In honoring Douglas Emory Wilson with the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society Distinguished Achievement Award, the Society recognizes a person whose literary expertise and devotion to the textual reconstruction of Emerson's writings have served as models of scholarship for the present generation of Emersonian editors and scholars. Born in Washington, D.C., and educated in the District's public schools, Colonel Wilson stands apart from his contemporaries as having enjoyed a distinctly non-traditional academic career. He received his A.B. from Dartmouth College in 1931 and A.M. in English from Harvard University in 1933, and he pursued additional graduate studies in English at Harvard into the late 1930s. Between 1934 and 1951, he taught English at George Washington University, Rice Institute (now University), Harvard, and Rutgers University. However, with the intervention of World War II and the Korean Conflict, Colonel Wilson's academic plans were temporarily displaced first with tours of active and reserve duty in the U.S. Army from 1941 to 1970, and then with U.S. Civil Service posts from 1956 to 1973. Over the years, his duties included service as the Executive Officer of the Army Chemical Corps School and Chief of Programs and Administration, Combat Developments Command C-B-R Agency, at Ft. McClellan, Alabama.

Colonel Wilson retired from the Army with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1970 and from the Civil Service in 1973, yet all who know him, know that "retirement" is not a word that occurs too often in his personal vocabulary. Since 1975, he has assumed significant responsibilities in several Emerson projects. As Textual Editor of the Harvard Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (CWRWE) series, he supervised textual work on volumes 2 and 3, and is the Textual Editor of volumes 4 through 7, and 9 and 10. In 1996, he succeeded Joseph Slater as General Editor of the CWRWE. Along the way to his current position, he served as Contributing Editor for volumes 3 and 4 of The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson published by the University of Missouri Press, and Consulting Editor for volumes 2 and 3 of The Topical Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, also from Missouri. In addition, since 1977 he has inspected volumes of the writings of Thoreau, Harold Frederic, Cooper, Howells, John Dewey, and C. S. Peirce, among others, for the MLA Committee on Scholarly Editions.

A Founding Member of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Colonel Wilson has been Editor of the Emerson Society Papers since 1990. For his ever enthusiastic support of the Society, for his generous service as an intellectual and technical resource for editors of Emerson, and for his record of textual scholarship, the Society warmly acknowledges Douglas Emory Wilson with our Distinguished Achievement Award.

—Ronald A. Bosco
EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

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

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EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

The following pages were presented by The Emerson Society at the eighth annual conference of the American Literature Association on 23 and 24 May in Baltimore, Maryland.

SESSION I: Emerson and His Lectures

Chair: Daniel Shaully, Univ. of North Carolina-Charlotte

Emerson’s First “Representative Men” Lecture Series (1845-46) and the Boston Press

Wesley T. Mott

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

In studying Emerson’s career as a lecturer, we can (with apologies to Henry Thomas) profitably Read the Times even while Reading the Emancipator. How Emerson’s first “Representative Men” lecture series was promoted and reviewed by the Boston press tells a great deal about Emerson. Emerson was popularly perceived in the mid-1840s and about the role of newspapers in shaping contemporary taste and culture.

Newspapers were in vogue; Boston (where Emerson had been “trounced by a critical” during his first lecture) was awash in critical opinions. The sequence of lectures differed from that published in 1850; Emerson was judged, and in part judged himself, against competing lecturers on similar topics; certain Emerson phrases gained instant currency; as might be expected, “Napoleon” was the most popular of the seven lectures, with “Montaigne” second.

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Gazing After the Illuminati?: Mary Moody Emerson and the Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson

NANCY CRAIG SIMMONS

Virginia Tech

Although Mary Moody Emerson plays an increasingly important role in our understanding of the young Emerson’s intellectual and psychological development, typically that role ceases after he left the pulpit. Following the disagreement that drove her from Concord in 1836, she virtually drops out of most biographies of her nephew. Disregarded by his move, she respected the intellectual honesty that prompted his decision, and for over two decades she eagerly followed his new career, usually from afar. There was a mutually supportive intellectual relationship. This paper documents interactions between Mary and Waldo’s lectures over two decades, details Mary’s role in the period of his crisis that culminated in “The Method of Nature,” and examines Emerson’s use of his aunt in other lectures. It suggests that the role of the “true orator” that Emerson described for himself in his youth, was in part influenced by Mary Emerson’s hopes and method as Emerson understood them.

Her letter describes how the Emersons sold off all of Emerson’s lecture’s series and many other addresses, beginning in 1834 when she was living in Concord. In 1841, after he discovered the antiscientific movement and hoped Waldo would exchange decorative lecturing for this worthy cause. Ten years later she was rewarded by his “Emancipation” address and pushed him to adopt a sermon in 1846. Lectures that disturb her prompt her most substantive comments; rather than bemoaning Waldo’s unobtrusive ideas, she expresses concern for the state of mind such ideas suggest. Her extreme reaction to “The ‘Self-Reliance’ led to the only known occasion when Mary was in his audience, at Waterville, Maine, for “The Method of Nature,” an address whose geniuses and central ideas are deeply embedded in Waldo’s relationship with his aunt.

The Method of Nature is one of several lectures in which Mary transformed. The 1834-35 Present Age time period represents the religious or intellectual occupation of pious New Englanders; and in the New England annotation she figures as the natural transmitter of ideas between generations.

Emerson as Lecturer: Oraity, Editing, and the Text

RONALD A. BOSCO

University at Albany-SUNY

University of South Carolina

This paper explores the contemporary context(s) for the 47 completed and previously unpublished Emerson lectures we are including in “The Late Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1843-1867,” forthcoming in 1999 from the University of Georgia Press. In the course of the paper, we consider Emerson’s compositional and lecturing practices and the relation between lectures such as those we are printing and Emerson’s rise to prominence in America during this period as a lecturer, writer—in an, as intellectual and cultural presence. We also argue that his is a guide to the guided selection of materials to include in this edition and our rationale for presenting texts in a clear text format, acknowledging in both instances our debt to the policies established for the presentation of comparable materials by the editors of Emerson’s Early Lectures so especially. Complete Sessions, as well as our departure from some of those policies.

SESSION II: Emerson and Nature

Chair: Lea Grogin, Univ. of South Carolina

Emerson, England, and the End of Nature

ROBERT E. BURKOLDER

University of South Florida

Emerson’s close depiction of the homeland and wilder aspects of nature and landscape occurs more often in his prose—lectures, essays, and letters—than in his more readily available works. Not only do these passages reveal a deeply existential basis for Emerson’s philosophical and political implications of the relations of nature to mind, but they also engage the larger questions of how natural philosophy is to be studied and what it might be profitably put to by humans. In the sense that Emerson faults English civilization lay in North American wilderness, where the grandeur of the landscape held the potential to condition the observer or conversely, if it is inhabited, it might be put to by humans. In the sense that Emerson faults English civilization and technology for its inability to consider the inherent value of nature, he prefigures the arguments of contemporary environmentalists such as Bill McKibben.

Emerson on Wilderness as Aesthetic Object

GAYLE L. SMITH

Penn State Worthington Scranton

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Selected Poems and the “Emerson Factory”

J.M. THOMAS

University of Georgia State University

Because Emerson’s final decade was marked by dwindling activity and acuity, it has received scant attention from critics and biogra-
Prospects.

Scholars Sought

...single volume), followed by an issue on Margaret Fuller. In 1983, however, Nancy Craig Simmons analyzed the evidence—beyond the usual sources—about any aspect of the volume and the choices he made in working on such poems strained the limits imposed by his failing health. The structural problems of long prose, compared with his earlier Poems (1847) and May-Day and Other Pieces (1867), was his longest; working on such poems strained the limits imposed by his failing health, blurring the line that separated his own prose and essays after 1872. Simmons dubbed their editorial workshop “the Emerson factory” and observed that the problem from which Emerson was suffering was...
Emerson's serious and far-reaching influence on American thought is well established. His work, especially his early essays and poems, has been widely studied and admired, and his ideas continue to be relevant today. Emerson's approach to life and his emphasis on individualism and self-reliance have had a lasting impact on American culture and thought. His writing continues to be read and discussed, and his legacy is celebrated in many ways.

Emerson's writing is characterized by its clarity, precision, and directness. His ideas are often expressed in simple, direct language, and his writing is often easy to read and understand. His work is also characterized by its universality. Emerson's ideas are often applicable to a wide range of situations and can be applied to a variety of contexts.

Emerson's life was marked by a number of significant events. His marriage to Ellen中国古代西文, which was not a small matter, had a profound influence on his work. Emerson was deeply committed to his family and his marriage, and he believed that marriage was a sacred institution. His commitment to marriage and family is evident in much of his writing, and it is one of the key themes of his work.

Emerson's writing is also characterized by its depth and complexity. His work is rich in meaning and has a number of layers of meaning. His ideas are often complex and can be difficult to understand at first glance. However, with careful study and reflection, his ideas can be fully appreciated and understood.

In conclusion, Emerson's influence on American thought is significant. His work has had a profound impact on American culture and thought, and his ideas continue to be relevant today. Emerson's writing is characterized by its clarity, precision, and directness, and his ideas are often expressed in simple, direct language. His work is also characterized by its universality, and his ideas are often applicable to a wide range of situations and can be applied to a variety of contexts. Emerson's life was marked by a number of significant events, and his marriage to Ellen中国古代西文, which was not a small matter, had a profound influence on his work. Emerson was deeply committed to his family and his marriage, and he believed that marriage was a sacred institution. His commitment to marriage and family is evident in much of his writing, and it is one of the key themes of his work.

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unhistorical qualities, Roberson knows what Emerson also knew: that the world is still lively and dramatic in the record of its coming to be.

—Albert J. von Frank
Washington State University

The Selected Letters of Mary Moody Emerson.

Nancy Craig Simmons’ superb edition of the letters of Mary Moody Emerson is a milestone in Transcendentalist studies, partly for the light it sheds on the development of Mary Emerson’s more famous nephew, but more importantly for throwing a whole new character onto the Transcendentalist stage. Mary Emerson was eulogized by nephew Waldo and has been mentioned in all decent accounts of his life and education—though usually in passing—as a major influence on him. But until now, the general impression many readers have had of Mary Emerson has been of a “character,” an eccentric and exasperating maiden aunt. Now, with the publication of her letters—more than a third of them in this scrupulously edited volume—we have the woman herself, a woman who will surprise many students of the period. Mary Emerson stands revealed at last in these letters as a profoundly learned person, as a major intellectual force, a Socratic dreadnought, a teacher at the center of an impressive circle, an impassioned writer of force and imagination who reaches at times the high tablelands of prophecy itself. This American Isaiah comes through, in Nancy Simmons’ judicious selections, as a force—and I want the emphasis to fall on that word force—for directness, for personal witness, for intellectual immediacy. She is the most important of R.W. Emerson’s teachers and interlocutors, a major source of Transcendentalism, and a significant post-Calvinist religious thinker in her own right.

She knew a great many people. She knew Hannah Adams, who wrote the first American history of the Jewish people, and she knew Thoreau’s paternal grandfather’s second wife. These letters jump with energy; the pages fairly rattle in the elegant white binding provided by the University of Georgia Press. Mary requests, via Ruth Emerson, information from brother William: “I wish him to explain the VJ” proposition of Dr. Jebb’s in the 2d vol. respecting the philosophy of prayer” (50). She hammers away at nineteen year old Waldo: “Are you well versed in Stewart & his host of noble predecessors—have you read all of Brown’s three vols of lectures...?” (160). She takes the short way with her nephew’s failings. “You write sneaking short letters,” she tells him (161). She holds nothing back. To Waldo’s brother Charles, perhaps her favorite young Emerson, she writes, “It is certain that not any Emerson is capable of deep investigation—long continued thought” (254).

She despised the beaten track, calling it “the safe guard of mediocrity” (182) and her own disdain for standard English is a perpetual reminder to the reader that she practiced what she preached. When Waldo’s older brother William fell off the path to the ministry, Mary Emerson, citing the precedent of Roman women, invoked her right to call him to account, and tried to nail the exact cause. “Do you doubt of the origin of xianity? Dislike its purpose—perplexed with its wonders—at a loss about its nature?....Tell me truly, and I will respect your confidence” (202).

As Waldo and his friends began to be called Transcendentalists in public, Mary Emerson writes Frederic Hedge bluntly asking about a movement she had had a major hand in shaping. “I am obtuse by reason of age,” she told Hedge with something less than candor, adding “and Waldo is no explainer. I have often wished to ask you for what may be the leading principles of transcendental philosophy” (400).

She nursed the highest imaginable ambitions for Waldo along with a persistent habit of devastating frankness about his many shortcomings. When Waldo lost his eyesight at Divinity School, she prayed for his recovery. When he recovered she told him “you are getting well too soon—before you have seen the mystic visions wh visit the soul.” She wanted everything. “But tell me, like a true man, your feelings” (196). When Waldo sent her a copy of his 1847 Poems, she wrote back saying “I wish that you could get into Milton’s old room and blind yourself to all but real poetry.” She reports that she told “Miss Pea [Elizabeth Peabody] that if you were blind and fixed in good faith you could write ‘Paradise Lost’ and avoid the wearisome parts.” But, alas for poor Waldo, the Poems as printed “have led me to think of their defects and the injustice you have done to the unique lady above named [the Muse]” (496). Later, in 1855, Mary Emerson took unconcealed and unqualified pleasure in Waldo’s anti-slavery speeches and told him “you must value the delight it gave to a solitary who loves her country and kind” (568).

Mary Emerson’s full impact on American thought and expression is only now beginning to be felt as it rises like the morning star at the end of Walden. There is much in her legacy yet to puzzle out, but now at least we have her voice, which is all the more valuable for its unpredictable syntax and for its not having been smoothed out by copy editors. Perhaps we can leave her, for the moment, as Nancy Simmons does, with the cryptic benediction she gave Sarah Bradford Ripley in the last letter she ever wrote. “May the God of love and wisdom draw you so near to communion with him that you may long remain to bless your gifts of children” (600). It goes without saying that all self-respecting American libraries should have a copy of this book.

Robert D. Richardson, Jr.
Middletown, Connecticut

1997 Annual Meeting

President Ronald Bosco presided over the 1997 annual meeting of the Emerson Society in Baltimore, Md., on 23 May. Elected by acclamation were Len Gougeon as president-elect, and Barbara Powell and Laura Dassow Walls as members of the Advisory Board. Douglas Emory Wilson was named the sixth recipient of the Distinguished Achievement Award in Emerson Studies. Ron Bosco proposed a new dues structure to take effect in 1998 and reported on plans for the 2003 Emerson Bicentennial. Doug Wilson reported on progress with The Collected Works. Secretary/Treasurer Wes Mott reported that at the end of 1996, the Society’s savings account had a balance of $4,814.48. Secretary’s and Treasurer’s Reports for 1996 (distributed at the meeting) may be obtained by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Professor Mott, Dept. of Humanities and Arts, WPI, Worcester, MA 01609-2280.