" of Emerson's "Essay, the "Over-Soul"), suggests that there is a "deftly spiritualized that permeates" the work of prominent 20th-century American impressionist painter Daniel Garber, "one of the finest painters of the 20th century." Although Garber was never known to quote Emerson or Thoreau, ... the seamless interweaving of the temporal and the timeless in his work is reminiscent of some of the core ideas (Continued on page 4)
Every hero becomes a bore at last,' and 'We boil at different degrees.' These four quotations derive from "Language," published in the 27 February 2006 issue of The New Yorker, the essay entitled "Emerson: The Ideal in America." Joseph M. Maddalena's Profiles in History autograph catalog on nature, self-reliance and taking Nature on Nature's terms."


Several from Joel Brattin:
  In an unpublished letter dated "Concord February 8, 1850," Henry David Thoreau writes to Mr. C. Northend, of South Danvers Lyceum, mentioning Emerson: "Dear Sir, I am informed by Mr. Emerson that you invite me through him to South Danvers Lyceum, mentioning Emerson: "Dear Sir, I am informed by Mr. Emerson that you invite me through him to"


Sarah Wider reviewed the success of the 2006 Oxford Conference and raised the possibility of a future Emerson confer-
ence in Italy. She also reminded the members about the Thoreau Society the customary Annual Gathering in Concord, 12-15 July, which includes an Emerson Society program on Friday with the Thoreau Sunset. The Board has agreed to offer the Thoreau Society the customary $290 in support of the Emerson Society. Phyllis Cole presented awards to two of our members:
  The Graduate Student Paper Award to Jessie Bray of the University of South Carolina, for her ALA presentation entitled "Not a pure Idealist:" Edward Emerson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the Civil War."
Edward's work on the poetry cost him great effort, perhaps at the expense of his other aspirations. He confided to his sister Edith that he had "memorized long for good on our own account, but surely it will prove to be as Emerson's children.

His work on the poetry became the sole arbiter of Emerson's canon for over a century, a remarkable feat well worth being remembered by.

SESSION II: Emerson on Other Shores
Chair, Todd Richardson, University of Texas—Permian Basin

Emerson's Encounter with European Natural History in "Goethe, or the Writer"

MICHAEL R. JOSK, University at Albany, SUNY

The goal of this essay, at least in part, is to provide a genealogy of Emerson's interaction with European scientific and natural history, especially with the work of Linnaeus, Buffon, Cuvier, Goethe, Hutton, Playfair, and Darwin. Whereas Emerson's "Goethe, or the Writer" is an understanding of natural history informed by these encounters is written across Emerson's work, my focus is the role of Goethe that Emerson demarcates in his essay from Representative Men, "Goethe, or the Writer." Goethe's scientific work, especially his theory of morphological botany, deeply inflcted Emerson's thinking, leading him to understand form as fluxion or transition. In "Goethe, or the Writer," Emerson develops a flexible notion of classification: Nature's archive becomes an active repository, "the record is alive." For Emerson, Goethe thus defines life from the rigidity of Linnaean taxonomy by detecting "amid littleness and detail" the "Genius of life, the old cunning Proteus" and, despite "whatever loss of French tabulation and dissection," because of his "poetry and humanity remain to us." Goethe becomes not only a representative "writer," but an "earth writer" complicit with the earth as it perpetually overwrites—or re-maps—itself. As such, Emerson's "biography" of Goethe provides us with a key landmark in understanding Emerson's interaction with European thought, especially European natural history. Emerson's "biography" of Goethe similarly marks a turning point in how the idea of nature functioned in Emerson's thought, from his earlier encounter with French botany in the Jardins of the Rivere to a new concept of nature as a shifting model of mental topology in his later lectures and notebooks.

Emerson's Search for a Teacher: The Jardin des Plantes
RICHARD GIELDRA, Independent Scholar

[Abstract not available at press time.]

Transcendental Orientalism: Questioning Religious Materiality in Antebellum Encounters with China
TAMARA J. LACOMBE, University of Wisconsin, Madison

In "Exporting Christian Transcendentalism, Importing Hawaiian Religion", Rob Wilson argued that "American authors such as Emerson, Twain, Alcott, Hawthorne, Thebes, and London, and
Emerson participated in the circulation of distancing tropes of the Orient and the Pacific as the ‘gorgeous East’ and thus helped to idealize imperial Western designs” (AL 72 [September 2000]: 540). However, when we consider the role religion played in U.S. interactions with the East, we find less evidence that Emerson and Transcendentalism supported an imperialism of the East and more showing how Emerson’s ideas worked to intervene in U.S. evangelism’s nineteenth-century imperialization of China.

Considering Bruno Latour’s 1993 anthropological models of relativism, universalism, and symmetry, I argue that evangelicalism followed a particular universalism in which one form of U.S. religion-culture was promoted as superior to any Chinese, attempting to justify, then, evangelism’s desire for both cultural influence and material gain in China. Emerson’s work, in contrast, reveals a position of symmetry. In his essay “Experience,” Emerson suggests that religion is an individual experience; thus, while he praises the existence of many religions, he suggests, ultimately, that religious experience cannot even be named, calling it simply an “ineffable cause.” Emerson’s acceptance of experiential religious difference allows him to focus on the similarities between the East and West rather than merely the differences, as evidenced in his 1860 speech “In Honor of the Chinese Embassy,” in which he suggests that Confucius spoke the same principles as Jesus did, only five hundred years earlier.

Nineteenth-century evangelical critiques of Emerson and transcendentalism provide a historical parallel to Wilson’s hasty analysis of transcendentalism. In 1848, Samuel Wells Williams, a missionary to China, compared Transcendentalists to Chinese Taoists, depicting both as “destitute of common sense and unproductive of good to their fellow-men.” His critique reveals the power that notions of religious difference had in U.S. imperialistic designs for the East, and the socio-economic importance of differentiating Transcendentalism from other nineteenth-century spiritual traditions.

Joe Thomas, Bob Habich, Jessie Bray, Noelle Baker, and Phyllis Cole conclude their panel.

Emerson’s Second Church in Boston

Emerson Speaks

Preaching from pulpits, lecturing on self-reliance, and speaking out against slavery—Waldo Emerson sightings have been reported with increasing frequency across eastern Massachusetts in recent months. Close inspection reveals that it’s actually Emerson Society board member Wendell Refior, of Belmont, Mass., who, with mutton-chop sideburns, has been performing as the Concord Sage at a variety of venues since 2003. In May, he recreated Emerson’s 1839 lecture “The Protest” at First Parish Church in Concord, Mass., in an NEH-supported program sponsored by Northeastern University: “The American Lyceum and Public Culture: The Oratory of Idealism, Opportunity, and Abolition in the 19th Century.”

On Sunday, 12 August, he ascended the pulpit of First Parish (Unitarian Universalist) in Watertown, Mass., to deliver Emerson’s 1830 sermon XC, urging each member of the congregation to “trust yourself.” Six days later, he stood outside the historic Old Manse in Concord—as part of the annual Civil War Soldier Recruitment Rally historical re-enactment—to perform a thirty-minute version of Emerson’s 1851 Fugitive Slave Law Address. Wendell asserts that “Emerson’s five points of how by ‘natural retribution’ the Fugitive Law is ‘contravened’ is the highlight and heart of the speech.” Having performed this lecture for three years, Wendell says that “every year someone in the audience comments that it seems so relevant for today and could apply to the Patriot Act or the recent wiretapping legislation.”

A statistical analyst for a biotech firm in Cambridge, Wendell Refior has also appeared as Emerson reading poetry and has spoken before middle school, adult education, and senior audiences. He will be preaching more Emerson sermons before Boston-area Unitarian Universalist churches this season and will appear in the 2008 Concord Patriot’s Day Parade and annual mid-August reenactment at the Old Manse.
An Emerson Bibliography, 2006

DAVID M. ROBINSON, Oregon State University

New scholarly works on Emerson and Transcendentalism from 2006, including items missed in the 2005 bibliography (ESP 18, 2007:5-6). Readers should also consult the Transcendental libraries in the Thoreau Society Bulletin, and the chapter "Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller, and Transcendentalism" in the annual American Literary Scholarship (Duke University Press).

Allen, Thomas M. "Frank Bidart's Emersonian Redemtion." Raritan 25:95-114. [Emerson's influence on the poet]


Baker, Anne. Heartless Immediacy: Literature, Culture, and Geography in Antebellum America. Michigan. [Cultural assumptions of space, boundaries and text]

Barnhill, Helen. Their Other Side: Six American Women and the Lure of Italy. Fordham [in Italy]


Baus, Ronald A., and Joel Myeroff. Emerson Bicentennial Essays. Massachusetts Historical Society, distributed by University of Virginia Press. [Essays from the 2003 Emerson Bicentennial conference at the Massachusetts Historical Society. Individual essays will also be found here.]


Beck, Lawrence, ed. The American Transcendentalists: Essential Writings. Modern Library. [Anthology]

Beckwith, Lawrence. "Saving Emerson for Posterity." Emerson Bicentennial Essays, pp. 13-27. [Call to de-focal critical perspectives on Emerson]


Chung, Soon-Gii. "It Does Not Touch Me: Emerson's Antislavery Politics." Phil. 77:729-60. [Evolution and antislavery in Emerson's thought]


Deese, Helen R. Selected Journals of Caroline Healey Dall. Volume I: 1838-1855. Massachusetts Historical Society. [Extensive selections from Dall's movement]

Diamond, Helen. Their Other Side: Six American Women and the Lure of Italy. Fordham [in Italy]


Goggin, Lewis. "Emerson and the British: Challenging the Limits of Liberty.

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Halko, Robert D. "Bolting, Caball, and Edward Emerson and the Challenges of Writing Emerson's 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" Emerson Bicentennial Essays, pp. 53-112. [The first biographies of Emerson]

Hulswit, Robert N. "Later Emerson: 'Imbecile' and the Cowley of Life.

Jung, Abraham. Emerson Bicentennial Essays, pp. 485-511. [Emerson's later lectures on the mind]


Larson, Kelly "Biblical Emerson." NCPR 33:28-72. [Emerson and classic liberal theory]

Lee, Young Lee. "The Tenant is More Than the House": Selected Essays, 1843-1844. [Thoreau, Emerson and transcendentalist theory]

Lee, Young Lee. "The Tenant is More Than the House": Selected Essays, 1843-1844. [Thoreau, Emerson and transcendentalist theory]


Mills, Bruce. Poet, Processor, and the Multimodal Arts: Transition Stages in the American Renaissance. Missouri. [Fuller's use of mimetic objects]


Ochs, Charles. "Beyond the Traveler's Testimony: Emerson's English Traits and the Construction of Postcolonial Counter-Discourse." AJS 29, 97-150. [Racial identity and politics]


Perry, Mark. "Beyond the Traveler's Testimony: Emerson's English Traits and the Construction of Postcolonial Counter-Discourse." AJS 29, 97-150. [Racial identity and politics]

Pickett, Margaret. "From Emerson to Emerson's Fate." "Emerson Bicentennial Essays, pp. 432-52. [Connections 'Fate' with Emerson's antisl.

Reals, Andrew. "Emerson and the Antislavery and Transcendental Female Body." EMERSON BICENTENNIAL ESSAYS, pp. 315-33. [Emerson's female leadership]

Rice, Lawrence A. Stanley Cavell's American Dream: Shakespeare, Philosophy, and Hollywood Movies. Fordham [Cavell's response to Emerson]

Rich, Lawrence A. Stanley Cavell's American Dream: Shakespeare, Philosophy, and Hollywood Movies. Fordham [Cavell's response to Emerson]

Richardson, Todd H. "Publishing the Cause of Suffrage: The Woman's Journal and the Antislavery Movement of Ralph Waldo Emerson." NEQ 76:578-608. [As the representation of Emerson as a women's rights supporter]

Roberts, Susan L. "Emerson, Columbus, and the Geography of Self-Reliance: The Example of the Seminary." EMERSON BICENTENNIAL ESSAYS, pp. 273-88. [Emerson's use of Columbus]

Roberts, Timothy M. "Margaret Fuller's Role and the Problem of Provincial America: Patterns of Peripatetic 40-60. [ Fuller and America]

Robinson, David M. "Experience, Insult, and Emerson's Philosophical Revolution.


Rutgers, Eric. The Black Skin of the Empire: The British and Africa. New York. [The British and Africa]

Sachs, Aaron. The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth-Century Exploration and the Construction of Postcolonial Counter-Discourse." AJS 29, 97-150. [Racial identity and politics]

Salentijn, Peter. "Sewing in Concord." VKS 35:397-412. [Sewing groups and the desire for the really real in Henry David Thoreau]

Samuel, Henry Aiken, and Laura Dassow Walls, eds. More Day to Set This World Right: The Antislavery and Transcendental Female Body. EMERSON BICENTENNIAL ESSAYS, pp. 315-33. [Emerson's female leadership]


Sklansky, Jeffrey. "Business and Solitude." MIH 3:357-69. [Emerson's cultural impact]

Stoneley, Peter. "Sewing in Concord." VKS 35:397-412. [Sewing groups and the desire for the really real in Henry David Thoreau]


Szabo, Mary. "Illiberal Emerson." NCP 33:28-72. [Emerson and classic liberal theory]

Talbott, Carrie. "Emerson and the Antislavery and Transcendental Female Body." EMERSON BICENTENNIAL ESSAYS, pp. 315-33. [Emerson's female leadership]
reviews

Emerson Bicentennial Essays. Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson, eds. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000. xx + 473 pp. $60 cloth. In academic culture, anniversaries usually serve as occasions that multiply the output of disparate interpretations to which an author’s works have been subjected. It had been 100 years since Ralph Waldo Emerson died in 1903. While it was the hundredth anniversary of his death, the occasion provided an opportunity for a number of new essays that included everything from a historical, biographical account of the essayist to a critique of his post-American influences and a critical re-examination of his post-romantic period (ca. 1845-1870). Although the essays included in this collection of papers were presented at the 1996 conference at Oberlin College which commemorated Emerson’s bicentennial, they were not formerly published in an essay collection. The essays included in this volume were selected to reflect the rich variety of perspectives and interpretations of Emerson’s work that have emerged in recent years. The essays in this volume address a number of topics, including Emerson’s relationship to his contemporaries, the development of his thought, and his influence on later generations of writers. 

The essays included in this volume were selected to reflect the rich variety of perspectives and interpretations of Emerson’s work that have emerged in recent years. The essays in this volume address a number of topics, including Emerson’s relationship to his contemporaries, the development of his thought, and his influence on later generations of writers. The volume also includes a number of essays that are devoted to the exploration of Emerson’s ideas and their relevance to contemporary thought. These essays are written by a number of scholars who are experts in the field of Emerson studies, and they provide a valuable contribution to the understanding of Emerson’s work. The essays included in this volume were selected to reflect the rich variety of perspectives and interpretations of Emerson’s work that have emerged in recent years. The essays in this volume address a number of topics, including Emerson’s relationship to his contemporaries, the development of his thought, and his influence on later generations of writers. The volume also includes a number of essays that are devoted to the exploration of Emerson’s ideas and their relevance to contemporary thought. These essays are written by a number of scholars who are experts in the field of Emerson studies, and they provide a valuable contribution to the understanding of Emerson’s work.
Review (Continued from page 13)

Wilson’s meticulous textual editing likewise enables us to appreciate this Emerson forever revising his writing and his views. Following the editing principles established for the Collected Works as a whole, Wilson has collated “critical and undetermined” (Iviii) forms of the nine essays that appeared together for the first time in the 1860 Conduct of Life. Each essay here is compiled from differing mixtures of Emerson’s original manuscript (when extant), his emendations (of which he made many), and the 1860 and later printed editions (1870; 1876; 1883; 1904). In most cases, the original manuscript serves as copy-text (in three cases, printed versions must be used), because the aim is to recover Emerson’s true intentions (Iviii; Iviii) from beneath the decisions of previous editors. Wilson’s Textual Introduction, as well as the opening pages of the textual apparatus, lucidly explain the complicated editing process; the apparatus itself and an appendix of “Alterations in the Manuscripts” record variant readings and when necessary discuss the reasoning behind Wilson’s own choices. His precision is simply stunning. What emerges is a portrait of Emerson as a composer then organizing and revising them to produce the [occasional] effect he desired” became his “art” (419). Flipping between the finished essays and their textual, authorial, and editorial origins, we feel as if we are watching Emerson at work. Wilson explains that the editors of the 1883 Riverside and the 1904 Centenary editions of the Collected Works did not add the 1870 paragraphs because they likely “preferred to print Emerson’s first thoughts but not his reconsiderations” (322). Having both views on hand seems critical; but placing the 1870 paragraph in the main body of the text, presenting it as if it were produced in 1860, seems to misrepresent the Emerson in his times that this wonderful new edition otherwise offers. (For a somewhat different view of this example, see Phyllis Cole, “Emerson at 200,” in Resources for American Literary Study 30 [2005]:316-30.)

The work that went into compiling this volume is daunting, and as a result of it we have the first truly critical, scholarly edition of this crucial Emersonian text. We now eagerly await the appearance in January 2008 of Society and Solitude, the seventh volume of The Collected Works, edited, introduced, and annotated by Ronald A. Bosco.

—Jennifer Gurley
Le Moyne College

Concord 2007:
“Emerson and the Quotidian Life”


Joan Goodwin—indeed, scholar, religious educator, historian and preserver of women’s heritage—died on 15 October 2006. When I think of Joan, I see her gentle presence: serene, unhurried, thoughtful, a source of strength and inspiration. A wise woman with strong and evolving beliefs, she lived what she believed and she accomplished much. She leaves a huge legacy in the hearts and minds of all who knew and loved her.

It is difficult to believe that Joan was almost eighty. Her youthful appearance and eagerness and enthusiasm for all experience bespoke her open mind and spirit. She stayed fully present to whatever she was doing and whenever she was with. That is, she was truly self-reliant in the Emersonian sense: trusting herself and others because she knew “the absolutely trustworthy...scared at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being.”

I was privileged to know Joan for almost twenty years. We met about 1987, soon after I began my Mary Moody Emerson letters project. Joan, semi-retired after fourteen years on the staff of the Unitarian Universalist Association, was eager to discuss her biography of Sarah Bradford Ripley—Waldo Emerson’s other significant aunt. I saw her during frequent research trips to the Boston area; at Collegium (Association of Liberal Religious Scholars), one of many organizations to which Joan introduced me; and, with Phyllis Cole, at the July meeting of our “Mary Moody Emerson Society” during the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering in Concord.

As our friendship grew, I often stayed at Joan’s Breakline apartment when in the area. She was a gentle

—Jennifer Gurley
Barbara Packer
(Continued from page 1)
synthesis of recent scholarship in the field. She not only makes dialogic use of the recently edited letters and journals of Emerson, Thoreau, and Fuller; she also integrates these deftly with their major published works and a myriad of other players and contexts, from Orestes Brownson and Theodore Parker to Marianne Dwight at Brook Farm and the female prisoners visited by Fuller at Sing Sing. With new insight she grounds the movement in philosophy and church history. She credits Fuller alongside Emerson and Thoreau as a major voice of the movement and weaves gender concerns into her study of women and men alike. She pays full attention to political and social reform, not only Brook Farm and Fruitlands but also the crisis of conscience over slavery. Her literary history genuinely encompasses the revolutions in textual and interpretive scholarship that have transformed this field over the past three decades. Indeed the accomplishment grows when we realize that no one else has attempted a full-scale literary history of Transcendentalism since Octavius Brooks Frothingham in 1876. It is surely fitting for the Emerson Society to recognize Barbara Packer’s achievement both in this book and through the decades of her scholarship.
—Phyllis Cole