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Transcendentalism in the private journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson

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TRANSCENDENTALISM IN THE PRIVATE JOURNALS

OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON

BY

RACHEL SHERWOOD

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
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[Signatures]

Director of Thesis

Chairman of the English Department

Dean of the Graduate School
Preface

This paper is designed to interpret Transcendentalism by showing its origins and influences and to give the reader a view into the private journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson. The first chapter is devoted to a study of Transcendentalism and the question of its taking root in the Boston area in the 1830's. The second chapter presents a study of Emerson as he debated the forces of his universe and formulated a philosophy to explain the vicissitudes of life. It is necessary to relate Emerson's views with the events of his life. The years covered in the second chapter are 1820 to 1835.

The third chapter begins with Emerson's marriage to Lydia Jackson and ends with his last Journal, dated 1876. Actually Emerson's philosophical views during these years were expressed in his lectures and published works rather than in his diaries. The Journals merely enhance one's knowledge of the private observations, comments, and opinions of the philosopher concerning his trips, domestic affairs, friends, books, slavery, government, and nature. Many events of his life are merely touched upon lightly in this study, for Emerson did not see fit to comment at length upon them. For instance, a catastrophe which most people would write at length upon was simply recorded: "My house burned."

Though the entries are superbly indexed and grouped, there is much repetition involved, and it is difficult to select the
passages which will best show the development of his thinking.
Because access to the *Journals* is difficult, most of the passages referred to are quoted at length.

The fourth chapter is a study of the influence of Oriental literature and philosophy upon Emerson's intellectual thought. His interest and use of Eastern works was a gradual development, and it was not until after 1845 that Emerson became an "Orientalist" in his thinking. Neoplatonism served as the background for Emerson's understanding and interest in the Orient. He studied Hindu religion and literature, Persian poetry, Arabic literature, Zoroastrian books, and Chinese proverbs, and he incorporated much that he read into his own writings.

The final chapter presents conflicting observations critics have expressed in their attempts to systematize and give meaning to the beliefs and works of Emerson. Emerson's interpretation of evil is explained and criticized. Opinions regarding his style of writing are diverse; some are scornful; others are laudatory. Emerson's *Journals* reveal, however, a character of spirit and mind which man cannot ignore.
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I. The Origin of New England Transcendentalism

New England Transcendentalism is clearly one movement which defies reduction into a concise definition which is readable and memorable. The word "transcend" means to pass over or go beyond some obstacle or limit. The New English Dictionary refers to the theological meaning as "above and independent; especially said of the Deity in relation to the universe." Transcendentalism is the philosophy which holds reason and understanding to be the creative activity in the universe. To comprehend this statement it is necessary to study the philosophical thoughts of such men as Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. To understand New England Transcendentalism it is necessary to correlate the philosophies of those German idealists with such influences as Carlyle, Coleridge, Henry More, Victor Cousin, and some Oriental writings.

The most specific meaning of "transcendental philosophy" and the thought it embodies is found in the Critique of Pure Reason by Immanuel Kant. Kant was "not concerned with the content of experience but only with the forms or ways in which the human mind, by virtue of its constitution, is obliged to react, in perception and in thought, to any and every content the touch of an external world may stimulate within it, whatever the nature of our sense-organs and our sensible experience."¹ According to Kant,

concepts such as space, time, and causality belong to the nature of the human mind and are prior to experience although in chronological sense knowledge begins with experience. These transcendental forms are a priori and are not built upon experience or influenced by it, but exist independently. "They are the agents by which experience is influenced and built up into the shapes in which it is presented to us." Kant set limits to the area of Pure Reason and Practical Reason; thus the distinction between transcendental and transcendent must be shown. Transcendental concepts belong and relate to the "substructure of experience and those 'transcendent' concepts which have to do with a sphere of reality that is beyond experience;" therefore, objects of thought as "God, freedom, and immortality are transcendent (rather than transcendental) and are known by Practical Reason, not by Pure Reason." These two spheres of knowledge are not equal and must not be confused. Practical Reason constitutes the essence of man and "were it possible for us to be purely contemplative beings, we should have no proper reason for regarding ourselves as free beings . . . ; nor should we have any proper reason for holding that the world manifests, however dimly and imperfectly, the unseen guidance of a Supreme Being . . . Nature is not so much made for us as by us." The spontaneous

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1bid., II, 226.


activity of the mind is the source of this universal concept and is also receptive to its own process.

Post-Kant philosophers accepted the essence of Kant's system but often failed to observe the distinction between Practical Reason and Pure Reason. German idealists sought to unify his plan into a single self-determining spiritual principle to form the basis for their systems of thought. The leading revisers of Kant who should be touched upon are Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.

Fichte followed Kant's study closely but veered from it as he elaborated on Reason as the active Ego. His philosophical problem was "How do I, in virtue of my reason, come to know a world in space and time, and what is the inner nature of my reason?"5 Although the New England Transcendentalists were not concerned with the details of such a question, it is pertinent that Fichte stated that the known world can only be explained when it is in relation with reason. Reason is the true "thing-in-itself."

The result of his investigations shows:

Practical Reason as an absolute and universal self, revealing itself to us as an Ideal which we must make the goal of our efforts. The self as it actually exists at any moment is thus contrasted with the idea of an infinitely perfect self with which we are to seek for identification. This ideal self is not ... to be regarded with Kant as identical with a Supreme Reason, conceived of as beyond the sphere of our knowledge, and therefore unknowable.6

5Ibid., p. 66.
6Ibid., p. 61.
What Fichte did was remove the veil which Kant had drawn over the thing-in-itself—whether called matter or soul or God.

Schelling's system implies that Fichte had reduced the non-ego, or nature, to little more than the bare presence in consciousness of a something-not-myself—I-know-not-what. Yet like Fichte, Schelling maintained that the realization of the ideal would be suicidal, since the complete removal of limits and obstacles would spell death to the exercise of freedom, to which there may always be more and more but never a consummation and an end. In Schelling's *Statement of My System* and in *Lectures on the Method of Academy Study* the question of the underlying unity or absolute is stated to be "an infinite and eternal Reason, in which the conscious and the unconscious, the subject and the object, the ego and the non-ego are identical. The absolute Reason is one. Outside of it there is nothing." Fichte denounced this statement as dead, and Hegel remarked "that it was like the night, in which all cows are black." To Schelling the "Absolute is transcendent and inexpressible in terms of finite existence." The Absolute indifference is transformed into identity; thus subject and object develop and "the Absolute becomes a personal God." Evil in the Absolute is "a necessary condition of the

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8 *Fuller*, II, 298.
divine self-realization" and if this is so, the question arises that "if God wills evil for the sake of his own-fulfillment, how can he be absolved from responsibility for it?" Evil cannot be viewed as negative, since the "self-assertion on which it is founded is a positive defiance of the universal will."11 Probably Ralph Waldo Emerson was not aware of this statement, but one must remember "his faith in the reality of the ideal world was so fundamental that even the loss of a bride and his first-born in a brief time left no deep scar."12 Although this comment concerning Emerson will be questioned later, it is placed here to show that the transcendentalist viewed the world and nature not with blindness or indifference, but with optimistic idealism. Schelling said:

Nature is an infinite self-activity, realizing itself in the finite, and yet unexhausted in that realization. . . . Nature is an eternal process that is ever fulfilling itself, and yet is never absolutely fulfilled, just as, in the sphere of self-consciousness, practical reason consists in the perpetual striving toward an ideal goal that is never attained.13

Hegel broke with Fichte and Schelling in his assertion:

Life is an organic unity, a spiritual activity, in which all seeming antagonisms between man and nature are overcome, and the clash of opposing forces is stilled. Multiplicity, variety, opposition, antagonism, are all subservient to some higher principle in which they are ultimately identified, and to whose being—which is an activity of reconciling and fusing them—they are necessary.14

11Ibid.
13Watson, p. 97.
14Fuller, II, 303.
Hegel dismissed the idea of an Absolute subject underlying experience and the objective source of experience. German idealism was brought to a climax in Hegel's thinking that the Absolute Idea is made manifest on the highest plane of its self-expression. "Pure reason by pure reasoning has wholly laid bare its own essence, and since thought and existence are identical, has in so doing revealed the essence of the Real." 15

Although Jacobi, Schiller, Richter, Novalis, Schlegel, and Baader contributed to German idealism, they will not be dealt with in this paper. It is doubtful that the philosophies of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel were studied by the New England group. The Concord Transcendentalists probably were not familiar with the actual philosophies of the German thinkers but became acquainted with the fundamental ideas in college bull-sessions and conversations with students who had studied abroad. Scholars like William Ellery Channing and Edward Everett kept in touch with the German philosophers, French psychologists, and other critics and helped plant the motivation for intellectual investigation in the Boston area. Ralph W. Emerson, who later became the primary spokesman for New England Transcendentalism, while a student at Harvard, listened to these philosophical doctrines with enthusiasm. These students and lecturers seemed to say that

the world was beginning again, that America was going to realize the promise of the Revolution, that Boston had been appointed by destiny to lead the civilization of the continent. . . . hidden forces lay below the threshold of the human

15Ibid., II, 336.
consciousness, waiting to be kindled! A word, a picture evoked for his inward eye, and he [Emerson] felt as if he were a Plato, a Caesar, a Dante. It was all there within him, the germ of every human thought and action; and, if in him, in every responsive soul.\textsuperscript{16}

New England Transcendentalism was not merely a 19th century interpretation of German philosophy but was influenced by such influential forces as Coleridge and Carlyle. Samuel Taylor Coleridge had studied Kant, Jacobi, and the post-Kantian idealists and was attacking the contemporary British empiricism and skepticism that was largely shaped by Locke and Hume. Schelling's \textit{Naturphilosophie} was a primary source for Coleridge's stress upon "the introspective method, the distinction between Reason and Understanding and an evolutionary theory of natural-spiritual 'correspondences.'"\textsuperscript{17} The chief outcome of Coleridge's investigation into "what our faculties are, and what they are capable of becoming"\textsuperscript{18} was his differentiation of Imagination and Fancy.

The Imagination . . . is the mind in its highest state of creative insight and alertness; its acts are acts of growth, and display themselves in breaking down the hard commonplaces which so easily besets the, and in remoulding this stubborn raw material into new and living wholes.\textsuperscript{19}

Fancy is on a higher level than memory and perception but is below Imagination. Although Coleridge had much to say in regard to


\textsuperscript{17}Hutchison, pp. 26-27.


\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 16.
intuitive Imagination and Fancy, it is not necessary to elaborate upon it further. The American idealists who followed this simplification by Coleridge often attached the term "transcendental" to points Kant had designated "transcendent."

Thomas Carlyle was another Romantic whose message was so influential that such a remark as "Carlyle is my religion" was not uncommon. Carlyle denounced the spiritual paralysis and blight in his age of materialism. To him "the universe had gone dead and mechanical; the nations would perish unless they could recapture the vision of God working in nature and history, and learn that the meaning of life lay in dutiful service, and not in motive-grinding or the felicific calculus."\(^\text{20}\) Carlyle and Coleridge both agreed in their diagnosis of the world's infirmity, but Carlyle rejected Coleridge's prescription, that of bringing the dead churches back to life again. He taught as a religious seer, denouncing all established tendencies of his society. "Believe in God, seek the Truth, and do the Duty nearest to hand! is the burden of his message."\(^\text{21}\)

Carlyle's teaching reinforced two tendencies which had been increasing in Europe—"the tendency to find God in nature, and the tendency to regard all translations of picture-thinking into concept and law as closer approximations to Truth."\(^\text{22}\) Included in the appendix is a passage from Sartor Resartus Book II, chapter 9—

\(^{20}\) Ibid., p. 107.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 116.
\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 118.
entitled "The Everlasting Yea" which illustrates Carlyle's view of God in nature. Carlyle's influence was felt across the Atlantic. He stressed that the universe is a temple; that Infinitude is eternal; that History is a Bible; that the true Shekinah is Man; and that in worshipping Heroes, we acknowledge the godlike in human form.23

Another philosophical view was given by Victor Cousin and Theodore Jouffroy of the French Eclectic School. Cousin was the predominant spokesman of the group which attempted to extract and recombine the best from all the other systems in order to fashion a definition of "Transcendentalism." Victor Cousin disagreed with Kant's position that

the nature of Reality is unknowable, and with Schelling's view that it is apprehended, not by reason, but by a kind of mystical intuition. Nor could he stomach the Absolute Idea of Hegel, or Hegel's principle of the identity of opposites, or his flouting of the law of self-contradiction, or the Hegelian application of the trinity of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis to the world-process.24

But, because the Eclectic School determined that the best of the philosophies was related with "psychological introspective" as "the supreme criterion of philosophical truth," they may be linked with the German idealists, particularly Schelling. They differ from the Germans in insisting upon "objective validation, through both psychological and historical analysis, for the truths given in intuition."25

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23Dodd, p. 122.
24Fuller, II, 379.
The 17th century Neo-Platonists at Cambridge University in England "endeavored by the aid of Plato and Plotinus to rationalize religion and at the same time to imbue it with Platonic and Neo-
Platonic mysticism. They attempted to revive the shape of eternal and unchangeable principles of reason and morality. Henry More and Ralph Cudworth were leaders in the group, and Cudworth attempted to reconstruct the World-Soul. Henry More, who was the more mystical, turned to Neo-Platonism for his inspiration rather than to Plato. The movement was a reaction against the naturalism of the Renaissance as well as an echo of Platonic concepts. The Neo-Platonists influenced the minds of such New England Transcendentalists as Emerson. According to Emerson, "the world ... should be like the Dance of Plotinus in which 'the bodies are moved in a beautiful manner, as parts of the whole, moved and moving in ecstasy."" Plotinus believed that the nature of the Real is unutterable and is attained only in a state of mystical ecstasy from which the last trace of sensible experience has been erased.

It is difficult to account for the dreams and raptures of the mystics. The Concord group were not mystics in the full sense of the word, but Emerson's statement, "I only worship Eternal Buddha in the retirements and intermissions of Brahma" indicates the vogue Orientalism had in New England. One reason Emerson accepted the Oriental writings was his inability to find at home a complete

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26 Fuller, II, 40.
27 Brooks, p. 50.
refutation of the eighteenth century rationalism against which his
idealistic temperament revolted. The sensationalism of Locke and
Hume dominated the period of Emerson's intellectual maturity, and
he found it to be uncongenial. Orthodox Christianity gave no answer
to the men who cared for the spirit but rejected the narrow proofs.
A natural revolt from rationalism and dogma led the way toward
interest in Oriental literatures which stressed inner spiritual
values. The eclectic method of Victor Cousin caused Eastern influ-
ences to be accepted by the New England thinkers. Such a method
was admired because it was cosmopolitan and congenial to men who
wished to study the full range of human thought. The personal
temperament of the New England Transcendentalists also influenced
the degree to which the "Bibles of the world" were accepted. Emerson
read Hindu lore, the writings of Confucius, and the Mohammedan Sufis.
He stated, "I want not the metaphysics but only the literature of
them." 29 Yet as he and his friends read the Eastern doctrines the
tones and religious implications were incorporated into their minds.
According to Gohdes in The Periodicals of American Transcendentalism,
Transcendentalism was not primarily a philosophy or a reform but a
mental and spiritual attitude. Essentially it sought to find the
source of all truth within the nature of man. When intellect failed
to supply the necessary grounds for knowledge, spiritual intuition
was used. Although there was considerable variation in the degree
to which the Transcendentalists exalted intuition over sense, all
of them were potentially mystics.

29 Tbid., p. 7.
In Memoirs of Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Cabot stated that the Oriental (particularly the Hindu) religious books, the Bhagavadgita, the Puranas, the Upanishads, and the doctrines of Karma and Maya were among Emerson's favorites. There is similarity of thought in Emerson's idea of the Over-Soul which absorbs man in an all-enfolding divinity and the Oriental statement that "the universe is the Brahman, but the Brahman is the Atman." This may be translated to read "the world is God and God is the soul." Emerson and his friends read Eastern literature "for the lustres,"—for suggestions which might help crystallize their thoughts and ideas.

Five distinct sources may be cited as the basis for New England Transcendentalism:

1. The German philosophers Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and other idealists.
2. The works of English Romantics who emphasized intuition, such as Coleridge and Carlyle.
3. Neo-Platonic philosophers of the 17th century with their reconstruction of the World Soul.
4. The Eclectic French School, namely Cousin and Jouffroy.
5. Oriental writings.

How and why did Transcendentalism take root in the Boston area in the 1830's? The answer is found in New England Unitarianism. The orthodox doctrine in American congregational churches from the middle of the 17th century to Emerson's time was Genovan Calvinism

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of the Cromwellian period. "The nominal point of contention was . . .
the doctrine of the Trinity; Unitarians denied that Jesus Christ was
God or a 'person' or the Godhead. The practical disagreement was
over the nature of man and his ability to contribute to his own
salvation."31

The Unitarian belief is that God is not only an idea of
the human mind or a device used to express universal laws, but is
a personality who revealed himself most importantly through Jesus
and the Holy Spirit. The Calvinists protested that the Unitarians
in their search for truth had passed the limits of Christianity.
Unitarians saw this statement as a sign of the narrowness and
bigotry of Calvinism. Yet the Transcendentalists found the Uni-
tarians unwilling to see free inquiry carried beyond the boundaries
of what they considered to be essential Christianity. The age of
the "Unitarian Controversy" lasted from around 1805 to 1833. By
1835 the Transcendentalists were joining the Calvinists in attacking
Unitarians for their inconsistency, not primarily because of their
doctrinal stand but because of the groundwork of authority they
had postulated. Many intellectuals in the Boston area questioned
Unitarian belief concerning reason and revelation, nature and the
supernatural, and the limits of faith. The Unitarians depended upon
the theory formulated by Locke and modified by Scottish philosophers
which placed emphasis on sense experience as the source of religion.
This theory was under attack both in Europe and America.32 Thus the

31 Hutchison, p. 4.
32 Ibid., pp. 12-21.
Unitarian movement made "unorthodox and comparatively free thinking in religious matters (though not in ethical) socially safe, comfortable, respectable, and, in New England at least, aristocratic." The atmosphere was made creative and fertile to philosophical speculation and independent investigation of the Real.

Contemporaries of the movement could not define Transcendentalism adequately, but they certainly knew who the New England Transcendentalists were. Actually there were two groups: the original group, which was narrow in its views; and the later Transcendentalists. Practically all of the members of the group were Unitarians at one time. The earlier group included Dr. William Ellery Channing, Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott, William Henry Channing (nephew of Dr. Channing), F. A. Hedge, James F. Clarke, W. H. Furness, John S. Dwight, C. F. Cranch, Elizabeth Peabody, and possibly Margaret Fuller. Margaret Fuller more or less complemented the group with her enthusiastic mind without belonging to it. Orestes A. Brownson, Converse Francis, and George Ripley also played a vital part in the formation of the group. Later members were T. W. Higginson, Samuel Johnson, John Weiss, David A. Wasson, Samuel Longfellow, O. B. Frothingham, C. A. Bartol, and Moncure Conway.

Francis Bowen of Harvard wrote of the New England Transcendentalists in 1877:

33Fuller, II, 452.

Kant's influence was but indirect, and his opinions were imperfectly known. . . . Hence it was that, misled by the term Transcendentalism, applied to his philosophy as a whole, and by his doctrine of the subjective character of space and time, the opinion became general, that his system was rather Platonic than Aristotelian, placing the essence of things and the characteristics of true knowledge in the realm of pure ideas and supersensuous intuitions of the truth—the very region, according to his philosophy, of necessary illusions and abortive attempts of the intellect to overstep its natural boundaries. 35

Bowen shows that the members of the Concord group were not strict disciples of Kant. Actually they resisted the name “Transcendentalists,” one reason being that the popular meaning of the adjective “transcendental” referred to anything “enthusiastic, mystical, extravagant, impractical, ethereal, supernatural, vague, abstruse, or lacking in common sense.” 36 When the club was formed in the fall of 1836, such names as “Hedge’s Club” or “The Symposium” did not stick, and the group was tagged as “The Transcendentalist Club.” The title was misleading and even Emerson stated that the word “Transcendental was a little starchy, . . . a little cold and stiff. The Greeks would never have liked it: their thought needed no Transcendental bush, and they lived the thing as naturally as they breathed.” 37

It is certain that the members could rarely share philosophies, for they all seemed to differ in their opinions. A passage taken from Hutchison’s study best illustrates this difference.

35 Hutchison, p. 27.

36 Ibid., p. 23.

37 Brooks, p. 105.
Their similarities of basic philosophy, of background, and of temperament, however, were more marked than those differences and produced a unity of purpose which was as apparent to their amused contemporaries as it was to the Transcendentalists themselves.

Most conspicuous among the unifying factors was their common tendency toward an intuitive philosophical method, their generally romantic approach to the universe, their almost invariable optimism about human nature, and their common feeling of participation in a movement of awakening and protest. Solutions differed, and so did the philosophical rationales for those solutions, but they agreed in placing 'intuition' above all traditions and conformities, all sacred books and special revelations. They were fundamentally united in condemning formalism in religion and literature, Lockean 'sensationalism' in philosophy, and all that was inhuman or materialistic in the popular social morality. Between such ways of thinking and the accepted attitudes of their time and place there was a gulf much wider than any of the divergencies within Transcendental ranks. 38

Scholars have attempted to define the New England movement, but the intangible statements given are often illusive and varied.

Emerson thus answered a questioning student at Williams College in 1851:

It isn't, I suppose, a commodity or 'Plan of Salvation,' or anything concrete; not, surely, an 'established church'; rather, unestablished; not even bread, perhaps, but a leaven hidden.

If we will only see that which is about us, we shall see also above. Is God far from any of us? There is an equality of the human spirit to the world's phenomena. We look neither up to the universe nor down to it, but confront it . . . 

The Transcendentalist sees everything as idealist. That is, all events, objects, etc., seen are images to the consciousness. It is the thought of them only one sees. You shall find God in the unchanged essence of the universe, the air, the

38 Hutchison, pp. 29-30.
river, the leaf; and in the subjective unfolding
of your nature, the determination of the private
spirit, everything of religion. As far as the
name, no one knows who first applied the name.39

Years before, Emerson had jotted the following statement in
his Journals: "Transcendentalism means, says our accomplished Mrs.
B., with a wave of her hand, a little beyond."40 Mrs. B. was probably
the mother of General Francis G. Barlow, and her definition was
probably as good as any.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary states that Transcen-
dentalism is:

Any philosophy, as that of Kant, which emphasizes
a priori conditions of knowledge and experience,
or the unknowable character of ultimate reality;
also, a doctrine, as that of Fichte and Hegel,
which emphasizes what transcends sense experience
as being fundamental in reality. Hence, more
widely, any philosophy, as that of Ralph Waldo
Emerson, which asserts the primacy of the spiri-
tual and super-individual as against the material
and empirical.

It is intuition, not reason, that is the key to the nature
of the Real for Emerson.

Nature is the outer appearance and symbol of
an inner spiritual law. This inner spiritual
essence, creating and supporting all things, of
which man's mind is a part, is the Over-Soul.
Within the universal mind nature lies as a:
harmonious entity, the parts of which are all
interrelated so as to relate the divine purpose
and to subservie man, the supreme manifestation

39 Charles J. Woodbury, Talks With Ralph Waldo Emerson,
pp. 103-109, quoted by Hutchison, p. 5.

40 Ralph Waldo Emerson, Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, eds.
Edward Emerson and Waldo E. Forbes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.,
1910), IV, 114, hereafter cited as Journals.
of deity. Science and religion alike testify to the glory of God and interpret the divine ideas, innate in the human mind, of which all experience is the reminiscence. 41

Emerson has been ignored by some scholars because he established no formal movement, no church, or lasting monument to his own philosophy. His writings have been marked by some as too genteel, and by others as too stuffy, too pretentious, as well as too liberal. It is true that Thoreau is to be the more admired for his determined stand against society, but it was Emerson who stood as the primary spokesman of the Transcendental doctrine which influenced not only his New England contemporaries but also men around the world. Emerson believed that nature is good and beneficent to man; that all men are capable of intuitive ideas; and that religion should be more than what is written out on examinations.

Not all people view nature as the Spirit of a good and personal God made visible. Nature is indifferent and contains within it disease, sorrow, pain, death, storms, beasts, and poverty. Although according to Christian doctrine man is made in the image of God, one must recognize that limits of intelligence and reasoning are applied to individual minds. Emerson held that man is divine, and the voice of God within man is Self-Reliance. Religion should be more than a standard pattern, but Emerson seemed unaware that environment and customs of society must be considered in the light of orthodox change. These situations are not adequately explained by the New England philosopher; in fact they are generally overlooked. Nevertheless,

41 Fuller, II, 453.
the development of Emerson's philosophy and the Transcendental views found in his private diaries will be traced in the next chapter. This chapter has not attempted to cover all aspects of Transcendentalism; it serves primarily as an introduction to the following study.
In 1909, twenty years after Emerson's death, his private journals were published by his son and grandson. The ten volumes are now out of print, but they remain a primary source for biographers and scholars who attempt to explicate Emersonian philosophy. The first volume which has survived is dated January, 1820, the year Emerson was sixteen years old and a junior at Harvard. The Journal is marked No. XVII, thus indicating that the student had done some earlier writing. He titled his diaries his "Blotting Books" rather than journals. The volumes from February, 1820, to July, 1824, were affectionately called "The Wide Worlds" by the young author. In his early volumes he often signed his entries "Junio," whereas in later years he referred to himself by various names but most frequently as "Casian." Year by year his entries reflect a maturing mind, an individual style, and a keen perception. It was not until he was in his thirties, however, that the entries are what many people term "Emersonian."

For fifty-six years Emerson recorded his observations, moods, and thoughts, not always daily, and sometimes at long intervals. These comments reflected his ambitions, his achievements, and his disappointments. Inevitably many entries are repetitious and of little consequence to the average reader. Emerson often jotted down maxims as well as long passages from books. If he did not feel like writing, he occupied himself by grouping and indexing.
his entries. He took pride in shaping his thoughts into sentences, aphorisms, epigrams, and gnomic sayings. He wrote that "the maker of a sentence . . . launches out into the infinite and builds a road into Chaos and old Right and is followed by those who hear him with something of wild, creative delight."\(^1\) Whenever he needed a lecture, he would take appropriate entries from his journals and shape them into a speech. Many sentences and paragraphs found in Emerson's published works appear throughout the diaries. His comments deal with such matters as religion, nature, morals, literature, personalities, philosophies, travels, and politics.

Emerson's philosophical thought as found in his private writings cannot be revealed without touching upon some of the important events in his life. A chronological table of Emerson's life is placed in the appendix for convenience.

Dr. William H. Furness wrote of the philosopher in a letter:

I don't think he ever engaged in boys' plays: not because of any physical inability, but simply because from his earlier years, he dwelt in a higher sphere. My one deep impression is, that, from his earliest childhood our friend lived and moved and had his being in an atmosphere of letters, quite apart by himself.\(^2\)

The boy certainly appeared to be introspective and derived his greatest pleasure from his writings. On August 23, 1820, at the end of his junior year, he made the following entry concerning his private writings:

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\(^1\) *Journal*, III, 395.

I think it has been an improving employment
decidedly. It has not encroached upon other occu-
pations and has offered seasonable aid at various
times to enlarge or enliven scanty themes; . . . it
has prevented the ennui of many an idle moment and
has perhaps enriched my stock of language for future
exertions.3

Aside from this activity, Emerson belonged to a literary
club called the Pythologian Society. For their programs the members
debated such topics as which is most conducive to individual happi-
ness, a state of celibacy or matrimony; which is the stronger passion,
love or ambition; and whether the conduct of the United States toward
Indians could be reconciled to principles of justice and humanity.
Emerson was a prominent member and contributed much to this club whose
purpose was described as extemporaneous discussion. At the last
meeting Emerson recorded that he won the thanks of the club for con-
tributing a couple of bottles of wine to encourage the spirit of the
occasion. His attitude toward himself, however, is seen in his entry
of October 25, 1820:

I find myself often idle, vagrant, stupid, and
hollow. This is somewhat appalling and, if I do not
discipline myself with diligent care, I shall suffer
severely from remorse and the sense of inferiority
hereafter. All around me are industrious and will
be great, I am indolent and shall be insignificant.
Avert it, heaven! Avert it, virtue! I need excite-
ment.4

Interesting is his notation from Senor, Lord of the Bright City, by
Henry Hunt Milman, "Mount on thy own path to Fame, nor swerve for

3Ibid., I, 31.
4Ibid., I, 70.
man or more than man." Then Emerson added that "it forms a good
motto by striking out the last four words."5

After his graduation in the summer of 1821, Emerson became
assistant teacher in his brother's school for girls. Though he
remained in this profession for two years, he was miserable, and
the journals reflect his general despondency. Emerson's health was
poor; his eyes were troubling him, his brother left him in charge
of the school while he went to Gottingen to study for the ministry,
and his mind was unsettled concerning his life's profession. Note
the following entry:

In twelve days I shall be nineteen years old; which I count a miserable thing. Has any other
educated person lived so many years and lost so
many days? I am he who nourished brilliant visions
of future grandeur which my will appear presumptu-
ous and foolish now... Shall I resign every
aspiration to belong to that family of giant minds? No, I will yet a little while entertain the angel.

He continued,

Look next from the history of my intellect to the
history of my heart. A blank, my lord. I have not
the kind affections of a pigeon. Ungenerous and
selfish, cautious and cold, I yet wish to be
romantic; I have not sufficient feeling to speak
a natural, hearty welcome to a friend or stranger. There is not in the whole wide universe of God
(My relations to Himself I do not understand) one
being to whom I am attached with warm and entire
devotion; and this I say at the most susceptible
age of man.6

Although the young man felt alone and apart from society,
he derived pleasure in the recording of his observations. He would

5Ibid., I, 14.
6Ibid., I, 139-142.
become almost enraptured with the beauties of nature and though he observed that such spells produced lassitude, he believed that it operated to divest the mind of worn-out contemplations and replaced new freshness upon life. The imaginative mind would be inspired to mould and create splendid fancies which would bring delight long after the physical phenomena ceased to create delight. This youthful attitude toward nature is evident in the following remark:

When those magnificent masses of vapour which load our horizon are breaking away, disclosing fields of blue atmosphere, there is an exhilaration awakened in the system of a susceptible man which so invigorates the energies of mind and displays to himself such manifold power and joy superior to other existences that he will triumph and exult that he is man. . . .

While in college his fondness for the classics, philosophy, and science caused him to consent on natural philosophy in this manner:

I do not think any one study so contributes to expand the mind as our first correct notions of this science—when we first know that the sky is not a shell, but a vacant space, that the world is not still and a plain, but a little globe, performing, as one of a system immense revolutions. . . .

To Emerson one of the great gifts of Nature is the ability "to forget for a season the world and its concerns, and to separate the soul for sublime contemplation till it has lost the sense of circumstances and is decking itself in plumage . . . from the gay wardrobe of Fancy—a recreation and rapture of which few men can avail themselves."

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7 Ibid., I, 26.
8 Ibid., I, 60.
9 Ibid., I, 63-64.
The young teacher considered the ministry as a profession, thinking much on morals, vice, and virtue, and doing much reading. His aunt Mary had much to do with his ideas and opinions. Emerson addressed her by the title of "Tsamurya," an anagram of his own for "Aunt Mary." He wrote to her casually the year after his graduation:

I am curious to read your Hindoo mythologies. One is apt to lament over indolence and ignorance, when he reads some of these sanguine students of the Eastern antiquities, who seem to think that all the books of knowledge and all the wisdom of Europe twicetold lie hid in the treasures of the Brahmas and the volumes of Zoroaster. When I lie dreaming on the possible contents of pages as dark to me as the characters on the seal of Solomon, I console myself with calling it learning's El Dorado. Every man has a fairy-land just beyond the compass of his horizon... and it is very natural that literature at large should look for some sanctified stores of mind which surpassed example and possibility.10

Emerson was interested in formulating his ideas and found his aunt to be on familiar terms with Plato and Plotinus. She instilled into Emerson a strong interest in Oriental literature and philosophy. She corresponded with him and discussed such things as the problems of society and solitude, Hindu lore, writers and their works, and religion. The problem of evil was particularly disturbing to Emerson. He recognized that the world housed the enslaved, the sick, the disappointed, the poor, the unfortunate, and the dying. There was so much evil in the world that goodness and virtue seemed to be a tiny island in an unbounded ocean. Emerson felt that man is incompetent to question the existence of evil or the divine benevolence which arises from evil. The question exists that if God is good, why are

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so many of His creatures unhappy? Evil, according to Emerson, is the rough foundation of human virtue. Emerson wrote in his Journal that the world is the accursed seat of all misfortunes. He stated that he would adore the Beneficent Author of his life. He wrote of the mind perceiving a purpose to pain and seeing how "the instruction and perfection of myriads is brought about by the spectacle of guilt and its punishment... This question lies at the sources of things, and we are only indulged with an intimation that may make out the just goodness of the Deity." To the young thinker, the recompense of virtue far surpassed the attractions of vice. He reckoned religion, the "invisible connection between heaven and earth, the solitary principle which unites intellectual beings to an account, and makes of men moral beings" to be essential to the Universe. Without religion there is no order to existence. Religion records the progress of mankind and suggests that it is the idea of the only true vehicle of immortality, "the only bond of connection which can traverse the long duration which separates the ends of the world and unites the first people to the knowledge and sympathy of the last people." Religious power is "a great flood which encircles the universe and is poured out in unnumbered channels to feed the fountains of life and the wants of Creation; but everywhere runs back again and is swallowed up in its eternal source. That source is God." Emerson

11 Journal, I, 199.
12 Ibid., I, 98.
13 Ibid., I, 100.
14 Ibid., I, 104.
was devoting much of his meditations to religion matters, and the
controversy over the Trinity caused him to comment:

> Will the disputes upon the Nature of God, upon
> Trinitarianism and Unitarianism, never yield to
> a purer pursuit and to practical inquiry? It is
> possible for all we know to the contrary, that
> God may exist in a threefold Unity; but if it were
> so, since it is inconceivable to us, he would never
> have revealed to us such an existence which we
> cannot describe or comprehend. Infinite Wisdom
> established the foundation of Knowledge in the mind,
> so that twice two could never make anything else
> than four.\textsuperscript{15}

The young teacher viewed the moral sense as divine in origin
and persistent in activity. Emerson felt that moral sense seemed to
sanction the Platonic idea that the individual is an emanation from
the Abyss of Deity and returned back from whence it flowed. He turned
to historical and religious research and was determined to confront
the problem of the medieval church in its relation to modern Christi-
anity. His final thoughts were published in an essay entitled "Thoughts
on the Religion of the Middle Ages." The article did not bring him
much esteem. Emerson continued to read and study nature as well as
books. In 1823, his mother moved to Canterbury, then a part of Roxbury.
In that fall Emerson took a solitary walking trip to the Connecticut
Valley—a trip which he described almost daily in his journals. Emerson's
inner being seemed to communicate with nature in such a fashion that he
was able to perceive spirit and purpose in each physical object. He
wrote in his Journals, "he who wanders in the woods perceives how
natural it was to pagan imagination to find gods in every deep grove
and by each fount head; Nature appeared to Emerson "not to be silent

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., I, 104.
but to be eager and striving to break out into music. Each tree,
flower and stone, he invests with life and character; it is impossible
that the wind which breathes so expressive a sound amid the leaves—
should mean nothing."16

Of reason, Emerson wrote:

God peopled the universe with images of himself,
and kindled within them the light of his own under-
standing . . . an intelligence by which they are able
to see their way in a universe where other beings are
blind, to behold him, and their relation to him . . . .
It is an intelligence which reveals to man another
condition of existence, and a nearer approach to the
Supreme Being. This intelligence is Reason.17

Thus the young schoolteacher analyzed his thoughts and in the
end, wrote on a Sunday in April at the age of twenty:

In a month I shall be legally a man. And I
deliberately dedicate my time, my talents, and my
hopes to the church. . . . in Divinity I hope to
thrive. I inherit from my sire a formality of
manner and speech, but I derive from him, or his
patrician parent a passionate love for the
strains of eloquence. In my better hours, I am
the believer (if not the dupe) of brilliant
promises, and can respect myself as the possessor
of those powers which command the reason and
passions of the multitudes.18

It is interesting to note that Emerson spent considerable
time discussing the mind as a ticket to another world, to an unknown
order of reality. The entries in his diaries become almost monoto-
nous with details regarding his doubts and fears, his views toward
vice and virtue, and his analyses of man in relation to the universe

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16 Ibid., I, 146.
17 Ibid., I, 168-169.
18 Ibid., I, 360-363.
and God. He felt that the soul would grow rank and stale if left to itself. And, with this idea of the soul as fertile soil, Emerson moralized and stated that if one wished to see the soul bud out abundantly and bring an harvest richer an hundred and a thousand fold, he should bind it with the restraint of cultivation. Probably few aspirants to the ministry ever showed more imagination or conscience than he. Emerson wanted to see his problems in their broadest meaning, and he wrote a lengthy letter to Plato on the moral and religious conditions of man for his aunt Mary to answer on Plato's behalf. In this letter he questioned whether man should have before him the strong excitement of religion and its thrilling motives. He stated, "I confess it has not for me the same exclusive and extraordinary claims it has for many. I hold Reason to be prior Revelation, and that they do not contradict each other."19 He had written in his Journals.

I fear the progress of metaphysical philosophy. * * * the Platonists congratulated themselves for ages upon their knowing that Mind was a dark Chamber whereon ideas like shadows were painted. Men derided this as infantile when they afterwards learned that the Mind was a sheet of white paper whereon any and all characters might be written.20

Naturally Emerson was keenly aware of the new historical criticisms of philosophy and religion. With his brother William in Germany, and with the influential sermons of Channing and Everett, Emerson was becoming more aware that "it is perilous for Religion to be a

19 Ibid., I, 386.
20 Ibid., I, 348-349.
fashion as it is apt to lead men to errors both in the nature and in
the degree of their virtue. . . ."

His aunt Mary expressed her
feelings in a letter to Emerson on the eve of his entering Cambridge
Divinity School on December 6, 1824.

Would to God thou were more ambitious—
respected thyself more and the world less. Thou
wouldst not to Cambridge. . . . why did you
not study under the wing of Channing which was
never pruned at Cambridge? The public ear,
weary of the artifices of eloquence, will ask for
the wants of the soul to be satisfied. May you
be among others who will prove a Pharoa to your
country and times. 22

The entry of December 17 is probably an extract from Emerson's reply:

I am blind, I fear, to the truth of a theology,
which I can't but respect for the eloquences it
bogets, and for the heroic life of its modern,
and the heroic death of its ancient defenders.
. . . when I see wise and good of all [ages]/
consenting to a single creed that taught the
infinite perfection and paternal character of
God, and the accountability of man, I cannot
help acknowledging the first and invariable
fruit of those means of information that are
put in all hands. I cannot help revolting from
the double deity, gross Gothic offspring of
some Genevan school. 23

Thus he stated his difference with Calvinism. His aunt Mary,
though alarmed, decided to let his heresy pass as being merely an
intellectual exercise. Emerson's serious nature, his intent, and his
attitude may be seen in some lines he wrote in his journal which
he entitled "From XVI." The entire composition is placed in the

21 Ibid., II, 18.
22 Ibid., II, 28-31.
23 Ibid., II, 32-33.
In a letter to his aunt, he once more stated his belief.

"For me, I hold fast to my old faith, that to each soul is a solitary law, a several universe."\(^2^4\) He continued to discuss Christianity and wrote that:

To one age • • • Christianity is a stern dogmatical and ritual religion, but it answers their prayers and does fulfil its Divine purpose. To the next generation it is a gentle and intellectual faith, for its disciples are men of minds and manners, and it likewise doth God's will to them. New England is the most reading community in the world and, of course, has the love of knowledge, and lust of change.\(^2^5\)

He believed religion to be the connection of God and the Soul. Man is an animal, Emerson believed, that contains in his soul an image of the Being by whom the Universe subsists. The Mind is the image and mirror of this Being. Therefore, it is better to depend upon Self rather than the judgment of society. "Is it not better to scorn and avoid the heaving fluctuations of its public opinion, refuse to be the victim of its changing estimations, and be the universe to yourself,"\(^2^6\) he questioned in his diaries.

In 1829, Emerson became associate pastor to the Reverend Henry Ware, of the Second Church in Boston, and he was married to seventeen-year-old Ellen Tucker. Eighteen months later Ellen died of consumption. Emerson's love for Ellen was beautiful, and her death grieved the young minister more than most biographers indicate. For two years after her death until the day he sailed

\(^{2^4}\text{Ibid.}, \text{II, 77.}\)

\(^{2^5}\text{Ibid.}, \text{II, 77-78.}\)

\(^{2^6}\text{Ibid.}, \text{II, 249.}\)
for Europe. Emerson walked to Roxbury daily to visit her grave. A single sentence written on March 29, 1832, shows the strange nature of Emerson: "I visited Ellen's tomb and opened the coffin." The poem "To Ellen" is inserted in the appendix to show Emerson's feelings for his new bride. Her death caused him to question his faith and ask "Will the dead be restored to me?" He wrote that he almost feared for this miserable apathy to wear off, for old duties would present themselves, and again he would be amused and move among his friends with a tranquil countenance. Emerson continued in his diary, "there is one birth, and one baptism, and one first love, and the affections cannot keep their youth any more than men."

Ellen's death did not change Emerson's mind concerning the church though he was beginning to feel uncomfortable in its bounds. A notation in his Journals that he went to a Sunday school meeting, but was a dumb dog that could not bark is most revealing. His awareness of sectarianism caused him to write the following passage:

A sect or party is an elegant incognito devised to save a man from the vexation of thinking.
Since to govern my passions with absolute sway is the work I have to do, I cannot but think that the sect for the suppression of Intemperance, or a sect for the suppression of loose behaviour to women, would be a more reasonable and useful society than the Orthodox sect, which is a society for the suppression of Unitarianism, or the Unitarian, which is a society for the diffusion of useful knowledge.

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27 Ibid., II, 469.
28 Ibid., II, 356.
29 Ibid., II, 356-357.
Religion is the relation of the soul to God, and therefore the progress of Sectarianism marks the decline of religion. For, looking at God instantly reduces our disposition to dissent from our brother. A man may die by a fever as well as by consumption, and religion is as effectually destroyed by bigotry as by indifference.

Emerson was at this time reading Coleridge's Friend with great interest. He told his aunt Mary of the book and wrote:

He has a tone lower than greatness—but what a living soul, what a universal knowledge! I like to encounter those citizens of the universe, that believe the mind was made to be spectator of all, inquisitor of all, and whose philosophy compares with others such as astronomy with the other sciences, taking post at the center and as from a specular mount, sending sovereign glances to the circumference of things.

In September Emerson again wrote of self-reliance, this time stating a belief that was to reverberate through most of his writings and lectures in the years to come. It is almost amusing to read "Know Thyself," a poem four pages long in Volume II, in which the message of Self is touched upon from every possible angle. The theme is excellent, but the poetic quality is exceptional in its awkwardness. His prose entry was a much better statement of his views:

I would have a man trust himself, believe that he has all the endowments necessary to balance each other in a perfect character, if only he will allow them all fair play. . . . It is a wondrous structure, this soul in me, infinitely beyond my art to puzzle out its principles. I admire a flower and see that each lily and aster is perfect in its kind, though different in its proportions and arrangements of petals from every other aster in the field, and shall I not believe as much of every mind—that it has its own beauty and character, and was never meant to resemble any other one? Every man has his own voice,
manner, eloquence, and, just as much his own sort of love and grief and imagination and action. Let him scorn to imitate any being, let him scorn to be a secondary man, let him fully trust his own share of God's goodness, that, correctly used, it will lead him on to perfection which has no type yet in the universe, save only the Divine Mind. **32**

Emerson found much pleasure in the study of nature as well as his books on religion and philosophy. As a minister Emerson had a difficult time teaching the scriptures, praying, and conducting the perfunctory duties of his profession. His sermons were orthodox and unorthodox by turns, and he used his own doubts and sufferings as a means to form a philosophy of life. He quoted Plotinus in his diary, "of the Unity of God, nothing can be predicated, neither being, nor essence, nor life, for it is above all these." **33** He was reading Cousin's lectures, "a sane and plain guide to the history of philosophy." **34** He asked his brother William to make a synopsis of the leading arguments against Christianity and mark in the works of Eichhorn passages that would tend to destroy a belief in the divine authority of the New Testament. Emerson wrote his brother Edward, "I am trying to learn the ethical truths that always allure me from my cradle till now and yet how slowly disclosed? That word Compensation is one of the watchwords of my spiritual world and time and chance and sorrow and hope do not by their revelations abate my

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**32**Ibid., II, 309-310.

**33**Ibid., II, 357.

curiosity." Emerson's sermons presented in a somewhat more religious garb the diarist's favorite doctrines of compensation and self-reverence with quotations from Socrates, Confucius, Moses, Fénelon, and Montaigne as authorities and witnesses in the justification of the common divinity of men. He naturally turned to the writings of Goethe, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Thomas Carlyle for inspiration and fact. Emerson's doubts began to be strengthened by a positive dislike for the church, and he wrote in his Journals:

How little love is at the bottom of these great religious shows; ... how much sham! Calvinism stands, I fear, by pride and ignorance; and Unitarianism, as a sect, stands by the opposition of Calvinism. It is cold and cheerless, the controversy makes it warm with fire got from below. He became disinterested with his Bible lectures and preached that the soul and the body of things are harmonized so that the deeper one knows his soul, the more intense will be his love of outward nature. It appears odd that a minister would write the following passage in his private journal, but it must be remembered that his inner nature was turning away from the institutionalized church:

It is the best part of the man, I sometimes think, that revolts most against his being a minister. His good revolts from official goodness. The difficulty is that we do not make a world of our own, but fall into institutions already made, and have to accommodate ourselves to them to be useful at all, and this accommodation is, I say, a loss of so much integrity and, of course, of so much power.

35Ibid., p. 156.
36Journals, II, 424.
37Ibid., II, 448-449.
In 1832 Emerson resigned from the church. Everything apparently, had gone amiss. Emerson had lost his profession; he had no plans; his wife was dead; and his two brothers, Edward and Charles, were both failing rapidly in their strength. Both were studying law and both had brilliant records. Charles had a chance of life, but Edward had little hope. He had broken down and become a violent maniac. Though he had recovered his reason, he had had to give up his career in Webster's office. Edward was in Puerto Rico working as a clerk—waiting for death. Emerson decided to go to Europe rather than visit Edward. After his departure, his aunt Mary wrote to Charles.

I do believe he has no fixed faith in a personal God! His letters have been confused and dark—a mixture of heathen greatness—of worse than antient good heathenism—pantheism—Swedenborgianism—hypothesis of nature and German rationalism. And yet yet you talk of his being a 'reformer and needing good health.' A reformer! and begin at the wrong end! annuling a simple rite w'h has bound the followers of Jesus together for ages and announced his resurrection! A reformer—who on earth with his genius is less able to cope with opposition? Who with his good sense less force of mind—and while it invents new universes is lost in the surrounding halo... So, he never loved his holy offices—and it is well he has left them... 38

When Emerson sailed to Europe on Christmas day in 1832, he was already entering his thirtieth year and had formulated to a good extent his philosophical views of man and the universe. This philosophy was further cultivated by his experiences in Europe. He was well acquainted with Plato, the Neo-Platonists, and some Oriental literature. He felt the force of spontaneous life within

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38 Rusk, p. 167.
and surrendered his nature to flow with the river of the universe.

He knew Pythagoras had said "the soul is an emanation of the Divinity, a part of the world, a ray from the source of light," and Heraclitus' statement "that common light which enlightens all at once is only the divine reason spread through all thinking beings by an immediate effusion."39 Emerson also knew Plato's philosophy that "Good, the unity that lies forever at the base of things, an unifying fire, constantly in flux, but always obedient to the same divine laws"40 was a message he himself sanctioned. To Emerson, this Absolute was the Over-Soul and was represented in all of Nature's principles, expressed most clearly in the outer world. Man had the potential of harmonious unity with Nature, but was disunited because of ignorance, customs, prejudices, and habits. By studying himself and the laws of his being, man could and would achieve his inheritance. The Neo-Platonic belief of the relationship of the soul and the cosmos, the World-Soul situation, was agreeable to Emerson's way of thinking. He was receptive to the teachings of Everett and Channing, who preached that the elements of the Divine are within ourselves. Emerson enjoyed the Universe, for he felt himself a part of it. He decided to study his inner self and reveal to man the potentials inherent within the soul. He turned to nature for his lessons and stood apart from tradition. He wrote of his faith in his Journals:

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39 Brooks, p. 46.

40 ibid., p. 46.
I read my commission in every cipher of nature, and know that I was made for another office, a professor of the Joyous Science, a detector and delineator of occult harmonies and unpublished beauties, a herald of civility, nobility, learning, and wisdom; an affirmer of the One Law yet as one who should affirm it in music and dancing.41

Emerson's trip, experiences, acquaintances, and impressions of Europe are recorded vividly in the Journals. His itinerary covered such places as Malta, Florence, Naples, Rome, Venice, Milan, Paris, and London. His acquaintance with Landor, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle were inspiring. From Landor, he gained an insight of the value of the literary spirit. Though he could not understand all of Coleridge's philosophy, Emerson was inspired by Coleridge's outcry against Unitarianism. With Wordsworth, Emerson shared his feelings of divinity immanent in the natural world. But it was Carlyle who excited Emerson most. Carlyle seemed to shake the continent as well as history and make the world alive with his expression of faith in man who could liberate life into action. In Liverpool while waiting to sail for New York, the travel-tired Emerson wrote in his diary:

"I thank the Great God who has led me through this European scene, this last schoolroom in which he has pleased to instruct me . . . he has shown me the men I wished to see . . . many things I owe to the sight of those men."42 His mind dwelt on humanity and the problems of mankind, but Emerson was no longer as a shepherd caring for his flocks but a philosopher musing upon the vicissitudes of society. His feelings are expressed in the following entry:

\[41 \text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 49.}\]
\[42 \text{Journals, III, 185.}\]
Ah me! what hope of reform, what hope of communicating religious light to benighted Europe, if they who have what they call the light are so selfish and timid and cold, and their faith so impractical and, in their judgment, so unsuitable for the middling classes. I know not, I have no call to expound, but this is my charge plain and clear, to act faithful upon my own faith, to live by it myself, and see what a hearty obedience to it will do. 43

Emerson landed in New York on October 9, 1833, a resolute man. The days of his apprenticeship were over, and Emerson accepted the challenge of his universe.
III. The Lecturing Philosopher

Emerson married Lydia Jackson of Plymouth in September, 1835, and bought a home near Boston for thirty-five hundred dollars. The settlement of the Tucker estate was enough to justify Emerson's resolve to end his ministerial career; and although he no longer held a church, he continued to do some supply preaching, always expounding his well-known views without apology. Emerson began some lecturing, using the country lyceums to his advantage. "Poor men," he stated in his Journals, "they little know how different that lecture will be when it is given in New York, or is printed." Most of Emerson's lectures came from a compilation of the writings in his Journals, and on one occasion he wrote, "This Book is my Savings Bank. I grow richer because I have somewhere to deposit my earnings; and fractions are worth more to me because corresponding fractions are waiting here that shall be made integers by their addition."

Emerson used science and natural history as the basis for expressing his provocative ideas, and although his lecture on "Water" to the Boston Mechanics' Institution was not outstanding, it did manage to recognize the ceaseless revolutions going forward in nature. A study of Emerson's Journals at this time shows an emphasis on natural history as well as an interest in the personalities

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1 Journals, III, 250-251.
2 Ibid., III, 246.
of such representative men as Michelangelo, Milton, Luther, Burke, and George Fox. Emerson slighted material values and favored intellectual and spiritual aspects, and he colored every subject with ethical implications. His literary struggles included some undistinguished and mediocre verses, an article for The North American Review, and the growing ideas of Nature which are interspersed in his Journals. His interests in self-reliance and compensation received stimulus from only a few people at first. When his brother Charles died on May 9, 1836, Emerson felt the loss keenly and wrote many pages in his diary concerning the tragedy. "Who can ever supply his place to me?" Emerson questioned, and then answered "None . . . The eye is closed that was to see nature for me, and give me leave to see."3

Charles too had felt the pull of the Universe and his mind, so similar to Waldo's, was revealed when he wrote, "I do not know but one of the ancient metamorphoses will some day happen to me, and I shall shoot into a tree, or flow into a stream, I do so lose my human nature and join myself to that which is without."4 The loss of Charles shook Waldo's faith, for he could "gather no hint from this terrible experience,"5 but with the birth of Emerson's first son, Waldo, his optimism returned. At this same time, Emerson received the first proof-sheets of Nature to be corrected, and his acquaintance with Alcott began to promote an interest in the exchange

3Ibid., IV, 41.
4Ibid., IV, 44.
5Rusk, p. 231.
of casual philosophical thoughts. It appeared to him that the law of compensation was verified once more. Margaret Fuller was another person who exchanged ideas with Emerson, and before long there existed a definite group of thinkers who looked to Emerson as their leader. A certain scholarly minister, Frederic Hodge, felt that a club should be formed and a magazine be founded for the self-expression of the select group. Emerson considered such a plan but was dubious. He did not want a group composed of ministers who would exclude any man who could contribute to the thinking exchange, and he insisted that "Man is the point wherein matter and spirit meet and marry." Emerson expressed both in his lectures and his diaries a belief that all men possess divinity and are capable of harmony with Nature.

Charles' death, Waldo's birth, the group of thinkers, Alcott's friendship, Margaret Fuller, and domestic situations—all these fill much space in the journals and though interesting, they are not of primary significance here.

Emerson was widely known as a speaker when his first book, *Nature*, was published in 1836. The book was not received enthusiastically although five hundred copies were sold, but it did make an impression upon Carlyle, Richard M. Milnes, John Sterling, and a few other English friends. *Nature* was recognized as a kind of manifesto of American Transcendentalism, and it announced Emerson's genius, for there was a certain exhilaration and vitalization apparent in the few chapters of poetical thoughts upon his well-worn themes.

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6 *Journal*, IV, 78.
The book describes the primacy of the soul, the sufficiency of Nature, and the immediacy of God. The second idea, the sufficiency of Nature, is presented in four aspects: that of commodity; that of beauty; that of language; and that of discipline. Emerson had planned the book as two essays, and as late as June 28, 1836, noted in Volume III of the Journals his plan to follow Nature with another essay entitled Spirit, and "the two shall make a decent volume." On August 8 he wrote: "The book of Nature still lies on the table; there is, as always, one crack in it, not easy to be soldered or welded." This flaw occurred between the chapter on "Discipline" and that on "Idealism." This flaw was not so much caused by Emerson's failure to solve the philosophical problem of mind and matter, as by the impression given that he had somehow solved it. Emerson had described nature in its material aspects, then jumped to the conclusion that nature might be better described as ideal. He recognized the dualism of mind and matter, and his conclusion is made in a kind of epilogue in which the purification of the soul through nature is the link between the two elements.

The primacy of the soul is presented as divine and identical in all men. This spark of eternity discloses nature without and also reveals its own inner ground of existence. Nature is described as being the shadow of God cast in the senses, and its function is to unlock the capacities of the soul. The third idea, the immediacy of God, expressed that deity has unobstructed access to all of every soul, and conversely every soul has access to all of God, a process of divine interflowing.
In the last stage of the work the key point is revealed.

That spirit, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old. As a plant upon the earth, so a man rests upon the bosom of God.7

The well-expressed ideas of Nature summarize the various observations and notations Emerson had written in his journals concerning his belief in man, nature, and the universe. The book expresses the idea that nature is the means to a spiritual or ideal end, a union of man and his universe with the spirit of the Supreme Being.

Emerson's address, "The American Scholar," to the Phi Beta Kappa of Harvard in 1837, proclaimed him the prophet of a new age. It dealt with influences upon the scholar, duties of the scholar, and the signs of the times. The message was for men "to trust their instincts..., rebel against the law of a commercial world—believe in their times, their country, believe that their dreams had meaning, believe that in them, and not in the gods of matter, lay the real hope of society."8 In his journals, however, Emerson wrote "it is ignoble to owe our success to the coaxing and allying of society, to be told by the incapable, 'That's capital. Do some more.'"9 Alcott described the Address as "the first adequate statement of the new views that really attracted general attention."10

8 Brooks, p. 78.
9 Journals, IV, 338.
Emerson was sought after, and in a short time Concord became the hub of intellectual minds. The group, called "The Transcendentalists," continued to meet, discuss, and argue their views. The immediate neighborhood of Boston was fed on whatever came from the flotsam of time and from new Eastern influences. The "Apostles of Newness," as the members were sometimes called, were gifted with many tongues. They spoke of an individualism in rampant protest, but Emerson was recognized as a bold, peaceful, and inspiring spokesman. Margaret Fuller was instrumental in bringing many outsiders to hear Emerson and helping him always to have an audience. Another of Emerson's friends was Henry David Thoreau—a shy but resolute neighbor. Whenever possible Thoreau and Emerson roamed the Concord woods and shared their views of nature and society. Nature was always a question to the philosopher, and he wrote:

I am agitated with curiosity to know the secret of nature. Why cannot geology, why cannot botany speak and tell me what has been, what is, as I run along the forest promontory, and ask when it rose like a blister on heated steel? Then I looked up and saw the sun shining in the vast sky, and heard the wind bellow above and the water glistened in the vale. These were the forces that wrought then and work now. Yes, there they grandly speak to all plainly, in proportion as we are quick to apprehend.\(^1\)

Henry Thoreau made the moments sunny for Emerson with his perception and simplicity. Emerson spoke of the young fellow's

\(^1\) Journals, IV, 355.
outlook. "... Everything that boy says makes sorrow with society, though nothing can be graver than his meaning."12

Aside from his lectures, walks, and work in his orchard, Emerson spent much time studying and reading German, meditating upon the writings of Confucius, and corresponding with Thomas Carlyle. He acted as a type of press agent for Carlyle, seeing that the Scotman's works were published and circulated in America. Carlyle, in turn, was assisting the spread of Emersonian influence in Europe. Many critics accused Emerson of being a mere imitator of Carlyle. Both saw the world becoming a victim of political and economic conditions, but where Carlyle was determined to save the world in masses, Emerson desired to deal with individual man. Emerson's comment concerning Carlyle's French Revolution presents his difference of attitude:

I cannot help feeling that he squanders his genius. Why should an imagination such as never rejoiced before the face of God, since Shakespeare, be content to play? Why should he trifle and joke? I cannot see; I cannot praise. It seems to me, he should have writ in such deep earnest that he should have trembled to his fingers' ends with the terror and the beauty of his visions.13

Yet Emerson's admiration for Carlyle was deep, and in another entry, he commented that "this man upholds and propels civilization. He cleans and exalts men and leaves the world better. He ... reports the good he sees, God through him telling his generation ... that it is good. He discharges his duty as one of the world's Scholars."14

12Ibid., IV, 397.
13Ibid., IV, 405.
14Ibid., IV, 274.
Emerson saw the virtues of society, but was disturbed with its evil elements. The problem of slavery was particularly distressing, and he was outraged when Lovejoy, an antislavery editor, was killed by an Illinois mob. In his Journal of 1837 Emerson wrote:

Lovejoy has given his breast to the bullet for his part, and has died when it was better not to live. He is absolved. There are always men enough ready to die for the silliest punctilio; to die like dogs, who fall down under each other's teeth, but I sternly rejoice that one was found to die for humanity and the rights of free speech and opinion.15

Emerson believed that every man is a god and if this Transcendental doctrine were accepted, the evil of slavery would be abolished. He was conscience-stricken at his own inaction, but he felt that his emotions and nature were not ordained to deal with the problem. His interests turned from slavery to literature. Emerson felt that his quest for philosophical truth was doomed, for he believed thinking to be talent and doing to be genius. He recognized himself as a seeker rather than a doer.

Emerson's problem hinged upon his contrary moods. He wrote, "I grow in God. I am only a form of him. He is the soul of me. I can even with a mountainous aspiring say, I am God. . . ." At such times, however, the problem of duality troubled him, and he confessed in his Journal, "A believer in Unity, a scur of Unity, I yet behold two."16 Though he believed in man as God, he sometimes felt apart and could not feel personal union with God. The philosophical principles

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15Ibid., IV, 372.
16Ibid., IV, 247-248.
which he gave others did not always correspond with his own feelings, and this troubled him. Emerson continued to expound the doctrines of self-reliance and compensation, and his Boston lectures on *Human Culture* were particularly successful. In spite of the depression of the times, Emerson's largest returns for his lectures were during the years of 1837-1839.

The "Divinity School Address" given on July 15, 1837, raised a storm of dissent which left New England in an uproar. Emerson attacked historical Christianity as a myth and Jesus as a demigod like Apollo or Osiris. He stated:

Historical Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion. As it appears to us, and as it has appeared for ages, it is not a doctrine of the soul, but an exaggeration of the personal, the positive, the ritual. It has dealt, it dwells, with pious exaggeration about the person of Jesus. 17

He did not recommend the establishment of a new system of worship but felt that new life should be breathed into the old form. Such words were atheistic to the public; yet Emerson felt no regret for his statements. He refused to argue with anyone though critics stated "the address was obviously in imitation of Thomas Carlyle," though based on principles like those of Cousin. Nothing of it was from the Bible. The author was clearly "an infidel and an atheist," 18 The test of religion or philosophy of religion is the number of things explainable by it, according to Emerson. To him "the religion

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17 Selected Writings, p. 73.
18 Rusk, p. 271.
of our churches explains neither art nor society nor history, but itself needs explanation. It was of little consequence to Emerson what the critics said; he ignored the storm of dissent and held fast to his doctrines. He narrowed his profession to that of author and lecturer after the "Divinity School Address," and the last note recorded in his **Journals** concerning a sermon was that he preached in Concord on January 20, 1839. He turned to the teachings of Moses, of Socrates, of Zoroaster, and of Jesus and found himself susceptible to them.

The life of a lecturer was arduous, but Emerson travelled about the country "emptying his decanters and demijohns of popular wisdom," as he termed his lectures. When he had given his lectures, Emerson rewrote them into essay form. He wrote in his **Journals** on one occasion that he had walked into the woods around Goose Pond and had formulated principles which could be used as foundations of a course of lectures. The eight principles were:

1. There is one mind common to all individuals.
2. There is a relation between man and nature, so that whatever is in matter is in mind.
3. It is a necessity of the human nature that it should express itself continually and embody its thought.
4. It is the constant endeavor of the mind to idealize the actual, to accommodate the shows of things to the desires of the mind.
5. It is the constant tendency of the mind to unify all it beholds, or to reduce the remotest facts to a single law.
6. There is a parallel tendency (corresponding unity) in nature of the compound shell, or leaf, or animal from few elements.
7. There is a tendency in the mind to separate particulars, and, in magnifying them, to lose sight of the connection of the object with the whole.

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19 *Journals, V., 151.*
8. Underneath all appearances, and causing all appearances are certain eternal laws which we call the Nature of Things. 20

Emerson spent much time in the interest of The Dial, a magazine edited by Margaret Fuller expressing a strong Transcendental quality. His opinion of The Dial is found in his Journals:

It ought to contain the best advice on the topics of Government, Temperance, Abolition, Trade, and Domestic Life. It might well add to such compositions, such poetry and sentiment as now will constitute its best merit. Yet it ought to go straight into life with the devoted union of the best men and women in the land. 21

In the middle of March, 1841, Emerson realized a boyhood dream when his essays were published. The Essays: First Series expounded the doctrine of the divine mind. History rather than nature was his means of expositing his theme—a definite influence from Cousin's book on the history of philosophy, and Hegel's lectures on the same subject. Emerson's Journals are filled with the epigrammatical sentences which fashion the essays. "Self-Reliance" is the most popular of the essays with its message that

- to believe your own thought, to believe that which is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the most universal sense; for the inward in due time becomes the outward, and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment. 22

The theme is similar to the Oriental law, "All that depends on

20 Ibid., IV, 118-119.
21 Ibid., V, 443.
22 Selected Writings, p. 15.
another gives pain; all that depends on himself gives pleasure. . . .

—a doctrine in which the Stoics found refuge. Emerson shows self-trust to be a belief in the native Self, the Absolute. He wrote the following question in his journals: "Can we not trust ourselves? Must we be such coxcombs as to keep watch and ward over our noblest sentiments even, lest they also betray us, and God prove a little too divine?" These essays and those of his second series were Emerson's attempt not to deny evil but to balance good and evil so as to show justice. The essay entitled "Compensation" was an endeavor to understand and explain the tragedies of his life. Emerson's purpose was not convincing enough, for to believe that polarity exists in everything in nature is difficult. Emerson was aware that his lectures and writings continually resounded the tone and theme of his doctrines.

He wrote of this in his journals when he asked "Why do I write another line since my best friends assure me that in every line I repeat myself?" His answer was a bit lengthy, but direct:

... the God must be obeyed even to ridicule.

The criticism of the public is, as I have often noted, much in advance of its invention. The ear is not cheated. A continuous effect cannot be produced by discontinuous thought, and when the eye cannot detect the juncture of the skilful mosaic, the spirit is apprised of disunion simply by the failure to affect the spirit. This other thing I will also concede,—that the man Fingal [himself] is rather too swiftly plastic, or, shall I say, works more in the spirit of a cabinmaker, than of an architect. The thought which strikes

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23 Rusk, p. 280.
24 Journals, V, 461.
25 Ibid., VI, 73.
him as great and Danteque, and opens an abyss, he instantly presents to another transformed into a chamber or a neat parlor, and degrades ideas. 26

Emerson's comment: "I do not wish to remove from my present prison to a prison a little larger" 27 indicated his opinion of the Brook Farm experiment. Although he felt that the only persons who really understood his philosophy were Henry Thoreau and Bronson Alcott, he did not feel that a communal project of like-minded people served anything but to show the virtues of a good neighborhood. His judgment of the Brook Farm project was that it "is an expression in plain prose and actuality of the theory of impulse. . . . The young people who have been faithful to it, their testimony, have lived a great deal in a short time, but have come forth with shattered constitutions. It is an intellectual Sansculottism." 28 Emerson believed he was constitutionally an individualist, and incapable of allying himself with a socialistic scheme that regarded everything from deity to medicine as communal property.

The death of Waldo, Emerson's five-year-old son, on January 27, 1842, caused the philosopher to study his own beliefs more thoroughly than ever before. "Threnody" is an elegy which relates the spirit of the universe through the memory of a small boy. The father grieved over his loss, but finally became reconciled that his child was nature's child; therefore death was not death but merely a passing of the boy's spirit into the great spirit of the over-soul.

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26 Ibid., VI, 73-74.
27 Rusk, p. 289.
28 Journals, VI, 373-374.
It contains many of the same words, phrases, and ideas Emerson had written in his diaries concerning his son. Emerson's activities as the new editor of The Dial, his domestic affairs, lectures, and studies took much of his time away from his sorrow. He lectured in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. His Journals continued to reflect his lectures, society, and personalities of the time; the ballet dancer, Fanny Elsler; Daniel Webster; Edward Everett; Hawthorne; Alcott; Thoreau; and the ordinary people of his neighborhood. The diarist wrote in his Journals:

If I should write an honest diary, what should I say? Also that life has hollowness, shallowness. I have completed thirty-nine years, and I have not yet adjusted my relations to my fellows on the planet, or to my own work. Always too young or too old, I do not justify myself; how can I satisfy others? 29

Times were changing, industry was expanding, and locomotives regularly passed Walden Pond. New Englanders were becoming accustomed to the progress of society and adapted themselves to the changing mores of the time. Emerson did not change his views but appeared to face the world with a more realistic attitude, although he continued to read Chinese lore, pagan mystics, as well as the Western Philosophers. Though he wrote "Transcendentalism is the Saturnalia of faith. It is faith run mad," 30 Emerson had not changed his faith. Yet his Essays: Second Series expressed more dependence upon experience than on theory. Emerson realized that his theories, as most men's doctrines, were not equal to experience.

29 Ibid., VI, 200.
30 Ibid., VI, 310.
Soon after Emerson's volume of Poems was published he travelled a second time in Europe. This time he lectured and measured himself against the scholars and thinkers of England, Americans seemed intellectually small and shallow compared to Carlyle, Macaulay, Tennyson, and DeQuincey. Fourteen years probably had not changed the Europeans, but Emerson had grown in spirit and intellect and saw the famous thinkers in a different light. Note Emerson's entry concerning Carlyle:

He is not mainly a scholar, like the most of my acquaintances. . . he says over and over, for months, for years, the same things. . . . His sneers and scoffs are thrown in every direction.31

Yet, Emerson felt an admiration for the Scotsman as well as for England. He wrote that if "I stay here long, I shall lose all my patriotism and think that England has absorbed all excellences. . . . I look at the immense wealth and the solid power concentrated, and am quite faint."32 The success of his tour seemed endangered by the number of ardent religionists who disagreed with his doctrines, especially his attack upon the Swedenborgians. His lecture tour lasted for nine months, and he was widely entertained and admired. When Emerson returned from Europe, it was evident that he had mellowed somewhat toward the world. His aunt Mary commented that he had been "getting 'beyond the mists and rainbow visions of transcendental philosophy' and was once more mingling 'with the woes and cares of practical life.'"33 Emerson's next years were busy, but he found them enjoyable. He was not so austere and his congeniality could be observed in his attitude toward others and

33 *Rusck*, p. 358.
his work. His doctrines were the same, but he no longer chose to
expound them as often. His Journals show an increasing interest in
the domestic phases of his life, and Channing noted that Emerson's
children were instrumental in bringing the philosopher away from his
books.

The outrages of the Fugitive Slave Law caused Emerson much
anxiety. He decried the smallness of his part in the fight. In 1851
he wrote:

We shall never feel well again until that detestable law is nullified in Massachusetts and until
the Government is assured that once for all it
cannot and shall not be executed here. All I have
and all I can do shall be given and done in oppo-
sition to the execution of the law.34

Later he emphasized his view again. "This Slavery shall not be, it
poisons and depraves everything it touches,"35 and he denounced the
Fugitive Slave Law by saying he would "not obey it, by God." Emerson
was involved in the reforms of society but distrustful of reformers.
He placed a quotation from Karl Marx in his diary—"The classes and
the races too weak to master the new conditions of life must give way."36
Actually Emerson felt a certain disregard for society since Goethe's
death and since Fichte, Kant, Schelling, and Hegel had failed in their
messages to society. He refused to sponsor an American edition of the
Bhagavadgītā, for he felt society unprepared to understand the sacred

34 Journals, VIII, 179.
36 Ibid., VIII, 351.
Hindu song. It was Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* that aroused Emerson's interest once more in contemporary English and American literature.

During the seven years following his return from Europe, Emerson did more lecturing and published his *Representative Men*, *English Traits*, and a few miscellaneous works. *English Traits* is Emerson's interesting observations concerning his travels; however, it is not a tourist's guide, nor a detailed description of sights. In *Representative Men* Emerson revealed himself to a greater degree. "There is hardly any book of his better worth study by those who wish to understand, not Plato, nor Plutarch nor Napoleon, but Emerson himself,"37 wrote Holmes. Emerson incorporated much of his Orientalism into the biographies of Plato, Swedenborg, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Napoleon, and Goethe; and although he swore by no master, Plato came nearest to being his idol, and Shakespeare next. "Out of Plato come all things that are still written and debated among men of thoughts,"38 Emerson wrote.

The *Atlantic Monthly* published Emerson's intellectual poems "Days" and "Brahma." "Brahma" brought laughter and criticism from many, but it was a masterpiece in the style of Hindu lore—another natural outgrowth of Emerson's Oriental reading. Emerson no longer wrote much in his journals, for he was busy with his lectures in the Middle West and Canada. *Conduct of Life* which was published on December 8, 1860, included nothing of politics or slavery but was a

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study of individual life in relation to fate, power, and wealth.
Self-reliance was still the strong doctrine, but the tone was less
daring and showed an awareness of the evils in nature. Moral law
ruled existence and was to the philosopher a "law which is not
intelligent but intelligence; not personal nor impersonal . . .
dissolves persons . . . vivifies nature; yet solicits the pure in
heart to draw on all its omnipotence." It expressed the idea of
the Over-Soul clearly.

Actually the struggles and events of the Civil War were
reflected dimly in Emerson's journals. He visited in Washington, where
he lectured and met Lincoln and other Union leaders. A visit to West
Point as a member of the visitation committee gave Emerson the oppo-
tunity to see his doctrines of self-worth and self-trust in action.
After his address at Waterrville College he wrote in his diary of England's
joy in seeing America threatened and destroyed by the war. His bitterness
was strong as he condemned all England except the truly cultivated class
and stated it was not slavery but contempt that tore down the merit of
men and nations. Emerson felt the strain of the emotional crisis. It
was difficult to maintain a literary reputation amidst so much political
tumult. Emerson's entries in the journals were brief, just as his
lecturing tour became shorter. He was awarded the Doctor of Laws degree
from Harvard. Though he spoke less frequently, many awards and citations
were given the philosopher. Emerson realized his strength was not as it
was before, and he wrote that "old age brings with its ugliness the

39 Rusk, p. 407
comfort that you will soon be out of it, —which ought to be a substantial relief to such discontented pendulums as we are.40 He also wrote that "the grief of old age is, that now, only in rare moments, and by happiest combinations or consent of the elements, can we attain those enlargements and that intellectual span which were once a daily gift.41

In 1867, some thirty years after his first address to the Phi Beta Kappa convention, Emerson gave a second address to the club. It was an historical moment to his doctrine of self-reliance and moral law. Emerson was enthusiastic but aware of his age. The lines from his poem "Terminus" show he understood the quality of his faculties.

The god of bounds
Who sets to sea a shore,
Came to me in his fatal rounds
And said: "No more!
No farther shoot
Thy bread, ambitious branches and thy root.42

The revered and esteemed philosopher wrote of fame in his Journala. "I confess," he stated, "there is sometimes a caprice in fame... What is Fame, if every snail or ripple or raindrop shares it?"43 His happiest moments remained those he spent in the open.

The only place where I feel the joy of eminent domain is in my woodlot. My spirits rise whenever I enter it. I can spend the entire day there with hatchet or pruning-shears making paths, without a

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40 Journala, X, 51a
41 Ibid, X, 47a
42 Brooks, P, 290a
43 Journala, X, 167a
remorse of wasting time. I fancy the birds know me, and even the trees make little speeches or hint them.44

Emerson still found it necessary to write of man in his diary.

It was as though he could not state his belief enough, though his own life was a doctrine in itself.

The mind is true; though the premises are false, the conclusions are right. And this self-reliance which belongs to every healthy human being is proof of it, proof that not a petty egoism, but the soul of the world is in him, and, in proportion as it penetrates his miserable crust of partiality, it saith, "Here am I, here is the Whole." Therefore we require absoluteness in every soul, absoluteness in the orator, in the poet, in the hero, in all manners; and if they have it not, they stimulate it.

The just pride of a man consists herein, that the recognition of him by others is no-wise necessary to him.45

In July, 1872, Emerson's home burned. Though the catastrophe apparently did not affect the philosopher at first, it became evident that he was suffering from shock. To divert his mind, he travelled with his daughter in London, Paris, Italy, and Egypt. Upon his return to Concord, Emerson discovered his neighbors had rebuilt his home. Though honors came to him from all corners of the globe, he took little pleasure in this adulation. He spent most of his time in his study, organizing his unprinted works, reading, walking in the afternoons, and enjoying his friends. He neglected his journals, and there are very few entries from 1874 to 1876, the date of his last journal. This neglect was due to his failing eyesight, memory, and writing.

44 Ibid., xiv, 261.
powers. On December 5, 1875, he took the time to jot down that Carlyle was eighty years old. To him Carlyle was still an intellectual giant. The Carlyle medal which Emerson received through the mail on February 5, 1876, was a precious gift.

One of his last entries states Emerson's creed:

I believe that all men are born free and equal, and that all men have a right to their lives.

I believe in freedom of opinion religious and political.

I believe in universal suffrage* in public schools, in free trade.

I believe the soul makes the body.

I believe that causality is perfect.

*With the exception that known crimes should withdraw the right of suffrage.46

The last six years of Emerson's life are not recorded in the journals. Only a few miscellaneous notes of little importance are listed in the last pages of the diaries. Emerson's grandson, publisher of the ten-volume Journals, wrote:

To readers of these journals—talks of a poet and scholar, who was also a good citizen of the Republic, with himself in varying moods—the words of the East Indian Hesiod may seem appropriate:

Yes, Emerson had all the wisdom and spirituality of the Brahmins. Brahmanism is an acquisition, a state of being rather than a creed.47

This comment is limited in its applicability, for "Emerson was the best of Brahmins only in one sense. Like them, he had acquired wisdom and spirituality partly from their own books. He had reinterpreted

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46 Ibid., Xo 470-471.
47 Ibid., Xo 476.
their ideas in his essays and poems. He had reinterpreted them, but his wisdom and spirituality were different. Emerson never claimed to attain the absolute mystical experience but "described his aesthetic, natural experience in mystical terms; his experience was identical with that of all mysticism in two essentials: it was 'an ecstasy,' and it gave the conviction of 'union with God.'" He read the Orientals, but remain Occidental," he wrote in his journals. Although he had achieved "a state of being rather than a creed" and had gained "wisdom and spirituality," he was and still remains Occidental.

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IV. Emerson's Orientalism

The unusual influence of Oriental literature and philosophy upon Emerson's intellectual thought was a gradual development. During boyhood, Emerson was keenly aware of conflicting reports regarding India, for the Boston Daily Advertiser constantly carried shipping reports of East India merchants, details about widely travelled persons, and articles and advertisements on such items as the madras pattern, sawns, gilla, shints, Bengal gingham, and leopard hides. The Orient was a mysterious land unexplored and rich with strange treasures; however, travellers from the East spoke of the miserable squalor existent there. As early as 1790, books arrived in Boston from the Calcutta presses including the works of Sir William Jones who was president of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.1 Probably Emerson's father shared with other clergymen, the hope that Oriental works would help them better understand the Hebrew scriptures. Members of the Anthology Club, founded in 1804 by the Reverend William Emerson, were interested in discussing Oriental works and often expressed their views in the Monthly Anthology and Boston Review.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's first interest in Eastern works is evident in 1820, when he was a junior at Harvard. He corresponded with his aunt Mary and asked her questions about "the curious Hindu mythologies." Throughout the ten published volumes of Emerson's

Journals beginning in 1820 and ending with his death, there are many quotations, references, and passages taken from Oriental works.

The very first entry in his journal of 1820 connects the Orientals with the Greeks. "The ostentatious ritual of India which worshipped God by outraging nature, though softened as it proceeded West, was still too harsh a discipline for Athenian manners to undergo." The second time Emerson wrote of the Orient was after a lecture by Edward Everett which mentioned the East.

Though the literature of Greece gives us sufficient information with regard to later periods of their commonwealth, as we go back, before the light of tradition comes in, the veil drops. "All tends to the mysterious East." ... From the time of the first dispersion of the human family to the time of Grecian rise, everything in the history of man is obscure, and we think ourselves sufficiently fortunate if we can write in broad lines the fate of a dynasty, though we know nothing of the individuals who composed it.

The same year Emerson's thought is revealed in a short comment regarding a student named Martin Gay.

I begin to believe in the Indian doctrine of eye-fascination. The cold blue eye of has so intimately connected him with my thoughts and visions that a dozen times a day, and as often by night, I find myself wholly wrought up in conjectures of his character and inclinations.

After Emerson graduated from Harvard, he continued to correspond with his aunt. Her religious views helped him build the structure of his later beliefs. While studying religion, Emerson wrote, "We know

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2 Journals, I, 5.
3 Ibid., I, 21-22.
4 Ibid., I, 69.
nothing of the first empires which grasped the sceptre of the earth in Egypt, Assyria, or Persia, but their modes of worship. He felt that the Oriental religions were mysteries which could possibly unite him with the modes of living in past ages. In May, 1822, he placed in his diary a confused but highly creative work:

I was the pampered child of the East. I was born where the soft western gale breathed upon me the fragrance of cinnamon groves, and through the seventy windows of my hall the eye fell on the Arabian harvest. A hundred elephants, appalled in cloth of gold, carried my train to war, and the smile of the Great King beamed upon Czar. But now— the broad Indian moon looks through the broken arches of my tower, and the wing of Desolation fans me with poisonous airs; the spider’s threads are the tapestry which adorns my walls, and the rain of the night is heard in my halls for the music of the daughters of Cashmere. Wail, wail for me, ye who put on honour as gay drapery!

Arthur Christy commented in The Orient in American Transcendentalism on the confusion of this “venture.” He stated that “Cashmere is far removed from the Arabian harvests; and in the usual sense of local color, Czar does not belong so close to the beams of the Indian moon.” This confusion is insignificant, for Emerson was not yet disciplined by books.

Another passage which illustrates Emerson’s growing interest in the Orient should be mentioned. After writing a discussion on God, he concluded with some lines from “Haraya,” a translation by Sir William Jones.

5 Ibid., I, 100.
7 Christy, p. 68.
Of dem-dyed and hands and blossoms bright
Hence! vanish from my sight,
Delusive pictures! unsubstantial shows!
My soul absorbed, one only Being knows,
Of all perceptions, one abundant source,
Hence every object, every moment flows,
Suns hence derive their force,
Hence planets learn their course;
But suns and fading worlds I view no more,
God only I perceive, God only I adore! 8

Thirty-four years later in his Journal for 1856, Emerson wrote of
Truth and added, "Remember the Indian hymn: — 'God only I perceive, 
God only I adore.' " 9

Emerson wrote a passage entitled "Romance" on the Orient.
To him romance grew from ignorance, yet he concluded that "Romance 
is the mother of knowledge—this ungrateful son that eats up his 
parent." It is only by searching for wonders that truth is found
and "if the unknown was not magnified, nobody would explore, Europe 
would lack the regenerating impulse, and America lie waste, had it 
not been for El Dorado." 10

Emerson wrote, "The Indian Pantheon is of prodigious size; 
330 million Gods have in it each their heaven, or rather each their 
parlour, in this immense 'goddery'. " 11 He had also written, "That 
fables abound, seems not to indicate any special activity of mind 
for, though Greece had many, stupid Indostan has more." 12 Yet on

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8 Journals, I, 157.
9 Ibid., II, 15.
10 Ibid., I, 303.
11 Ibid., I, 304.
12 Ibid., I, 303.
February 20, 1824, Emerson wrote a passage on the origin of Asia and expressed the belief that it was in Asia where the spirit of man first triumphed. The entire composition is much like a short poem he composed and placed in his Journal sometime later:

**Asia**

Sleep on, ye drowsy tribes whose old repose
The roaring oceans of the East enclose;
Old Asia, nurse of man, and bower of gods,
The dragon Tyranny with crown and ball.
Chants to thy dreams his ancient lullaby. 13

Emerson was twenty-one in 1824, and for thirteen years he did not concern himself with Oriental works though there are a few comments scattered throughout his journals. One comment contains the essence of Emerson's transcendental thought:

The Oriental man: Abraham and Hoth, Job, etc. Man stands on the point betwixt the inward spirit and the outward matter. He sees that the one explains, translates, the other; that the world is the mirror of the soul. He is the priest and interpreter of nature thereby. 14

In 1837, after thirteen years of disregard of Eastern works, Emerson commented on the August number of the Asiatic Journal: "Herein is always the piquancy of the meeting of civilization and barbarism. Calcutta or Canton are twilights where Night and Day contend." He seemed interested in Lord Napier's mission to China and added, "There stand in close contrast the brief, wise English despatches, with the mountainous nonsense of Chinese diplomacy." 15

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On July 19, 1837, Emerson confided in his journal that though he knew the systems of philosophy that flourished under Heraclitus, Zoroaster, Plato, Kant, Jesus, Napoleon, Shakespeare, and Dante, "by knowing chemistry and commerce, I get thereby a vocabulary for my ideas. I get no ideas."16 The very next year, however, when Emerson gave his "Divinity School Address," he seemed to respect Oriental thought. His words were shocking and unorthodox to the Unitarians. In his address, he stated:

Man fallen into superstition, into sensuality, is never quite without the visions of the moral sentiment. In like manner, all the expressions of this sentiment are sacred and permanent in proportion to their purity. The expressions of this sentiment affect us more than all other compositions. The sentences of the oldest time, which ejaculated this piety, are still fresh and fragrant. This thought dwelled always deepest in the minds of men in the devout and contemplative East; not alone in Palestine, where it reached its surest expression, but in Egypt, in Persia, in India, in China. Europe has always owed to oriental genius its divine impulses. What these holy bards said, all sane men found agreeable and true.17

All Emerson's reading in Oriental books had very little influence on his writings. When Nature was published in 1836, it expressed Emerson's formulated philosophy before he incorporated Oriental thought into his writings. In Emerson and Asia, this situation is explained.

He seldom assimilated any foreign idea till he had come upon it several times. When he did find such an idea to his liking, he copied

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16Ibid., IV, 256.

17Selected Writings, pp. 70-71.
the significant outline of it into his Journals, and gradually absorbed it more completely into his mind. Finally he reinterpreted it in his Essays, and gave it new connection and meaning. 18

It was not until 1845 that Emerson became an Orientalist in earnest. After gradually rediscovering the wisdom of the Eastern literatures, he saw divinity in all the ancient scriptures, and when he wrote of the Bible, this idea was superbly expressed.

The most original book is the Bible. This old collection of the ejaculations of love and dread, of the supreme desires and contritions of men, proceeding out of the region of the grand and eternal, by whatsoever different mouths spoken, and through a wide extent of times and countries, seems the alphabet of the nations, and all posterior literature either the chronicle of facts under very inferior ideas, or, when it rises to sentiment, the combinations, analogies or degradations of this. . . . I have used in the above remarks the Bible for the Ethical Revelation considered generally, including, that is, the Vedas, the Sacred writings of every nation, and not of the Hebrews alone; although these last, for the very reason I have given, precede all similar writings so far as to be commonly called The Book, or Bible, alone. 19

Emerson was fascinated with Oriental scriptures and "used them abundantly, sometimes with a purpose quite contradictory to that in the Oriental mind. . . . He turned to them as a religious psychologist, not as a metaphysician." 20 He used the "Bibles of the world" to reflect his own moods and observations, and to form the basis of his analysis of society. He found that Oriental philosophy and

18 Carpenter, p. 13.
19 Journals, V, 334-335.
20 Christy, p. 73.
scripture gave him poetic stimulation and enjoyment, and this enjoyment influenced Emerson's initiative to write.

Oriental philosophy dealt with the larger aspects of nature, and its superlative expression was colorful, free, and poetic. Emerson endowed the Orient with feminine characteristics. He contrasted Asia with Europe, and though his terms and descriptions changed, the distinctions remained. "In general Asia is the feminine, the passive, the religious, the contemplative, 'the ocean of love and power'; while Europe is the active, the practical, the definite, the inventive."21 This analogy of the mysterious East no doubt was the reason for Emerson calling his wife, Lidian, "Kine Asia." This land of feminine genius represented a life where the elemental questions of existence were important. Emerson's comment was:

"In looking at Hena and Saadi and Bhagavat, life seems in the East a simpler affair. --only a tent, and a little rice, and ass's milk; and not, as with us, what commerce had made it, a feast whose dishes come from the equator and both poles."22

Neoplatonism furnished the background for Emerson's receptivity to Oriental philosophies. Most of his acquaintance with Neoplatonism came through the translations of Thomas Taylor, and the Journals for 1841 to 1843, fully indicate the influence of the Neoplatonists upon Emerson. In 1842, he wrote, "Thou shalt read, . . . Proclus, Plotinus, Jamblichus, Porphyry. . . ."23 On another occasion Emerson wrote:

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21Emerson and Asia, p. 32.
23Ibid., VI, 282.
When I read Proclus, I am astonished with the vigor and breadth of his performance. Here is ... an Atlantic strength which is everywhere equal to itself and dares great attempts, because of the life with which it feels itself filled.24

In the complexities of Neoplatonism there were many ideas which could be traced to Plato, but a few qualities of Plotinus' thought which are Oriental should be mentioned. Plotinus' system was described as one of "Emanations" -- a definite Hindu thought; the idea of the "All-Soul" corresponds closely to the Hindu "Paramatman," and there is a high regard for intuition, mysticism, and justification. The idea that evil is the absence of good is certainly Oriental. The New England Transcendentalists read the Neoplatonists for inspiration. Emerson said:

When I read Plato or Proclus, or, without Plato, when I ascend to thought, I do not at once arrive at satisfactions, as when I drink being thirsty, or go to the fire being cold; no; I am only apprized at first of my vicinity to a new and most bright region of life.25

In the 1850's Emerson began keeping a notebook called "The Orientalist," where he gathered many quotations, poems, and passages from Persian, Arabian, and Indian literature. In 1858 he published an essay on Persian poetry, and in 1865 he wrote the preface for the American edition of Saadi's Gulistan. Two of Emerson's major works, Representative Men (1850) and Conduct of Life (1860) best illustrate how he used Eastern philosophies. In Representative Men, Emerson converted Plato into half an Orientalist and presented his other heroes

24 Ibid., VI, 205.
25 Ibid., VI, 200-201.
in a mixture of mystical ideology. The Conduct of Life constitutes the conclusion and fulfillment of his writing, and in it he wrote of "Fate" and "Illusions," two ideas which are directly Oriental. This book represents his most mature wisdom and includes many quotations which express the central current of Oriental thought.

Although Emerson admired the Eastern doctrines, he found distasteful the use of superlative expression as well as the apparent blind acceptance of Fate by the people. In 1866 he criticized the poetry of Hafis by stating that "the positive degree is manly, and suits me better." The apathy of the people caused Emerson to write "Orientalism is Fatalism, resignation; Occidentalism is Freedom and Will. We Occidentals are educated to wish to be first." The Orient was too orderly and usually did not tend to foster initiative. "Its philosophy was purely speculative, its poetry purely fanciful. It educated men in the theory of life, but did not teach them the practical value of it." After Emerson published his Representative Men, with all its mystical aspects of Oriental ideology, it is difficult to differentiate his own thought from all the Indian and Eastern materials which he wove into his writings. This study will touch briefly upon Emerson's use of Hindu material, Persian poetry, Arabian literature, Zoroastrian books, and Chinese proverbs.

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26 *Hindu*, X, 167.
27 *Hindu*, VII, 291.
28 *Emerson and Asia*, p. 37.
The literature of Asia impressed Emerson's thought so much that his poem "Brahma" shows almost a direct translation of certain Hindu scriptures. "Ramayana" seems to be half Hindu, and the essays "The Over-Soul," "Fate," and "Illusions" show strong Hindu influence.

Probably the most important idea Emerson translated was that of Brahma which presented "the concept of a disinterested and impersonal God whose laws lie beyond human good and evil. To this absolute God, human life and death—human 'shame and fame'—are one." In 1845 Emerson came upon two passages dealing with the central idea of "Brahma," and he versified one in his diary; it was ten years before the poem appeared in final form. The passage from the Vishnu Purana which is similar to the first stanza of Emerson's "Brahma" and which he placed in his diary asks, "What living creature slays or is slain? What living creature preserves or is preserved? Each is his own destroyer or preserver, as he follows evil or good." (The poem "Brahma" is placed in the appendix.) Actually the force of the idea presented itself to Emerson in 1844, and he wrote in his Journal: "I discovered the Secret of the World; that all things subsist, and do not die, but only retire a little from sight and afterwards return again." The same idea of the impersonal creative force of the universe, the idea of "Brahma," is found in Emerson's essay on "Plato." The material was adapted from a prose passage in his diary:

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29 Emerson Handbook, p. 211.
30 Journals, VII, 127.
31 Ibid., VI, 424.
In all nations there are minds which incline to dwell in the conception of the fundamental unity. The raptures of prayer and ecstasy of devotion lose all being in one Being. This tenacity finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian Scriptures, in the Vedas, the Brahma Geeta, and the Vishnu Purana. Those writings contain little else than this idea, and they rise to pure and sublime strains in celebrating it.

The Same, the Same: friend and foe are of one stuff: and the stuff is such and so much that the variations of form are unimportant. . . . "What is the great end of all, you shall now learn from me. It is soul— one in all bodies, pervading, uniform, perfect, preeminent over nature, exempt from birth, growth and decay, omnipresent, made up of true knowledge, independent, unconnected with realities, with name, species and the rest, in time past, present and to come. The knowledge that this spirit, which is essentially one, is in one's own, and in all other bodies is the wisdom of one who knows the unity of things."32

The difference between Emerson's Over-Soul and the Hindu Brahma is the element of Christianity in the Over-Soul. Emerson's God, however, was impersonal. It is evident that Emerson viewed God as "an indifferent God, indifferent to the praise or curses of mankind, ruling the world with a cold, inexorable law called Compensation."33 Both the Brahma and the Over-Soul express the intrinsic presence of divinity in all things. "What is there divine in a load of bricks?" Emerson asked in his Journal. His reply was, "Much, All."34 Six months later he reaffirmed this when he wrote: "Whosoever therefore apprehends the infinite, — and every man can, — brings all worth and

32 Selected Writings, pp. 476-477.
33 Christy, p. 61.
34 Journals, III, 321.
significance into that spot of space where he stands, though it be a ditch, a potato-field, a work-bench. 35 This attitude is in keeping with the Vedanta which "would insist that the Absolute God is as much in Picadilly Circus as in the most immaculate madonna. 36 The philosophical implications of the Hindu scriptures are evident—transcendence, immanence and pantheism.

There are many other connections between Emerson's works and Hindu material, but only a few more will be mentioned. Emerson's poem "Hamatreya" deals with the statement of identity of body and matter and may be compared with an extract from the Vishnu Purana.

The passage is a dialogue between Vishnu and Maitreya. Emerson expressed the same idea but changed the name from "Maitreya" to "Hamatreya."

These and other kings who with perishable frames have indulged the feeling that suggests "This earth is mine,—it is my son's—it belongs to my dynasty,"—have all passed away . . .

Earth laughs, as if smiling with autumnal flowers . . . I will repeat to you, Maitreya, the stanzas that were chanted by Earth . . .

How great is the folly of princes . . . "Thus," they say, "will we conquer the ocean encircled Earth;" and intent upon their project, behold not death, which is not far off . . . Foolishness has been the character of every king who has boasted, "All this earth is mine—everything is mine—it will be in my house forever," for he is dead.

These were the verses, Maitreya, which the earth recited and by listening to which ambition fades away like snow before the sun. 37

36 Christy, p. 74.
37 Journals, VII, 128-129.
"The Sphinx" is a much more complex poem, but it shows the influence of the Brahmanic upon Emerson's thought. The poem was published in 1841, two years before his journals list the book as his reading matter. It is probable that he had read extracts from the Oriental work earlier. It is in the later journals and essays that Emerson deals more thoroughly with the idea of Illusions. Illusions is personified by the Hindu goddess Maha and gives the appearance of variety to the world. She is the creatress of the individual soul of man. 

Two other ideas which relate to Hindu thought are Emerson's idea of the transmigration of souls and Fate. In his journal there is a passage which illustrates the idea of Transmigration:

Natarajayogis. For this Indian doctrine of transmigration, it seems easy of reception where the mind is not preoccupied. Not more wonderful than other methods which are in use, and so readily suggested, not only by the manners of insects, but by the manners of men. Here is a gentleman who abused his privileges when in the flesh as a gentleman, and curtailed therefore his amount of vital force. We cannot kill him, for souls will not die. This punishment, self-imposed, is, that he take such a form as his diminished vital force can maintain. Now it takes, to make a good dog, say, half a grain; to make a peacock, a quarter grain; to make a great general, a pennyweight; a philosopher, two; a poet, ten; and a good and wise man, a thousand pounds. Now our ill-behaved man, on emerging from his rotten body, and a candidate for new birth, has not capital enough to maintain himself as a man, and, with his diminished means, nothing is left for it but that he should take a turn through nature, this time as monkey. That costs very little, and by careful governance in the monkey form, he shall have saved something and be ready at his return to begin the world again.

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38Emerson and Asia, p. 122.
more decently, say, as dog. There he saves again, and, at the end of that period, may drop his tail, and come out Hottentot. Good Hottentot, he will rise, and one of these ages will be a Massachusetts man. "Travelling the path of life through a thousand births."39

Of Fate, Emerson wrote, "In India, it is the dread reality, it is the cropping out in our planted gardens of the core of the world; it is the abysmal Force, untameable and immense. They who wrestle with Hari, see their doom in his eye before the fight begins."40

Emerson came upon Persian poetry later in life, though he first read selections as early as 1841. His poem which is entitled "Saadi" was written the year before he listed Saadi's Gulistan in his Journal. After reading the book in 1843, he wrote: "In Saadi's Gulistan I find many traits which comport with the portrait I drew."41 He was referring to his poem which was published in the Dial in October 1842. Emerson wrote two essays and two poems which dealt with Persian poetry; however, other of his works show distinct influences. His essay on "Persian Poetry" is found in his Letters and Social Aims, and the Preface which he wrote for the American edition of Gulistan is on, the same subject. The two poems are "Saadi" and a group of "Fragments on the Poet and the Poetic Gift." Two of his favorite poets were Hafiz and Saadi, but he never attempted to contrast their characteristics. Though he never really said why he found Persian poetry to his liking, it is apparent that he admired

39 Journals, VII, 93-94.
40 Ibid., VII, 123.
41 Ibid., VI, 463.
its quality of intellectual emancipation. He wrote of Hafiz:

Nothing stops him. He makes the dare-god and dare-devil experiment. He is not to be scared by a name, or a religion. He fears nothing. He sees too far; he sees throughout; such is the only man I wish to see and to be. The scholar's courage is as distinct as the soldier's and the statesman's, and a man who has it not cannot write for me. 42

These Persian poets expressed the virtue of Self-Reliance, and in their self-expression they expressed joy, lightness, and love of nature. The essence of their joy came from their turning away from the strict Mohammedan beliefs. Though Emerson referred to the Persians as fatalists, he never renounced them. He wrote of Saadi in his Journal:

Saadi was long a Sacayi or Water-drawer in the Holy Land, "till found worthy of an introduction to the prophet Ahir (Elias, or the Syrian and Greek Hermes) who moistened his mouth with the water of immortality." Somebody doubted this and saw in a dream a host of angels descending with salvers of glory in their hands. On asking one of them for whom those were intended, he answered, "For Shaikh Saadi of Shiraz, who has written a stanza of poetry that has met with the approbation of God Almighty." 43

Emerson also approved of Persian poetry because it expressed the beauty of commonplace things; the inspirational quality of women, love, and friendship; and presented the idea of Compensation. In 1866 when Emerson criticized Persian poetry, he wrote that "Hafiz's poetry is marked by nothing more than his habit of playing with all magnitudes, mocking at them." He continued to speak of fancy and sentiment and added; "I will not be the fool of fancy, nor a child

42Ibid., VII, 328.
43Ibid., VI, 464-465.
with toys... The truth is stranger and grander than the gayest fable. Even so, he coupled the Persian poets with Homer, Dante, Chaucer, Montaigne, and Shakespeare.

Arabic poetry is similar to Persian poetry, but the true Arabian poets had not been translated in Emerson’s time. Arabic literature places most of its emphasis upon religion and beauty expressed in a reedy realistic style. The literature “sprang from the soil, and was the natural expression of this race of desert people.” His first readings were the light secular works of popular appeal such as the Arabian Nights. Scheherazade expressed to Emerson an universal type of youthful joy. The folk tales, proverbs from Les Chevaux de Sahara, and the historical account of the rise and fall of the Saracen Empire, which Emerson found in Gibbon’s Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, provided the basis for his more mature reading. During Emerson’s most productive period, he found that the religious and philosophical literatures inspired him most. Arabic literature expressed the duality between material objects and religious spirit and illustrated heroism, courage, and seriousness of worship. The Koran is not included in his reading list until 1855.

Arabic belief is one of absolute reliance upon one’s own temperament, and the religious implications of this is found in Emerson’s essays on “Heroism,” “Behavior,” and even in his essay on “Shakespeare.” The seriousness of purpose is apparent in the following dialogue from the Koran:

\[44\] Ibid., X, 166-167.

\[45\] Emerson and Asia, p. 200.
Akhlak-I-Falaly. Abu Said Abulkhair, the mystic, and Abu Ali Leema, the philosopher, on leaving each other said: the one, "All that he sees, I know," and the other, "All that he knows, I see."

"There are two that I cannot support, the fool in his devotions, and the intelligent in his impieties." 46

This attitude is similar to Emerson's when he questioned the religious sincerity of New England churches. The essence of Emerson's "transcendental" belief may be traced in the seriousness of Arabic idealism and in its relation to the material aspects of reality. Emerson disliked the religious tyrannies of Mohammedanism with emphasis upon war and power. He accepted the literature of the Arabs for the ideas of realism, religious sincerity, courage, and force.

Emerson's use of Zoroastrian books and Chinese proverbs is not as significant as his use of Hindu and Persian works. In 1832, Emerson devoted two entire pages in his Journal to Zoroaster and although many references are made to the mystical prophet, Carpenter states that "Emerson probably did not read any authentic book of Zoroastrianism until 1872, at the very end of his life when the Zend-Avesta is listed." 47 Two pseudo-Zoroastrian works gave Emerson his knowledge of ancient Persian religion. The belief is that Ormaz, the lord of light and goodness, constantly wages war against Ahriman and his evil hosts. Man was created by Ormaz so that goodness might prevail in the world with his help. Emerson's first interest was probably formed after he read an

47 Emerson and Asia, p. 218.
explanation of the ancient Persian religious system in Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.48

In 1844, Emerson copied selections from the Chaldean oracles in his Journals and later confided that they "are plainly all esoteric metaphysics and ethics of a deep thinker speaking after truth, and not after appearance, and using whatever images occurred, to convey his grand perception."49

Emerson owned a copy of Derasir, a forgery of the Zend-Avesta. From the oracles and the Derasir, he incorporated and blended into his writings portions of scripture which appealed to his thought. His concern was not with the authenticity of the books. In his essay on "Books" he grouped the oracles and the Derasir with the "Bibles of the world," and Zoroaster with the religious teachers of the world.

Of the religion, Emerson wrote the following soliloquy:

A strange poem is Zoroastrism. It is a system as separate and harmonious and sublime as Swedenborgianism—congruent. One would be glad to behold the truth which they all shadow forth. For it cannot but be truth that they typify and symbolize, as the play of every faculty reveals a use, a cause, and a law to the intelligent. One sees in this, and in these all, the element of poetry . . . the effect produced by making everything outward only a sign of something inward: Plato's forms or ideas, which seem almost tantamount to the Fargers of Zoroaster. . . .

Do we not feel in reading these elemental theories that these grotesque fictions are the gallipots of Socrates, that these primeval allegories are globes and diagrams on which the laws of living nature are explained? Do we not seem nearer to divine truth in these fictions than in less pretenting prose?50

48 Ibid., p. 219.
49 Journals, VIII, 534.
50 Ibid., II, 473-475.
Emerson's first entry regarding China was a couplet which showed his immaturity and lack of interest:

I laugh at those who, while they gape and gaze,
The bald antiquity of China praise. 51

It was not until 1836 that Emerson read Marshman's Confucius, and the next year he read the Asiatic Journal, where he became acquainted with what he labelled "the mountainous nonsense of Chinese diplomacy." In 1843 Emerson listed The Four Books of Chinese classics in his Journal. Although he delighted in many of the proverbs, he never incorporated the literature into his own writings. The individual figure of Confucius seemed to overshadow and overpower the rest of Chinese writing, and this deprived Emerson from enjoying the human and folk literature of the people. Proverbs were included in his diaries and essays, but the Chinese ideas were never really used. Confucius was to Emerson, the "glory of the nations, . . . sage of the Absolute East, . . . a middle man. He is the Washington of philosophy, the Moderator. . . ." 52

Emerson distrusted the materialism which surrounded Confucius, but he admired the sage in his search for truth. In spite of the ancient mystery which China seemed to possess, Emerson questioned its formality and diplomacy. "The Chinese are as wonderful for their etiquette as the Hebrews for their piety," 53 he wrote. In 1868 Emerson was asked to speak at a banquet in honor of some Chinese representatives who were visiting Boston. On this occasion he commanded China

51 Ibid., I, 369.
52 Ibid., VII, 126.
53 Ibid., VI, 418.
for the duration and strength of her civilization. He, however, never used the Chinese legends of antiquity to help him interpret his philosophical ideas.

Emerson accepted the ancient Oriental literatures of the world, and his thoughts took shape and form. He wrote for the world, for he felt the world within.

I dreamed that I floated at will in the great Ether, and I saw this world floating also not far off, but diminished to the size of an apple. Then an angel took it in his hand and brought it to me and said, "This must thou eat." And I ate the world.54

Emerson was the precursor of the American Renaissance of Orientalism. He was one of the few scholars who introduced the wisdom of the ancient literatures to Americans. George E. Woodberry stated:

His is the only great mind that America has produced in literature. His page is as fresh in Japan and by the Ganges as in Boston; and it may well be that in the blending of the East and West that must finally come in civilization, the limitations that awaken distrust in the Occidental mind may be advantageous when he is approached from the Oriental slope of thought, and his works may prove one of the reconciling influences of that larger world.55

54 Ibid., Vol. 435.
55 Woodberry, p. 176-177.
V. Criticisms and Observations

Scholars find it difficult to systematize and give meaning to the works and thoughts of Ralph Waldo Emerson. To many readers, Emerson was a quiet maker of systems, a guide of men, a peaceful New England minister who trusted in the inherent good of man. Critics differ with this popular myth, for their study of his journals, books, and lectures reveals a poetical philosopher who taught a way of living rather than a system of thought. His writings show a spirit kindled with inspiration rather than reason and a restless mind which challenged the traditions of society. Actually Emerson was a radical although he was modest, friendly, and of civil demeanor.

It seems strange that Emerson stands as a monument in modern American literature, for he had no definite philosophical system. He was the prophet of any system democracy may witness and construct. He stimulated the intellectual spirit of America, for he subtly challenged men to question their lives and ideals. It was the spirit of democracy which Emerson idealized. He believed in man and wished to see man stand apart from the binding forces of established society. He wished to see man self-reliant and self-understood. He wished to see man dream dreams and realize his dreams. But most of all, Emerson wished man to realize that God and man and God in man are one. "Emerson's thought starts and ends with the centrality of man, and from this
center he developed his ontological, epistemological, religious, and moral insights.  

This chapter attempts to show a few different opinions which scholars have expressed after studying Emerson's works. Though George E. Woodberry referred to the New England thinker as the great mind of American literature, it is evident that many critics disagree with him. Woodberry was severe, however, in his own criticism and did not hesitate to point out Emerson's faults. He wrote of Emerson and the substance of his works:

The first and most important general consideration with respect to him is his blindness to the life of humanity in the race. He dissolved mankind into its atoms, the private person, and so related the private person to God that all truth in knowledge and all impulse in action came from this divine source. He first isolated the soul and deprived it of all ancestral benefit; and then he left it to Intuition and Impulse, mystically conceived, for all knowledge and guidance.

The second general consideration relates to that imprisonment of the human faculties as integral in his thought. He put the law of impulse in the place of the will, and the state of ecstasy as its climax in the place of reason and judgment.

Emerson's greatness still shines forth, for he was a brilliant example of the American spirit. He embodied moral forces in his work rather than practical and intellectual instincts. Religion and the belief in individual man constitute the force and form of his works. Emerson believed that religion was the key to the mystical moments.

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2Woodberry, pp. 186-190.
which may touch every man at some time or other. Emerson was not a mystic in the general sense of the word. "He was not seeking in the angle of vision an escape from the world; . . . the angle of vision was to make use of the world. . . . mystical union . . . was an epistemological necessity." 3 Religion was becoming a thing which could be written out on examinations, and he was aware of its dying embers. Religion required new emotion, and he found this means in metaphysical ideas. He acknowledged the divinity of man, and his works reveal even to modern readers the enigmas, mysteries, and obscurities which darken their vision of truth.

The moral power which Emerson taught had impetus in his belief of man. The secret of man's power is self-reliance and self-assertion, Cabot explained Emerson's belief simply:

Man, when he thinks, is placed at the center of beings, where a ray of relation passes from every other being to him; every natural fact is seen as the symbol of a spiritual fact, the expression of a thought that does not stop there, but goes on endlessly to embody itself in higher and higher forms. When he submits his will to the divine inspiration, he becomes a creator in the finite. 4

A faith grounded upon mystical visions and democratic ideals formed his doctrine—a doctrine which could transcend man into a world of the subconscious where life knew not trivialities nor death. Revelation of self to self could not take place in a materialistic society. Heaven and earth became the setting where man casts off his years and through faith realizes his spirit to be God. Nature became the occult relation

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4Cabot, 1, 260.
between man and his spirit, Emerson wrote in Nature of his own experience:

Standing on the bare ground—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental; to be brothers, to be acquainances, master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance.\(^5\)

Many critics find such words disturbing, George Santayana wrote:

He was not a prophet who had once for all climbed his Sinai or his Tabor, and having there beheld the transfigured reality descended again to make authoritative report of it to the world. Far from it. At bottom he had no doctrine at all. The deeper he went and the more he tried to grapple with fundamental conceptions, the vaguer and more elusive they became in his hands.\(^6\)

Emerson's mind was endowed with plasticity, spontaneity, and liberty of thought. Imagination was his theme and with it, Emerson traced the spiritual laws of experience—compensation, continuity, and the self-expression of the soul in the forms of nature.

Stephen E. Whicher wrote that the Emersonian tragedy is "a tragedy of incapacity.\(^7\) The incompetency of power that his writings reveal is one of unreconciled Yankee realism and ethereal transcendental idealism. He was not a leader of actions, but he was an intellectual revolutionist. He taught ways of thinking, and his ideas were

\(^5\)Selected Writings, p. 6.

\(^6\)George Santayana, "Emerson," Collection of Essays, p. 31.

\(^7\)Stephen E. Whicher, "Emerson's Tragic Sense," Ibid., p. 43.
means for action for others. Emerson wanted no followers, for he wished
to bring men not to him but to themselves. But he was besieged by

those who renounced money, and those who denounced
the State; those who believed that man should not
work for man, and those who believed that animals
should be equally free. To these moon-struck Peter
the Hermits, each preaching his little Crusade,
Emerson listened, but went his own way. 8

In his Journal for 1840, Emerson wrote:

And must I go and do somewhat if I would learn now
secrets of self-reliance? for my chapter is not
finished. But self-reliance is precisely that
secret, — to make your supposed deficiency redun-
dancy. If I am true, the theory is, the very want
of action, my very impotency, shall become a greater
excellency than all skill and toil. 9

It is Emerson's acceptance of his inaction that critics attack. Most
of the Journals reflect an inner conflict, however, which Emerson had
over his lack of will to act. He was certainly aware of the incon-
sistencies between his life and works. Somehow he never seemed able
to unite the real and the ideal in formal bounds of logic. In his
essay entitled "Experience," he apparently tried to excuse himself by
saying that "the great gifts are not got by analysis." 10 In the same
essay Emerson wrote, "I can very confidently announce one or another
law, which throws itself into relief and form, but I am too young yet
by some ages to compile a code." 11 He seemed to appeal to future
scholars in future ages to emphasize his purpose. "This appeal to

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8 Robert N. Linscott, ed., The Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson
9 Journals, v, 430.
10 Selected Writings, p. 351.
11 Ibid., p. 363.
experience of the future relates his thought to pragmatism and justifies the attempt to interpret his ideas in terms of the modern world, and of their influence on it.”

Truth was his aim, and he either ignored or disregarded the vacillating character of his thought. "Emerson's strength lay in his flashing intuitions; in the quick, oblique thrust that penetrates to the heart of the matter." He impressed scholars with the qualities of his mind and spirit, especially in his effort to perceive life yet keep himself balanced between the conflicting elements. His brave words gave others inspiration to attack society, yet he could not join them. "His admiration for vitality and wildness are a romantic reaction from his own softness and non-resistance." Emerson disliked men who persistently thought of themselves, yet he upheld faith in egoism. "He is in the anomalous position of one who fears to stand alone yet resents the support of others."

Emerson was haunted by the desire to strike materialism with its conventions which hold men in prisons of distrust. He attempted to formulate a balance of good and evil. The question raised is obvious. Does Emerson recognize evil? If so, what is his interpretation of evil?

Explanation of Emerson's understanding of evil is through mysticism. Mysticism does not deny "evil" in individual human experience,
but it does deny the justification of calling the misfortunes, pains, and sorrows of life "evil." Emerson's problem was that he seemed to emphasize evil as desirable, rather than teach the discipline of it. Difficulties are lessons in life which contribute to resoluteness of spirit, but Emerson viewed tragedy as preliminary to visions of goodness. "More often . . . Emerson sought to mediate between the purely mystical and the purely conventional interpretations to preach the potential inner victory of good over evil in the soul of man or the possible, future victory of good over evil in the life of humanity." It is disconcerting to hear Emerson express the belief that evil is but the shadow of good. One critic spoke of this belief when he wrote:

Pain hurts, poverty pinches, bereavement is bitter, injustice cruel, remorse torture. If evil is but the shadow of good, its blackness leaves any but an invincibly optimistic temperament sadder still by minimizing the moral order in rendering it less substantial and therefore less apt a field for calculable conflict. . . . To call sin 'good in the making' to ascribe it to some 'circle' or other in following which the 'ways of the wicked' are made to serve the harmony of the spheres, is to minimize its gravity and 'either' the individual with a vengeance.17

It is surprising that the young man who was so unsure of himself because the popular lecturer whose words were not only entertaining but also complex with brilliant reflections of life. The problem of his prose was similar to that of his philosophy. Because he attempted to identify man with all segments of society, his writings often sound repetitious.

16 Emerson Handbook, p. 143.
His sentences fall over you in glittering cascades, beautiful and bright and for the moment refreshing, but after a very brief while the mind, having nothing to do on its own account but to remain wide open, and see what Emerson sends it, grows first restive and then torpid. Admiration gives way to astonishment, astonishment to bewilderment, and bewilderment to stupefaction. 18

Matthew Arnold was not quite so harsh as Birrell, but he wrote that Emerson's "style has not the requisite wholeness of good tissue." 19 Arnold did not place Emerson among the great poets, writers, or thinkers.

The secret of Emerson's effect was in his serene temper. The benign nature of the man with his insight and truth was the working formula for his lectures and writings. "Happiness in labour, righteousness, and veracity; in all the life of the spirit; happiness and eternal hope;—that was Emerson's gospel." 20

Emerson's Journals reveal the manner in which his mind worked. Epigrams and maxims are scattered through his pages. The critic Garrod wrote:

His best power lies in epigram; but in that kind of epigram which relies for its effect always upon the thought, and never upon the words—the idea is fine enough, or sharp enough to look after itself: of verbal art there is almost nothing, but everything depends on a kind of sleight of mind... You may observe him, over initial tracts of dull or untidy work, fumbling toward his epigrams, groping uncertainly towards the point of light. As often as not, when he finds it, he dies upon it; he falls


back into dullness; or the flash suffices to irradiate
a paragraph; and then begins a new darkness, a new
fumbling. 21

James Russell Lowell expressed a different opinion. He referred
to Emerson's elocution and style when he said, "I know not where to
match in these days of writing by the page; it is like homespun cloth
of gold. The many cannot miss his meaning, and only the few can find
it. It is the open secret of all true genius." 22 James Cabot remarked
that "his speech would come down upon the word he wanted, and not
Worcester or Webster could better it from all the wealth of their
huge vocabularies." 23

Emerson was not constructing a system of philosophy, and to
those who felt the vagueness of his style, Lowell commented, "He may
suspect in him, here and there, a certain thinness and vagueness of
quality, but let the waters go over him as they list, this masculine
fibre of his will keep its lively color and its toughness of texture." 24

The Journals reveal the character of a man who attempted "to
slay the dragons of sloth and greed, and their litter of squalor of
mind or heart or place . . . . To the world he is full of good hope." 25

He achieved an inner harmony

of which everything that he did was a faithful
expression—like rays from a shining light. Yet
this light shone impartially on all things.


23 Cabot, II, 620.

24 Lowell, p. 303.

Nature, science, history, art, ethics, metaphysics, religion, all were dear to him, all so absorbing that he could surrender none of them. He studied the whole of life, and expressed himself as preacher, moralist, metaphysician, orator, poet, literary critic, summarizing the series with the term 'scholar,' understood in his own sense. If he was anything, he was the scholar in his own sense; that is, he was nothing in particular, he was a man—a man thinking.26

Emerson was a thinking man who should not be "pigeon-holed as a Transcendentalist, nor as anything else. He refuses labels and classifications... Although he has a Ben Franklin side, he has also a Confucius, a Plato, an Isaiah side. He is a seer, a poet, and a prophet, as well as a citizen of Concord, who made a humble living by talking and thinking."27

Not everyone is willing to follow Emerson's doctrine of idealism into the world of intuition. Some think it heresy to identify self with God, and others consider it a mere rhapsody. Emerson expressed his faith with dynamic passion. One writer who spoke of Emerson's belief said:

To believe himself part of universal wisdom gave him a wonderful sense of freedom. It was the ultimate liberation. It was creative. Life seemed good fundamentally; nature and man could be trusted. Life was something not to be learned but to be lived. Now was the appointed hour for a fresh start. The doctrine was a receptive one. Better an imperfect theory, with glimpses of the truth than digested systems that were dead.28

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28Lindsay, *Introduction*, xxii.
Octavius Frothingham elaborated upon this general opinion and commented that Emerson "neither dogmatizes nor defines. . . . His chief anxiety seems to be to avoid committing himself to opinions; to keep all questions open; to close no avenue in any direction to the free ingress and egress of the mind."29

Opinions regarding Emerson and his doctrines are varied. Critics express elaborate, scornful, laudatory, and diversified observations. As Woodberry so aptly wrote, "Appreciation of Emerson is largely one of temperament."30 Robert Frost stated that Emerson may be too Platonic about evil but that his belief in freedom has impact and meaning. Frost said, "I owe more to Emerson than anyone else for troubled thoughts about freedom. . . . Emerson says God would take the sun out of the skies/Emerson's freedom out of a man, . . . and there rings the freedom I choose."31 It is for this sort of feeling that Emerson must be acknowledged. "Emerson has taken away the barriers that shut out the sun and has assured the unimpeded, cheerful circulation of the light of heaven, and the wholesome air of day."32

No definite classification can be imposed upon Emerson's works. His life and his Journals reflect his thoughts. He believed in truth, in solid living, in character, in knowledge gained through revelation of self with God. He believed in nature and in the future. He stood

30Woodberry, p. 176.
32John Dewey, "Ralph Waldo Emerson," Ibid., p. 29.
for America—the ideal reality of democracy. "His life was one long conversation with the invisible divine, expressing itself through individuals and particulars: 'So high is grandeur to our dust, so near is God to man!'"

33William James, "Address At the Emerson Centenary in Concord,"
Ibid., p. 23.
Bibliography


Appendix

Chronological Table of Emerson's Life

1803  Emerson born, in Boston, May 25.
1813-17  At the Boston Latin School.
1817-21  At Harvard College.
1821-28  Teaching School and Studying Divinity at Harvard.
1829  Pastor of Second Church of Boston, Married, September, to Ellen Louisa Tucker.
1831  Death of his wife (February).
1832  Resigned his pastorate (September). Sailed for Europe (December).
1833  Returned from Europe (October).
1834  Death of Edward Emerson in Puerto Rico.
1835  Married to Lydia Jackson (September).
1836  Charles Emerson died (May). Nature published (September). Emerson's son Waldo born (October).
1837  The Phi Beta Kappa Address (The American Scholar; August 31).
1838  Divinity School Address (July 15).
1841  Essays: First Series.
1842  Waldo died (January). Editor of The Dial, (1842-1844).
1844  Essays: Second Series.
1847  Poems. Second visit to Europe.
1850  Representative Men.
1856  English Traits.
1860  Conduct of Life.
1867 May Day (poems). Received degree of LL.D. from Harvard, and was elected an Overseer of the University.

1870 Society and Solitude.

1872 House burned; third visit to Europe.

1875 Letters and Social Aims.

1882 Died at Concord, April 27.
From XVI

O what have I to do
With merriment and jollities,—
Youth, golden hair and sparkling eyes,
And deafening games that children prize?

I am not made to tune a lute,
Nor amble in a soft saloon;
Nor mine the grace of kind salute
To men of pride and heart of stone,
My pulse is slow, my blood is cold,
My stammering tongue is rudely turned.

Man to his work, the merry to their wine,
Friend to his friend, folly to festivals,
All hopes and humors to their several ends,
Sages to schools, young Passion to its love,
Ambition to its task, and me to mine,
I am not charged with dallying messages
That thus I mingle in this glittering crowd,
Seeing with strange eyes their buffooneries.
I am not tangled in the cobweb net
That wanton Beauty weaves for youth so knit
To some fair maid he follows with his eye.
A sterner errand to the silken troop
Has quenched the uneasy blush that warmed my cheek;
I am commissioned in my day of joy
To leave my woods and streams, and the sweet sloth
Of prayer and song that were my dear delight;
To leave the rudeness of my woodland life,
Sweet twilight walks and midnight solitude
And kind acquaintance with the morning stars,
And the glad heyday of my household hours,—
The innocent mirth which sweetens daily bread,
Sailing in love at those who rail again,
By mind's industry sharpening the love of life.
Books, Muses, study, fireside, friends, and love,
I loved ye with true love, so fare ye well.

I was a boy; boyhood slid gaily by,
And the impatient years that trod on it
Taught me new lessons in the lore of life.
I've learned the sum of that sad history
All woman-born do know, that hoped for days,
days that came dancing on fraught with delights
Dash our blown hopes as they limp heavily by.
But I—the bantling of a country Muse—
Abandon all those toys with speed, to obey
The King whose weak ambassador I go.

Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, II, 38-40.
To Ellen

All that thy virgin soul can ask be thine,
Beautiful Ellen, —let this prayer be mine.
The first devotion that my soul has paid
To the mortal grace it pays to thee, fair maid,
I am enamoured of thy loveliness,
Lovesick with thy sweet beauty, which shall bless
With its glad light my path of life around,
Which now is joyless where thou art not found.
Now am I stricken with the sympathy
That binds the whole world in electric tie;
I hail love's birth within my hermit breast,
And welcome the bright ordinance to be blest.
I was a hermit whom the lone Muse cheers,
I sped apart my solitary years,
I found no joy in woman's meaning eye
When Fashion's merry mob were dancing by;
Yet had I read the law all laws above,
Great Nature hath ordained the heart to love;
Yet had I heard that in this mortal state
To every mind exists its natural mate;
That God at first did marry soul to soul,
Though lands divide and seas between them roll.
Then eagerly I searched each circle round,
I panted for my mate, but no mate found,
I saw bright eyes, fair forms, complexion fine,
But not a single soul that spoke to mine.
At last the star broke through the hiding cloud,
At last I found thee in the silken crowd;
I found thee, Ellen, born to love and shine,
And I who found am blessed to call thee mine.

Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, II, 257-258.
The Everlasting Yea

Often also I could see the black Tempest marching in anger through the Distance: round some Schreckhorn, as yet grim blue, would the eddying vapour gather, and there tumultuously eddy, and flow down like a mad witch's hair; till, after a space, it vanished, and, in the clear sunbeam, your Schreckhorn stood smiling grim-white, for the vapour had held snow. How thou fermentest and elaborated, in thy great fermenting vat and laboratory of an Atmosphere, of a World, O Nature! --Or what is Nature? Ha! why do I not name thee God? Art not thou the 'Living Garment of God'? O Heavens, is it, in very deed, He, then, that ever speaks through thee; that lives and loves in thee, that lives and loves in me?
Brahma

If the red slayer think he slays,
   Or if the slain think he is slain;
They know not well the subtle ways
   I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
   Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
   And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
   When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
   And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
   And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, seek lover of the good!
   Find me, and turn thy back on heaven,

Vita

Rachel Sherwood was born in Campo Grande, Matto Grosso, Brazil, South America, on June 28, 1940. Her parents, the Reverend and Mrs. W. B. Sherwood, retired in 1951 after thirty-four years in Brazil as Baptist missionaries, and it was November of that year when Miss Sherwood first came to the United States to live. She had attended the first two years of public elementary school in Campo Grande.

In January of 1952, Miss Sherwood entered the last semester of the sixth grade at Latta Elementary School, Latta, South Carolina. In September, 1952, she transferred to the seventh grade at Dillon High School, Dillon, South Carolina. She graduated from Dillon High School in June, 1958.

Miss Sherwood entered Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, in September of 1958. During her four years at Furman, she was active in college publications and had published many essays and poems. In 1960 and in 1961, she received the South Carolina College Press Association award for the Best Poem in the State. She was a member of Alpha Phi Gamma, honorary co-educational journalism fraternity. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in June, 1962, with a major in English and minors in political science, French, and education.

Miss Sherwood taught ninth-grade English, social studies, and world geography during the school year of 1962-1963 at Hughes Junior High School, Greenville, South Carolina.
In June, 1963, Miss Sherwood entered the University of Richmond Graduate School, Richmond, Virginia, to begin work on her Master of Arts degree in English. After this degree is awarded to her in August, 1964, Miss Sherwood will move to Radford, Virginia, where she will be an Instructor of English at Radford College.