Emerson and American Cosmopolitanism

By

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Abstract

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Emerson uses the word "cosmopolitan" to describe the characteristically American legislature that will emerge in the United States. Examining the idea of cosmopolitanism in Emerson's work invites us to consider an early manifestation of what Bruce Robbins, in 1998, recognizes as "a growing consensus that cosmopolitanism sometimes works together with nationalism rather than in opposition to it." Emerson's idea of the cosmopolitan not only provides a meaningful framework for Americanists to study his work, but also contributes to contemporary theoretical interest in cosmopolitanism. The hitherto under-examined embodiment of the cosmopolitan as a functional idea in mid-nineteenth century America will contribute to studies on American transnationalism, and will help bridge an apparent opposition between philosophical transcendentalism and political engagement in the work of Emerson. Throughout the dissertation, I examine Emerson's relationship to the literature and land of India as it marks the bounds of his cosmopolitan scope.

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Introduction
The Candidate

On March 18, 2008, the Illinois senator and Presidential candidate Barack Obama delivered a speech in Philadephia's Constitution Center. Announced as a speech on race in the United States, titled "A More Perfect Union," and scrutinized as an apology for his relationship to his pastor, Obama defines himself as cosmopolitan and American:

> I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in Patton's Army during World War II and a white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. I've gone to some of the best schools in America and lived in one of the world's poorest nations. I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slaveowners – an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue, scattered across three continents, and for as long as I live, I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible.[1]

For Obama, that "no other country on Earth" provides such a possibility is testament to a specific quality of what constitutes American nationality, a nationality that is essentially cosmopolitan. Far from seeking simply to find a place on the margins of American society, Obama seeks the most ostentatiously nationalist position in the country. Commentators question whether Obama's candidacy has thrived because of his cosmopolitan background or in spite of it. Such questioning is symptomatic of the ambivalent role cosmopolitanism plays in the concept of American nationality. In his 1961 book, *Emerson on Race and History: An Examination of* English Traits, Philip

Nicoloff sets out to "find the exact role which Emerson played in that whole dark tradition of racial preference and historical determinism," and he argues:

> Should we find that he was unable to bring anything fresh and viable to these most bitterly argued issues of his and our time, or that he imagined he could somehow remain personally uncommitted to the doctrines which he preached to his audience, then we might wonder whether his books are worth reading at all.[2]

Almost forty years later, I am examining Emerson's relevance to questions of American national identity amidst an election cycle featuring a strong nativist sentiment based in part upon a fear of the dilution of Anglo American cultural hegemony, questions over how a global economy coheres or disintegrates human interactions within and across national boundaries, questions of nationalist and humanistic responsibilities and their compatibility, and questions as to whether a major candidate's cosmopolitan background implies compromised allegiances or fulfilled promises of the American national project. Does an understanding of Emerson and cosmopolitanism enhance or contribute to our understanding of these questions? Addressing them is a peripheral task of this dissertation.

Ralph Waldo Emerson has been ubiquitous on canonical American literature syllabi for almost a century. Works like "The American Scholar" and "Self-Reliance" are quoted as anthems of American self-definition. There are good reasons why *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* calls Emerson "arguably the most influential American writer of the nineteenth century," and devotes to him the longest critical introduction of any American writer.[3] Literary criticism tracing, qualifiying, and analyzing Emerson's canonical status in America abounds.[4] Well beyond literary studies,

Emerson has served as a proponent of jingoistic American materialism, as when Ken Lizotte writes, in *The Expert's Edge: Become the Go-To Authority People Turn to Every Time*, devotes a chapter to Emerson, "Ralph Waldo Emerson's life practices have laid the foundation for today's business thoughtleading way of life."[5] And according to biographer John Patrick Diggins, Ronald Reagan, the godfather of contemporary political conservatism, was "an Emersonian… turning his back on what both saw as forces inhibiting America."[6] Diggins writes, "Like Emerson, Reagan was determined to rid America of the fear of selfishness, since the self itself was sacred." Many critics, including myself, would argue against Diggins' understanding of Emerson's notion of the "self" and "self-reliance," but one common understanding of that term, as justified selfishness and absolute self-interest, remains popular. That Reagan derives his celebrated optimism regarding America from Emerson is evident in Reagan's last public address, at the 1992 Republican National Convention, where he said, "Emerson was right. We are the country of tomorrow. Our revolution did not end at Yorktown. More than two centuries later, America remains on a voyage of discovery, a land that has never become, but is always in the act of becoming" (Diggins, 41).

On the other hand, as Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell, among others, suggest, a thorough reading of Emerson's work, his readings and his readers, might find that Emerson is "*American* only in caricature."[7] While the work of Dimock and Buell reflects a growing interest in trans-Atlantic and transnational readings of Emerson, such readings have existed since the nineteenth century. In a volume edited by F.B. Sanborn and published in 1885, just three years after Emerson's death, Protap Chunder Mozoomdar calls Emerson "a geographical mistake. He ought to have been born in

India," and considers that "perhaps Hindoos were closer kinsmen to him than his own nation."[8] George Willis Cooke, in an essay called "Emerson's View of Nationality," published in the same volume, writes, "Emerson was at the same time an American and a cosmopolitan; he believed equally in humanity and in his own country" (Sanborn 310). Cooke continues:

> A view of nationality which recognizes the distinctive American type as essential, and which is as cosmopolitan as the race, is that to be found in the writings of Emerson. It is not cosmopolitan in the manner of some of his predecessors, who teach that the nation is nothing; but he makes the idea of a universal humanity the very centre of his conception of nationality. Attachment to our country becomes the motive for a recognition of all mankind. (336)

Cooke writes that Emerson's cosmopolitanism need not teach "that the nation is nothing," but rather that cosmopolitanism somehow is "at the very centre of his conception of nationality." In so doing, Cooke presages contemporary critics writing a century later, including Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, who claim that "there is a growing consensus that cosmopolitanism sometimes works together with nationalism rather than in opposition to it."[9] Further, Cooke describes the American as a type and a "race," and as Nicoloff wrote in 1961, and as coverage of Obama's speech and campaign continues to suggest, the meaning of race as it relates to American nationality in the nineteenth century might remain integral to questions of American nationality and its cosmopolitan character today. What role does the idea of cosmopolitanism play in the sometimes apparently conflicting loyalties one might hold between a minority group within a nation, or a group that crosses national bounds, and one's nation-state? What

role does race play in the construction of cosmopolitanism? Since Cooke wrote the above passage in 1885, the term "cosmopolitan" and all of its cognates have undergone scrutiny that addresses some of these questions. A reading of Emerson has an important role in such discourse, especially as cosmopolitanism relates to American nationality, and this dissertation aims to provide such a contribution.

One of the paradoxes of nations that Benedict Anderson puts forth in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, is that of the "formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept" versus "the particularity of manifestations." While all nationalities share the quality of being nationalities, each individual nationality is *sui generis.*[10] I posit that American nationality has always been characterized by cosmopolitanism, a nationalism not based on patrilinear descent but on ideological sympathy. I plan to look at Emerson as exemplary and pivotal in the relationship between American nationality and cosmopolitanism.

If critics have struggled in their attempts to understand Emerson's "Americanness" and his cosmopolitanism, they have also been challenged in attempting to reconcile the political and philosophical strains of his writing, which often seem, stylistically and thematically, to be at odds with one another. John Carlos Rowe opposes two critical strains that unsuccessfully try to reconcile Emerson's political and expository writings. On the one hand, Sacvan Bercovitch defends Emerson's philosophical transcendentalism against charges of unqualified support for Jacksonian democracy and emergent capitalism. Bercovitch argues that Emersonian "individuality" or "self-reliance" must be distinguished from the "individualism" of industrial capitalism. If, as Reagan said, "Emerson was right," then Reagan was wrong about Emerson. The

synthesis of these opposing ideas forms for Bercovitch a critical tradition of "liberal dissent" within American progressivism.[11] Rowe argues that Bercovitch neglects to examine Emerson's essays on slavery and women's rights, or else Bercovitch would see that the opposition is not an "energetic 'paradox,'" but "rather the fundamental contradiction beyond which Emerson cannot take his transcendentalism." On the other hand, Len Gougeon, who edited Emerson's antislavery writings and wrote *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform,* seeks to redeem Emerson's reputation as a committed social reformer throughout his career.[12] However, Rowe writes, "just as Bercovitch only treats Emerson's philosophical transcendentalism, so Gougeon treats only Emerson's political affiliations and commitments."[13] I see cosmopolitanism as an aegis under which these apparently opposing strains might be reconciled.

While a rich scholarly discourse about cosmopolitanism has developed over the past twenty years, few Emerson scholars have considered the value of theories on cosmopolitanism when reading Emerson, and fewer theorists on cosmopolitanism have considered Emerson in the development of their ideas. This project reconciles and contributes to both fields.

The rest of this dissertation is divided into two parts, each consisting of two chapters. Part One focuses on the political, legal, and economic notions of Emerson's cosmopolitanism, and is anchored by the pivotal but oft-neglected 1844 address, "The Young American," where Emerson, anticipating the type of law that will arise in the United States, describes such law as "cosmopolitan" in a passage cited by the *OED* as the earliest adjectival usage of the word. In the first chapter, I survey etymological, historical, and other notions of cosmopolitanism in order to develop a working idea of

this term, from its origin with Diogenes the Cynic through its permutations as a Stoic concept, a Christian concept in the early Church, the term's first appearance in English in 1598, the Enlightenment and colonial period in the United States, and finally in the nineteenth century. The axis around which this essay will spin is the role of cosmopolitanism as it informs a developing American sensibility from the colonial period to the nineteenth century. I will conclude the first chapter with a discussion of "The Young American" and Emerson's use of the term "cosmopolitan" to describe the type of law he foresees in the growing republic. The second chapter, also based upon "The Young American," is an examination of Emerson's economic cosmopolitanism, a non-utilitarian theory of value based upon the ornamental or instructive value of public works.

Part Two explores Emerson's literary cosmopolitanism, first in a consideration of Emerson's approach to Bibles, and then in an application of what I call "cosmopolitan reading," where I re-examine Emerson's relationship to the Bhagavad Gita in the context of the American Civil War, and challenge the standard myopic view of Emerson and his influences that have remained largely unchallenged since 1930.

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[1] Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union," Phildadelphia, 18 March 2008. http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hisownwords/, 14 April 2008.

[2] Philip L. Nicoloff, *Emerson on Race and History: An Examination of* English Traits (New York: Columbia U Press, 1961), 5.

[3] *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Fifth Edition, Vol 1, ed. Nina Baym et al. (New York: Norton, 1998), 1069-1072.

[4] See Charles E. Mitchell. *Individualism and its Discontents: Appropriations of Emerson, 1880-1950* (Amherst: UMass, 1997), 4-78.

[5] Ken Lizotte, *The Expert's Edge: Become the Go-To Authority People Turn to Every Time* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007).

[6] John Patrick Diggins, *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History* (New York: Norton, 2007), 37-38.

[7] Lawrence Buell, *Emerson* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2003), 108-109.

[8] *The Genius and Character of Emerson: Lectures at the Concord School of Philosophy,* ed. F.B. Sanborn 1885 (New York: Kennikat Press, 1971), 367.

[9] Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, ed. *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation,* (Duluth: U of Minn Press, 1998), 2.

[10] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 14.

[11] Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[12] Len Gougeon, *Emerson's Antislavery Writings* and wrote *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform* (Athens: U of GA, 1990).

[13] John Carlos Rowe, *At Emerson's Tomb: The Politics of Classic American Literature,* (New York: Columbia U Press, 1996), 24-25.

Chapter 1

Of Mice and Men: A Brief History of the American Cosmopolitan

Upon first arriving in Athens, Diogenes of Sinope saw a mouse, which he took as an example upon which me might conduct his life – "not looking for a place to lie down in, not afraid of the dark, not seeking any of the things which are considered to be dainty."[1] Diogenes had been exiled from his native city because either he or his father, entrusted with the money of the state, had adulterated the coinage. Diogenes Laertius, in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* describes Diogenes of Sinope as "a homeless exile, to his country dead. A wanderer who begs his daily bread." His rejection of social conventions was so thorough – "when behaving indecently in the marketplace he wished it were as easy to relieve hunger by rubbing an empty stomach"—that he became known as "dog-like" or *kynikos,* which lead to the moniker Diogenes the Cynic. "Asked where he came from," writes Diogenes Laertius, "he said, 'I am a citizen of the world'" (65), and thus inaugurated the term cosmopolite, or citizen of the cosmos.

While Diogenes the Cynic provides no other idea as to what the duties or allegiances of such a citizenship of the world entails, a set of ideas that would first find elucidation by the Stoics a century later, his attenuation to the mouse as a primary model of cosmopolitanism is worth examining. Kwame Anthony Appiah, in his 2006 book, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers,* describes a commonly held notion of the urbane cosmopolite:

> You imagine a Comme des Garcons – clad sophisticate with a platinum frequent-flyer card regarding, with kindly condescension, a ruddy-faced farmer in workmen's overalls. And you wince.

But when Appiah considers the real reasons for migration, for learning the languages and customs of other places, for the inability or refusal to settle upon a stable homeland, throughout history, he notes:

> A few were looking for food for thought; most were looking for food. Thoroughgoing ignorance about the ways of others is largely a privilege of the powerful. The well-traveled polyglot is as likely to be among the worst off as among the best off—as likely to be found in a shantytown as at the Sorbonne.[2]

In my consideration of early American cosmopolitanism and its effect on the construction of an American nationality, I consider this cosmopolitanism of exile as integral, which necessitates a recognition of American nationality itself as partly exilic. When we finally come to Thoreau in the nineteenth century, we find a particular type of cynic and cosmopolite, who never left his nation and rarely left Massachusetts, but who found that the only place he could feel "free" within the society he lived was in prison or in the woods, who sought exile within the bounds of what was ostensibly his nation in order to better live the ideals of his nationality.

Diogenes' first model cosmopolite, the mouse, has an ironic legacy that touches both the American and other cosmoplitanisms. The most notorious connection made between the cosmopolite and the mouse occurs in the twentieth century, when Adolph Hitler referred disparagingly to Jews as "rootless cosmopolitans," and as vermin, a theme that Art Spiegelman exploits for his graphic novel, *Maus.* Hitler's consideration of mice

reflects a shift in his own view of cosmopolitanism, from what he referred to as his earlier years of naïve cosmopolitanism to an intolerant fascism. Of the development of his hatred for Jews, he writes, "From a feeble cosmopolitan I had become a fanatical anti-Semite."[3]

Early in his life, Hitler described a night in which he leaves crusts out for mice in his room and empathizing with them because of his own early poverty. Later, when he develops and cements his anti-Semitic views and embraces German fascism, he views Jews as mice, and advocates and enacts a program of genocide. The method of execution he used, of exposure to poisonous gas, he took from the delousing methods used in German buildings. Suzanne Benze and Oliver Axer's 2005 documentary, *Hitler's Hit Parade,* on pop culture in Germany in the 1930s and 40s documents an eerie commercial for a fumigating extermination service that alludes to the gas chambers. After World War II, the suspicion of the cosmopolitan pest, especially as Jew, found furtherance in the Soviet Union, where Josef Stalin accused Jews of being "rootless cosmopolitans" and persecuted them mercilessly.[4] Other scholars have studied the "cosmopolitan Jew" as a type in European history.[5] What I am interested in pointing out here is that the metaphor of cosmopolitan as vermin or parasite is an image that extends beyond the twentieth century and back to the very origin of the term cosmopolite, and that then has a legacy in America.

Anti-Semitism in the discourse of vermin sheds light on multiple versions of cosmopolites generally in America. If, on one hand, the cosmopolite would seem to be able to assimilate, unbound as he is to a homeland, one of the main suspicions of him is that, in fact, he apparently doesn't assimilate, and isn't part of the national majority.

Henry Ford, in his 1922 anti-Semitic harangue, *The International Jew,* writes that "the Jew could merge with the people of America if he desired, but he doesn't."[6] Despite the fact that, according to Ford, no prejudice exists against him for his creed or his race, "he cultivates by his exclusiveness the feeling that he does not 'belong.'" Ford complains that the Jew makes his decision not to assimilate and uses it as grounds for complaint against Gentiles, and then Ford voices the complaint of a young Jew: "A Jewish American is a mere amateur Gentile, doomed to be a parasite forever" (Ford, 39).

A *New York Times* piece from 1920 suggests further the association of rats and cosmopolitans, but in this case doesn't limit the association to Jews. "Cosmopolitan Rats Invade Food Mart," reads a November 21 headline. According to the article:

> There are red rats, black rats, gray rats, and brownish-blue rats from the Far East, which have arrived on steamships that have been moored to piers nearby in West Street, and discovered the market, with its abundance of delicacies, while doing a mooch in the gutters after dark.

According to a watchman:

> Once we had a lot of bandy-legged big yellow rats with red eyes and bushy tails. They came from Bagdad and ate up all the dates, figs and raisins they could find in the market and had fights all the time with the regular New York bunch.[7]

Reading Hitler, Ford, and *The New York Times,* it would be easy to conclude that the association between cosmopolitans and mice is purely pejorative. However, in noting that the association extends back to Diogenes, who looked at the mouse as a model upon which to base his life, we might reconsider examining the American relationship to the mouse and see if it sheds light on the idea of the cosmopolitan.

In America, where I am positing that American nationality and cosmopolitanism grew together, the image of the cosmopolitan mouse as American extends from John Winthrop to Walt Disney. Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts, was emphatically not "an American" in terms of what we might call a nationality. And yet when he famously describes a battle in Watertown, MA between a mouse and a snake, he seems to begin the process of defining an American sensibility. The mouse prevails in the fight, and the pastor of Boston gives the following interpretation: "That the snake was the devill; the mouse was a poore contemptible people, which God had brought hether, which should overcome Sathan heere & dispossesse him of his kingdome."[8] In another instance, Winthrop writes of a chamber containing a thousand books, along with a store of corn. One volume contained a Greek Testament, the Psalms, and the Book of Common Prayer. Winthrop finds it worthy of observation that a mouse entered the chamber and ate the Prayer Book, leaving the rest untouched. The mouse, for Winthrop, is a humble instrument of God, chosen to testify his abhorrence of the stated prayers of an idolatrous church (349). In both cases, the mouse is not specifically described as "cosmopolitan," but he represents "a poor contemptible people" and a "humble instrument of God," with whom the Massachusetts settlers choose to identify. Sympathy for the mouse, and identification with the mouse, carries on in American culture through Mickey Mouse. Walt Disney credited Charlie Chaplin's "little fellow" as inspiration for the creation of Mickey Mouse, "trying to do the best he could." Chaplin, a British-born cosmopolite, adamantly refused to contradict anyone who mistakenly believed him to be Jewish.[9] Hitler banned Mickey Mouse in Germany as "the most degenerate piece of pro-Jewish propaganda ever to come out of America."[10]

This cosmopolitan parasite, then, as Jew, Jewish American, or proto-American, has an ambivalent reception. On one hand, Winthrop's mouse and Mickey Mouse exemplify what we might call pluck – resilience coupled with good humor and fortune, while on the other, Ford's Jewish American is unassimilative and parasitical. The idea of cosmopolitan breeds or species, as the *New York Times* article suggests, also implies a biological discourse. Robert Sullivan's 2004 book, *Rats: Observations on the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants,* parodies Thoreau's *Walden* in its form, substituting rats for beans. The book opens, "When I wrote the following account of my experiences with rats, I lived in an apartment building on a block, amidst the approximately eight million people in New York City…" and proceeds to offer a history of rats in New York City. Sullivan answers the question, "Why rats?":

> Rats have conquered every continent that humans have conquered, mostly with the humans' aid, and the not-so-epic-seeming story of rats is close to one version of the epic story of man: when they arrive as immigrants to a newfound land, rats push out the creatures that have preceded them, multiply to such an extent as to stretch resources to the limit, consume their way toward famine—a point at which they decline, until, once again, they are forced to fight, wander, or die.[11]

As Laura Dassow Walls and Phillip Nicoloff have written, Emerson's use of nineteenth-century biology as correspondent to human behavior deeply influenced his social ideas, and as we can see in Sullivan's book, the search for correspondence continues in a direct lineage from the transcendentalists. A useful way to continue this genealogy of cosmopolitanism for the purposes of this study is to discuss the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s entries for cosmopolite and cosmopolitan.[12]

An English Word with an American History

The genesis for this dissertation came about in 2003, as I participated in two apparently unrelated graduate seminars. In one course, on American Aesthetics, I was studying Emerson and nineteenth-century scientific writing, and in the other, on Transnational Literature, I was studying contemporary theories of transnationalism, postcoloniality, and cosmopolitanism. Perusing the *Oxford English Dictionary,* I was surprised to see Emerson's 1844 address, "The Young American," cited as the earliest instance in which the word cosmopolitan was used as an adjective. The *OED* claims that their illustrative quotations are "normally arranged in *chronological* order, starting with the earliest printed example of the sense."[13] The *OED* cites James Howell using the word as a noun in 1645, and Samuel Johnson's 1755 dictionary, which refers to work from the 1580s to the 1660s, lists "cosmopolitan" only as a noun.[14] Whether or not Emerson's use of the word be truly inaugural or not is of somewhat trivial import to this dissertation, though I am yet to find an earlier instance in English where cosmopolitan appears an adjective. In any case, Emerson's adjectival use of the word is not incidental.

That the noun precedes the adjective might seem counter-intuitive; we might usually think of words ending in –an being adjectives, and so assume their historical priority, especially in the case of "cosmopolitan." The suffix is derived from the Latin suffixes meaning "of, or belonging to," which could imply belonging to a place or to some class or order. According to the *OED,* "Primarily these are all adjs., but as in L. etc., all may be used subst., and with some this is the more frequent use." In fact, with a number of such formations, the noun usage seems to precede the adjective, often by

centuries. "Roman" appears as an English noun in the ninth century, but not as an adjective until the fourteenth. "Metropolitan" (etymologically a citizen of the mother/mother city) also appears as a noun a century before being used adjectivally. "American" as noun (1568 – to describe Native people) precedes the adjective (1580) in the *OED* by about a decade. "America" was coined by the German cartographer Martin Waldseemuller in 1507 (*OED,* "America"). In his essay on Odin from *Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History,* a model for Emerson's *Representative Men,* Thomas Carlyle cites Adam Smith's *Essay on Language* to posit that all adjectives were derived from nouns. In Carlyle's paraphrase:

> some very green thing, chiefly notable for its greenness, got the appellative name *Green,* and then the next thing remarkable for that quality, a tree for instance, was named the *green* tree,--as we still say 'the *steam* coach,' 'four-horse coach,' or the like. All primary adjectives, according to Smith, were formed in this way; were at first substantives and things.[15]

The citizen of the world as noun, then, precedes what we might call "citizen-of-the-world-like" behavior, legislation, or species.

In English, the word "cosmopolite" historically precedes "cosmopolitan." The *OED* defines cosmopolite as "one who regards or treats the whole world as his country; one who has no national attachments or prejudices." These two phrases, however, do not reinforce one another. One who "treats the whole world as his country" may not be without national attachment or prejudice. Any imperialist could fit such a description. One might simply believe that his nation is the world, that his nation is destined to encompass the world. This difference, between believing that the whole world is one's

country, and that one *has* no country, is reflected in the usage history between the late sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, a period of time that notably saw both the rise of the modern nation-state and the elucidation of enlightened cosmopolitanism.

The first *OED* citation of "cosmopolite" comes from Richard Hakluyt's *Principal navigations, voyages, and discoueries of the English nation*, a popular account of travel stories and novel sights, published in 1598. A definitively *English* text, with English translations of other texts embedded in the text, it was significant in its historical context, appearing directly after the 1590 defeat of the Armada, which marked the emergence of England as a naval power and competitor with Spain and Portugal for New World colonization. The text is a celebration of "what voyagers and plunderers had hitherto done," and features vivid stories of ocean travel and novel sights of the overseas world. It includes narratives, illustrative material, private letters, and accounts from foreign writers. In Hakluyt's prefatory account of King Edgar the Peaceable, a tenth century unifier of the English monarchy, Hakluyt writes:

> I haue often times (sayd he) and many wayes looked into the state of earthly kingdoms, generally the whole world ouer (as farre as it may be yet knowen to Chrisitian men commonly) being a studie of no great difficultie, but rather a purpose somewhat answerable to a perfect Cosmographer, to find himselfe Cosmopolites, a citizen and member of the whole and onely one mysticall citie vniuersall, and so consequently to meditate of the Cosmopoliticall gouernment thereof, vnder the King almightie, passing on very swiftly toward the most dreadfull and most comfortable terme prefixed.[16]

It would seem that this example of the cosmopolite, "a citizen and member of the whole and onely one mysticall citie vniuersall," corroborates the second part of the *OED's* definition, "one who has no national attachments," a manifestation of early Christian cosmopolitanism, favoring the cosmopolitan over the local as in Saint Augustine's *City of God*, a phrase Augustine used to describe an ideal state, with the Church as its center, as opposed to the material world. However, Hakluyt goes on to argue that Edgar, in his cosmopolitan vision, foresaw British imperialism:

> This peaceable Edgar had in minde about six hundred yeeres past, the representation of a great part of the selfe same Idaea, which from aboue onely, & by no mans deuise hath streamed downe into my imagination, being as it becommeth a subject carefull for the godly prosperitie of this British Empire vnder our most peaceable Queene Elizabeth.

Hakluyt's association of the mystical cosmopolis and the British Empire emerges in 1598, prior to the emergence of both the modern nation state and modern theories of cosmopolitanism. Hakluyt's Edgar foresees a mystical cosmopolis that finds a reflection in Elizabeth's empire. Besides the significance of the early written use of "cosmopolite," Hakluyt proves important in the development of Emerson's cosmopolitanism for another reason: his interest in America.

Hakluyt was one of the first chroniclers of British voyages to America. Montaigne would later base his essay "Of Cannibals" at least partly on Hakluyt's writings, which would in turn serve as a basis for Shakespeare's *Tempest.* Emerson, in a 1840s journal entry writes, "Gonzalo in the 'Tempest' anticipates our reformers" and he goes on to paraphrase Gonzalo as adapted from Montaigne. Gonzalo's description of the

classless cosmopolis, an early and long-standing vision of Utopian America and a model for reformers in the 1840s, is derived from the first English writer to write of the cosmopolite and cosmopolitical.

Jonathan Gil Harris, in his essay, "The Time of Shakespeare's Jewry," argues that the *OED* neglects to consider the religious connotation of the "mystical city vniversall," limiting the concept of cosmopolitanism to a spatial idea of transnational movement. Harris writes:

> By focusing exclusively on the spatial dimensions of the "Vniversall" city or body, however, we lose sight of how cosmopolitan discourse often employs not just space but also time as a way of organizing the relations between different cultures.[17]

Harris points out that the concept of the cosmopolitan "City Vniversall" draws directly from Paul's ideas of the different peoples that come to form the Church. He goes on to describe a typological cosmopolitanism, an engagement with the past and future that correlates to spatial notions of cosmopolites' engagement with other spaces. For Harris, the Jew in Shakespearean England functions as a tie not so much to another space, but to another time. The Jew, including Shylock, represents, and literally *is*, the past, and to supersede his law is to enact the cosmopolitical government of Christian law superseding Jewish Law. Harris considers John Stow's *Survey of London* (1598 and 1603), which includes narratives of Anglo Jewish history to the point of their expulsion in 1290. "Stow doubtless knows that there were Jews living in London," writes Harris. "But the time of the Jews is, in his *Survey*, pluperfect passive—they are not has-beens, but *had*-beens, always already absent because irrevocably past" (43).

Harris' discussion of this typologically cosmopolitan conversation with Jewish people, who even when contemporary become temporally distant, finds a parallel in Emerson's consideration of the Indian people. For Emerson, despite the fact that he saw the "the beautiful costume of the Hindoo, the Chinese, and the Turk" on the streets of New Bedford, and despite wide American press coverage of the First War of Independence or Indian Mutiny of 1857, for Emerson, the Hindus whose texts he reads are a superseded and ancient people. Their texts must be relics in order to understand and justify British colonialism as intellectual and social melioration. The British, writes Emerson, have "justified their occupancy of the centre of habitable land, by their supreme ability and cosmopolitan spirit" (*EL* 815-816). As Harris suggests that the superseding of Jewish culture by Christianity is an act of typological cosmopolitanism, Emerson considers Anglo Saxon imperialism in America as well as Asia and Africa, in a similar manner. Harris suggests the contemporary consequences of such temporal or typological cosmopolitanism by considering the parallels between Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye's recent and wildly popular *Left Behind* series, in which Judaism functions as "the old" superseded past within the cosmopolitan present, and the Bush administration's foreign policy:

> For Jenkins and LaHaye, the Israeli Jew is the Old believer who must be converted to the New covenant, which means Israel must be violently protected by the Christian faithful from all threats posed to it and hence to human salvation. Baghdad, by contrast, is Satan's headquarters and irredeemably evil, and United Nations is a godless organization against which believing Americans must crusade. (Harris 45)

In this version of American typological cosmopolitanism, the "temporalization of geographic space is closer to the religious fantasy of the 'cosmopolites' that we find in early modern writing" (46). America as cosmopolis is the site of apocalyptic history. The integration of America into world religions found expression in the Book of Mormon in the nineteenth century and in the teachings of Elijah Muhammad in the twentieth century, well before the *Left Behind* series. In chapter 3, I will discuss the ways in which Emerson seeks to integrate American literature into the cosmopolitan literary tradition of Bible-making.

An early form of typological cosmopolitanism in America arises with William Bradford. The term "pilgrims" has been applied to the Calvinist settlers of Plymouth, and comes from Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation.* When Bradford's people considered leaving the Netherlands, settling on "Those vast and unpeopled countries of America" as a place where they may advance the gospel and live according to it, they left Amsterdam, "the goodly and pleasante citie which had been their resting place near 12 years; but they knew they were pilgrimes, and looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits."[18] Bradford's pilgrims have no earthly country. They are not Dutch or English, and certainly not American. Bradford cites The Book of Hebrews as his source for this passage. The Book of Hebrews, a New Testament work of pseudonymous authorship, posits the superiority of Jesus Christ as sacrifice and as priest, over prior forms. A good portion of the text is dedicated to a dissertation on faith. Stephen L. Harris writes, "Unlike Paul, who always associates faith with trust in Christ, the author of Hebrews defines the concept in classically Platonic terms—perception of an unseen universe transcending the material world."[19] This unseen

cosmos, the mystical cosmopolis, is an ideal that corresponds to the material world and is hoped for and made evident by faith. This is Bradford's country of the pilgrims. The author of Hebrews considers in succession the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, acting upon faith without ever seeing the results of their faith. The author describes this idealistic faith in a cosmopolitan manner. Abraham, by faith, travels to his promised inheritance, without knowing where he is going. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country" (Hebrews 11:8, KJV). The passage that Bradford cites follows:

> These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:13-16, KJV)

It isn't merely their pilgrims without a land that makes them cosmopolitan. In their utter rejection of a terrestrial country for a cosmopolis prepared by God, the ideal held by the first European settlers of Massachusetts entails a cosmopolitanism that transcends secularization and nationalization over the course of the two centuries that pass between their time and that of Emerson.

The wandering pilgrim as cosmopolite and as American finds a variation in Henry David Thoreau's essay, "Walking," where he develops two faux etymologies for the

word "sauntering." First he considers that the word is derived "'from idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked for charity, under the pretense of going *á la Sainte Terre*," to the Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, 'There goes a *Sainte-Terrer,'* a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander." But for Thoreau, what exactly constitutes a Holy Land? And where is Thoreau going if, as he claims, he is a saunterer "in the good sense?" Thoreau then provides another etymology for the sauntering pilgrim, suggesting that the word is derived from *sans terre,* "without land or home, which, therefore, in the good sense, will mean, having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere. For this is the secret of successful sauntering." Thoreau takes Bradford's cosmopolite who has no home on earth, and makes him "equally at home everywhere," partially through a denial of property ownership. As Jonathan Gil Harris writes of Hakluyt's Jew as anti-cosmopolitan, Thoreau sees progress and cosmopolitanism in both a spatial and temporal dimension. Cosmopolitanism lies to the future, and to the West: "It is too late to be studying Hebrew; it is more important to understand even the slang of to-day."[20]

The Book of Hebrews celebrates another theme that we come to recognize as part of the American cosmopolitan project, relevant to Bradford in his position as the first governor of Plymouth. In the early part of the book advocating the superiority of Christ to Levitical priests, the author cites the story of Melchizedek. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, a king of Salem, described as a superior king because he is "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God." The authority of Christ as king and high priest superior to earthly kings and priests comes specifically because, like Melchizedek, he has become a priest, "not through a legal requirement concerning physical descent, but through the

power of an indestructible life" (NRSV Hebrews 7:16). This denial of patrimony, which is related to a denial of *patria*, will form the basis of American cosmopolitan nationalism in the eighteenth century and ideas of American governance. Ironically, the political authority of the king Melchizedek is distinguished in the same manner that the democratic leader will be, by personal qualities unrelated to patrimony. Hakluyt's and Bradford's vision of the cosmopolis, then, is one of "no country," where the very idea of countries loses meaning, and this is the cosmopolite of the second phrase in the *OED*'s definition – "one who has no national attachments or prejudices."

Revolutionary and Failed Cosmopolitanisms: Crèvecoeur and Paine

By the eighteenth century, however, when Kant and later modern theorists of cosmopolitanism emerge, the sovereign nation-state has also emerged, and the meaning of cosmopolitanism now assumes the existence of nation-states. From Hakluyt and then the 1645 Howell citation, "I came tumbling out into the World a pure Cadet, a true Cosmopolite, not born to Land, Lease, House, or Office," the next cited occurrence of a derivative of cosmopolite in the *OED* comes from W. Taylor in 1797, who writes in the *Monthly Review,* "It discusses the possibility of a cosmopolitical federation." The term federation shows that the understanding of nation has become integral to understanding the cosmopolite. Where the cosmopolitan zone was ephemeral, mystical, a non-place, now it is grounded in a world full of nation-states. The cosmopolite comes from a place, belongs to a place. Tennyson, finally, in his 1876 poem, "Hands All Round," writes:

> First pledge our Queen this solemn night,
>
> Then drink to England, every guest;
>
> That man's the best Cosmopolite

Who loves his native country best.[21]

What has caused this change in the notion of the English cosmopolite that comes about in the nineteenth century? To be an "English cosmopolite" would have been oxymoronic in the seventeenth century. For my purposes, a consideration of two eighteenth-century American figures will serve to explain such a progression.

J Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, a French-born naturalized American, was an aristocrat stuck in France during the French Revolution. While unsuccessfully lobbying the American ambassador for passage to the United States, where he was French consul (and had therefore given up his American citizenship as the post required), and despite the danger of his predicament in France, in 1794, he occasionally would visit a jail prisoner whom he referred to as Thomas, and who might have been Thomas Paine.[22] Paine, a British-born American citizen, had become an important member of the French National Convention in the wake of his popular *Rights of Man*, but his opposition to the execution of Louis XVI had rendered him unpopular with Robespierre. He was arrested because of his English birth, and he remained unclaimed by the United States as a prisoner of France, despite his American citizenship. Paine had written some of the most influential pieces of pro-American propaganda, *Common Sense* and *The Crisis,* and in England, where he would never return, he was wanted for treason. He was therefore unclaimed by the US, imprisoned in France for being British, and wanted in Britain, which he had excoriated, for treason. Crèvecoeur gave the prisoner clothes, sheets, blankets, and some money. He would have been able to empathize with the transient prisoner whose questionable citizenship and loyalties led to his imprisonment during a revolution. French by birth and educated in England, Crèvecoeur was an American

farmer and a Tory sympathizer looking to return to England with his son ten years prior when, ironically, he was suspected of being an American spy and imprisoned in British-occupied New York for three months. Following a winter of near-starvation, resulting in permanent detriment to his health, Crèvecoeur returned to England and published his *Letters from an American Farmer.*

Paine and Crèvecoeur, whose eighteenth-century writings are integral to defining what nationality means in the United States (Paine coined the term "United States of America"), were both tragic cosmopolitans whose lives show the limitations of the United States to fulfill a cosmopolitan national identity. Paine would eventually return to the United States, and die in poverty in upstate New York. Later, William Cobbett, an Englishman who had once criticized Paine but now had reversed his opinion, and claimed that Paine "belongs to England," would dig up his remains. Ensuing events left his body appropriately scattered – a jawbone, a skull, a ribcage, a right hand, in Wales, New Rochelle, France, and England. Someone claims to have part of his hair; another has part of his hardened black brain. Like his body, his personally annotated works never found a safe haven, and were likely burned. His citizenship remained dubious throughout his life; his ballot was refused in the election of 1806. In a late letter to George Washington, which completed the descent to unpopularity in America that he had suffered since the end of the Revolution, Paine writes:

> Land I have none, or what is equal to none. I have exiled myself from one country without making a home of another; and I cannot help sometimes asking myself, what am I better off than a refugee?[23]

And yet it was this cosmopolite whose popular *Common Sense* and later *Crisis* pamphlets served as fomenters of nationalist sentiment in the American colonies.

Paine's *Common Sense* posits an American nationalism that isn't patriotic. I differentiate patriotism and nationalism in part by looking at the etymologic roots. Where "patriotism" is derived from *patria* and further *pater,* or father, it is an allegiance to heredity and patrimony. "Nationalism," we might say, emphasizes the nativity, or the birth, the offspring. Paine's American nationalism is emphatically anti-patriotic. His is a nationalism based not on ancestry but on living and consenting loyalty. In *Common Sense,* Paine combats the notion that "Britain is the parent country" by arguing first, "Europe, not England, is the parent country of America":

> In this extensive quarter of the globe, we forget the narrow limits of three hundred and sixty miles (the extent of England) and carry our friendship on a larger scale; we claim brotherhood with every European Christian, and triumph in the generosity of the sentiment.[24]

Now Paine's depiction of cosmopolitanism here is still limited to European Christians, but the point is that the patrilinear claim of Britain does not hold weight with the Americans. Paine is suggesting that Americans' loyalty to the British, as opposed to some other group, such as Europe, is arbitrary and wrong-headed. First of all, he denies "English descent" as having any meaning whatsoever – "The first King of England of the present line (William the Conquerer) was a Frenchman, and half the peers of England are descendants from the same country" If Americans are to believe that they owe allegiance to Britain as "the parent country," a notion that Paine further dismisses by depicting

Britain as a cannibalistic parent, then Britain would owe its own allegiance to France due to the lineage of its monarchs (Paine 86).

Paine's depiction of "brotherhood with every European Christian" is what Richard Rorty would call "larger loyalty." Rorty, in his essay, "Justice as Larger Loyalty," argues against the Kantian idea, supported by Jurgen Habermas and Martha Nussbaum, that "justice springs from reason and loyalty from sentiment." Rorty suggests that what we call "justice" might simply be loyalty to a larger group, perhaps even all of humanity. Rorty writes, "we cannot resolve conflicting loyalties by turning away from them all toward something categorically distinct from loyalty—the universal moral obligation to act justly."[25] It is by the appeal to larger loyalties that Paine manages to maintain cosmopolitan ideals in the service of a fierce nationalist campaign. Paine writes:

> It is pleasant to observe by what regular gradations we surmount the force of local prejudices, as we enlarge our acquaintance with the world. A man born in any town in England divided into parishes, will naturally associate most with his fellow parishioners (because their interests in many cases will be common) and distinguish him by the name of neighbor; if he meet him but a few miles from home, he drops the narrow idea of street, and salutes him by the name of townsman; if he travel out of the county and meet him in any other, he forgets the minor divisions of street and town, and calls him countryman, i.e., countyman: but if in their foreign excursions they should associate in France, or any other part of Europe, their local remembrance would be enlarged into that of Englishmen. And by a just parity of reasoning, all Europeans meeting in America, or any other

> quarter of the globe, are countrymen; for England, Holland, Germany, or Sweden, when compared with the whole, stand in the same places on the larger scale… (Paine 85)

Paine uses the idea of larger loyalty to deny England any special privilege as "parent country." However, by dropping loyalty to England, the American need not drop the feeling of loyalty. Nor is Paine loyal to Europe; his consistent abolitionism and anti-imperialism may allow us to discount the obvious Eurocentricism in these passages. He replaces loyalty to England with a loyalty to a qualified cosmopolitanism in the service of American nationalism.

Paine writes, "The cause of America is, in a great measure, the cause of all mankind" (Paine 42). His idea is that shared principles, not bloodlines, guide the national sentiment of Americans. To a certain extent, Paine's cosmopolitanism is a direct extension of universalist Enlightenment principles. However, for Paine, in order for America to *be* cosmopolitan (and this is where cosmopolitanism makes a change from the past notions of Hakluyt and the rest) America needs to be a nation. Paine writes:

> It is the custom of nations, when any two are at war, for some other powers, not engaged in the quarrel, to step in as mediators, and bring about the preliminaries of a peace: but while America calls herself the subject of Great Britain, no power, however well disposed she may be, can offer her mediation. (Paine 111)

The idea of nations mediating the disputes of other nations is an eighteenth century cosmopolitan idea, most famously elucidated by Kant. Bradford's pilgrims were cosmopolitan because they had no national identity; now, cosmopolitan engagement and participation requires national identity. So cosmopolitanism and nationalism co-exist and

require one another despite the fact that cosmopolitanism has traditionally been seen as antithetical to nationalism.

I'd like to return to the genealogy of cosmopolitanism as it began with Diogenes and bring it to the eighteenth century in order to show how nationalism and cosmopolitanism come to relate to one another. Diogenes the Cynic was apolitical and did not expand on his idea of the cosmopolitan. In her influential 1997 essay, "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism," Martha Nussbaum writes about the first philosophers to elucidate the meaning of cosmopolitanism – the Roman Stoics of the third century BCE. Nussbaum aims to trace the influence of Roman Stoic cosmopolitanism, particularly via Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, and Cicero, in Kant. She provides a general outline of Stoic cosmopolitanism as Kant was aware of it, and then outlines Kant's affinity with the ideas and differences between Kant and the Stoics.[26] The Roman Stoics, and Kant by extension, envisioned a universal citizenship based upon shared rationality. The Stoics also were able to remain politically involved while maintaining cosmopolitan aims. Pauline Kleingeld and Eric Brown, paraphrasing Chrysippus' *On Lives,* write, "that goodness requires serving other human beings as best one can given the circumstances, that serving all human beings equally well is impossible, and that the best service one can give typically requires political engagement."[27] That Emerson read Kant and the Stoics together is evident from his 1866 essay, "Character," where he writes, "He is moral,--we say it with Marcus Aurelius and with Kant,--whose aim or motive may become a universal rule, binding on all intelligent beings."[28] I will further discuss the role of cosmopolitanism as a factor in Emerson's political engagement in later chapters.

Two works by Kant in particular, "Towards Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch" (1795) and the earlier "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" (1784), have served as standard Enlightenment announcements of cosmopolitan ideals. In addition to positing that all rational beings are citizens of a single community, Kant theorizes a confederation or league of nations in order to maintain "perpetual peace," whereby individual states will respect the rights of their own citizens and of foreigners. James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann edited a volume of essays in 1997 to celebrate the bicentennial of Kant's "Perpetual Peace" along with the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II.[29] This volume featured essays by Nussbaum and Habermas, among others, all with the general thesis that reading and re-evaluating Kant was relevant for the post-Cold War world.

The following year, Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins edited a volume called *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation.* Many of the essays in this volume historicize Kant's cosmopolitanism "as a vision essentially formulated prior to the spread of nationalism in Europe." Cheah writes, "Written in 1795, Kant's 'Perpetual Peace' clearly precedes what Lord Acton disparagingly names as the age of 'the modern theory of nationality'—the period between 1825 and 1831 when nationality, in search of statehood, emerges for the first time, as the primary basis of revolution."[30] In Kant's time, cosmopolitanism cannot be opposed to nationalism because nationalism doesn't exist as we know it. Another essay in the volume, "Cosmopolitanism and the Experience of Nationality," by Jonathan Reè, posits that there is a significant difference between the "cosmopolitan purpose" of Kant's 1784 essay and "Perpetual Peace" a decade later. Reè writes, "The shining ideal of world citizenship was reduced to a grudging concession that

we ought always to allow foreigners to travel among us unmolested, provided they do not stay around too long…. Kant's cosmopolitanism, in short, transformed itself into internationalism, without anyone noticing the difference."[31]

So while Kant has often been cited as a key figure in the formulation of modern cosmopolitanism, the pertinence of his ideas remains unclear in the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Thomas C. Walker, in "The Forgotten Prophet: Tom Paine's Cosmopolitanism and International Relations," convincingly argues, in a comparison of Kant and Paine, that Paine is the more faithful representative of the Enlightenment for students of international relations. First, Walker writes, "by the time a relatively obscure Immanuel Kant penned his ideas on the democratic peace in 1795, *Rights of Man* was already an international best-seller that was often read aloud to the illiterate."[32] Paine believed that democracies will be peaceful with one another and that trade will increase peace between nations. The cosmopolitan basis of Paine's support for other nations' democratic revolutions would become official American policy in 1821 under the Monroe Doctrine. Paine's cosmopolitanism differs from that of Kant in that for Paine, cosmopolitanism requires democracy. Monarchies must make war with other nations in order to preserve inherited privilege. Another difference between Paine and Kant is that Paine had no proposal for world governance or for a federation of governments. For Paine, as Walker writes, "Autonomous nation-states can pursue cosmopolitan ends." Related to his focus on democracy, Paine believed in a reliance on a civilian militia rather than a standing army.

Emerson's exposure to Paine reaches back to his father, William Emerson, who was a reader of Paine. And upon his return from Europe, Emerson also was drawn to

Paine's 1793 pronouncement that "science is the true theology" and to Paine's optimistic view of amelioration.[33] Furthermore, Paine's popularity as a writer, and his place in and consideration of a World Republic of Letters, are relevant to a study of Emerson, who sought a place for American writers in such a community. When, in the second *Crisis* essay, Paine coins the term "United States of America," it is in a discussion of the ancient "Republic of Letters," which he writes is more ancient than monarchy. Paine writes, "'The United States of America' will sound as importantly in the world or in history as 'the kingdom of Great Britain.'"

Where Thomas Paine's cosmopolitanism served the ends of nationalism and American independence, Crèvecoeur's cosmopolitanism led him away from the support of American independence. A pivotal literary figure in the careers of both Paine and Crèvecoeur is the Abbé Raynal, an early abolitionist and critic of British and French imperialism. Raynal depicted the American Revolution as something of an overblown grievance over tea and tariffs in his *Révolution d'Amérique.* In a book review, Paine took the opportunity to correct Raynal and make Europe understand the American perspective, and to promote the ideals of the American Revolution in Europe. Paine, in his review, includes ideas on a Republic of Letters. "Letters, the tongue of the world," he writes, "have in some measure brought all mankind acquainted, and by an extension of their uses are every day promoting some new friendship." He goes on to explain the importance of literature in the explanation of political events. The Revolution in America and alliance with France are important as literary events because, according to Paine, "Our style and manner of thinking have undergone a revolution more extraordinary than the political

revolution of the country. We see with other eyes; we hear with other ears; and think with other thoughts, than those we formerly used" (Nelson 162).

If Paine felt the need to reprimand Raynal and used his review of Raynal's book to promote his own cosmopolitan vision, J Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur saw Raynal as a literary light and role model. He dedicated his *Letters From an American Farmer* to Raynal in 1782, writing

> For the first time in my life I reflected on the relative state of nations; I traced the extended ramifications of a commerce which ought to unite, but not convulses the world; I admired that universal benevolence, that diffusive goodwill, which is not confined to the narrow limits of your own country; but on the contrary, extends to the whole human race. As an eloquent and powerful advocate, you have pleaded the cause of humanity, in espousing that of the poor Africans.[34]

Crèvecoeur, like Paine, saw slavery as an anti-cosmopolitan and plainly anti-human practice incompatible with rational or progressive government or economy. But where Paine's cosmopolitan outlook was predicated on mercantilism ("Our plan is commerce, and that, well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe"), Crèvecoeur was an agrarian suspicious of the ways in which economic cosmopolitanism or globalization tied the agrarian farmer to the slave trade. Further, where Paine uses cosmopolitanism to promote American nationalism, as Christopher Iannini writes, "From the first words of *Letters from an American Farmer,* Crèvecoeur announces that his primary interest in a form of elite transnational fellowship subsumes his meditations on American identity."[35]

Crèvecoeur, in his introduction, proceeds to write of America as "the asylum of freedom; as the cradle of future nations, and the refuge of distressed Europeans." While Crèvecoeur traveled extensively, to Lisban, Jamaica, Peru, England, and France, his narrator, Farmer James, is "provincial," insofar as he doesn't leave North America or experience the world beyond the continental colonies. Nevertheless, he is a cosmopolite because he shares ideals with Raynal. Towards the end of the dedication, Crèvecoeur writes:

> There is, no doubt, a secret communion among good men throughout the world; a mental affinity connecting them by a similitude of sentiments: then why, though an American, should I not be permitted to share in that extensive intellectual consanguinity? (Crèvecoeur 12)

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson accuses the British people of being "deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity." Kristin Boudreau, in *Sympathy in American Literature: American Sentiments from Jefferson to the Jameses,* points out that the idea of consanguinity, or shared blood, is part of an American tradition of sympathy. The British lack of sympathy is testament to a lack of cosmopolitanism and, as I'll discuss in the first chapter, a lack of hospitality, a major tenet of cosmopolitanism.[36] Crèvecoeur as cosmopolite is interested in the rights of the refugee, considering America as a receptacle for the refugee, a nation for the nation-less, though he does not consider America a nation. Crèvecoeur continually returns to the importance of "this great American asylum." In the third letter, "What is an American," he writes that it is this shared refugee quality alone that gives them any sense of national belonging. They shared a cosmopolitan poverty even before they left Europe:

> Alas, two thirds of them had no country. Can a wretch who wanders about, who works and starves, whose life is a continual scene of sore affliction or pinching penury; can that man call England or any other kingdom his country?
>
> (Crèvecoeur, 47-48)

In the letters, Crèvecoeur constructs a persona, "James," a third generation British immigrant, with an education furnished by musty books brought from England by his grandfather. This romantic notion contradicts Crèvecoeur's own past – he was born in France and well educated in England. James has no pretenses towards independence from the British crown, and in the third letter, "What is an American," Crèvecoeur begins with a flush of English pride, the words "nation," "native" and "national" appearing repeatedly throughout the first pages. The English, he writes, are the cultivators of the land, and in America, furthermore, the agrarian culture has narrowed income disparity and created "the most perfect society now existing in the world" (47).

Crèvecoeur then turns from the idea of an American society to that of an American race. "There is a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes," he writes. "From this promiscuous breed, that race now called Americans have arisen." Crèvecoeur's use of a biological metaphor for racial and cultural nationalization forms the basis of a series of themes that run through the writings of nineteenth century Americans when they consider American cosmopolitanism. The idea of a "promiscuous breed" is partly metaphoric, but through the nineteenth century, and arguably through the current day, an understanding of demarcations of breed, race, and even species, was not clear. Emerson, following the prominent naturalist Louis Agassiz, believed in polygenesis, the idea that the races were created separately.

After describing this American race as a promiscuous breed, Crèvecoeur switches to plant imagery:

> …here they are become men: in Europe they were as so many useless plants, wanting vegetable mould, and refreshing showers; they withered, and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war; but now by the power of transplantation, like all other plants they have taken root and flourished. (Crèvecoeur 48)

Philip Nicoloff, Cornel West, Laura Dassow Walls, and Len Gougeon have written insightfully about Emerson's use of science in the formulation of his ideas on race. Nicoloff and West suggest that Emerson adhered to typically racist scientific arguments about the genetic inferiority of darker races and point to the numerous instances in which Emerson proclaims Anglo Saxon superiority and the inferiority of other races as scientific, or "secular" facts. Gougeon, on the other hand, considers Emerson in the context of contemporaries like Bronson Alcott, Thomas Carlyle, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Theodore Parker, whose racist statements were more extreme and vicious, and writes of Emerson's racist statements:

> [These statements] are not conclusions but elements in the evolution of Emerson's understanding of the Negro race. Emerson was always a dialectical thinker, and he attempted to see not only both sides but all sides of an issue before reaching conclusions. In the case of slavery, it is clear that comments such as these represent only half of the dialectic.[37]

Dassow Walls effectively writes that Emerson had no choice in the matter because racist science was the only type available:

> The lack of an effective scientific opposition, at least in the United States, meant that Emerson—committed as he was to scientific truth and the certainty that truth was single and coherent,--was left on his own to confront the "facts" as presented by science.
>
> Given this, Emerson's ability to question established science on moral grounds is remarkable.[38]

What I would like to consider is the idea of cosmopolitanism *as* a racial trait. By the nineteenth century, cosmopolite and its cognates had entered the discourse of geologic sciences and the nascent field of economics.

Charles Lyell, in the second volume of his *Principles of Geology* (1832), which Emerson read extensively, analyzes the geographical distribution of birds; Lyell notes that "some species of the vulture tribe are said to be true cosmopolites."[39] Elsewhere, Lyell discusses lichens and fungi, "many species of which are cosmopolitan, and therefore fitted, by their adaptability to varying conditions, for a long duration in time." Cosmopolitanism, for Lyell, is a biological characteristic, a product of evolution, with the races staggered in their evolutionary stages. Writing of the modern origin of man, he posits "that although we might expect man to become cosmopolitan as soon as he had acquired such intellectual superiority as belongs even to the lowest of the human races now inhabiting the globe, yet so long as was slightly inferior to these races, he may continued for an indefinite time restricted to one limited area."[40]

A cosmopolitan race, tribe, species, then, is one that is suited to live anywhere on the planet. Emerson uses this idea to justify Anglo Saxon imperialism. In the "Race" chapter of *English Traits,* Emerson asks, "It is race, is it not? that puts the hundred

millions of India under the dominion of a remote island in the north of Europe."[41] Later in the volume, he writes of the British imperialism:

> They have approved their Saxon blood, by their sea-going qualities; their descent from Odin's smiths, by their hereditary skill in working in iron; their British birth, by husbandry and immense wheat harvests; and justified their occupancy of the centre of habitable land by their supreme ability and cosmopolitan spirit. *(CW* 5:51)

The Saxon's cosmopolitan superiority justifying conquest finds resonance in American expansionism, towards which Emerson was ambivalent, but often enthusiastic. He writes, regarding Texas, "It is very certain that the strong British race, which have no overrun so much of this continent, must also overrun that tract, & Mexico & Oregon also, and it will in the course of ages be of small import by what particular occasions & methods it was done."[42]

How does a race become cosmopolitan? With Crèvecoeur, the American race becomes cosmopolitan through the mixture of races. Even Emerson's English cosmopolitan comes about through a celebrated mixture of northern tribes. America offers an opportunity (or is it a threat) for the construction of such a race. Laura Vetter discusses Mina Loy's theories on the benefits of mixed-race breeding. Loy posits that Jews have a particular racial cosmopolitanism that resulted in their ability to thrive in various places, and this, she argues, is due to their hybrid make-up acquired through historical nomadism. Loy, a British born naturalized US citizen, posited that "racial purification" was an obstacle to spiritual evolution. Elisabeth Frost, discussing Loy's poem, "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," writes, "If Loy endorsed any eugenical idea, it

might have been 'hybrid vigor.'"[43] The Jews possessed a "transnational blood; wandering so long in exile, Jewish bodies were thought to possess an uncanny, almost magical resistance to diseases," which included both physical ailments and spiritual ones such as nationalism (Vetter, 54). But as Loy was considering a biological cosmopolitan fitness, Francis Galton, the father of eugenics, said in 1884, ""It strikes me that the Jews are specialised for a *parasitical* existence upon other nations, and that there is need of evidence that they are capable of fulfilling the varied duties of a civilised nation by themselves" (Vetter, 55).

We see a return to the discourse of cosmopolitan Jew as parasite in Galton, but in Loy we also see an idea of a hybrid or biologically vigorous cosmopolitan race. Emerson thought a great deal about what exactly constitutes a cosmopolitan race, and of the strength of the hybrid. In an 1845 journal entry lambasting the growth of nativism, Emerson considered the growth of an American race through racial hybridity:

> I hate the narrowness of the Native American Party. It is the dog in the manger. It is precisely the opposite of true wisdom….Well, as in the old burning of the Temple at Corinth, by the melting and intermixture of silver and gold and other metals, a new compound more precious than any, called Corinthian brass, was formed; so in this continent--asylum of all nations--the energy of Irish, Swedes, Poles, and Cossacks, and all the European tribes--of the Africans, and of the Polynesians, will construct a new race, a new religion, a new state, a new literature, which will be as vigorous as the new Europe which came out of the smelting-pot of the Dark Ages, or that which earlier emerged from Pelagic and Etruscan barbarism. (*JMN* 9:299-300)

But if exilic strains have combined to form some sort of a cosmopolitan race in America, Crèvecoeur exhibits an anxiety towards American nationalism that Paine did not. Letter XII, "Distresses of a Frontier Man" shows the cosmopolite's dilemma, a distress about allegiances. First, he considers life in a remote place. He also shamelessly describes his material fear of war. Considering friends who have died, James asks, "of all the animals that live on the surface of this planet, what is man when no longer connected with society; or when he finds himself surrounded by a convulsed and half dissolved one? He cannot live in solitude, he must belong to some community bound by some ties, however imperfect" (Crèvecoeur, 204). He considers his British and American allegiance, and whether, in Rorty's words, he will hold the larger or smaller loyalty in a given period:

> As a member of a large society which extends to many parts of the world, my connection with it is too distant to be as strong as that which binds me to the inferior division in the midst of which I live. I am told that the great nation, of which we are a part, is just, wise, and free, beyond any other on earth, within its own insular boundaries; but not always so to its distant conquests: I shall not repeat all I have heard, because I cannot believe half of it.[44]

Crèvecoeur at this point rejects both national allegiance with Britain and cosmopolitan idealism in favor of self-preservation. "The cool, the distant spectator, placed in safety, may arraign me for ingratitude, may bring forth the principles of Solon or Montesquieu," he writes. Solon, according to Hugh Harris, in his 1927 article, "The Greek Origins of Cosmopolitanism," was an Athenian patriot whose reforms united factions within Athens, and who proposed that "scientific truth should come before national traditions."[45]

Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws,* has served as a basis of cosmopolitan thought for contemporary critics like Julia Kristeva and Hannah Arendt. Like Crèvecoeur, he wrote in the voice of other nationalities, including a Persian.[46] Crèvecoeur at once mocks cosmopolitan idealism and yet appeals to cosmopolitan sympathy in his isolation.

Christopher Iannini argues that "throughout his life, Crevecoeur treated identities and allegiances as provisional strategies designed to ensure his continued mobility and prosperity." All of his writings, according to Iannini, rest upon an identity rooted in enlightened cosmopolitanism as opposed to any national identity. Drawing from Crèvecoeur's 1773 "Sketches of Jamaica and Bermudas and Other Subjects," unpublished until 1995, and considering his "Rock of Lisbon" and "Sketch of a Contrast Between the English and Spanish Colonies," Iannini argues that Crèvecoeur was skeptical of international trade's capability to ensure cosmopolitan rights, and that in fact, the trans-Atlantic economy made it impossible for a rural New York farmer to remain independent from the important influence of slave-produced West Indian sugar. In my second chapter, I will discuss Emerson's idea of a cosmopolitan sequel to trade.[47]

The Nineteenth Century

By the mid nineteenth century, United States sovereignty was undisputed, though its bounds have remained in question. Further, if political independence and national sovereignty were stable, aesthetic and cultural identity remained undefined. Emerson's interest in the significance of America –its means of signifying itself to itself and to the world—is central to his life's work. In 1844, he delivered a lecture on "The Young American," which was first published in *The Dial* in April 1844, the periodical's last issue, and later heavily edited and republished in the 1849 volume, *Nature, Addresses,*

and Lectures. Here, Emerson considers the relationship between the laws and institutions of a technologically interconnected American continent and the natural landscape. He writes:

> To men legislating for the vast area betwixt the two oceans, betwixt the snows and the tropics, somewhat of the gravity and grandeur of nature will infuse itself into the code. A heterogeneous population crowding on all ships from all corners of the world to the great gates of North America, namely, Boston, New York, and New Orleans, and thence proceeding inward to the prairie and the mountains, and quickly contributing their private thought to the public opinion, their toll to the treasury, and their vote to the election, it cannot be doubted that the legislation of this country should become more catholic and cosmopolitan than that of any other. (*CW,* 1:228-229)

It is this passage that the *OED* cites as the first adjectival use of the term cosmopolitan, used to describe the legislation that should arise in the country. The two sentences illustrate two notions of diversity that go into creating a "cosmopolitan" code. One is the heterogeneous population and the other is the diverse landscape, encompassing prairies, mountains, snows, and tropics. Man and nature must combine to form law. Nevertheless, what cosmopolitan law consists of is unclear. Jessica Schiff Berman writes that Emerson "is employing the term 'cosmopolitan' in what we may take to be a distinctly American sense—neither like Kant advocating a league of nations nor like Coleridge privileging nationality."[48]

Immanuel Kant considered cosmopolitan law to be that sphere of law separate from constitutional laws within nations and international laws governing the relations between nations. Cosmopolitan law is that law under which individuals have rights as citizens of the world. One such right is the right of hospitality. Jacques Derrida, in his essay, "On Cosmopolitanism," addresses the refugee crisis in France in the 1990s, the simultaneous tightening of criteria for refugees afforded asylum coupled with the rise in applicants. France, writes Derrida, historically portrayed itself as open to political refugees, but the real reason for its hospitality was a drop in the birth rate and an economic boom led to a need for workers. As "hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic among others," Derrida writes, "*ethics is hospitality.*"[49] However, within the history of hospitality, which is about being at home with oneself and mastering one's home domain, is "an always possible perversion of *the* law of hospitality (which can appear unconditional), and of the laws which come to limit and condition it in its inscription as a law." Derrida provides a history of the law of hospitality going back to the Torah, where in the Book of Numbers, God orders Moses to institute cities of refuge for the resident alien or temporary settler. In the medieval tradition of hospitality, the idea of the Church as sanctuary turns the law of hospitality into a universal law, making all borders unconditionally open, and this, according to Derrida, is when cosmopolitanism begins, which is common to the Stoics and Pauline Christians and finally the Enlightenment inheritors of that tradition. But where Paul determines that all Christians are "fellow citizens," Kant, whose first idea is that all rational beings are free to go anywhere, later differentiates between a right of residence and a right of visitation. The very idea of being hospitable to foreigners implies within it a division between the

host and the visitor. So, as cosmopolitans, two people are citizens of the world together, but as one is a guest and one a host, one is a citizen of the host-country, and one is not.

When we come to America and Emerson's "The Young American," the question of hospitality is a central issue in Emerson's consideration of the Irish. The 1849 version of "The Young American," published after Emerson had visited Europe during the French Revolution and labor uprisings in England, excised a number of passages included in the 1844 version, including four paragraphs from early in the essay on the Irish in Concord. In the summer of 1843, Emerson had visited construction sites where the railroad was being built. Emerson, in the original version of "The Young American," simultaneously describes the technological aspects of the work and the labor involved: "the character of the work itself, which so violates and revolutionizes the primal and immemorial forms of nature." In addition to the tunneled mountains and bridged streams, Emerson describes "the village of shanties, at the edge of beautiful lakes until now the undisturbed haunt of the wild duck, and in the most sequestered nooks of the forest, around which the wives and children of the Irish are seen; the number of foreigners, men and women, whom now the woodsman encounters singly in the forest paths…"[50]

Where Emerson had earlier in the address written that the railroad would bind those of various descents in one web, he now notes, "Our hospitality to the poor Irishman has not much merit in it." Emerson regrets the low pay, long hours, and hard labor, the sight of which "reminds one of negro-driving." The Irish, writes Emerson, are building the levee in New Orleans, are working in Lowell, Maine, Albany, and Ohio at a pittance. And yet, for Emerson, the worker has two advantages. First, as he writes in his journal,

the day laborer, while "standing at the foot of the social scale," is "saturated with the beautiful laws of the world."[51] He remains a cosmopolite in his proximity to the laws of nature dictating his work. Further, "their plight is not so grievous as it seems. The escape from the squalid despair of their condition at home, into the unlimited opportunities of their existence here, must be reckoned a gain.":

> The Irish father and mother are very ill paid, and are victims of fraud and private oppression; but their children are instantly received into the schools of the country; they grow up in perfect communication and equality with the native children, and owe to their parents a vigor of constitution which promises them at least an even chance in the competitions of the new generation. (*CW* 1.224)

Emerson closes his discussion of the Irish with good humored stereotypes about Irish "vivacity" in the face of oppression, and "bounding sportfulness." It seems, to Emerson, that in fact, the intense working hours function "as safe vents for peccant humors" and the ensuing exhaustion "is a better police than the sheriff and his deputies" (*CW* 1:225).

Why does Emerson omit these passages after he returns from England in 1849? While Irish immigration had been steady since the 1820s, in 1845, the year after Emerson published the first version of "The Young American," a shipment of seed potatoes from America to Belgium brought with it the *Phytophtora infestans,* blighting potatoes in Ireland, causing a mass famine, and resulting in an unprecedented emigration from Ireland to the United States, especially to Massachusetts. Emerson, as the 1845 quote above excoriating the Native American party and foreseeing a hybrid American race shows, was not particularly anti-Irish, though he shared some of the dull racism of his contemporaries. Further, while he would eventually lambast England for its support of

the South during the Civil War, Emerson's cosmopolitanism was a Saxon cosmopolitanism, which excluded the Irish, much as it did the Indians. Emerson remained silent on the Irish nationalist movement and rebellion of 1848, just as he would remain silent and in support of Britain's suppression of India seven years later during the Mutiny of 1857, despite wide coverage of the events, including columns by Karl Marx in the *New York Tribune.*[52] Finally, the limitations of Emerson's cosmopolitanism, of his hospitality and equal affordance of humanity to non Saxons, remain a part of what we know as American cosmopolitanism and American nationality, a privileging of whites, especially those with mixed or obscure but unquestionable European origins, as real Americans, as opposed to those hyphenated Americans, often of color, who remain somehow compromised.

Despite my attention to Emerson throughout the rest of this dissertation, I do not try to argue that he was the only or best elucidator of cosmopolitan values in nineteenth century American literature. Margaret Fuller, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, and Martin Delany, among the canonical writers, all have important cosmopolitan elements that, like Emerson, are simultaneously about constructing a national identity through cosmopolitanism. Tom Lutz' *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value* draws its title from Whitman's *Democratic Vistas,* where Whitman writes:

> Sole among nationalities, these States have assumed the task to put in forms of lasting power and practicality, on areas of amplitude rivaling the operations of the physical kosmos, the moral political speculations of ages, long, long deferr'd, the democratic republican principle, and the theory of development and perfection by voluntary standards and self-reliance.[53]

[1] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* with an English translation by RE Hicks, MA, (Cambridge: Harvard, 1965), Vol 2, 25.

[2] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, (New York: Norton, 2006), xviii.

[3] George Victor, *Hitler: The Pathology of Evil* (Dulles: Brassey's, 1998), 125.

[4] Stephen Shenfield, *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements.* (New York: Sharpe, 2001), 39.

[5] See Gary Martin Levine, *The Merchant of Moderinsm: The Economic Jew in Anglo-American Literature, 1864-1939,* New York: Routledge, 2003, David Cesarani, ed. *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading.* New York: Routledge, 2002, Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain: 1656-2000*, Berkeley: UCal, 2002.

[6] Henry Ford, *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*, 1920 (New York: Kessinger, 2003), 39.

[7] "Cosmopolitan Rats Invade Food Mart," *New York Times,* 21 November 1920, 37.

[8] John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630 – 1649* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1996), 72.

[9] David Robinson. *Chaplin: The Mirror of Opinion,* (Bloomington: Indiana U Press, 1984), 119.

[10] Douglas Brode, *Multiculturalism and the Mouse: Race and Sex in Disney Entertainment* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 2005).

[11] Robert Sullivan, *Rats: Observations on the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), 2.

[12] See Nicoloff, 98-133 and Laura Dassow Walls, *Emerson's Life in Science: The Culture of Truth* (Ithaca and London: Cornell, 2003).

[13] *The Oxford English Dictionary,* (2nd edition, 1989), lxiv.

[14] Samuel Johnson and John Walker, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755 (London: Pickering, 1828).

[15] Thomas Carlyle, *Of Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History.* 1841 (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), 34.

[16] Richard Hakluyt, *The principal navigations, voyages and discoueries of the English nation*, 1598-1600. http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/h/hakluyt/voyages/chapter10.html

[17] Jonathan Gil Harris, "The Time of Shakespeare's Jewry. Shakespeare Studies 35, 2007, 40.

[18] William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation,* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912), 1:124.

[19] Stephen L. Harris, *Understanding the Bible,* fourth edition (Mountain View: Mayfield, 1997), 456.

[20] Henry David Thoreau, "Walking," *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau,* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1893), 9:273.

[21] *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson.* Ed. Hallam Lord Tennyson (New York: Macmillan, 1908), 4:387.

[22] Gay Allen Wilson and Roger Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur* (New York: Viking, 1987), 182.

[23] Craig Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of the Modern Nation,* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

[24] Thomas Paine, *Common Sense,* 1776 (New York: Penguin, 1986), 85.

[25] Richard Rorty, "Justice as Larger Loyalty," in Cheah and Robbins, 48.

[26] Martha Nussbaum, "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* Vol. 5, issue 1.

[27] Kleingeld, Pauline and Eric Brown, "Cosmopolitanism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2006 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2006/entries/cosmopolitanism/.

[28] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Character", in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* ed. Edward Waldo Emerson, 12 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903-4), 10:92; hereafter cited parenthetically as *W,* with volume and page number.

[29] James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann, ed. *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal,* Cambridge: MIT, 1997

[30] Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, ed. *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation,* Duluth: U Minnesota, 1998, 23.

[31] Jonathan Reé, "Cosmopolitanism and the Experience of Nationality," in Cheah and Robbins, 78.

[32] Thomas C. Walker. "The Forgotten Prophet: Tom Paine's Cosmopolitanism and International Relations." *International Studies Quarterly* (2000) 44. (p.55).

[33] Robert D. Richardson, *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Berekeley: U Cal Press, 1995), 153.

[34] J Hector St. John Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer.* 1782, (Glouceter: Peter Smith, 1968).

[35] Christopher Iannini, "'The Intinerant Man': Crèvecoeur's Caribbean, Raynal's Revolution, and the Fate of Atlantic Cosmopolitanism." *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 61:2.

[36] Kristin Boudreau, *Sympathy in American Literature: American Sentiments from Jefferson to the Jameses,* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2002).

[37] Len Gouegon, *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform*, (Athens: U of GA, 1990), 184. See Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism,* (U of Wisconsin, 1989).

[38] Laura Dassow Walls, *Emerson's Life in Science: The Culture of Truth,* (Ithaca and London: Cornell, 2003), 184.

[39] Charles Lyell, *Principles of Gelology: Being an Inquiry how Far the Former Changes of the Earth's Surface are Referable to the Causes Now in Operation, vol 2*, First American from the Fifth and Last London Edition. (Philadelphia: James Kay, 1837), 35

[40] Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology or the Modern Changes of the Earth and its Inhabitants,* 11th edition, Volume 2, (New York: Appleton, 1889), 564.

[41] *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* ed. Alfred R. Ferguson, Joseph Slater, et al. 6 vols. To date (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, Belknap Press, 1971-), 5:26; hereafter cited parenthetically as *CW,* with volume and page number.

[42] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* 15 vols, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, Belknap Press) 9:74; hereafter cited parenthetically as *JMN*, with volume and page number.

[43] Laura Vetter, "Theories of Spiritual Evolution, Christian Science, and the 'Cosmopolitan Jew': Mina Loy and American Identity." *Journal of Modern Literature,* 31:1, Fall 2007, 48.

[44] Crèvecoeur, 207.

[45] Hugh Harris, "The Greek Origins of Cosmopolitanism," *International Journal of Ethics,* Vol 38, no. 1, October 1927.

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[47] Christopher Iannini, "'The Intinerant Man': Crevecoeur's Caribbean, Raynal's Revolution, and the Fate of Atlantic Cosmopolitanism." *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Vol. 61, Issue 2.

[48] Jessica Schiff Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Poltics of Community.* Cambridge: Cambridge U, 2001. 35.

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[50] *CW* 1.224

[51] *JMN* 9:17

[52] See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Colonialism,* (New York: Progress, 1968).

[53] Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days & Collect.* 1883, (Mineola: Dover, 1995), 203

Chapter 2

"This prospering country is your ornament": Emerson and the Instructive Value of the Cosmopolitan Project.

I. Emerson's Mantles

Consider some trinkets adorning Emerson's study in 1872, now on permanent display at the Concord Museum: a plaster replica of Flaxman's *Psyche*; a small bronze head of Homer; a photograph of a bas-relief of *Three Kings of the East*; a wood box covered with dark green plush; a lyre shell; about a dozen Egyptian idols, one attached to a string of elongated turquoise beads; a Lion of Lucerne, carved from wood; a wooden replica of an Egyptian mummy; a scarab; a red earthenware vase; a round plaster plaque of *David*; twelve views of the English Lakes of Westmoreland and Cumberland; a framed engraving of cypresses in the Villa D'Este at Tivoli.[1]

In his 1841 essay, "Self Reliance," Emerson famously laments that "our houses are built with foreign taste; our shelves are garnished with foreign ornaments." And one of his most enduring themes remains the need for the American artist and intellectual to create his own forms from the American landscape. And yet, Emerson's mantles resemble his essays, adorned as they are with a collection of eclectic and decontextualized quotations, from various and obscure sources, translated and interpreted with an adamant disregard for propriety. This apparent ambivalence towards the ornament is integral to understanding Emerson's economic notion of the cosmopolitan, particularly in the speculative years leading up to and following the Panic of 1837. A cosmopolitan economic order in America, or what Emerson calls "the sequel of trade" in his 1844 address, "The Young American," is guided by his notion of an instructive

ornament. In this chapter, I suggest that Emerson exploits the etymological connection between the cosmopolitan and the ornament towards the promotion of cosmopolitanism in America. In the introduction to his sprawling *Cosmos* (English trans. 1858), Alexander von Humboldt explains the title of his work, writing that the Greek *kosmos,* "in the most ancient and at the same time, most precise definition of the word, signified *ornament* (as an adornment for a man, a woman, or a horse." Plato, in his *Timaeus,* says, "the world is an animal endowed with a soul." The order of the world, or the soul of the world, is its ornament. As Humboldt explains:

> Thus the word Cosmos, which primitively, in the Homeric ages, indicated an idea of order and harmony, was subsequently adopted in scientific language, where it was gradually applied to the order observed in the movements of the heavenly bodies, to this whole universe, and then finally to the world in which this harmony was reflected to us.[2]

A trace of the connection between cosmos and ornament persists in the English word "cosmetic." Kosmos, in the Greek New Testament, depending on the context, can express both "world" or "adornment."[3] For Emerson, who writes in *Nature* that "every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance," his attention to the physical origin of cosmos is worthy of interest, especially as he meaningfully and variably employs the theme of the ornament in his 1840s work, including the 1844 address, "The Young American."

Emerson's editors call this oft-neglected but pivotal February 1844 address "a battle cry for the new era of industrial expansion and manifest destiny that was about to

flower with the election of James K. Polk as President of the United States the following November" (*CW* 1:217), but in fact, Emerson here delineates the benefits of industrial capitalism to what he sees as its limits, and then speculates on what he describes as "the sequel of trade," a communist economy, which challenges utilitarian valuation models by prizing an *instructive* value of cosmopolitan public works, including cultivated public gardens and technological innovations like railroads and canals.[4] Far from merely expediting trade, these structural improvements instruct the interior of the continent and instruct identity into a nation.

Ornaments instruct, not so much because they teach, but because they actually structure the interior. I am considering the obsolete use of the word instruct, meaning "to put in order, to put into form; to form; to 'inform'; to make ready, prepare, equip, furnish" (*OED*), such as when Barten Holyday, in a 1624 sermon, writes of "a body which the breath of the Almighty will instruct with a soule" (*OED*). The Latin *instruere* means to build, erect, set up, set in order, prepare, furnish, or to furnish with information or teach.[5] I am suggesting that Emerson's idea of the ornament is instructive in that the ornament furnishes the interior of the continent, serving to develop the nation. Such an instruction, a construction of the continental interior through adornment, also "interiorizes" the idea of the nation for the citizen, who leaves his trace on it through his dwelling. The instruction is therefore mutual, and the interior refers both to a psychological interior of the citizen and citizenry along with the physical interior of the continent. These ornamental traces are cosmopolitan in that they develop an interior landscape from collected exterior materials and function towards transcending local peculiarities and provincialisms.[6] Walter Benjamin's writings on interior space in the

nineteenth century are useful in explaining how the instructive ornament works to furnish an interior space and "interiorize" that space for the individual.

In his *Arcades Project,* Benjamin examines the history of the indoor space in nineteenth century Europe: "…The phantasmagorias of the interior… are constituted by man's imperious need to leave the imprint of his private individual existence on the rooms he inhabits."[7] Benjamin considers the verb "to dwell" as a transitive verb—"as in the notion of 'indwelt spaces'….It has to do with fashioning a shell for ourselves" (Benjamin, *Arcades Project* 221). In his writing on the development of "The Interior" in the nineteenth century, Benjamin notes:

> The original form of all dwelling is existence not in the house but in the shell. The shell bears the impression of its occupant. In the most extreme instance, the dwelling becomes a shell. (220)

Consider and compare Emerson's discussion of the shell in "The Conservative," a lecture about the necessary use of existing states for innovation, and the impossibility of total revolution:

> Throughout nature the past combines in every creature with the present. Each of the convolutions of the seashell, each of its nodes and spines marks one year of the fish's life, what was the mouth of the shell for one season, with the addition of new matter by the growth of the animal, becoming an ornamental node. (*CW* 1:187)

Each ornamental node is the trace marking the regular and iterative expression of a growing organism, expressing in its orderliness the conservative nature of progressiveness. "The Conservative" consists of a hypothetical conversation between the

conservative and the reformer, in which Emerson denies the possibility of a total reformer, explaining effective reform as that new trace left in existing circumstances much as a strong flowing river leaves its trace in a permanent bed. Emerson seeks flux within presence, flux within permanence. It is the combination of flux and presence that creates beauty in both act and matter, and nature gives beauty "not to the rock which resists the waves from age to age, nor to the wave which lashes incessantly the rock," but to the ever-flowing river within the ancient bed. So with the beauty of reform—the best of reformers' hearts "will beat with love of mankind, with impatience of accidental distinctions, with the desire to achieve its own fate, and make every ornament it wears authentic and real" (*CW* 1:183). This real ornament is dialectical, consisting of a novel trace in ancient ground. Laura Dassow Walls cites Emerson's passage on the shell in her discussion of the gnomonic in Emerson. The gnomonic figure, according to Hero of Alexandria, is "any figure that, when added to an original figure, leaves the resultant figure similar to the original." Walls, commenting on the Emerson passage, writes:

> Thus we ornament ourselves with the fashion of the moment, even as we grow beyond it, using the energy of the present to build the tradition that will unite future and past; the leaves of the hour build and layer our duration for the ages.[8]

For Emerson, as I will detail further in my discussion of "The Young American," the railroad would prove to be one of the most important cosmopolitan ornaments that would instruct the American domestic interior, a trace of the progress left by the human inhabitant. Emerson's notes following an 1843 visit to a railroad construction site along the Boston-Concord line show us that he sees the railroad as a gnomonic project consisting of iterative growth:

> In the process of roadbuilding, to sink the hill & fill the hollow, they make use all the way of little railroads, which reminded me of Swedenborg's doctrine that the lungs are made up of lunglets, the liver of little livers, & so on. (*JMN* 9:7)

While Benjamin writes of the interior space with reference to the urban home, Emerson considers the domestic space both as the home and as the nation. We might apply Benjamin's ideas to both. The interior, then, or the domestic space, for Emerson, is equally the immediate shelter from the elements, the common "house," and the developing domesticated interior of the North American continent. Man domesticates his space by leaving his ornamental trace on both.

II. Cosmopolitan Adornment and Reform in "Domestic Life"

In his essay, "Domestic Life," which Emerson began to compose during his first son's infancy and illnesses in 1836, continued to work with while in Europe in 1848, and finally published in his 1870 volume, *Society and Solitude,* Emerson seems to be writing about the common notion of "home life," beginning with some light musing on the raising of infants. It would seem that Emerson is asking his reader to turn away from public or societal questions in order to focus on the private home. However, we soon see that the essay deliberately deconstructs the opposition separating the public and private spheres. "Domestic events are certainly our affair. What are called public events may or may not be ours," he writes. But domestic events can mean at once the affairs of one's individual home, as well as the domestic affairs of a nation. He writes:

> If a man wishes to acquaint himself with the real history of the world, with the spirit of the age, he must not go first to the state-house or the court-room. The subtle spirit of life must be sought in facts nearer. It is what is done and suffered

> *in the house, in the constitution*, in the temperament, in the personal history, that has the profoundest interest for us.[9] (italics added).

Those issues of the house and of the constitution draw attention to what might be considered "public" events, the events of legislation, and reading the essay further, we see that the domestic space of the home functions as a metaphor for the domestic space of the United States, and the infant represents the American coming upon the expanding frontier. Of the infant, he writes that when he is carried out of doors, "he is overpowered by the light and by the extent of natural objects, and is silent," before embarking on architectural projects with blocks and cards. "But chiefly," writes Emerson:

> [T]he young American studies new and speedier modes of transportation. Mistrusting the cunning of his small legs, he wishes to ride on the necks and shoulders of all flesh. The small enchanter nothing can withstand,--no seniority of age, no gravity of character; uncles, aunts, grandsires, grandmas, fall an easy prey. (*CLSS* 350)

Emerson expresses a related sentiment in a journal entry from 1836, in the midst of entries regarding his young son: "It becomes the young American to learn the geography of his country in these days as much as it did our fathers to know the streets of their town; for steam & rails convert roads into streets & regions into neighborhoods" (*JMN* 5:120). If we can recognize Emerson's equation of the domestic interior of the personal home with the domestic interior of the town and then the continent at large, we can begin to see that, as there is a value in ornamenting the home, *á la* Benjamin, so there is a value in ornamenting the continent, in order to interiorize it for the American.

Emerson continues to write about the infant in "Domestic Life," and of the various ways in which adornment works as education. He begins with the boy's first exposure to books, which help him develop an imagination: "His fears adorn the dark parts with poetry" (347). The material of books, processed, leads the boy to domesticate and order his own space. Adorning the dark parts with imaginative speculation and physical exploration is akin to developing and inhabiting the frontier after imagining it. Kris Fresonke explicates the ways in which literature of the East and exploration of the West reinforced the design arguments of Manifest Destiny. Americans expected the West to "look like America," and found it as such, justifying their occupation and development of it.[10] As the boy creates a phantasmagoria of the domestic space, then comes to occupy it, he "grows up the ornament and joy of the house" (348). The traces of both the human imagination and the human body work as domesticating influences on space. Later in the essay, Emerson writes, "the ornament of a house is the friends who frequent it" (365), further suggesting dwelling as transitive, equating habitation, ornamentation, and domestication. Further, it reminds us of Emerson's home study as a microcosmic community, where his mantles were adorned with trinkets and his chairs with conversationalists, engaged in non-utilitarian but valuable work. Such is the cosmopolis that Emerson envisions.

From the idea of the human's organic and ornamental trace on his home, Emerson proceeds to develop the idea of the household economy, negating the banality of mere efficiency. "I am not one thing and my expenditure another," he writes. "My expenditure is me" (350). Finally, the house and its ornaments reflect the man:

> His house ought to show us his honest opinion of what makes his well-being when he rests among his kindred, and forgets all affectation, compliance, and even exertion of will. He brings home whatever commodities and ornaments have for years allured his pursuit, and his character must be seen in them. (353)

The arrangement of the household expresses man's ideals. As Benjamin writes that the residence becomes "a receptacle for the person," distinguishable from the office or place of work, in a like manner, Emerson sees art's purpose and the purpose of public works in the nation as instructive, structuring the interior and creating the nation as the fish does its shell from digested nutrients. We instruct our internal space with external material in the ways in which Emerson adorns both mantles and essays. It would seem that the point at which we define an interior space as interior is when it becomes such a habitation for this collection. The commodity becomes an expression of the home owner through recontextualization in his collection. Benjamin's description of the emergence of an interior space in industrial capitalism resembles Emerson's description of the ideal home. Benjamin writes:

> For the private individual, the place of dwelling is for the first time opposed to the place of work. The former constitutes itself as the interior. Its complement is the office. The private individual, who in the office has to deal with reality, needs the domestic interior to sustain him in his illusions.[…] From this rise the phantasmagorias of the interior—which, for the private man, represent the universe. In the interior, he brings together the far away and the long ago. His living room is a box in the theater of the world. (Benjamin, *Arcades Project,* 8-9)

It is as a collector that the private individual ornaments his interior space. The collector, writes Benjamin, divests things of their use value and bestows upon them a connoisseur value. He frees things "from the drudgery of being useful" (19). The collection has a particular form of economic valuation, one that is adamantly non-utilitarian, and the value of the instructive trace is reformative and progressive. In "Circles," an essay at least partly about various modes of expansion and the leaving behind of entire economic systems, Emerson writes of the usefulness of the obsolete, that is—the usefulness of the useless:

> The new continents are built out of the ruins of an old planet; the new races fed out of the decomposition of the foregoing. New arts destroy the old. See the investment of capital in aqueducts, made useless by hydraulics; fortifications, by gunpowder; roads and canals, by railways; sails, by steam; steam by electricity. (*CW,* 2:180)

The knowledge of eventual obsolescence does not make investment in current technology futile. Rather, the obsolete technologies, along with geological and biological traces, work towards further instruction, towards not only new technologies, but eventually entirely new modes of being, new economic orders, what I will argue is Emerson's notion of the cosmopolitan sequel. Such instruction, or domestic construction, has a value that is essentially *reforming* both in its effect on space and on the society that inhabits that space. All construction is, after all, no more than a re-forming and re-placement of matter. Emerson would take such notions and apply them to the less physically apparent aspects of American life. The investment in infrastructural projects were called "internal improvements" in the 1830s, a term that begs for metaphorical application to the

individual. In his 1844 lecture and essay, "New England Reformers," Emerson considers the radical democratic movements of the preceding twenty-five years that coincided with western expansion, the second Great Awakening, massive infrastructure projects, Utopian living experiments, and national economic collapse: "With this din of opinion and debate there was a keener scrutiny of institutions and domestic life than any we had known…" (*CW*, 3:150) Again, domestic life signifies both the country's domestic affairs, and the individual's personal living arrangements. While "New England Reformers" and "Domestic Life" may appear to be juxtaposed utterances of the adage that societal reform starts with individual reform, in fact the argument is more extreme: there is no difference between one and the other. The very language precludes such a distinction.

The cosmopolitan projects that Emerson discusses in "The Young American"—public gardens, railroads, canal building—are literally reformative in that they construct the interior by way of a massive reformation of the landscape. As prospective, the new technological advances serve the purpose of what Benjamin calls "wish images," the tendency of new technologies to set themselves off from the outdated by evoking the primal past, the fantasy of a classless society. Emerson's promotion of artistic uses of technology for the sake of leaving an ornamental trace is revolutionary, an early utterance of what Futurism and *Jugenstil* movements would later celebrate. "Domestic Life," an essay that begins by appearing socially innocuous, telling the reader to focus on his home life and enjoy his bumbling child, approaches a climax with a short strong sentence looking towards a socialist age: "Our whole use of wealth needs revision and reform" (*CLSS,* 354). As a result of our inability to adorn our interior, to instruct our home, "we never come to be citizens of the world, but are still villagers, who think that everything in

their petty town is a little superior to the same thing anywhere else" (362). Proper instructive ornamentation will make us cosmopolites.

Emerson concludes "Domestic Life" with an emphasis on the ornament's instructive public value, completing his transformation of the domestic from private to public: "I do not undervalue the fine instruction which statues and pictures give. But I think the public museum in each town will one day relieve the private house of this charge of owning and exhibiting them" (367). Emerson tells of trips to Rome to see Renaissance works by Raphael and Michelangelo, and of his wish to bring home copies of these forms, copies such as those we see in his study. And yet, he writes, he does "not wish the vexation of owning them." The proper place is in a museum, "among hundreds of such donations from other citizens who have brought thither whatever articles they have judged to be in their nature rather a public than a private property" (367). For Emerson, the art work achieves its pinnacle when it becomes instructive, public, and cosmopolitan. In a lecture on Michelangelo, he writes, "Of his genius for architecture it is sufficient to say that he built Saint Peter's, an ornament of the earth" (*W* 12:231).

The years 1836-1844 mark the period between the publication of Emerson's *Nature* and his *Essays: Second Series,* and also one of the worst economic depressions the United States ever faced. The rise of transcendentalism occurs during this depression, as do the proliferation of socialist communities and reform movements. The theories of European Utopian socialists like Charles Fourier, Henri de Saint Simon, and Robert Owen found, in the American depression of the late 1830s and 1840s, soil and citizens eager to seek new organizations of economic life.

Such a mode of living, indifferent or hostile to utilitarianism, what we might call a citizenship of beauty, in that Emerson translates the Greek *kosmos* as beauty. The productivity of some of these societies, including the Shaker, the Amana, and the Oneida communities, is legendary, but they placed less value on efficient production via industrialization or mechanization, and more on the conduct of life that accompanied work. The work and its profit were far from primary in their importance to the citizens of the communities. Often, we find a turn to aestheticism in an effort to overturn existing notions of value. That the legislature of the United States would be more cosmopolitan than that of any other means that a new form of citizenship arises in a mutually instructing and instructed populace and landscape. The citizens' trace upon the landscape is literally reformative, reforming the land even as the land informs or forms the psychological and intellectual interior of the populace. Art involves the human leaving a trace on the landscape through an interiorization of the landscape. Science involves an interiorization of the landscape that manifests itself in human arts. Emerson, in an aphoristic journal entry parenthetically labeled "Scholar," writes, "The Arts & Sciences are the only Cosmopolites" (*JMN* 5:112). Cosmopolites, for Emerson, may be unbound to ideological constructs of nationality, but they are not unbound to the landscape.

The best artifice is that which acts as a conduit for natural forces, functioning as a cosmos (ornament), and signifying the cosmos (world/universe). In May, 1836, Emerson writes:

> So in our manipulations, we do few things by muscular force but we place ourselves in such attitudes as to bring the force of gravity, the weight of the planet, that is, to bear upon the spade or the axe we wield; in short in all our

> operations we seek not to use our own but to bring a quite infinite force to bear. (*JMN* 5:166)

Five months later, Emerson would reflect on the above entry, and add:

> It is remarkable that [the Universal] also paints the best part of the picture, carves the best part of the statue, speaks the best part of the oration, &, in short, that the Universal lends to the individual ever his best ornament. (*JMN* 5:225)

The ornament is that thing in and through which the individual can behold the universe. Finally, arts and sciences at their best are what Emerson, in his Journals, calls "superserviceable." He lists the word "superserviceable" among "English words which I never use" for which "my style is so much the poorer" (*JMN* 5:165), and yet he jots down the word elsewhere in the midst of his discussion of reform, art, and science (*JMN* 5:112). The superserviceable could be that which is of great service, of more than necessary service, or it could be that which is above being serviceable, and it is this type of value that I am calling cosmopolitan, ornamental, instructive, and non-utilitarian. Such superserviceability is not, however, of an imprudent extravagance. Emerson, in his 1841 essay, "Prudence," declaims against "a base prudence […] which seldom asks but one question of any project,--Will it bake bread? This is a disease like a thickening of the skin until the vital organs are destroyed" (*CW,* 2:132). The instructive and reformative value of the non-utilitarian is as necessary to the organism's growth and development as bread, and the cosmopolitan element, an appropriation of the external in order to ornament the interior, is essential to the nation's growth and survival.

III. "The adorning of the whole continent with every advantage and ornament": Trade and the Sequel of Trade.

Two days before marrying Lydia Jackson and moving into a new house in Concord, Emerson delivered a historical discourse to mark the second centennial of the incorporation of the town. The 1835 address, Emerson's first real publication, was a painstakingly researched historical account, referencing Cotton Mather, Thomas Hutchinson, various town records and historians, his grandfather's unpublished account of the Battle of Concord, and personal interviews with Revolutionary War veterans. With its extensive footnotes and a two-part appendix, no other Emerson piece features more of the trappings of formal scholarship. However, serving as Emerson's public introduction to Concord, the piece is also self-referential and personal. It is about the traces individuals leave on a land, physical and metaphoric, through names and naming, and the various feats of domestication and heroism.

Emerson begins by relating the account of the first families setting out west from Boston that settled the town and of the first traces they left on the land: "They must then plunge into the thicket, and with their axes cut a road for their teams…." Citing the local historian Edward Johnson, he then describes the first shelters: "After they have found a place of abode, they burrow themselves in the earth for their first shelter, under a hill-side, and casting the soil aloft upon timber, they make a smoky fire against the house at the highest side." Emerson's depiction of the settlement of Concord is, in historic microcosm, a story of man's civilizing effect on nature and on himself through domestication.

Thoreau, in the "Economy" chapter of *Walden,* cites the same Johnson passage. As Emerson's reformer sought to make "every ornament it wears authentic and real," Thoreau asks of the indebted home-owner:

> Who bolsters you? Are you one of the ninety-seven who fail? or of the three who succeed? Answer me these questions, and then perhaps I may look at your bawbles [*sic*] and find them ornamental. The cart before the horse is neither beautiful nor useful. Before we can adorn our houses with beautiful objects the walls must be stripped, and beautiful housekeeping and beautiful living be laid for a foundation…

Theo Davis, in a paper called "Ornamental Thoreau," suggests that Thoreau's theory of ornamentation anticipates the modernist idea of form following function. Clumps of snow on an elm weigh the tree down in such a way as to make it a more "perfect elm." The true ornament is not a tacked-on adornment, but rather the natural force that acts as necessary supplement, the ornament that makes the thing reflect what it is.[11]

For Emerson, in the "Historical Discourse," the truly ornamental traces are those brought about by necessity, reflected literarily in the Town Records, which Emerson sees as the most worthy book to be printed and sent to England. In the idiosyncratic utterances of dissent that fill the "ill-spelled pages of the town-record," and in these least efficient political proceedings, Emerson finds happy evidence that the town was not "a church of saints, a metropolis of patriots, enacting wholesome and creditable laws." Rather, "*instructed by necessity*" (emphasis added), self-rule emerges, and Emerson finds "ground of assurance of man's capacity of self-government." The traces of such instruction by necessity form the best domesticating ornamentation, and these are the cosmopolitan traces that render Concord valuable and noteworthy to the world, ornaments that show the traces of beautiful actions.

Ruins—the "ruins of mankind" as Emerson describes the surviving Pequots exterminated by Concord settlers, and "the western abutment of the old bridge" that serves as a reminder of the Revolutionary War—make up some of the instructive traces on the landscape. But the true ornament is not only this collection of visible signifiers of the battle. Emerson proceeds to speak directly to the veterans of the Revolution, men who themselves carry traces of historic instruction. "To you belongs a better badge than stars and ribbons. This prospering country is your ornament, and this expanding nation is multiplying your praise with millions of tongues" (65).

Consider the image of a country as an ornament. Humboldt, remember, points out that a cosmos was first considered as an ornament such as a man might wear, and then came later to signify the order of the universe in Plato's metaphor of the universe wearing its order like an ornament. The war hero's ornament is the country, and such a country serves as a cosmos. The country itself, physically, politically, and intellectually reformed, possesses now an ornamental value, the value of the war fighter's act, which is not in the better terms of trade or taxation that accompanied independence, but in the instruction and ordering of the country, in the domesticating beauty that their act brings about. Emerson celebrates Concord in Concord, but considers its ornamental quality significant and adorning for the entire country and world. The country serves to adorn the men's reformative and revolutionary acts.

In *Nature,* published a year later in 1836, Emerson sets forth the "uses" of nature in a succession delineating the nobility of the purpose served. Nature serves "a nobler want of man" as beauty or ornament than it does as a commodity. "The ancient Greeks called the world κοσμοξ [kosmos], beauty" (14), writes Emerson in the opening of the

third chapter of *Nature*, and proceeds to further categorize the values of nature's beauty. First, the simple perception of natural forms is delightful and restorative. Second, nature's cosmic or beautiful value is enhanced when it is "found in combination with the human will. Beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue. Every natural action is graceful. Every heroic act is also decent, and causes the place and the bystanders to shine" (16). Cataloguing a series of historical acts—Leonidas leading three hundred Spartans to martyrdom, Columbus nearing the shores of America—Emerson asks, "Does not the New World clothe his form with her palm-groves and savannahs as fit drapery?" (17) In the historical discourse, what Emerson is claiming, in calling the country the ornament of soldiers, is that the American landscape's beauty, a property created by the eye, is a result of the heroic acts of the revolution. Man's cosmopolitan trace, in this case, through heroic action, makes the land beautiful, ornamental, literally "cosmic." Here, again, the landscape adorns the hero as a cosmos in the Homeric sense of an ornament.

Thirty-two years after delivering his historical discourse and addressing Revolutionary War veterans, Emerson spoke at Concord's dedication of a soldier's monument to commemorate Civil War veterans. Here, it is the monument that lays testimony to the idea of the reformative ornament. The obelisk, "a simple pile enough," has "no reference to utilities," but only to "the grand instincts of the civil and moral man, mixe[d] with surrounding nature" (84, 85). Every cosmopolitan trace inspires the next iterative, expansive trace. Emerson discusses the old monument consecrating the Revolutionary War. That war began merely as a resistance to offensive taxes. "Instructed by events, after the quarrel began," Emerson writes, "the Americans took higher ground, and stood for political independence" (85). And yet that Revolution, in

leaving slavery intact, was itself incomplete and local, though it left an important and instructive trace leading to the Civil War. The principles that underlie heroic war are cosmopolitan:

> Once we were patriots up to the town-bounds, or the State-line. But when you replace the love of family or clan by a principle, as freedom, instantly that fire runs over the State-line into New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, and Ohio, into the prairie and beyond, leaps the mountains, bridges, river and lake, burns as hotly in Kansas and California as in Boston, and no chemist can discriminate between one soil and the other. (86)

The monument, in marking the traces of heroic action, serves an instructive purpose, and its cosmopolitan value lies in that which is not utilitarian.

After delivering the historical discourse in 1835, Emerson married and settled into the home that he would occupy for the rest of his life. 1836 saw the birth of his first son, the publication of his first book, *Nature,* and the informal organization of discussants that would later be dubbed the Transcendental Club, consisting of Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Orestes Brownon, Thoedore Parker, Bronson Alcott, and James Freeman Clarke among others.

The first half of the 1830s, to that point, was a decade of massive infrastructural development in the United States, largely funded by unsecured speculative loans. The East had become such a hub for manufacturing, that the *American Railroad Journal* was founded in 1831 for the sole purpose of serving railroad investors. The two major forms of internal improvements advanced by the industrial prosperity of the East were railroads

and canals, both of which leave literal physical traces on the landscape. In New York, the 1830s saw the construction of over 736 miles of canals and 406 miles of railroad.[12]

Such “internal improvements” are non-productive industries. They facilitate trade and the mobility of goods, but they are inexhaustible, non-consumable commodities, and therefore definitively public goods. As such, railroads and canals have an economic resemblance to public gardens and national parks. Emerson would develop this idea of a shared value most clearly in “The Young American” in 1844.

In 1836, President Jackson, an opponent of the Bank of the United States, a privately owned entity upon which fractional reserve lending profited an elite and anonymous group of investors, issued the Specie circular, which mandated that the use of precious metals be used for purchasing public lands. Within a year, most paper money, issued by individual state banks, unregulated and not backed by specie, was rendered worthless. Many banks collapsed, and the United States fell into a major Depression that resembled, in length, scope, and severity, the Great Depression of the 1930s. It is worthwhile to consider that it is during this Depression that American transcendentalism in New England emerged and grew. Emerson’s own financial and economic position at the time was uniquely stable; he was a public intellectual with an inheritance in real wealth from his deceased wife, which led to personal prosperity in the midst of widespread economic collapse. Nevertheless, Emerson didn’t fail to sympathize with the distress felt throughout the country following the collapse of the economy. In his *Journals,* he wrote, "April 22 (1837) - Cold April; hard times; men breaking who ought not to break; banks bullied into the bolstering of desperate speculators; all the newspapers here a chorus of owls."

Critics have not found consensus on Emerson's economic theory, and it is typical of him that he did not subscribe to a single school. Alexander Kern's 1940 article, "Emerson and Economics," suggests that "Emerson's doctrine of wealth was to a considerable extent the product of his puritan background," and yet Puritans were deeply suspicious of mercantilism and banking, both of which Emerson often celebrates. Kern foregrounds Emerson's search for and belief in natural economic laws attuned to other laws of nature, and cites Emerson's many passages that argue for extreme *laissez faire.*[13] John C. Gerber (1949) argues that Emerson liked the classicist Adam Smith because he was the most "moral" of the political economists, but that Emerson was more of a "mild agrarian," never specifically citing the Physiocrats, but taking his agrarianism second-hand from Jefferson and Franklin. Both Gerber and Kern see this agrarianism as a Romantic notion, involving the benefits of a primary relationship between work and nature. Both point out Emerson's ambivalence towards materialism. He was not a utilitarian, and likely agreed with his friend Thomas Carlyle, who referred to utilitarianism as "a stinking disease," though Gerber says that "it is doubtful that he knew precisely what utilitarianism was" (346). In *English Traits,* however, Emerson writes disparagingly that the English "are incapable of an inutility, and respect the five mechanic powers even in their song." [14]

B.L. Packer, in *Emerson's Fall: A New Interpretation of the Major Essays,* specifically cites the Depression of 1837 as the point in which Emerson's attention to economic affairs increases. Packer writes:

> [Emerson] realized that he needed a far deeper understanding of the relationship between the individual and his social and economic system than he had ever

> bothered to acquire. And it was just this kind of knowledge that the sudden collapse of the economy promised to provide.[15]

Packer suggests that while the squalor of the Depression was distasteful, it was "in another sense liberating," because it "freed Emerson from feeling that he needed to justify his more radical assertions to the eye of common sense" (Packer 95). Packer sees the last chapters of *Nature*, which were composed and added later, as exemplary of his increased interest in economic ideas. Money and wealth are useful insofar as they serve to prove the possibility of man, to manifest speculation and realize "prospects." Tycoons, for Packer's Emerson, "were poets who chose to write their epics in cash" (96). Packer quotes an 1837 journal entry to show how Emerson saw the panic as an opportunity:

> This is the causal bankruptcy—this the cruel oppression that the ideal should serve the actual; that the head should serve the feet. Then I am forced to inquire if the Ideal might not also be tried. Is it to be taken for granted that it is impracticable? Behold the boasted world has come to nothing. Prudence itself is at her wits' end. (*JMN* 5:332)

Emerson proceeds, however, to reconcile the idealistic and materialistic classes by means of ornamentation. He writes, "It is easy for the philosophic to be poor. Poverty is their ornament. They wear it with a sort of silent protest & challenge admiration" (*JMN* 5:334). On the other hand, the unphilosophical must rely on ornaments such as expensive engravings and a fine house. Emerson writes, "These realize to him his inward merit. These are tough medals of his honesty & labor & regard of fellow men. It is very cruel of you to insist because you can well forego them that he shall" (*JMN* 5:334). In the case of each class, Emerson understands the need for man to make non-utilitarian use of matter,

which is the ornamental. For the philosopher, "matter has higher uses, namely its poetic use, or language." But the basic concern for use of matter challenges the notion of utilitarianism, and challenges with it, the contemporary neo-classical economic models of the nineteenth century.

A more recent critic on Emerson and economics, Thomas Birch, writes on nineteenth- century American economists Henry Carey and Francis Wayland and their affinity to Emerson. Birch points out that Carey, like Emerson, saw the value of land as a thing to be excavated, and the human mind's place in the increasing value of land is, according to Birch, undervalued by continental classical economists like David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus. This analysis by Birch is useful for understanding how Emerson's notion of the valuable trace that I am delineating in this essay is especially American and finds resonance in American thought. Birch, however, neglects or diminishes Emerson's indictment of the limitations of American capitalism. In this last section, I'd like to look at three lectures, "New England II: Trade," "Emancipation in the British West Indies," and "The Young American," in order to explicate Emerson's notion of the cosmopolitan and its relation to emerging capitalism.[16] Trade enables cosmopolitanism and signifies towards it, but its limitations lie in its hyper-utilitarianism, its lack of a proper sense of ornamental value, and therefore its want of cosmopolitan values.

In February, 1844, six months before delivering his first major anti-slavery address, on emancipation in the British West Indies, which Len Gougeon describes as pivotal in that Emerson "shows his willingness to consider, now, the possibility of collective rather than an exclusively individualistic development of society," (*Virtue* 84), Emerson gave a lecture in Boston titled "The Young American." Delivered in Boston

before the Mercantile Library Association, it was published in the last issue of the *Dial* in April, 1844. This final issue of the *Dial,* edited by Emerson, who had taken over the editorship from Margaret Fuller in 1842, was notable in its attention to social issues. Elizabeth Peabody contributed an essay on Fourier; Henry Thoreau reviewed Nathaniel P. Rogers' periodical, *Herald of Freedom,* published by the New Hampshire Anti-Slavery Society. Thoreau's enthusiastic review of Rogers' periodical can be taken as a critique of the *Dial,* with Thoreau's Rogers "making the press a living and breathing organ to reach the hearts of men, and not merely 'fine paper, and good type.'"[17]

An exception to the contributions dealing with social issues was Margaret Fuller's contribution, "Dialogue," a conversation between two friends who bear some resemblance to Emerson and Fuller, using the poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge along with the plays of Shakespeare to ground their strained relationship in the solace of literature. Susan Belasco writes of Fuller's contribution:

> The dialogue is at odds with the social spirit of other contributions in this issue of the *Dial* and demonstrates Fuller's deep commitment to literature and culture at this time, as opposed to what she then viewed as the transient nature of social issues. The publications of Fuller and her friends in this final, uneasy number of the *Dial* reveal the tensions of the times between civilization and nature, individual rights and public policy, and art and social action.[18]

Emerson's interest in societal concerns occupied a greater part of his writings since 1842; and in a late essay, "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England," Emerson's account places the thematic shift in his writings in the context of a larger intellectual shift in New England. According to Emerson, between 1820 and 1840, led by William Ellery

Channing and Edward Everett, and influenced by Goethe's *Faust,* the writings of Kant and Hegel, and French science, an American idealism emerged that insisted upon the sovereignty of individual intellect replacing old forms of authority. 1840 saw the first attempts in New England to establish "aesthetic society," or "society that deserved the name" in New England (264). A loose group of conversationalists, who came to be known by the name of Transcendentalists, began meeting, and "nothing more serious" came of their society than "the modest quarterly journal called 'The Dial.'"

In 1842, Emerson traveled to New York, met with Horace Greeley and Albert Brisbane, and wrote a short article, "Fourier and Socialism," for the *Dial,* upon assuming the editorship of the publication. "Genius hitherto has been shamefully misapplied, a mere trifler," writes Emerson in the article. It must now set itself to raise the social conditions of man, and to redress the disorders of the planet he inhabits."[19] Emerson's negotiation between his traditional individualistic philosophy and a growing sense of social, economic, and political awareness and relevance, perhaps first apparent in the early 1840s, continues throughout the rest of his career. "The Young American," certainly one of his more "public" pieces, begins to illustrate how cosmopolitanism can function as a form of social transcendentalism.

Emerson begins "The Young American" by celebrating the assimilatory consequences of the railroads in America. "The land will be presently mapped in a network of iron," he writes. "Threads of employment and national descent are bound fast in one web," and "there is no danger that local peculiarities and hostilities should be preserved." The railroad's binding property functions almost like a social religion in the 1852 writings of Michel Chevalier, the Saint Simonian economist:

> One can compare the zeal and ardor displayed by the civilizations of today in their establishment of railroads with that which, several centuries ago, went into the building of cathedrals….If it is true, as we hear, that the word 'religion' comes from *religare,* "to bind"…, then the railroads have more to do with the religious spirit than one might suppose. There has never existed a more powerful instrument for… rallying the scattered populations.[20]

After admonishing the treatment of railroad laborers and voicing concern for environmental degradation, reservations he omits when reprinting the lecture in 1849, Emerson proceeds to "that which led me to this topic,--[the railroad's] importance in creating an American sentiment" (*CW* 1:225).

He divides the rest of the lecture into three sections: the railroad's influence in territorial expansion, the railroad's role in industrial capitalism, which he calls "trade," and he concludes with "the signs of that which is the sequel of trade," hints of which he sees in the communist societies of America and the labor unions of Europe.

First, the railroad enables the expedient development of natural resources and continental conquest, but Emerson is more interested in "an unlooked for consequence of the railroad," which is "the increased acquaintance it has given the American people with the boundless resources of their own soil." He is martial in his celebration of American expansion: "The bountiful continent is ours, state on state, and territory on territory, to the waves of the Pacific sea" (227), and the railroad functions as "but one arrow in our quiver" to achieve such continental domination. But all of this is precursor to Emerson's other vision of domesticating the West, dominated by an idea of the cosmopolitan project

of gardening.[21] After considering the ability the American citizen has to explore the continent with the railroad, Emerson quotes two lines of poetry from an unknown source:

> Our garden is the immeasurable earth,
>
> The heaven's blue pillars are Medea's house.

The prospect of gardening and farming, which Emerson conflates at times, are "new duties" that await and cheer us. Emerson considers both as opportunities afforded by western expansion, modeled along the lines of recent experimental and educational projects, which have led "active young men to withdraw from cities, and cultivate the soil." First extolling the "tranquilizing and sanative influence" of farming, Emerson writes, "Beside all the moral benefit which we may expect from the farmer's profession, when a man enters it from moral causes, this promised the conquering of the soil, plenty, and beyond this, the adorning of the whole continent with every advantage and ornament." Emerson is asking that the young American use both his education and his labor to instruct the interior of the continent.

Recalling "the beautiful gardens of Europe" which he had visited in 1833, Emerson proceeds to call for the adornment of the American landscape with picturesque gardens, which will "make the land dear to the citizen, and inflame patriotism." From an extended passage promoting the planting of "public gardens" in marked contrast to the "private gardens" of Boston that have been obliterated and unmourned by technological advancement in the city, Emerson begins to make repeated etymological allusions to a cosmopolitan ideal that is ornamental in its value, as opposed to utilitarian or profitable. In a journal entry from which he drew while composing "The Young American" he writes:

> I think it will soon become the pride of this country to make gardens & adorn country houses. That is the fine art which especially fits us. Sculpture, painting, music, architecture do not thrive with us, but they seem as good as dead, & such life as they show, is a sort of second childhood. But land we have in greater extent than ever did any people of the same power, and the new modes of traveling are making it easy to cultivate very different tracts & yet remain in strict intercourse with the great centres of trade & population. And the whole force of all the arts goes to facilitate the decoration of lands & dwellings. A garden has this advantage, that it makes it indifferent where you live. If the landscape around you is pleasing, the garden shows it: if tame, it excludes it. (*JMN* 9:19)

The railroad has a similar effect - making diverse tracts of land temperate, evening an uneven landscape, and offering the traveller "a multitude of picturesque traits into our pastoral scenery." Such prospects are ecstatic and cathartic, and furthermore safe, almost a precursor to the cinematic, as Emerson writes in an 1843 journal entry from New York: "Dreamlike traveling on the railroad. The towns through which I pass between Philadelphia and New York make no distinct impression. They are like pictures on a wall." Cosmopolitanism, as an appreciation of the cosmos through the ornament, requires a stepping away, the state of ecstasy or being out of stasis. Laura Dassow Walls reminds us that Emerson's revelation and decision to become a naturalist takes place not in the American wilderness, but in the Paris Museum: "Both garden and laboratory are ecstatic spaces in which the scientist leaves his self behind to penetrate to the selfless realm of law, of mind" (Dassow Walls 124). The garden as ornament provides the viewer the ecstatic position from which to view the wholeness Emerson experienced at

the Jardin des Plantes, when he came to appreciate the way in which beauty occurs only in composition. The adornment of the landscape with public gardens will serve as educating and edifying, instructing the interior of the continent and instructing Americans in the cosmopolitan laws of nature. Trains and gardens are analogous to the shining cities that will emerge in Chicago and throughout the West. As the city has a greater purpose than mere commercial center, so the train, the enabler of exploration, serves as more than a mere expeditor of commercialism.

While the garden will inflame patriotism and endear the land to the citizen, it is indifferent to its local situation, a collected work of artifice, the creation of a cosmos. Describing gardening as that art uniquely suited to America, Emerson alludes to the European aristocracy in a journal passage that he later incorporated into a lecture on trade in New England:

> In Europe… the land is full of men of the best stock…whose interest and pride is to remain half the year on their estates, and to fill them with every convenience and ornament[, which] are a constant education to the eye of the surrounding population.

The ornament of a garden, the collection of plants, serves as a visible and instructive symbol both of the cosmos, and *as* a cosmos. Always, the ornament is that individual and visible thing that can reflect the universal. In a journal entry from late 1835 or early 1836, Emerson writes:

> I have spoken of the power of nature as predominant over the human in all human works. It is remarkable that it also paints the best part of the picture, carves the best part of the statue, speaks the best part of the oration, &, in short, that the

> Universal lends to the individual ever his best ornament. The cheek of the maiden would be pale but for the sun & wind or the glitter of the lighted & decorated hall filled with other beauty reflecting rays on her. (*JMN* 5:225)

The garden as ornament, then, which makes the American landscape beautiful, reflects within it something universal and is thereby cosmopolitan. Emerson finishes his meditation on the garden in "The Young American" by suggesting a Utopian and redemptive cosmopolis: "How much better when the whole land is a garden, and the people have grown up in the bowers of Paradise" (*CW* 1:229).

After his discussion of the railroad's influence on the domestication of the interior, Emerson focuses in on to "the uprise and culmination of the new and anti-feudal power of Commerce" in America. Emerson sees the economy and its laws as necessarily derived from the landscape, to "exist on some scale of proportion to the majesty of nature;" a diverse population's ability to travel through diverse landscapes for purposes of trade necessitates legislation that will be "more catholic and cosmopolitan than that of any other" country. America, as "the country of the future," is evidence of what Emerson sees as a law of "*amelioration in nature,"* and readers have seen Emerson's effusive praise of Trade in this section as an unqualified promotion of this economic system as an elixir:

> We rail at Trade, and the philosopher and lover of man have much harm to say of it; but the historian of the world will see that Trade was the principle of Liberty; that Trade planted America and destroyed Feudalism, that it makes peace and keeps peace, and it will abolish slavery. (*CW* 1:234)

In his address on British emancipation in the West Indies, delivered six months after "The Young American," Emerson justifies emancipation by arguing that colonialism would be more profitable than slavery.[22] Emerson argues that "the oldest planters of Jamaica are convinced that it is cheaper to pay wages than to own the slave" (754), that the English are essentially mercantilist, "a nation of shopkeepers," (a phrase he repeats in other lectures of the times, including an 1843 lecture on Trade in New England), and that slavery is antithetical to market economics. "In every naked negro of those thousands, they saw a future customer," Emerson writes of English manufacturers.[23]

In 1843, Emerson delivered a series of lectures on New England, the second of which was called "The Trade of New England." Here, Emerson believes that the ameliorative power of capitalism lies in its enabling of cosmopolitanism:

> Here, Trade is the God and walks supreme in his streets and wharves. Here we must needs see its immense and growing empire. It perforates the world with roads. The old bonds of language, country, and king give way to the new connexions of trade. It destroys patriotism and substitutes cosmopolitanism.

The cosmopolitanism of international capitalism marks itself visually in the American city: "We have the beautiful costume of the Hindoo, The Chinese, and the Turk in our streets. Our domestic labor is done by the African, our trench dug by the Irish." Both "The Young American" and "New England Trade," along with much of the rhetoric in the essay, "Wealth," composed contemporaneously but not published until 1860, have been taken to suggest that Emerson was an unqualified proponent of industrial capitalism. Throughout his life, he believed in free trade. However, what I propose is that Emerson's embrace of market capitalism is proto-pragmatic, useful insofar as it directs us to an

undefined economic system approaching a cosmopolitan ideal. Emerson's notion of the evolution of economic systems is not teleological, though it is ameliorative. Writing of amelioration in nature, "which alone permits and authorizes amelioration in mankind," Emerson writes:

> The population of the world is a conditional population; these are not the best, but the best that could live in the existing state of soils, of gases, animals, and morals: the best that could *yet* live; there shall be a better, please God.

So it goes with economic systems. Emerson allows that feudalism had its purpose, "had been good, had broken the power of the kings, and had some very good traits of its own," but eventually proved to be mischievous. Trade replaces feudalism, and yet "is also but for a time, and must give way to somewhat broader and better, whose signs are already dawning in the sky."

The problems with Trade come down to a brute utilitarianism that limits the very cosmopolitanism that it and its engines promised. In the 1843 lecture on trade in New England, after celebrating the successes of trade, he notes that "it yet remains to ask whether [the people of New England] have played a great part in the history of man: whether they have done anything for the greatest and highest." He concludes that "there is a speedy limit to the advantages which flow from Trade," resulting from the obsession with the utility in "the worlds of Trade":

> These things which make the conversation of all hotels and railroad cars, are symptomatic of the disease of the people. That repose which is the ornament and ripeness of man, is not in New England, is not in America.

The New Englander and the American, as a merely commercial enterprise, lacks a progressive instruction essential to cosmopolitanism: "Commerce is the child and again the tutor of understanding." The ripeness of man, which is man's ornament, is "repose," an ability not to be useful.

The problem with trade, as Emerson sees it, is its very utilitarianism, its tendency to reduce all things to their salability:

> Trade goes to make the governments insignificant, and to bring every kind of faculty of every individual that can in any manner serve any person, *on sale.* Instead of a huge Army and Navy, and Executive Departments, it tends to convert Government into a bureau of intelligence, an Intelligence-Office, where every man may find what he wishes to buy, and expose what he has to sell, not only produce and manufactures, but art, skill, and intellectual and moral values.

The notion of the Intelligence-Office as representative of the excessive dehumanization in the era of burgeoning market capitalism finds an echo in a Nathaniel Hawthorne story, also first published in 1844, and titled, "The Intelligence Office." A man sits in a metropolitan office in a bustling city with advertisements for "nearly all the conveniences, or otherwise, that the imagination of man has contrived." Some seek employment or a domestic worker, or an affordable tenement. But we also find "a faded beauty inquiring for her lost bloom; or Peter Schmiel for his lost shadow." Hawthorne, like Emerson, rates commodities in order from physical to intellectual to moral. And he finds a man trying to sell his heart to be a possessor of an ornament that is valuable, but outside the utilitarian valuation models inherent in market capitalism:

> It might also be considered a misfortune, in an outwardly point of view, to be the possessor of such a diamond of the purest water; since in any reasonable probability, it could only be exchanged for an ordinary pebble, or a bit of cunningly manufactured glass, or, at least, for a jewel of native richness, but ill-set, or with some fatal flaw, or an earthy vein running through its central luster.

The phrase "diamond of the purest water" seems to allude to Adam Smith's "water-diamond" paradox, the unresolved contradiction between use and exchange values (water is useful but has little exchange value; diamonds are useless but of great exchange value). In 1844, Emerson and Hawthorne walked from Concord to a Shaker community in Harvard. Both men were interested in the experimental socialist societies of the time, Hawthorne having lived at Brook Farm in 1841. While Emerson deprecated the Shakers in his journals as "stupid," he also found a great deal to admire in this community that Frederick Engels called "the first people in the world "to create a society on the basis of common property." In the 1840s, more than 100,000 Americans joined scores of Utopian societies, including the Mormons, the Oneidans, Brook Farm, New Harmony, the North American Phalanx, Aurora, Amana, Skinny Atlas, Harmony, and Bishop Hill. While Emerson could not countenance what he perceived as a compromise of individualism necessary to join such a society, he saw in them "signs of that which is the sequel of trade."

Emerson's notion of the sequel is indeterminate. He praises the Fourierists and socialists without consideration for their success. "This is the value of the Communities; not what they have done, but the revolution which they indicate as on the way." As he had written in "Circles" about the ways in which failed and obsolete technological

advancements remain useful in their indications of future progress, so the traces of these societies will be useful in creating future cosmopolitan communities. Emerson's call for a cosmopolitan instruction, in "New England Trade," is finally apocalyptic, anticipating climatic and climactic change, in which trade alone will never leave a trace upon the land but only the cosmopolitan projects that accompany trade will:

> The time will come when the looms of Lowell and the presses of Cambridge will stand still, when the masts of Boston and New York shall rot at their wharves, when great national or great natural changes will have made that region, already on the borders of the Arctic climate, uninhabitable. At that time, this trade, and swarming population, and immense industry will leave no trace; by every moral trait, every burst of genius, every impulse of humanity and love which fired some lonely heart among those granite hills, will still live and warm the human race.

The non-utilitarian value of such cosmopolitan traces would find great expression in 1871 upon the completion of the trans-continental railroad, in two artworks, a poem by Walt Whitman and a painting by Albert Bierstadt, which might best serve to illustrate the cosmopolitan value of the instructive trace. Whitman's "Passage to India" celebrates the completion of the railroad and the Suez Canal, a completion of the project of Columbus, to find a route to India. But where the motive of these projects might have been profit, Whitman finds the value elsewhere. Addressing the captains, voyagers, explorers, and engineers, he writes, "You, not for trade or transportation only, / But in God's name, and for thy sake O soul." The value of these projects is in connecting "by network" the races and neighbors, and further to "mark from on deck the strange landscape, the pure sky, the

level sand in the distance," to experience the prospect of the cosmos from the ecstatic position of the train or ship.

An Albert Bierstadt painting illustrates the idea. Critics have written extensively about the influence of Emerson upon American landscape painting.[24] Bierstadt's *View of Donner Lake* (1871) represents the palimpsestic inscriptive traces upon a landscape, with the landscape as canvas containing various inscriptions written on top of one another, marking technological advance. Bierstadt was born in Germany in 1830 and grew up in New Bedford, MA, before going on to document the American West. Commissioned by Collis P. Huntington to commemorate the completion of the trans-continental Central Pacific Railroad, the painting has three main elements: the lake itself and the natural landscape, and two different human traces, along with the poignant title. Huntington chose an area to paint near Donner Pass where the railroad's engineering and construction crews had faced their greatest challenge.

The upper half of the canvas features a luministic view of the lake itself. The lake is flash of light in a mist. It is at once a lake of fire and an illuminated lake. It seems impervious, and offers no evidence of human dwelling. To the right, and distanced, we see the railroad, an almost negligible trace on a cliff. Nancy K. Anders and Linda S. Ferber write, "Responding to Huntington's wishes that the picture celebrate the conquest of the Sierra by the railroad, Bierstadt attempted to create a composition that would accommodate both the natural and the technological sublime."[25] Bierstadt's previous paintings of California stripped away all traces of human beings, whether natives or explorers. The lower half of the canvas shows a ruin, a desolate, overgrown, and abandoned road going towards the lake, and a post sticking up like a cross. The name,

Donner Lake, and the ruin, a desolate road, remind the viewer of the failed emigration of the Donner Party, some fifteen years earlier, but the road illustrates its instructive gesture towards the railroad. Anders and Ferber note, "California's spectacular beauty had not been compromised by the construction of the railroad" (98), manifest in the untouched lake. In the painting, "the compositional base, to which the historical and technological associations of the Donner party and the railroad were added, is another landscape addressed to the western sublime." Further, the ruinous trace of the Donner Party foregrounds the entire work. Consider Emerson's October 1835 journal entry following the purchase of a new house in Concord:

> Behind us, as we go, all things assume pleasing forms as clouds do far off. Even the corpse that has lain in our chambers has added a solemn ornament to the house. In this my new house no dead body was ever laid. It lacks so much sympathy with nature. (*JMN* 5:101)

The Donner Party ruin testifies to the value of that failed project, and illustrates the usefulness of the useless.

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[1] Erin McGough of the Concord Museum helped me to identify these objects.

[2] Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe,* Trans. E.C. Otte, 1858, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1997), 69n, 68.

[3] See *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.* The third chapter of 1 Peter exhorts the submissiveness of women to their husbands in order to win their favor. The subject of the true "adornment" has some relevance to Emerson's discussion of the "real" ornament in Emerson's "The Conservative." The King James translation reads as follows:
3.3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plating the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 3.4 But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God a great price. 3.5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands." (1 Peter 3:3- 3.5, King James Version)

[4] Marx and Engels describe cosmopolitanism as an ideological reflection of capitalism but also describe a world-wide proletariat as essentially united despite national boundaries. The debates on the implications of cosmopolitanism on economics range, but in this discussion of Emerson and ornamentation, I adhere to none of them. Insofar as Emerson supports emerging global capitalism and free trade, labeling them

cosmopolitan, he seems to be promoting the vision of economic cosmopolitanism that has proceeded from Adam Smith to Milton Friedman. But his criticism of the limitations of trade, and of materialism and the economic order of the United States, show that his idea of the cosmopolitan sequel is very different.

[5] *The Oxford Latin Desk Dictionary,* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), *instruo.*

[6] With the phrase, "interior landscape," I am considering AK Ramanujan's collection of translated Tamil poems: A.K. Ramanujan, trans. *The Interior Landsacpe: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology.* (Delhi: Clarion, 1967.) Ramanujan notes that classical Tamil Sangam poems were classified by their themes as *puram* (public, or "outer part") and *akam* (love poems or "inner part"). In the *akam* poems, "the actual objective landscapes of the Tamil country become the interior landscape of Tamil poetry" (108). Conventionally, various features of the landscape correspond to "types" of love. I'm not concerned with the specifics of those correspondences or with Tamil poetry here, but am interested in the notion of an exterior landscape interiorized in a body of literature.

[7] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, (Cambridge: Harvard Belknap, 1999), 14.

[8] Laura Dassow Walls, *Emerson and Science.* 118.

[9] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life and Society and Solitude*, (London and New York: Macmillan, 1888), hereafter cited as *CLSS* with page number.

[10] Kris Fresonke, *West of Emerson: The Design of Manifest Destiny* (Berkeley: UCal, 2003).

[11] Theo Davis, "Ornamental Thoreau," MLA address, December 29, 2006.

[12] Reginald Charles McGrane, *The Panic of 1837: Some Financial Problems of the Jacksonian Era*. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 9-10.

[13] Alexander C. Kern, "Emerson and Economics." *The New England Quarterly,* Vol. 13, No. 4 (Dec. 1940), 678-696.

[14] Alexander Kern, "Emerson and Economics," *The New England Quarterly,* Vol. 13, No. 4 (Dec, 1940), 678 – 696. John C. Gerber, "Emerson and the Political Economists," *The New England Quarterly,* Vol. 22, No. 3 (Sep. 1949), 336-357.

[15] B.L. Packer, *Emerson's Fall: A New Interpretation of the Major Essays,* (New York: Continuum, 1982), 98.

[16] Thomas D. Birch. "Toward a Better Order: The Economic Thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson." *The New England Quarterly,* Vol. 68, No. 3 (Sep., 1995), 385-401.

[17] Henry David Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau: Reform Papers*. Ed. Wendell Glick. (Princeton: Princeton U Press, 1973), 49-50.

[18] Susan Belasco, " 'The animating influences of Discord': Margaret Fuller in 1844." *Legacy* 20. 1 & 2 (2003) 76-93.

[19] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Uncollected Writings; Essays, Addresses, Poems, Reviews, and Letters*, (Port Washington: Kennikat, 1971).

[20] Michel Chevalier, "Chemins de fer," in *Dictionnaire de l'economie politique* (Paris, 1852), p. 20 (qtd in Benjamin *Arcades,* 598).

[21] Mark Kingwell's comments about pamphlets emphasizing the "usefulness" of the Empire State Building's observation tower have a relevance here: "In an age overwhelmed by science and its instrumental application, technology, we somehow find it unacceptable to emphasize anything *other than* the use-value of even so obvious an illustration of human desire." Mark Kingwell, *Nearest Thing to Heaven: The Empire State Building and American Dreams*. (New Haven: Yale, 2006.)

[22] Emerson would later reverse his position on indemnification of the slave "owner" in his poem, "Boston Hymn": "Pay ransom to the owner, / And fill the bag to the brim. / Who is the owner? The slave is owner, / And ever was. Pay him."

[23] See Michael Craton, *Sinews of Empire: A Short History of British Slavery* (Boston: Ashgate, 1974). Craton shows how slavery was in fact essential and profitable for British mercantilism. This book also provides a good comparison of the Caribbean and mainland colonies.

[24] Barbara Novak, *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century,* (New York: Praeger, 1969). Gayle L. Smith, "Emerson and the Luminist Painters: A Study of Their Styles." *American Quarterly,* Vol. 37, No. 3. (Summer, 1985), pp. 193-215.

[25] Nancy K. Anders and Linda S. Ferber, *Albert Bierstadt: Art & Enterprise* (New York: Brooklyn Museum and Hudson Hills Press, 1990.)

Chapter 3
"We Too Must Write Bibles": *Representative Men* and the Cosmopolitan Literary Project

In April 1830, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote a letter to his older brother William, who had studied in Gottingen under Johann Eichhorn, asking William "to mark, in the works of Eichhorn or others, the passages that would tend to destroy one's belief in the divine authority of the New Testament."[1] Emerson was in the midst of his ministry at the Second Church in Boston, succeeding in that post such lights as Henry Ware Jr., and Cotton and Increase Mather. It was still two years before he would leave the ministry, and six years before he would publish *Nature.* He took his preaching seriously, more so than he did his pastoral work; he developed a style of oratory that was in the tradition of Unitarian ministers like Ware and William Ellery Channing, combined with the emotional fire of Methodist preachers like Edward Taylor, a friend of Emerson's and later a model for Melville's Father Mapple in *Moby Dick*.[2] Emerson was newly married, he was making money, and he was becoming a prominent individual in Boston society as chaplain to the legislature and as a member of the school committee.

His sermons, as the form dictated, derived from biblical passages, and in his case, mostly from the New Testament. These formal exercises were precursors to his essays in two ways. First of all, the Second Great Awakening had made new aesthetic demands upon the minister and his sermon. With the termination of tax support for established churches, the minister ceased to be an "official" position, and became a profession. William Ellery Channing, a chief spokesman for New England Unitarianism, referred to

by Emerson as "our bishop," wrote in his 1824 discourse, "The Demands of the Age on the Ministry," that a minister must "communicate religion—not only as a result of reasoning but as a matter of experience—with that inexpressible character of reality, that life and power which accompany truths drawn from a man's own soul."[3] Lawrence Buell, in his essay, "Unitarian Aesthetics and Emerson's Poet-Priest," points out that a bond had formed between religion and art in Unitarian thought.[4] The sermon addressed aesthetic concerns, and the priest needed to be a poet. David S. Reynolds discusses the evolution of the religious sermon in the North and the South in the nineteenth century, and in particular, the literary ramifications of Emerson's relationship with Taylor, an infusion of emotionalism into a tradition of sobriety.

The official de-authorization of the minister, and the infusion of creativity and personality into the sermon, have a relationship to another important element of Emerson's sermons that precursor his essays. Emerson's sermons make use of text and scripture, of quotation, but they do so in an overtly creative and decontextualized manner. Emerson's sermons play a critical role that resembles what Oscar Wilde describes in "The Critic as Artist." The Biblical text serves as a starting point for Emerson to essay creatively; the sermons are not parasitical interpretations. Their relationship to the object text resembles the relationship between the artist and the object he purports to represent.

The stakes of such sermonizing literary criticism, that is, criticism of literature, and criticism that is literary, have consequences on a sacred text's authority. Beginning with his letter to William in 1830, Emerson begins a life-long task of figuring out what constitutes textual authority, what makes for a Bible, and what is the reader's and the writer's relationship to that Bible. Barbara Packer points out that textual authority can

have two meanings. Among secular texts, we speak of the authority of a text as being a text's adherence to the author's intentions. A second meaning would be the moral authority that a certain text holds, the text's representation of absolute truth. When dealing with sacred literature, in undermining or questioning the first form of textual authority, the second form of authority suffers a consequent destabilization. Susan Sontag expresses a similar idea regarding translation:

> The accuracy of a translation is not merely a technical question. It is as well an ideological one. And it has a moral component, which becomes visible when for the notion of accuracy we substitute the notion of fidelity.[5]

For Emerson, such a destabilization was dearly important to his ambitions for nineteenth century writing.

That destabilization of the Bible's authority begins with Emerson's negation of the preacher's claim to authority while he was still a minister. In Sermon CLXXI, based on Isaiah 52:7 ("How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth salvation,"), Emerson claims that the minister no longer serves as shepherd to the flock, guiding creatures with his staff, but rather, as a critic, he "solicits your attention to truths which engage him and therefore should engage you… he drops all shadow of a claim of authority over you."[6] In this sense, the sermon becomes an act of creative criticism. These critic/priests are not men of church title, not of a class ordained by the clergy, but are "composed of individuals in every age of the world, in every country, in every condition and calling" (*CS* 4:246). He describes this class of people, the true priesthood, as having "justified the way of God to man," echoing Milton. Writers comprise this "class of natural preachers" who "make us feel that the Revelation

is not closed and sealed, but times of refreshment and words of power are evermore coming from the presence of the Lord" (*CS* 4:246).

Upon his return from Europe following the death of his first wife, Emerson continues to deny ministerial authority, that of the Church, and that of institutionalized religion, claiming that Christianity, while "the most emphatic affirmation of spiritual nature," is "not the only nor the last affirmation. There shall be a thousand more (*CS* 4:213)." He continues:

> That word never will be finished. It was before the heavens and shall be after them. But a part of his message is spoken this day and every day. There are truths now being revealed. There is a revolution of religious opinion now taking effect around us. (*CS* 4:209)

That revolution in religious opinion is coeval with a revolution in ideas about religious literature. Emerson's 1838 Harvard Divinity School address, delivered after he left the church, is unabashed in its promotion of a more emotional and personal method of preaching, but it also considers the role of the Bible as part and parcel of a revolution in religious instruction:

> The stationariness of religion; the assumption that the age of inspiration is past, that the Bible is closed; the fear of degrading the character of Jesus by representing him as a man; indicate with sufficient clearness the falsehood of our theology.

The correction of religious "stationariness" entails the enactment of Biblical dynamism. In this chapter, I will develop Emerson's idea of the cosmopolitan literary project, which is a Bible. A Bible is a dynamic, compiled, cooperative, and translated

project. Three nineteenth-century developments play a role in shaping Emerson's cosmopolitan ideas of the Bible: German high criticism, new developments in geology, and increased access to world scripture in translation. These developments helped Emerson continue the process he had begun when he wrote to his brother in 1830, the process of destabilizing and unfixing the Bible.

For Emerson, a religious and literary protestant, part of religious reformation means canonical reformation. The de-centering of Judeo-Christianity, with the help of translated Hindu texts and geological discoveries, de-authorizes and de-nationalizes the sacred canon. Translation and the development of a world republic of letters make the project of describing the human relationship to the order of the universe a cosmopolitan endeavor. The meaning of sacred and profane literature begins to lose clean demarcations as encyclopedic compendia from the Royal Asiatic Society arrive in America, along with work by the Humboldt brothers on language, mythology, and geology. Emerson, despite his departure from the Unitarian church, remains deeply religious in the most profound sense of that word, "yoked" to a belief in an order, and he takes a large view of what types of literature one uses to compose Bibles. Goethe – dramatist, botanist, conversationalist, letter-writer, translator – serves as a model for the nineteenth - century cosmopolitan Bible composer.

In the revision of the meaning of a Bible, there is an attendant revision of what a literary prophet or a gospelist is, and de-authorization is not only the stripping of arbitrary authority from a text, but the stripping of authorship. Emerson sees the author as less of a defined personality than a representative composite, making his text more of a compilation, redefining the meaning of creative composition. The 1850 volume,

Representative Men, couched in a conversation about Bibles, and functioning as a Bible and cosmopolitan literary project itself, is the culmination of a growing set of ideas on the nature of cosmopolitan writing.

Emerson's Vestry Lectures

In 1831, beginning a month after the death of his first wife Ellen, the 28-year old Emerson began a series of gospel lectures, six of which are extant, for the youth of his congregation. According to their editor, Karen Kalinevitch, these lectures "show his beginning to question the Bible as divine authority handed directly to man" (69). Making use of the German high critics' historical criticism of the Bible, the first lecture speculates on the identities of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Anticipating his later essay on Shakespeare in *Representative Men*, where he would revise his 1840s notion of the national poet, along with his ideas on originality and authorship, Emerson describes an approach to anonymity among the gospelists that adds to their virtue. The effacement of personality, the discounting of the accidentals of biography, are what make them credible prophets. They are "three simple poor Jews," the obscurity of whom "is hardly to be regretted" in comparison to the "minute accounts of so many worthless men." The invisibility of the authors adds to the prestige of the text.

Another lecture tries to justify the similarity of passages in the three synoptic gospels by considering the viewpoints of Eichhorn, Johann Gieseler, and Jean LeClerc. German biblical scholars were textual scholars, who sought to apply to the Bible the same principles of critical analysis that they used on classical authors. By treating the Bible as a literary text, one can question the traditional ascription of authorship and date, and can amend the text, question the accuracy of the text, and scrutinize the formation of

the canon. This process, which E.A. Schaffer describes as "comparing the Scriptures coolly with the sacred and secular writings of other nations,"[7] poses a threat to the nineteenth – century practice of "rational Christianity," as practiced by Andrews Norton, who would later become a harsh adversary of Emerson's. Norton and the rational Christian critics argued that the empirical evidence of miracles recorded in the Bible prove the divinity of Christ. The criticism offered by the Germans, notably Eichhorn and Johann Gottfried Herder, sees the miracles as events "transformed by the intense emotions of the viewers and by the hyperbolic style of Oriental poetry" (Packer). Eichhorn writes, in a passage translated by Edward Everett, one of Emerson's professors, "this miraculous and superstitious system was not contained in the [biblical] books themselves. But arose merely from misunderstanding them, from a mode of conception which is common to them with all works of antiquity that they contain."

Julie Ellison writes that Emerson was attracted to the new power of the critic, "the scholar's power to shape myth and history retroactively."[8] Packer concurs, writing that "the notion that the canon of Scripture was a product of human choice and hence open to human revision… appealed strongly to a young prophet alternately resentful of tradition and ambitious to be included in it" (82). In another of the vestry lectures, on the misinterpretation of the term, "kingdom of heaven," Emerson declares that baptism was a bathing practice, and that it is wrong to take local practices and make them universally Christian, an idea that would eventually catalyze his departure from the church when he considered the Lord's Supper in the same manner. Yet another lecture considers the biblical landscape and possible scientific explanations for such phenomena as the casting

– out of demons. The questions raised in these lectures, while delivered in a religious context and under the auspices of the church, liberate him from orthodoxy.

Kalinevtich notes that for the Germans, as well as for Emerson, the point of such endeavors was not to demean the works or the acts of the Biblical era through de-mystification. Rather, she writes;

> Because biblical times could no longer be considered times of magic, because biblical heroes could no longer be considered extraordinary men of special insight and power, the present age took on equally miraculous overtones: miracles were ever-present in natural phenomena; God was ever-present, accessible to men in the here and now. (71)

Both Emerson and the higher critics find God incarnate in man. As geological discoveries would show, the present is far more contemporary with the biblical era on the scale of planetary history than previously thought. This age can also demand prophecy, Bible writing, and a serious and sacred collation of the world's reckoning with itself and its wonder.

The third vestry lecture, which perhaps best sets up Emerson's continuous approach to the ideas of Bibles and translation, was on the history of the translations of the New Testament. Emerson begins by stating his purpose:

> Our Bible is so familiar to the eye in a single volume that many are apt to forget that it was ever a multitude of separate compositions. And it is important to a Christian that he should know (since this is not the original work but for the most part a translation of translation) the means through which it came to him, that he may be sure it was really written by those to whom it is ascribed (77)

Emerson notes here that the Bible we possess is not "original," and that its cohesion is illusive. He proceeds to trace the transmission of the Bible from the King James Version, back through the English versions: the Bishops, Geneva, Great, Matthew, Tyndal, and Coverdale Bibles, and then back to the Latin Vulgate, and finally to the Greek, and to second and third generations of the Christian Church. He claims that the various English translations were not even "translations," but rather corrections, standardizations, and modernizations. Emerson's point seems to be that the Bible, as we have known it, lacks authority as a direct text of God.

The 1611 King James Bible, according to Emerson, arises when Puritan ministers, desiring a reformation of abuses in the church, propose a new translation, and the king appoints persons "for revising the common translation." They were ordered to follow the 1568 Bishops Bible, to alter it little, and to omit marginal notes. "This therefore was not to be a New Translation but a correction or amendment of Bishops Bible" (78). According to John Seldom, the translators would meet together, and one would read the translation, while others would have Bibles of learned tongues, French, Spanish, Italian, and compare.

Emerson, in his backward-moving narrative, then discuss the Bishops Bible, published in 1568 on the orders of Elizabeth I, who, according to Emerson, "gave orders that a revisal & correction of the former translation should be made." The archbishop "assigned a particular book of scripture with directions *not to vary from the former translation* except where it was not agreeable to the original." Again, the basis of the Bishops Bible was not itself the Latin, or the Greek or Hebrew, but another English Bible, the Geneva Bible, produced by English refugees who found asylum in Geneva

during the reign of Mary. Emerson continually emphasizes that new translations are themselves based on translations, and are usually mere variations with explicit instructions against variance. It would seem that Emerson is negating the idea of an "original text" or authoritative text as we move back, negating the idea that our Bible is simply a direct removal from a single ur-text. In fact, each translation communicates almost only with other translations. There is no "original" true text. Such a destabilization finds an echo for us when we consider Derrida's notion of the signifier not so much signifying a transcendental signified but merely other signifiers. However, as I will show later, while Derrida's deconstruction of the transcendental signified has tended to negate ideas of "pure" or sacred language, Emerson, following Romantic theories of translation, finds in Biblical compilation and translation an approach towards a pure language unbound by locality.

From the Geneva, Emerson, working backwards chronologically, skips to the 1526 translation of William Tyndal. Tyndal and Miles Coverdale translated the five books of Moses, and Tyndal was strangled and burnt for his efforts. Emerson continues:

> After [the Tyndal-Coverdale Bible] were published Matthews Bible; the Great Bible; & the Geneva Bible; but they were all only revisions of this. Coverdale was the main author of the last. All the English bibles are no different translations but different editions of Tyndal and Coverdale's translation. (79)

Benson Bobrick's book, *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution it Inspired,* shows how each translation was a cause, effect, and symbol of changes in England, in variant reforms both literary and political. The Bishops Bible was published in 1568 in large part because Elizabeth I, while Protestant, didn't care for the

anti-ecclesiastic glosses of the Geneva Bible comparing Rome to Sodom. James I, a Calvinist, was sympathetic to the Puritan producers of the Geneva Bible, but he didn't like glosses that appeared to allow the disobedience to kings. Textual authority is temporally grounded by political authority. The Bible maintains a living authority only through constant translation.[9]

Finishing his summary of the English Bibles, Emerson considers "what is the *Vulgate* and what authority it has." Used by the Church of Rome, made as early as 150 and revised by Jerome in 382, the Vulgate was the first Latin Bible translated from Hebrew, though other translations from Greek existed. Finally, Emerson takes us back to the first century after the death of Jesus. "As this was the period when the gospel was spreading throughout the Roman empire, the Scriptures were not yet distinguished by that authority they have since received" (80). In fact, there were many Christian writings, regarded as records of the life and doctrines of Jesus and the apostles, "but those which we have in the New Testament were not very early separated from the others as of more authority" (80).

Emerson concludes by noting that he has connected "by an unbroken chain of evidence the books from which we now draw our rule of faith & duty with the books written by the four apostles 1800 years ago." These "four short narrative compositions have outlasted the mighty monuments of the Jewish & Roman architecture under whose shadow they were written," he continues. The comparison between the scriptures and structures has to do with scriptural imperfection. Of the gospelists, "these four witnesses have only borne a part of their record." The scriptures do not decay because they are not finished, and people will continue to add to the record via translation, and they will be

dispersed among "a widely increasing race of beings, a multitude that no man can number, till God's will is done in Earth as in Heaven."

The significance of this lecture is that Emerson is arguing that while the gospels as we have them are special texts, they have no inherent textual authority, but are rather worked on, amended, updated, by "translators" who themselves worked upon other amended translations. Emerson doesn't actually try to account for the "original" texts. It isn't the antiquity of the texts or their adherence to some ur-text that lends them their authority. On the contrary, it is their novelty, their ever-present relevance acquired through translation and revision, which makes them meaningful. The actual Greek texts written by the gospelists have no inherent authority. They were, as Emerson writes, initially accorded the same degree of reverence as many of what would later be termed the Gnostic gospels and labeled as heresies. It is translation that makes these texts live.

Emerson's Biblical scholarship coincides with his first exposure to the eclecticism of Victor Cousin's *Course of the History of Philosophy,* where Emerson first encounters a summary of the Bhagavad Gita. Cousin argues that "the philosophy of an epoch" determines and is separate from the epoch's culture, religion, and politics. This philosophy is the medium by which the culture can be translated. Cousin writes:

> Go through the annals of civilization, and you will find that it is always the philosophy of an epoch, which completely contains its predominant mode of thought, which disengages it from its political and religious veils, and, if we may so speak, assumes the task of translating it into an abstract, clear, and precise formula.[10]

Cousin assumes that an essential contextually extractable philosophy is translatable. The task of the translator, for Cousin, is to extract the philosophy from its locality and make it available to others in other ages. Cousin's notion finds an echo a century later in Walter Benjamin's introduction to his translation of Charles Baudelaire's poems. Benjamin, in "The Task of the Translator," argues that a translation is the afterlife of a work, its continued existence outside of the historical circumstances of its production.[11]

The point of Cousin's remarkably lucid summary of the Gita is to disengage a philosophy from its political and religious context in order to reveal an essential governing philosophy of the Hindu people, a theistic one, according to Cousin, in which "man is nothing," which he then uses to summarize the philosophy of the Hindus en masse. A nation is reduced to an idea that enters into every facet of life in that nation, to the point of giving the nation "a distinct physiognomy," as he writes in his chapter on "Great Men," from which Emerson drew heavily in composing *Representative Men.* Emerson would later revise Cousin's notion, seeing great men as representative of ideas or archetypes that transcend national boundaries, just as he would otherwise come to suspect "Cousin's pompous plea for Eclecticism"[12] as overly reductive, writing of it in his Journal and later in "Literary Ethics":

> Take Cousin's Philosophy. Well this book (if the pretension they make be good) ought to be wisdom's wisdom, & we can hug the volume to our heart & make a bonfire of all the libraries" (*JMN* 5:458).

The image of burning libraries returns to us in the opening of Emerson's essay on "Plato," which I discuss below. Emerson begins that essay by writing, "Among books,

Plato only is entitled to Omar's fanatical compliment to the Koran, when he said, 'Burn the libraries; for, their value is in this book."

Despite his later criticism of Cousin, the ease with which Emerson draws from such eclectic sources and his exposure to Cousin at this early point in his career suggest a lasting effect on his method of reading. Arthur Christy, in his 1932 book, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism,* writes, "It might even be said that eclecticism is the method of cosmopolitanism" (Christy xii). Part of Cousin's achievement in the early nineteenth century, and that which would be of import to Emerson even when Emerson would dismiss the ambition of eclecticism, involves a recognition of the scholar's unprecedented access to varied texts, particularly those from Asia. Cousin's lecture on "The Philosophy of the Nineteenth Century" considers the implications of this glut of texts on the role of criticism in composition. He first considers the contribution of Eastern translations:

> Never did a quarter of a century produce so many ingenious and solid writings, nor prepare such rich materials for the generalizations of genius. It maybe said that in our days only, the philosophy of India begins to be known, and to go forth from the mythological darkness which has hitherto enveloped it. From 1824 to 1825 the illustrious president of the Asiatic Society of London, Colbrook, has at last furnished European criticism the only foundations which it possesses for the philosophical systems of India.[…] If our century has, thus to speak, discovered Oriental philosophy, it has nearly renewed the knowledge of philosophical antiquity, by introducing criticism into it. (252)

For Cousin, the introduction of these ancient texts into critical discourse and the consequent revised criticism of philosophy will produce an entirely new history of philosophy:

> …as every precipitate generalization leads to the necessity of a *decomposition***,** so it is impossible that a vast decomposition may not lead to a new *recomposition*, and that so many skilful and profound researches may not, sooner or later, produce a new general history of philosophy. (254; italics added)

I want to draw attention to the ideas of decomposition and recomposition. Emerson's composition process, and his ideas on the composition of Bibles, consists of exactly this notion – we find a text in decomposition, and through quotation and translation, we recompose it, and give it life again. Inspired composition comes to contain a critical function that classic prophets lack. The actuality of composition as an arrangement of pre-existent elements replaces the idea of a single inspired voice creating language, law, and literature through immediate contact with God.

Finally, one of the effects that Cousin and the German high critics have on Emerson is that Emerson develops an engaged indifference to forms in religion, helping him to overcome prejudice and repulsion to both Christian and non-Christian clerical forms. His adept use of sacred literature for poetic purposes, particularly the Qu'ran, helps him come full-circle to re-embrace the Bible poetically and critically, bringing the text into "the thousand-eyed present." Recognition of the Bible as a translated and dynamic project unfixes it, and leaves open the possibility for a dynamic approach to religious forms. A passage from his famous admonition against "a foolish consistency" serves to illustrate this general tolerance of variant forms:

> In your metaphysics you have denied personality to the Deity: yet when the devout motions of the soul come, yield to them heart and life, though they should clothe God with shape and color. Leave your theory, as Joseph his coat in the hand of the harlot, and flee. (*CW* 2:265)

Representative Men as Bible

Fifteen years after his vestry lectures on the gospels and gospelists, Emerson delivered a series of lectures, first in England, which he later revised for his 1850 book, *Representative Men.* The volume consists of the introductory "Uses of Great Men," followed by six lectures on Plato, Swedenborg, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Napoleon, and Goethe. The lectures are roughly chronological (Swedenborg is out of time), and they thematically respond to each other. Plato the philosopher is complemented by Swedenborg the mystic, who is tempered by Montaigne the skeptic, who is in turn countered by Shakespeare, the poet. Napoleon, the only non-literary figure, is the representative "man of the world," whose imperial activity manifests the poetic ideals of Shakespeare. Napoleon's nineteenth-century counterpart is Goethe, whose myriad interests in botany, drama, conversation, and art Emerson encapsulates with the title, "the writer."

In the introductory "Uses of Great Men," Emerson writes, "The past and passing religions and philosophies answer some other question" than the contemporary ones. Those who are useful "must be related to us." In this insistence, Emerson seeks modernity in all of his subjects. They must speak to us now. When they do so, they are translated. There is both a temporal and a spatial element of translation. Great men must

have a current "use" in order to be of value. Emerson's shifts in tense reflect the strange temporal quality of this currency:

> There have been sane men who enjoyed a rich and related existence. What they know, they know for us. With each new mind a new secret of nature transpires, nor can the bible be closed until the last great man is born. (12)

The men continue to "know" presently in our reading of them. Their knowledge, what they know for us, can change. The Bible comes to represent a record of time and the ideas of a time, yet its meaning is dynamic – what it knows it knows for us, it must correspond to our world and our knowledge. *Representative Men*'s biblical pretensions reside in the quality it holds as a celebration of the archivist and discoverer, and Emerson stands as redactor. The readings of past literatures and thoughts on those readings constitute a religious collation of history. Emerson introduces his book by explaining the difficulty of approaching the men of the past by discussing the difficulty in approaching anyone's mind. "There is somewhat deceptive about the intercourse of minds. The boundaries are invisible, but they are never crossed"(16) and this opacity makes recording the ideas of a time challenging and only proximate. Regarding "a reasonable book," "we seem to want but one, but we want one" (14).

Ostensibly about six men, *Representative Men* contains some of Emerson's most varied citations and the essays are among his most allusive. Andrew Delbanco's index in a 1996 edition of the book contains references for more than 300 different people ranging from Guatama and Jesus to John Bunyan, Madame de Stael, and more obscure translators, scientists, and others like Jan Swammerdam, Thomas Taylor, and J.J. Garth

Wilkinson. The profusion of citations detracts from the centrality of the namesakes of each essay. We can consider each lecture in *Representative Men* as a "gospel" of the titular great man: a book of Plato, a book of Swedenborg, of Goethe. But it is notable that in each case, Emerson is emphatic about the man's biographical obscurity, which is what makes him representative, and makes him represent less Jesus, and more the gospelists, whom he had described in his 1830 vestry lectures as such:

> Here are three simple poor Jews who were marked in their lifetime by no favor from men, & no distinction of genius, that we know of, from God, but who are picked out from the innumerable population of the world, & sanctified in the memory of ages & nations, by their attachment to certain moral truth that was disclosed to their minds. (76)

In *Representative Men,* each man's biographical record is purposefully obscured. The portraits function as imaginative expressions of an idea. In "Plato," Emerson writes, "Great geniuses have the shortest biographies. Their cousins can tell you nothing about them." In particular, Emerson negates conjugal and familial relationships in his subjects. "If [Plato] had lover, wife, or children, we hear nothing of them. He ground them all into paint." Swedenborg "was never married" and had no children. Montaigne married at 33, but Emerson quotes him as saying, "might I have had my own will, I would not have married Wisdom herself, if she would have had me." We celebrate, among the mysteries of Shakepeare's life, "why he left in his will only his second best bed to Ann Hathaway his wife." The only mention of Josephine in the essay on Napoleon concerns his delight in terrorizing her with his stories, which comes in a paragraph detailing Napoleon's faults, including that he cheated at cards and was a gossip, facts that detract from his

representative quality as a "man of the world." Finally, Goethe's autobiography sheds "no light on his marriage…Meantime, certain love-affairs, that came to nothing, as people say, have the strangest importance."

Such a denial of familial bonds necessitates that the lineage and legacy of the men is not that of a patriarchy but of an ideology. *Representative Men* occasionally mentions women, including DeStael, but gender, in the volume, is purposely occluded, and his use of the term "men" is often ambiguous. In "Shakespeare," Emerson writes, "Men, nations, poets, artisans, women, all have worked for him, and he enters into their labours." The separation of "men" from "women" is notable. When Emerson uses the term "manly," it is not antonymous with "womanly" – "Let us have a robust manly life, let us know what we know for certain… Let us have to do with real men and women and not with skipping ghosts." Discussing Swedenborg's *Conjugal Love,* Emerson writes:

> […] in the spiritual world, we change sexes every moment. You love the worth in me, then I am your husband; but it is not me, but the worth, that fixes the love: and that worth is a drop of the ocean of worth that is beyond me. Meantime, I adore the greater worth in another, and so become his wife. He aspires to a higher worth in another spirit, and is wife or receiver of that influence.

The phallocentrism of *Representative Men* is not so much based on a male chauvinism as on a denial of gender difference. The purpose of the gender obfuscation is the negation of patriarchal and sexual reproduction as the dominant mode of lineage. Swedenborg is "a highly fertile genius" who gives "birth" to ideas. Emerson writes of Plato, "No wife, no children had he, and the thinkers of all civilized nations are his posterity, and are tinged with his mind." Men differentiate themselves from their influence, and hence become

separated from their parents not through birth, in *Representative Men,* but through a form of mitosis: "A dot appears…which enlarges to a slit, and it becomes two perfect animals…Children think they cannot live without their parents: but…the black dot has appeared, and the detachment has taken place." Reproduction is intellectualized. Napoleon is the only subject who has a child of any note, but the only allusion to his son comes when Napoleon says, "My son can not replace me; I could not replace myself. I am the creature of circumstances."

If the negation of biography and of patrilinear descent marking the subjects of *Representative Men* resembles the gospelists, it also, of course, resembles Jesus, who in all three synoptic gospels responds to his followers telling him that his mother and brothers are outside waiting for him by saying, "Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother" (Mark 3:32-35; also see Matthew 12:46-50 and Luke 8:19-21).[13]

This alternative form of lineage and patriarchy is cosmopolitan, negating patriarchy and by extension patriotism in favor of aesthetic and ideological kinships. The literary effect is that tradition does not emerge solely via local, linguistic, or historic bonds but by some other affinity, a shared cosmopolitan purpose and mode of writing. Translation will be the primary means of negating patriotic lineage in favor of cosmopolitan traditions, and composing new Bibles.

A Bible records the world's account of itself to the extent of existent knowledge and even wonder. The nineteenth century was full of a new kind of Bible-writing, writing produced in the presence of a republic of letters, in a post-enlightenment age of

mass translation and wide dissemination of text. Emerson writes *Representative Men* as one of these nineteenth–century Bibles, in the presence of two nineteenth–century genres that also function as Bibles, or that at least challenge fixed notions of the Bible: translated scriptures, and geological treatises.

Enlightenment natural philosophy became a cosmopolitan endeavor in the eighteenth century, as continental Europeans and Americans sought universal laws of nature that transcended national contexts. Kant's modern notions of cosmopolitan law, discussed more thoroughly in chapter 1, emerge during this period. By the early nineteenth century, extensive travel by such geologists as Alexander von Humboldt, Charles Lyell, and later Charles Darwin created a breed of intellectual cosmopolites whose adventurous study now consisted of observations of the entire planet. Simultaneously, romanticism's embrace of the holistic privileged conceptions of cosmic unity over specific disciplinary strivings.

Alexander Von Humboldt's *Cosmos,* published in five volumes between 1848 and 1862, is exemplary of a type of literary production that works as a Bible under the pretense of geology. Humboldt's work attempts "to comprehend the phenomena of physical objects in their general connection, and to represent nature as one great whole, moved and animated by internal forces."[14] Emerson would later write of Humbodt that his *Cosmos* "follows the marches of a man whose eyes, ears, and mind are armed by all the science, arts, and implements which mankind have anywhere accumulated." (*Weatlh*, W 6.94) Humboldt's cosmopolitanism has left its mark in place-names ranging from California to Peru to Germany. Nicholaas A. Rupke, in his introduction to the 1997 edition of *Cosmos,* writes that "Humboldt was regarded not merely as a German scientist

but as the consummate European," due to his international network of correspondence, his adeptness in various languages (his brother Wilhelm was a linguist), and his liberal sympathies with revolutionary governments in Latin America.

Humboldt's project makes pretenses towards being Biblical while challenging dogmatic notions of the Bible. The five volumes form a sort of alternative Pentateuch, one in which the first chapter of Genesis, comprised of the Elohim's seven-day creation of the physical planet, is expanded into a detailed portrait of the creation of the universe taking place over millennia, absent the anthropomorphic being. As I detail below, the recognition of the planet's age would be of great import in destabilizing the Bible for Emerson.

Beyond the five-book form, Humboldt conceives of his project in continuum with the Bible. In his introduction, Humboldt defines the Cosmos as "a harmoniously ordered whole, which, dimly shadowed forth to the human mind in the primitive ages of the world, is now fully revealed to the mature intellect of mankind as the result of long and laborious observation" (24). The dim shadow becoming clear in mature man echoes Paul in 1 Corinthians, where Paul writes:

> "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:9-12).

Humboldt's holism functions as a fulfillment of Paul's anticipation. He follows the definition with a critique of religion:

> The dogmas of former ages survive now only in the superstitions of the people and the prejudices of the ignorant, or are perpetuated in a few systems, which, conscious of their weakness, shroud themselves in a vail [sic] of mystery. (24)

Scientific clarification and enlightenment mature the idea that man has of the creation and the creator. The revision of creation via science necessitates a revision of our concept of the creative intelligence. Humboldt is aware of the stakes he is striving for as a writer and considers his style.

> Nature is a free domain, and the profound conceptions and enjoyments she awakens within us can only be vividly delineated by thought clothed in exalted forms of speech, worthy of bearing witness to the majesty and greatness of creation (23).

Part of the modern linguistic task consists of onamastic colonization, a task remiscent of Adam's, but now delegated to the cosmopolite attempting to situate himself in foreign lands. He finds pleasure in recognizing that beneath superficial vegetation, the earth's crust is independent of climate. Regarding the varied vegetation, Humboldt writes:

> As a true citizen of the world, man everywhere habituates himself to that which surrounds him; yet fearful as it were, of breaking the links of association that bind him to the home of his childhood, the colonist applies to some few plants in a far-distant clime the names he had been familiar with in his native land. (27)

In a footnote, he clarifies the problem with such naming, explaining the need for a new language:

> If I have made use, in this work, of the unphilosophical expressions of *European* genera, *European* species, *growing wild in Asia, & c.,* it has been in consequence

> of the old botanical language, which…has dogmatically substituted the false hypothesis of a migration, which, from predilection for Europe, is further assumed to have been from west to east. (30n)

Humboldt's work, then, means to affect language, nomenclature, and to transform our language as it transforms our understanding of the world. The connection between cosmopolitan science and colonialism finds resonance in another late eighteenth-century undertaking that had an effect on notions of the Bible: the work of Sir William Jones and the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

A British magistrate and linguist, William Jones arrived in India in 1783, and stayed for the rest of his life. He formed the Asiatic Society of Bengal, most notable for introducing Sanskrit literature to Europe through the first translations into modern European languages. His preliminary discourse defined the objects of study as "Man and nature, whatever is performed by the one, or produced by the other." To legislate in India, according to Jones, it was necessary to learn and codify not just Hindu and Muslim laws, but to understand the landscape, music, geography, geology, and botany of the place as it functioned holistically. The range of subjects covered in *The Works of Sir William Jones,* which included work by other scholars completed under the aegis of the society, includes such diverse titles as "A Demonstration of Hindu Roles of Arithmetick," "An Account of Catching Wild Elephants," "A Proof that Hindoos Had the Binomial Theorem," "Astronomical Observations in Ft. William, Between Madras," along with translations and commentaries on the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, the Manusmrti, Bhagavad Gita, and works by Kalidas and others.[15] In many cases, scientific discovery

mixes with mythical imagination. Reuben Burrow, in his "Proof that the Hindus Had the Binomial Theorem," claims that the equator was once farther north:

> In the aforesaid position of the equator, the sands of Tartary were inhabitable and the Siberian climate temperate; the deserts of the Buckharia were then part of the seat of the Paradise of Moses; and the sacred rivers of Eden went through India, China, Siberia, and into the Caspian sea, respectively. (Jones 1.375)

Burrow goes on to insist that it is obvious that the Hindu religion had spread to England, that "Stonehenge is evidently one of the Temples of Boodh" and "that the Druids were Bramins is beyond the least shadow of a doubt" (375-6).

Throughout the *Works* of Jones, we find an assimilative project, attempts to reconcile difference into a holistic and cosmopolitan world.[16] It is true that Jones produced his work in his capacity of magistrate, and the contextual tinge is inescapable. But he also considered the intellectual conversation with India as part of a cosmopolitan endeavor striving towards a compilation of "the accumulated experience and wisdom of all ages, and all nations," which necessitated the learning of Sanskrit. Recalling Samuel Johnson's remark that Newton would have been worshipped as a divinity in ancient Greece, Jones writes, "how zealously then would he be adored in Hindustan, if his incomparable writings could have been read and comprehended by the pandits of Cashmir or Benares." Jones' work, while part of a colonial project, is conducted in conversation with Indians on a level of intellectual equality. Jones often details conversations with "my pandit" and other Vedic scholars. Jones' attitude is significant to note as a balance to criticism that emphasize his role as an "intellectual colonist."

In my next chapter, I will look more in depth at some of the issues surrounding the translation and transmission of specific texts, but it is worth noting that Emerson was aware of the colonial relationship. Late in life, Emerson befriended Max Muller. The two had "Hindu" nicknames for each other – Muller sent a birthday greeting in 1880 referring to himself as Moksha Mulara and to Emerson as Amarasunu. Emerson, for his part, praised Muller's translation as being valuable for not being encumbered by the political taint of a colonial involvement with India.

Most famous today for his translations and linguistic accomplishments, William Jones often said, "My principal amusement is botany" (Teignmouth 434-435). Indeed, the *Works* contain an entire volume on botanical writings, including two treatises on spikenard, the plant of the ancients, using botanical, mythological, and etymological routes of inquiry. He also includes a treatise on the plants of India, an essay "On the Fruit of Mellori," and "A Catalogue of Indian Plants, comprehending their Sanscrit, and as many of their Linnaean Names as could, with any Degree of Precision, be ascertained."

Like Humboldt, Jones is attentive to nomenclature, pointing out the importance of using the Sanscrit names despite the temptation to use European approximations. An 88-page "Dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatick Words in Roman Letters" reveals the importance Jones attributed to nomenclature and the use of the Sanskrit language. Translation of Sanskrit to English would not simply be the substitution of English words for Sanskrit ones. It would be the carrying over of Sanskrit words into the English language. A perusal of the *OED* finds Jones' *Works* responsible for introducing numerous words into the English language from religious and botanical Sanskrit,

including avatar, bulbul (a singing bird) champac (a species of magnolia), and kokila (a bird, probably the etymological ancestor of the cuckoo), along with other neologisms in English, like attractability, biliteral (having two letters), hornlet, spheterize (to make one's own), and unscholarly. As I will discuss below regarding Emerson's "Shakespeare" and romantic translation, one of the tasks of translation, for Emerson and his contemporaries, was to renew the language of the translator. Bibles have traditionally pretended to a pure and perfectly representative language. Sanskrit, in particular, assumed by Jones to be the oldest of what would come to be called the Indo-European family of languages, was seen to have a closer relationship to the things represented, and to bring Sanskrit into English, to renew that connection, would refresh the English language.[17]

As far as the influence of Jones' translations in the United States, the points of intersection between Ralph Waldo Emerson's transcendentalism and the ideas of the Upanishads and other Vedic texts have been examined in great detail since shortly after Emerson's death by critics in both the United States and India, and in the next chapter I will provide a critique of this criticism and add to it. For the purposes of studying Emerson and his recasting of the idea of the Bible, the most important role the work of Jones and the Orientalists serves is to de-center Judeo-Christianity, and with the help of Hinduism's Vedic philosophy, to bring to the center a cosmopolitan world spirit that pervades humanity. What I refer to as a cosmopolitan world spirit is a generally non-anthropomorphic impersonal God, what the Vedas refer to as "Brahman" or "*paramatman*" (supreme soul), and what Emerson calls the Oversoul. The impersonal God loses all national bounds. As with German high criticism, Orientalism enabled

scriptures to be read comparatively and destabilized the unique position of the Bible. Looking at the essays "Plato; or, the Philosopher" and "Goethe; or, the Writer," can illustrate how the coupling of religious literature with geologic and geographic studies incites the cosmopolitan literary project.

Plato, Goethe, *Weltliteratur* and Deep Time

The first paragraph of "Plato" and the last paragraph of "Goethe" couch *Representative Men* in a discussion of the Bible, the scrutiny of which I argue is at the heart of the book's intent. In the first paragraph of "Plato; or, the Philosopher," Emerson writes:

> The Bible of the learned for twenty-two hundred years, every brisk young man, who says in succession fine things to each reluctant generation[…] is some reader of Plato, translating into the vernacular, wittily, his good things. (*EL* 633)

But if *Representative Men* begins by confirming the canonicity of Plato, even as various other allusions in the essay, first to the Qu'ran, and then extensively to Hindu literature, begin to destabilize our notion of what exactly that canon is and what purpose it serves, the last paragraph of the book, from "Goethe; or, the writer," confirms the suspicion that the Bible's creation involves its readership:

> The world is young: the former great men call to us affectionately. We too must write Bibles, to unite again the heavens and the earthly world. (*EL* 761)

Between the two passages, the volume *Representative Men* takes on a role as a type of Bible written in the midst of nineteenth – century cosmopolitan literary projects that Emerson considers Bibles. The first and last paragraph work cyclically – we use Bibles in order to write new ones.

Emerson's Plato functions as the father of Western thought and the most Eastern of Western thinkers. He is deracinated from Greece not only because he draws his ideas from divergent points, but because of his text's adaptability. Each nation can make Plato its own: "An Englishman reads and says, 'how English!' a German, 'how Teutonic![…] so Plato seems to a reader in New England an American genius. His broad humanity transcends all sectional lines" (634).

For Emerson, this transcending of sectional lines has an important resonance in the nineteenth century. Emerson is "struck in reading [Plato] with the extreme modernness of his style and spirit." His reading of Plato's modernness, however, is based solely upon a construction he makes of Plato that is possible in the nineteenth century. In the essay, Emerson uses Persian and Sanskrit literature made available by Jones in order to offer a reading of Plato and an understanding of the roots of Western literature and culture. In an essay on the father of Western philosophy, Emerson offers his strongest praise of Sanskrit writings, exhibiting Emerson's great breadth of exposure, shortly before delineating formulaic differences between the Eastern and Western mind to posit Plato as the reconciliation between the East and West. Emerson's reading of Plato is grounded on ancient literatures, but it is an impossible essay outside of its contemporary context. While, according to Emerson, Plato might have gone East to find those eloquent utterances of divine unity, only the nineteenth century reader, with exposure to translations from India, can read Plato in this fashion. While Plato's writings were "the Bible for twenty-two hundred years," it is a new discovery, a recovered access to older texts, to the "eastern wit that Europe wanted," which allows Emerson to write the chapter on Plato that he does.[18] If, as I suggest, each of the essays functions as something

of a gospel, a good spell or good tidings, Emerson, at the end of "Plato," accentuates the sense of timeliness, of the "news" worthiness of his subject.

In every published version of *Representative Men,* the essay on Plato is followed by an appendage, "Plato: New Readings." Why publish such an appendage instead of simply revising the essay, as he did with so many of his lectures that he later published as essays? The "New Readings" emphasize and lay bare a gospel's currency and its openness to revision, and the journalistic nature of criticism and revelation. The "New Readings" appendage opens:

> The publication, in Mr. Bohn's "Serial Library," of the excellent translations of Plato, which we esteem one of the chief benefits the cheap press has yielded, gives us occasion to take hastily a few more notes of the elevation and bearings of this fixed star; or, to add a bulletin, like the journals, of *Plato at the latest dates.* (655)

In his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Benedict Anderson writes about how the spread of printing and in particular the advent of newspapers and novels changed notions of time. According to Erich Auerbach and Walter Benjamin, medieval Christian notions of time, or "messianic time" as Benjamin calls it, allowed for no radical separation between past and present. Isaac prefigures Christ, always has and will and does now. Perry Miller discusses the role such typology plays in Puritan New England in the seventeenth century.[19] The newspaper and the novel, which emerge in the eighteenth century, give us "homogenous empty time," marked not by prefiguration and fulfillment but by temporal coincidence, measured by

clock and calendar. For Anderson, the imagined community of a coincidental common readership is integral to creating the idea of a nation.

Emerson's bulletin, his appendage to the essay on "Plato," emphasizes the role of "modern science" in our reading of Plato. He considers new notions of geologic time, the consideration that nature, "when in five or six millenniums, she had turned out five of six men, as Homer, Phidias, Menu, and Columbus, was no wise discontented with the results." Emerson's bulletin, in recognizing deep time, restores the medieval or messianic notion of time, a "simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present." By allowing Plato to participate in modernity, Emerson allows the modern writer access to classical and biblical prestige.

James Hutton, in the late eighteenth century, discovered strata in Scotland, which offered evidence that the Earth's history was far older than human history. Traditionally, the Book of Genesis was the accepted source of the earth's age, dating the planet to little more than 5000 years. By understanding history on a scale of "deep time," as John McPhee, Henry Gee, and Stephen Baxter refer to it, all human time becomes condensed. McPhee gives an example: "Consider the earth's history as the measure of the English yard, the distance from the King's nose to the tip of his outstretched hand. One stroke of a nail file on his middle finger erases human history."[20] Emerson, considering "the latest news of Plato," reminds us that we, in fact, live in the time of Plato when we consider history on a larger scale. We live in classical times and Biblical times by virtue of the fact that human history is a small amount of time. In "Plato: New Readings," Emerson conflates the modern notion of homogenous empty time, described by Anderson as

having been conceived in the age of newspapers, with messianic time, the notion of a continuous present.

The extent to which Emerson considered history in the context of geologic time extends beyond his consideration of Plato. In his 1867 lecture, "The Progress of Culture," Emerson writes, "The old six thousand years of chronology become a kitchen clock—no more a measure of time than an hour glass or an egg glass—since the duration of geologic periods has come into view." The new science of geology, "a science of forty or fifty summers," helps the American reconcile with the fact that "in America everything looks new and recent" compared to Asia and Europe. "[G]eology has effaced these distinctions." Geologic time helps Americans recast their novelty by making the age distinctions between nations insignificant on the larger scale.

Wai Chee Dimock, in her 2006 book, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*, uses the term "deep time" in a literary context in order to look at American literature in conversations with other languages and literatures.[21] Reading American literature in the context of deep time, "American literature emerges with a much longer history than one might think." Dimock writes:

> Finally, the concept of a global civil society, by its very nature, invites us to think of the planet as a plausible whole, a whole that, I suggest, needs to be mapped along the temporal axis as well as the spatial, its membership open not only to contemporaries but also to those centuries apart. (Dimock 5)

Such temporal mapping allows us to read a conversation of literatures that isn't limited by priority, a pursuit shared by Susan Manning, Paul Giles, and others. I call these readings of texts in conversation over spatial and temporal bounds without the priority

inherent in "influence" cosmopolitan, and in the next chapter, I provide an example of such a reading, by re-examining Emerson's reading of the *Bhagavad Gita.*

Dimock, in her reading of Emerson, Hafiz, Christianity, and Islam, considers that literary culture and world religion are two forms of attachment, two communities, which are tangential to the nation-state. A member of a world religion or a participant in literary culture defines his or her membership in such a community by something other than national citizenship. Dimock proceeds to propose Islam as an aegis under which we can read American literatures that don't seem to converse with one another (Elijah Muhammad and Lydia Maria Child for example), as Islam incorporates America and Americans into something larger and older than America. For Dimock, this incorporation is what impresses both Malcolm X and Emerson. But if the American expropriation of texts from the East (east starting with Europe) has come to be seen as hackneyed or pirated to form a tradition where none exists, Dimock shows how one of Emerson's favorite texts, the *Akhlak-I-Jalaly*, was itself a polyglot mixture of the Qu'ran, Sufi mysticism, Platonic and Aristotelian ideas, and finally English in its translation, a world text incorporating Greek, Arabic, Persian, and English flavors. Dimock suggests that divorcing the texts from their local contexts "secularizes" them, which in a literal sense it does, though they do not lose their religiosity for Emerson. Rather, the authority of the texts changes – they weren't written by God for a single people, but worked upon by many until authorship doesn't become simply obscure, but omnipresent.

Emerson's interest in the collation and conversation of literatures reflects his interest in the last subject of *Representative Men,* Johann Von Goethe. Emerson's essay on Goethe is among his most personal, revealing Emerson's own purpose, position, and

method as a writer. Napoleon and Goethe serve as Emerson's two nineteenth-century representatives in *Representative Men,* and he writes of Goethe:

> I join Napoleon with him as being both representatives of the impatience and reaction of nature against the *morgue* of contentions,--two stern realists, who, with their scholars, have severally set the axe at the root of the tree of cant and seeming, for this time, and for all time. (*EL* 761)

It is a loaded sentence in two ways. First, there is the ambiguity of "I join Napoleon with him." It could mean, either "I put the two together" or it could mean, "I join Napoleon, along with Goethe." The first possibility seems the more obvious. A comma after "I join Napoleon" would be necessary for the second reading to be convincing. But as he does with words, Emerson plays with grammar, sometimes making nouns into adjectives, as he first did with "cosmopolitan" in "The Young American." I suggest that Emerson boldly hints at the second reading, thereby inserting himself into the book in its last chapter.

The second important theme the sentence brings up is in its Biblical allusion, which reinforces the second suggested reading. It was John the Baptist, who, in three of the gospels, fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah as "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness" and then chastises the Pharisees and Sadducees, who come to baptism thinking that they can escape God's wrath through formality without true repentance. In Matthew 3:7-11, John the Baptist tells them:

> O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able to

> raise these stones up to children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good forth is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire. (KJV)

Emerson alters the Biblical passage to give the scripture agency. Where, in the Bible, "the axe is laid unto the root" with an ambiguity about who lay it there, in Emerson's essay on Goethe, the scholars of Goethe and Napoleon become the agents and actively "set the axe at the root of the tree of cant and seeming." Richard O'Keefe, in his Blakean reading of "The Divinity School Address," explicates the ushering in of the new teacher that Emerson calls for towards the end of the address by noting that Emerson is the very teacher he is calling for. As such, Emerson works as both John the Baptist and Jesus.[22] In "Goethe," it Emerson is doing something similar with the final paragraph, in which he writes, "We too must write Bibles, to unite again the heavenly and earthly world." The metamorphosis of the representative man, through the forms of philosopher, mystic, skeptic, poet, and man of the world, culminates in the nineteenth century with the writer. It is the writer who is the culmination of these prior forms, who documents the knowledge of his time and world, who "writes" bibles. He does so by being cosmopolitan in his genre, his reading, his correspondence, his religious temperament, his demand for scientific rigor, his travels, and his personal relations. In so doing, he fulfills the ideals that Goethe set forth in his writings on "World Literature." In a collection of passages collected as an essay, "On World Literature," Goethe writes:

> World Literature is not merely taking note of one another. That is already there and developing. We mean, rather, that contemporary writers and all participants in the literary scene are becoming acquainted and feel the need to take action as a group because of public-spiritedness. However, visits more than correspondence will bring this about, since only personal contact can establish and solidify true relationships.

Emerson's early criticism of travel as a "want of self-culture" had been tempered. He considered the search for conversation with great men to be among the most legitimate reasons to travel, and he begins his book, *English Traits,* by noting, "If Goethe had been still living I might have wandered into Germany also." Emerson's conversations with Goethe would be purely literary and apparently one-sided, and yet it was a very personal impression and connection that Emerson felt towards Goethe.

In an 1832 letter to his Aunt Mary, Emerson shows how his sense of conversation is not limited by mortality: "I am entering into acquaintance with Goethe who has just died," he writes. This type of "acquaintance," of course, can only be literary, and acquainting oneself with the dead entails a one-sided conversation unless we can revive Goethe, make Goethe speak freshly, and that is what translation does, and what Emerson does by translating Goethe, in this case not linguistically but through criticism and interpretation. Emerson canonizes Goethe even as he denies Goethe's works divine authority. In his essay on Goethe, he writes that Goethe "can never be dear to men" because he lacks the capability of self-surrender; his devotion to truth is only "for the sake of culture." Goethe's cosmopolitanism, not a prophetic profession, make his works "biblical."

Lawrence Buell suggests that Emerson criticizes Goethe's being entirely at home and happy in his century and the world. "Emerson wanted cosmopolitan prophecy, not cosmopolitan urbanity," writes Buell. Nevertheless, Emerson reading Goethe helped Emerson develop a new notion of the prophetic profession. Emerson, quoting Goethe quoting Muhammad in Goethe's review of Carlyle, writes that "God has given every people a prophet in its own speech." Goethe continues, "So is every translator a prophet to his people. Luther's translation of the Bible produced the greatest influence, if the critics up to this day continually stipulate and cavil thereon" (*JMN* 6:292*).* Emerson's Goethean prophet as translator is devoid of locality. The classic prophet erased his authorship by ascribing his authorship to God. The translator erases his own authorship in his guise as critic and translator.

John Pizer, in his essay "Goethe's 'World Literature' Paradigm and Contemporary Cultural Globalization" shows how Goethe's notion of "world literature," a term he introduces in 1827, masks authorship. Where Goethe writes, "Everywhere one hears and reads about the progress of the human race, about the further prospects for world and human relationships," Pizer comments:

> Goethe as an individual does not perceive what he describes; rather, one sees and hears of progressive globalization, and one experiences this trend everywhere…. It is as though Goethe wishes to disappear into the background so that the impersonal essence of a world literary scene can be foregrounded.

Pizer notes that Goethe does not proclaim an end of national literatures or of nations or nationalities, but on the contrary, Goethe argues that Germans ought to be proud of the prominent role they will play in the coming world literature. Then, this phenomenon of

world literature, which engages nations via translation across spatial and temporal bounds, need not obscure American nationality, but can help define a national literary identity for America. In translation, texts can become American via critical participation, forming an American library, an American literature broadly defined as literature in America and literature for Americans. Americans can play a prominent role in world literature despite their novelty on the scene of nations and the scarcity of writers among them.

Goethe writes, "Every literature dissipates within itself when it is not reinvigorated through foreign participation." America, as compiler, as receptacle, as critic, provides this reinvigoration of the world's literary texts. In the case of the Bible, there is the tradition of Americans considering themselves types, fulfillments of the prophetic antetypes.[23] David Damrosch, in his 2002 book, *What is World Literature?,* writes, "constructions of world literature have always been motivated by a mixture of public concern and private pleasure." Damrosch considers the busts on the American Library of Gongress, completed in 1897. Benjamin Franklin in the center is flanked on the left by Demosthenes, Emerson, Irving, and Goethe, and on the right by Macaulay, Hawthorne, Scott, and Dante. The collection includes men from various nations and epochs, but it is idiosyncratic and particularly "American" in its sense of being worldly. Six of the nine people were from the nineteenth century, with Franklin and Goethe writing in the eighteenth. Dante and Demosthenes represent all previous literary history. Some scholars would have seen the list as prejudicially biased to Americans, with Hawthorne assuming a place on the pantheon while Shakespeare and Homer are omitted. Darmosch writes that the choices are strategic. The designer "wished his library to

connect America and Europe, past and present, literature and politics."[24] The point is that American writers can compose their own World literatures and include America in these new canons.

For Emerson's Goethe, a combination of translation and attentiveness to nature and scientific writing make him a representative of World Literature. "Nature will be reported. All things are engaged in writing their history," writes Emerson. The second paragraph of the essay discusses the non-verbal communication of nature and man, which Emerson had earlier suggested was the function of the poet, but is now the province of the scientifically inclined writer. In "Goethe," he writes:

> The planet, the pebble, goes attended by its shadow. The rolling rock leaves its scratches on the mountain; the river its channel in the soil; the animal its bones in the stratum; the fern and leaf its modest epitaph in the coal. The falling drop makes its sculpture in the sand or the stone…The air is full of sounds, the sky of tokens, the ground is all memoranda and signatures, and every object covered over with hints, which speak to the intelligent. (151)

A poetic sensibility is required to translate nature. Note the onomatopoeic sound of Emerson's paragraph. The writer is striving to understand the ways in which nature expresses itself, to understand primal language. Walter Benjamin, in his essay, "On Language," has a parallel take on the language of things, but it differs in its character and tone:

> Speechlessness: that is the great sorrow of nature (and for the sake of her redemption the life and language of *man*—not only, as is supposed of the

> poet—are in nature)…Lament, however, is the most undifferentiated, impotent expression of language; it contains scarcely more than the sensuous breath; and even where there is only a rustling of plants, in it there is always a lament. (*Reflections* 329)

Man can and will communicate with that nature through name. Emerson alludes to Adam's tasks of gardening and naming. "Men are born to write. The gardener saves every slip and seed and peachstone: his vocation is to be a planter of plants. Not less does the writer attend his affair"(152). Nature communicates itself to the writer in a revelatory manner. "Nothing so broad, so subtle, or so dear, but comes therefore commended to his pen, and he will write"(152). This writer is more than a mere stenographer. He also goes beyond the language-making function ascribed to the poet in the 1844 essay "The Poet." He is a revealer of cosmopolitan law.

> There are higher degrees, and nature has more splendid endowments for those whom she elects to a superior office; for the class of scholars or writers, namely, who see connexion, where the multitude see fragments, and who are impelled to exhibit the facts in ideal order and so to supply the axis on which the frame of things turns. (*EL* 747)

These writers who reveal the "ideal order" are the same class as the critic/priests whom Emerson discussed in his sermons, but they reflect Emerson's own change in profession. Emerson's exposition of the historical majesty of the writer that he wishes to restore through this essay is also a characteristic self-calling:

> There have been times when he was a sacred person: he wrote bibles; the first hymns; the codes; the epics; tragic songs, Sibylline verses, Chaldean

> oracles, Laconian sentences, inscribed on temple walls. Every word was true, and woke the nations to new life. He wrote without levity, and without choice. Every word was carved before his eyes into the earth and the sky, and the sun and stars were only letters of the same purport, and of no more necessity. (750)

This writer has fallen in stature to where "he is no longer the lawgiver, but the sycophant" (750). The nineteenth century-writer deals with a distracting overabundance of facts that "extends itself like American trade" (751). Emerson invokes the composite, interdisciplinary, and cosmopolitan literary projects of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century through his description of *The Helena*, or the second part of *Faust*. As evident of the resurgence of the reverend writer, *Faust* is

> the work of one who found himself the master of histories, mythologies, philosophies, sciences, and natural literatures in the encyclopaedical manner in which modern erudition with its international intercourse of the whole earth's population, researches into Indian, Etruscan, and all Cyclopean arts, geology, chemistry, astronomy; and every one of these kingdoms assuming a certain aerial and poetic character, by reason of the multitude. (752)

It is this collection of genres, of branches of knowledge, of sentiments of nations, that makes a Bible and defies genre. In one of the most resonant passages for a reader of Emerson's journals, Emerson writes of Goethe, "A great deal is still left that will not find any place. This the bookbinder alone can give any cohesion to: and hence not-withstanding the looseness of many of his worlds, we have volumes of detached

paragraphs, aphorisms, *Xenien*, & c" (753). Finally, Goethe's bible – fragmentary, combining science and poetry, transcending genre—"has brought back to a book some of its ancient might and dignity" (166).

"The old forest is decomposed for the composition of the new forest" – Shakespeare and Romantic Translation.

If Goethe as writer represents the one aspect of nineteenth century literary cosmopolitanism, nineteenth-century Shakespeare as poet represents another, particularly the aspect of translation. Emerson wrote two essays on the subject of the poet, the 1844 essay published in *Essays 2,* and the 1850 essay, "Shakespeare; or, The Poet," published in *Representative Men* in 1850. While the latter essay refers to a specific personality and the former to a generic ideal, it is the second essay, ostensibly on Shakespeare, that occludes authorship of the individual poet. Within those six years, and continuing forward, Emerson qualifies and redefines the meaning of literary originality. The personality of the poet, and by extension the poem itself, comes to be seen as a composition or composite, cosmopolitan and devoid of national particularity at least partly because he is devoid of personality. This is a departure from Emerson's earlier notions of the poet. Translation is the major enabler of this new poet, and Emerson incorporates Romantic theories of translation in the development of this character.

Among the most recognizable sentiments attributed to Emerson in his earlier writings are those that ask man to intuit his wisdom, to step away from his notebooks and library. In his lecture on "The American Scholar," which Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. called our "intellectual declaration of independence," Emerson declares that "our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close."

Moses, Plato, and Milton, writes Emerson, "set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men but what they thought" (259). The individual's eye "was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify of that particular ray." The poet in Emerson's 1844 "The Poet" is marked by his deep originality. He is a language maker, "the sayer, the namer," and his poem comes from his extraordinary attenuation to "that region where the air is music," where "we hear those primal warblings and attempt to write them down." Most men are distracted, losing the connection to this primacy, "and thus miswrite the poem." But the men "of most delicate ear," transcribe nature directly, and "these transcripts, though imperfect, become the songs of nations." The poet avoids worldly distraction, and his work is utterly original. Throughout the essay, Emerson stresses the poet's distinction, his absolute novelty: he "has a new thought: he has a whole new experience to unfold." The poet uplifts the regular man, humanizing him.

When Emerson considers the necessity of a poet at all times, and considers the poet for whom he looks in vain, one that would "chaunt our own times and social circumstance," the goal is to find a particular personality who would be able to see the poetic glory in the banality of a materialistic and at times barbarous nineteenth century. Walt Whitman was the poet who came to write of "our fisheries, our Negroes, and Indians, our boasts, and our reputidations, the wrath of rogues…" Whitman announced America as poem. Finally, however, it is the personality itself that is the poem. The poet is the poem. Whitman's conspicuousness, his photographs, his celebrity and persona, living and taking directly from his experience, makes his poem proprietary, even if he did publish *Leaves of Grass* anonymously in 1855.

Further, Emerson's notion of the poet is heroic, with Adam, as namer, the primal poet, and words the most basic poetic unit. Emerson, in "The Poet," as in *Nature,* believes in a representative idea of language. The connection between words and the things that they represent is not arbitrary. The poet is the person who fastens our words to things. In *Nature,* Emerson insists upon our words' derivation from physical nature, on language's non-arbitrariness.

Walter Benjamin's essay, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," can serve to elucidate Emerson's theory on representative language. Benjamin writes that all things have a mental essence that they communicate through language. "All communication of mental meanings is language, communication in words being only a particular case of human language"(Benjamin, *Reflections* 314). What is special about man is that he names. In naming, man takes hold of the entire mental essence of the thing, without residue. But where does the name come from? Benjamin and Emerson do not believe that words have just accidental or arbitrary relations to objects. "Language never gives *mere* signs," Benjamin writes (Benjamin, *Reflections* 324), and Emerson takes pains to show how all words are derived from physical nature. Benjamin calls bourgeois the concept of language in which words are simply the means for men to communicate factual subject matter to other men. "The other concept of language," Benjamin writes, "in contrast, knows no means, no object, and no addressee of communication. It means: *in naming the mental being of man communicates itself to God"* (318).

This idea of a divine and revelatory concept of naming is integral to understanding Emerson's plays on language. Benjamin continues, "All nature, insofar as

it communicates itself, communicates itself in language, and so finally in man… God's creation is completed when things receive their names from man, from whom in name language alone speaks." (319).

Benjamin explicates the creation stories of Genesis to show that God's word is creative and man's word is knowing. To name something is to know it, and there is, of course, an important power dynamic that comes into play when dealing with knowing the colonial subjects, as discussed above regarding Jones and Humboldt. Emerson's naming tendency leads to coinings of new words. He mixed up the letters of his Aunt Mary's names to call her "Tnamurya," the suffix sounding distinctively Indian, as in "Surya" for sun. In his Blakean reading of Emerson, Richard O'Keefe points out the various explanations for the title of Emerson's poem, "Hamatreya." Maitreya is the disciple seeking dialogue in the Vishnu Purana, but *hama* is the Greek word for the earth's surface, and *treya* is a feminine suffix, which could make the title an allusion to an Earth Mother. Both etymologies seem to work. O'Keefe writes:

> … we are confronted with a dichotomy rather than a unity, because the Hindu and Hellenic cultural contexts are in conflict here: the former, stressing epistemological allusion, disagrees with the latter notion of pantheistic apotheosis. Was Emerson really inventing a Joycean multilingual portmanteau word to express both meanings? Given the cultural and philosophical polarities in the two significances (Hindu vs. Greek), the title can be said to contradict itself. If we accept both etymologies, it contradicts itself also in gender. Maitreya was a male

character in the Vishnu Purana; the earth mother is undoubtedly female.

Thus a curious rhetorical androgyny annihilates the title.[25]

The neologistic element of Emerson may include the original adjectival use of the word cosmopolitan. Further, terms like "oversoul" and "selfreliance"(used as one word throughout *Representative Men*) are Emersonian coinings. The point is that Emerson now sees language creation arising not solely from attention to nature, but to literature – language can be created through translation.

By the time Emerson comes to write "Shakespeare; or the Poet" and publish it in 1850, his notion of originality changes. He begins his essay on Shakespeare by qualifying the meaning of originality as we know it: "If we require the originality which consists in weaving, like a spider, their web from their own bowels… no great men are original." By 1875, when Emerson publishes "Quotation and Originality," a late essay that was published in *Letters and Social Aims,* Emerson has come to negate the notion of absolute originality, and he also redefines revelation. In "Quotation and Originality," Emerson posits that the quoting function of the intellect is as primary and natural as "the main business of life" for infant mammals, that of suction. Revelation, as an original relation to the Universe, is not a relation to what is outside the universe, not to an inhuman and impersonal Nature, but to an insular system. The cohesiveness, or insularity of the universe, and of the literary universe, necessitates that we understand the flashes of revelation themselves as quotation. "The originals are not original," writes Emerson.

Emerson had earlier versions of this alternative poet as quoter in an early lecture/public reading of Chaucer in 1835. In a manner not unlike his vestry lectures, Emerson traces translations and versions of texts to the point of obscurity. Pope, Milton,

and Dryden borrow English versions of classic mythology from Chaucer. "Chaucer however did not invent this modern dress for the old gods and heroes" because Guido de Colonna published a prose romance in Latin in 1260, itself founded on an apocryphal Greek history by Dares Phrygius, along with paraphrases from Ovid and Statius. Colonna was translated into English verse by Lydgate, and into English prose by Caxton. Emerson first concludes that "the extent of Chaucer's obligations to his foreign contemporaries and predecessors is so great as to induce the inquiry whether he can claim the praise of an original writer." Considering that Bocaccio and Colonna had sources of their own, Emerson finally declares in one of his characteristic short aphoristic sentences, "There never was an original writer" (155).

For more evidence to his assertion, he goes back to his biblical studies, noting that "the sublime prayer which Jesus taught to his disciples, Grotius has shown to be a compilation of existing Jewish petitions" (155). Nevertheless, the individuality of the personal author never disappears in the essay on Chaucer. While struggling with what plagiarism consists of ("if the writer appropriates the praise and conceals the debt"), he finally declares, "Jefferson is not less the author of the Declaration of Independence because every clause of it had been suggested by some Memorial or Remonstrance of the period" (155). The Declaration is of course an odd choice of text to make such a point, and Emerson probably uses it for exactly that reason, considering that the authorship, while ascribed to Jefferson, is ostensibly collective, the work of all its signers who in turn represent their constituencies.

Emerson more fully develops some of these notions in the essay on Shakespeare from *Representative Men*. While Emerson subtitles his essay on Shakespeare, "the Poet,"

he could quite possibly have called it "The Translator." The change is from the notion of the poet being original to being wholly unoriginal. While the anonymous poet as an archetypal figure in the 1844 essay on the poet receives his intuition from his immersion in nature and does well to avoid "fill[ing] thy brain with Boston and New York, with fashion and covetousness"(300), in his essay on Shakespeare, Emerson is interested in the poet's reception of the state of mind of the people of his city and country as much as he is in the poet's reception of nature. "A poet is no rattlebrain saying what comes uppermost, and, because he says everything, saying, at last, something good; but heart in unison with his time and country"(109). Shakespeare is in touch with the world. The poet's "great genial power, one would almost say, consists in not being original at all; in being altogether receptive; in letting the world do all, and suffering the spirit of the hour to pass unobstructed through the mind"(110). Where the poet in Emerson's earlier essay was encouraged to incline towards mediation and solitude, Shakespeare as poet is immersed in society and literary culture.

From human society, the poet finds his form. For Shakespeare it was drama, precisely because that genre functioned as "ballad, epic, newspaper, caucus, lecture, Punch, and library." Cosmopolitan poetic utterance, that is, utterance that transcends language, nation, and time, must be expressed in localized forms. But form is eventually annihilated, leaving one with cosmic utterance. Form and storyline are only grounds for Shakespeare. They keep him relevant, and with the people. Emerson writes, "the poet owes to his legend, what Sculpture owed to the temple," and points out that sculpture was "the ornament of the temple wall"(Rep Men 112). When the statue is created for itself, it becomes "freak, extravagance"(112). In this way, the cosmos, the ornament, needs a

form in which to express itself. That is nature, man, all things. But the form dissolves, leaving the ornament shining alone. Eight pages after detailing Shakespeare's need of the theater to create his work, he talks of Shakespeare's individual utterances as proverbs of a saint, to be cut up and translated in different languages, "so that the occasion which gave the saint's meaning the form of a conversation or of a prayer or of a code of laws is immaterial, compared with the universality of its application"(120). In the end, the ornament remains when the temple and the need for the temple falls. The cosmos alone shines forth and can be seen. One sees God, and nothing else.

Translation kills the locality of language, and destroys form, and gets to the essence of cosmic, or pure language. It removes the contextual temple. It destroys individualism, in both nations and persons. As with the "waste stock" from which Shakespeare drew his story lines, so with the Bible:

> It is no longer possible to say who wrote them first. They have been the property of the Theatre so long, and so many geniuses have enlarged or altered them, inserting a speech, or a whole scene, or adding a song, that no man can any longer claim copyright in this work of numbers. (111)

From English theater, Emerson proceeds towards proving the originality to be illusory. He harkens back to Chaucer. Chaucer influenced so many. But Chaucer drew from Boccaccio and others. "All originality is relative"(114). The epic poets "are librarians and historiographers as well as poets"(113). These collectors of books, of sentences, of quotations, are recorders, accountants of eras. One should note the diversity of examples that Emerson gives of Epic poets: "Homer, Menu, Saadi, Milton"(114), a Greek, Hindu, Persian, and Englishman. Emerson, unlike any of the aforementioned, has a wide and

unparalleled access to books made available in the nineteenth century, which affords the possibility of new creations by the societies of the world. He alone can mention the four together.

The idea that "what is best written or done by genius in the world was no man's work, but came by wide social labour"(114), leads into a discussion of the English Bible and translation.

> Our English Bible is a wonderful specimen of the strength and music of the English language. But it was not made by one man or at one time; but centuries and churches brought it to perfection. There was never a time when there was not some translation existing. (115)

Emerson repeats in this essay on Shakespeare the thrust of his third vestry lecture. Shakespeare, as text, not man, resembles the Bible in its diversity of source, its translatedness, and its lack of definitive authorship. It is a collective and serious artifice worked upon by the world. Emerson begins to unpeel layers of translation from formal religious texts.

> The Liturgy, admired for its energy and pathos, is an anthology of the piety of ages and nations, a translation of prayers and forms of the Catholic Church,--and these selected, too, in long periods, from the prayers and meditations of every saint and sacred writer, all over the world. Grotius makes the like remark in respect to the Lord's prayer, that the single clauses of which it is composed, were already in use, in the time of Christ, in Rabbinical forms. (115)

From the discussion of the Liturgy and Lord's Prayer, Emerson moves into a discussion of legal treatises. The best words in the "nervous language" of our laws "are the contribution of all the sharpsighted and strongminded men who have lived in the countries where these laws govern"(115). They picked "the grains of gold" from scriptures. We must have a law that is religious, governed not by a Church, but by a cosmic order. This is the cosmopolitan law that Emerson was promoting in "The Young American." In this same paragraph, Emerson moves from the Bible, Protestant pieces, and the laws of great societies to the secular work of Plutarch with a similar point:

> The translation of Plutarch gets its excellence by being translation. There was never a time when there was none. All the truly idiomatic and national phrases are kept, and all others successively picked out and thrown away. Something like the same process had gone on long before with the originals of these books. The world takes liberties with world-books. Vedas, Aesop's Fables, Pipay, Arabian Nights, Cid, Iliad, Robin Hood, Scottish Minstrelsy, are not the work of single men. In the composition of such works, the time thinks, the market thinks. (115)

In translating, Walter Benjamin writes, a work finds continued life. Translation comes in a work's "afterlife"(Illuminations 71). What was "waste-stock" became, when translated by Shakespeare, living work. And yet it is translation that helps even Shakespeare become truly understood by a nineteenth-century sensibility. When Emerson begins to write about Shakespeare criticism, he asserts:

> It was not possible to write the history of Shakespeare till now; for he is the father of German literature: it was on the introduction of Shakespeare

> into German, by Lessing, and the translation of his works by Wieland and Schegel, that the rapid burst of German literature was most intimately connected. It was not until the nineteenth century, whose speculative genius is a sort of living Hamlet, that the tragedy of Hamlet could find such wondering readers. (Rep Men 117)

The translation of Shakespeare was as significant for Shakespeare as it was for the Germans. Gotehe brought up the advantages of the foreign reader in his 1827 essay, "On World Literature: "The phenomenon which I call world literature will come about mainly when the disputes within one nation are settled by the opinions and judgments of others"(226). Benjamin's essay on "The Task of The Translator," written as an introduction to his translation of Baudelaire, sheds light on Emerson's sentiments as well. Benjamin points out that translation approaches a purer language, and this approach brings elements out of a work in a language that would not have been evident in the original:

> In the individual, unsupplemented languages, meaning is never found in relative independence, as in individual words or sentences; rather, it is in a constant state of flux—until it is able to emerge as pure language from the harmony of all the various modes of intention. Until then, it remains hidden in the languages. (*Illuminations* 74)

In translating, we go through levels of removal from pure language. As such, translating, from one language to another, or from the language of things to the language of man, is a religious task. Benjamin writes, "the growth of religions ripens the hidden seed into a higher development of language"(*Illuminations* 75). Translating works

contributes to the works. Furthermore, "the mother tongue of the translator is transformed as well"(*Illuminations* 73).

K.P Van Anglen's introduction to Henry David Thoreau's translations hints at the notion of translation transforming the translator's language as well. Thoreau not only sought to learn the language of the native people of Massachusetts, but he translated Greek texts, and even translated a Sanskrit work from the French, as Emerson did with Hafiz and Saadi. Van Anglen writes that Thoreau was fascinated with the "primitive" languages because they gave us glimpses of the origins of language. Van Anglen writes,

> Thoreau sought to regenerate the American language by confronting it with the rougher, more natural tongue of the Greeks and Hindus—an attempt to recover for his contemporaries the emblematic relationship between words and the things they name" (Thoreau 219).

In addition to Thoreau, another of Emerson's peers, Margaret Fuller, was on the forefront of Romantic theories of translation in the nineteenth century. A shifting attitude towards translation was prevalent in the Romantic period in Europe, and Emerson's attitudes towards translation echo and Americanize the ideas circulating among Germans and Brits. Schleirmacher suggested that translation was important within a language, and the English renewed their own traditional texts like Beowulf, Chaucer, and even Shakespeare. Furthermore, the idea that translation can renew the host language and perhaps approach something like pure language emerges in the writings of such proponents of world literature as Germaine de Stael:

> Ultimately, it is the universal to which one must aspire in attempting to do good for the human race. I would go even further: even if one had a good understanding

> of foreign languages, a successful translation of a work into one's own language would provide a more familiar and intimate pleasure than the original. The imported beauty that a translation brings with it gives the national style new turns of phrase and original expressions. To preserve a country's literature from banality, a sure sign of decadence, there is no more effective means than translating foreign poets.[26]

Colleen Glenney Boggs, in her 2004 article, "Margaret Fuller's American Translation," writes that Fuller's literary executors sought "to repatriate Fuller by erasing the central feature of her theory of a multilingual American literature: translation." Boggs suggests that Arthur Fuller, in the context of growing American xenophobia and U.S. imperialism, purged her books of translations and let her book-length translations pass out of print, in the process causing the U.S. to lose "its premier theorist of literary cosmopolitanism, who practiced translation as a viable social ethics." (Boggs 31-32). Boggs sets Fuller's embrace of romantic translation theories in opposition to Emerson's universalism, which would essentialize or erase linguistic complexity. I find that Emerson's ideas on translation and quotation resemble Boggs' description of Fuller, suggesting that American interpretation of Romantic translation theories, in Fuller and Emerson, while differing in important ways, were part of a larger movement in the mid-nineteenth century to develop an American literature of translation engaged with world literature.

One of the main differences between Fuller and Emerson is that Fuller shows little regard for the approach to and consideration of Bible-making or canon formation. Fuller's cosmopolitanism is a closer application to Goethe's theory of *weltliteratur* than is Emerson's. She is interested in actual conversation and travel, what Buell calls

"cosmopolitan urbanity" as opposed to "cosmopolitan prophecy." Fuller meets with and marries into the Italian revolution. She implicates her life and body in these conversations in a way that Emerson does not.

Boggs foregrounds two important nineteenth century women in intellectual if not actual correspondence with Fuller. British translator of German texts Sarah Austin refused to use translation as "nationalization of a text" but rather left exposed the national distinctions, the "Germanisms" that might affright English readers much in the way Emerson's "Divinity School Address" frightened Andrews Norton into drawing attention to "the infusion of German barbarisms" embedded in that lecture.[27] Fuller sees this mode of translation, which leaves intact national particularities, as antithetical to a universalizing world literature as advocated by such contemporaries as Thomas Carlyle. Goethe, as Austin reads him, reconciles the two possibilities, either to efface national distinction in translation or to accept peculiarities through our own translation.

Fuller, via DeStael, found that preserving the national distinctions in translation can affect the national literature of the host language. Boggs writes that for DeStael, translation is "a method for negotiating universality through particularity." For Boggs, "De Stael, in effect, proposes that translation does not just reflect the source language's idiomatic originality, as Austin explains, but also generates expressive originality for the language and culture into which a text is translated" (36).

We see this generation of expressive originality through translation in Emerson, in his store of translations that make up more than half of his published and unpublished poetry. Emerson introduces place names, words, images, feelings, that are otherwise completely absent from American literature, such as when he quotes Hafiz: "Take my

heart in thy hand, O beautiful boy of Shiraz! / I would give for the mole on thy cheek Samarcand and Buchara" (*CPT* 259) The meter here, neither cleanly anapestic or dactylic, with a slant rhyme on Schiraz and Buchara, along with the poem's homoeroticism, differs greatly from any of Emerson's original compositions, which almost without fail fall into clean meters and rhyme schemes. Emerson's criticism of Wordsworth's poetry in *English Traits* as "sterile" has to do with Wordsworth's "want of due catholicity and cosmopolitan scope," a trait he sees as characteristic of dominant English literary culture, which doesn't appreciate translators, particularly Emerson's favorite Neoplatonist, Thomas Taylor, and which suffers for it.

In addition to poetry, Emerson sees translated prose as a valuable contribution to national literature's cosmopolitanism. Emerson was primarily a prose writer, and his essays "Quotation and Originality" and "Plutarch" respectively theorize and exemplify his ideas on the nineteenth century essay as a cosmopolitan composition.

Composition, we should recall, is literally the laying of things together, and to compose is to put together parts. Emerson lays bare the cosmopolitan composition process, redefining the role of the individual mind in creating prose compositions. The greatest essays reveal themselves as redactions, worked upon by the world. As the writer's body decomposes to provide elements for the growth of new plants, the individual writer's contribution to literature becomes part of the nutritious elements that support the text that later readers hold and in turn work. The great writer's authority and authorship come not from the detached, hermetic, and undisturbed attention to nature, but from the reader's power of assimilation and detachment, recontextualization and revitalization.

We find continually that what we assumed was original has a predecessor. In "Quotation and Originality," Emerson writes, "If we find in India or Arabia a new book out of our horizon of thought and tradition, we are soon taught by new researches in its native country to discover its foregoers, and its latent, but real connection with our own Bibles." The primary element that comprises Bibles, which the act of quoting and being aware of quotation shows us, is the aphorism. To quote is to reduce literature to the *bon-mot* and to the aphorism, the condensed literary unit. The aphorism is the reduction, by means of re-circulation through quotation, to condensed wisdom.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge writes about the aphorism in his *Aids to Reflection.* Coleridge writes, "Exclusively of the abstract sciences, the largest and worthiest portion of our knowledge consists of aphorisms: and the greatest and best of men is but an aphorism." He further defines aphorism as a determinate position "whence our horizon." In a manner that Emerson would consider a fastening of the word to the thing, Coleridge considers the "visual image that forms [the aphorism's] primary meanings." Coleridge exemplifies the aphoristic process by taking a country from a map, cutting it out, and examining it detached. "A twofold act of circumscribing, and detaching, when it is exerted by the mind on subjects of reflection and reason, is to aphorize, and the result is an aphorism" (129). Emerson, like Montaigne and Plutarch, wrote aphoristically, and like them, he collected aphorisms. "Make your own Bible," he writes in his journal, from "all those words & sentences that in all your reading have been to you like the blast of the trumpet" (*JMN* 5:186). Coleridge's metaphor of the detached country aptly describes Emerson's Biblical composition process. Detach aphoristic writings from localized contexts and recompose the text from the individual prospect. One's "relation to the

world" becomes less the introspective connection to an impersonal and immovable nature than it is an utterance of a specific temporal and spatial point in relation to those utterances that circumscribe him.

The circulation of aphorisms leads to communally written texts. Emerson details the composition of a Bible as a project of a community, worked upon by a society, and he begins with the construction of myth:

> Mythology is no man's work; but, what we daily observe in regard to the *bon-mots* that circulate in society,--that every talker helps a story in repeating it, until, at last, from the slenderest filament of fact a good fable is constructed,--the same growth befalls mythology: the legend is tossed from believer to poet, from poet to believer, everybody adding a grace or dropping a fault or rounding the form, until it gets an ideal truth.

Later in the essay, he extends the idea of the shared myth to a point that anticipates Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, writing that many fables "as they are found in every language, and betray no sign of being borrowed, are said to be agreeable to the human mind."

He goes on to detail more conventional, canonical, and modern religious literature, "the psalms and liturgies of churches," which develop via the same process, "a fagot of selections gathered through the ages, leaving the worse and saving the better, until it is at last the work of the whole communion of worshippers." Emerson compares the Bible to a Cremona violin – "it has been played upon by the devotion of thousands of years until every word and particle is public and tunable."

The act of making a text public through continual quoting and tuning again negates personal authorship. Translated texts play an important role in such deauthorizations:

> What divines had assumed as the distinctive revelations of Christianity, theologic criticism has matched by exact parallelisms from the Stoics and poets of Greece and Rome. Later, when Confucius and the Indian scriptures were made known, no claim to monopoly of ethical wisdom could be thought of.

The Bible becomes world literature, its very canonicity now derived not from its exclusivity but its universality. These revolutions in the ideas of both mythology and religious literature are specifically products of the nineteenth century discoveries in linguistics and literature:

> It is only within this century that England and America discovered that their nursery-tales were old German and Scandiinavian stories; and now it appears that they came from India, and are the property of all the nations descended from the Aryan race…

Just as his sermons used a short Biblical passage as a prompt to essay, Emerson's ideas on quotation anticipate or resemble some of Oscar Wilde's ideas in "The Critic as Artist." Wilde says that criticism should not be parasitical but creative and independent, having a relationship to the work being critiqued that resembles the relationship between the artist and the object. The quoter should be assimilative, and the composer is a skilled quoter, a critic. Emerson distinguishes Coleridge for his knowledge and his use of quotations, which are as valuable and "possibly more, than his original suggestions." Colerdige's use of the quotation *is* his genius. In an early lecture on Coleridge, Emerson

writes that Coleridge's "true merit undoubtedly is not that of a philosopher or of a poet but a critic." He was "a living dictionary," surveying through language the intellectual, moral, and social world of England.[28]

For Emerson, "next to the originator of a good sentence is the first quoter of it." This entails creative reading and marks a form of creative genius. Shakespeare, Voltaire, and Bacon are examples of such creative readers. Through extensive quotation, the source becomes indifferent. "The nobler the truth or sentiment, the less imports the question of authorship." The continual quest for anonymous authorship is a motion towards deauthorization. The author is representative; losing and subsuming his identity, he is a composer making a composite. The composite work loses a single author, and as it does so, it becomes a Bible. Emerson praises those works as "passing through long time, have had a multitude of authors and improvers. We admire that poetry which no man wrote,--no poet less than the genius of humanity itself."

Plutarch, for Emerson, represents best how an author becomes "de-authorized." Emerson wrote an introductory essay to William Goodwin's 1870 translation of *Morals.* Emerson begins the essay directly by noting that no biography exists of Plutarch, that we know "not even the dates of his birth and death," and that despite being the contemporary of many of the great Latin writers in the first century of the common era, Plutarch apparently didn't know Latin, and he never mentions nor is mentioned by any Roman writer. For Emerson, "the want of printing, of railroads, and telegraphs" fails to account for the dearth of correspondence. Emerson suggests that an environment of Goethean world literature, of literary and ideological correspondence and mutual interest, is not merely the result of technology and market economics, but of an idea that had not yet

emerged in Plutarch's time. In the second paragraph of the essay, Emerson proceeds to develop Plutarch as text, as we know him. His books were never known to the world in the language in which they were written, but were printed first in Latin in 1470, then in Italian, French, and English before being printed in Greek in 1572. If, as Goethe suggests, texts find their best readers outside of their own countries, Montaigne would prove to be "the best reader [Plutarch] has ever found," and Emerson's essay goes on to compare the inter-centenary and international relationship between these two essayists, concluding that such relationships exemplify an ideal of cosmopolitanism:

> It is one of the felicities of literary history, the tie which inseparably couples these two names across fourteen centuries…. These distant friendships charm us, and honor all the parties, and make the best example of the universal citizenship and fraternity of the human mind.

Emerson the essayist finds deep fraternity with both Plutarch and Montaigne. What Emerson writes of Plutarch has often been said of reading Emerson: "It is a consequence of this poetic trait in his mind, that I confess that, in reading him, I embrace the particulars, and carry a faint memory of the argument or general design of the chapter." Later in the essay, Emerson classifies Plutarch, with Montaigne, Hume, and Goethe as distinct from what might be considered more rigorous philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza and Kant. Of the former group, whom he calls men of the world, and with whom we are likely to group Emerson, he writes "Perhaps they sometimes compromise, go out to dine, make and take compliments; but they keep open the source and wisdom of health." Jorge Luis Borges considers Emerson's essay on Montaigne as exemplary of great criticism because "you feel…that his criticism comes from his

personal experience of him" as opposed to T.S. Eliot, where "you always think—at least I always feel—that he is agreeing with some professor or slightly disagreeing with another" (qtd Richardson 414). This deeply personal mode of criticism and reading is part of Goethe's notion of "World Literature" as a personal conversation.

It is interesting that Emerson begins the essay by emphasizing how little we know of the biography of Plutarch, but then his portrait of him and of his relationship to other writers becomes personally intimate. This ability for the writer to maintain personal intimacy, across linguistic, temporal, and spatial boundaries, is what makes him a cosmopolitan writer. Their aphoristic style, and further, their wide reading and method of quotation also distinguish them. Among the praises of Plutarch are that "he has preserved for us a multitude of precious sentences, in prose or verse, of authors whose books are lost; and these embalmed fragments, through his loving selection alone, have come to be proverbs of later mankind." Plutarch is, according to Emerson, "an eclectic in such sense as Montaigne was," and one of his chief accomplishments was in taking texts otherwise lost, quoting them, and making them live, a particularly relevant achievement to nineteenth-century scholars in context of great translation projects instigated by the discovery of ancient texts:

> At all events, it is in reading the fragments he has saved from lost authors that I have hailed another example of the sacred care which has unrolled in our times, and still searches and unrolls papyri from ruined libraries and buried cities, and has drawn attention to what an ancient might call the politeness of Fate,--we will say, more advisedly, the benign Providence which uses the violence of war, of earthquakes and changed water-courses, to save underground through barbarous

> ages the relics of ancient art, and thus allows us to witness the upturning of the alphabets of old races, the deciphering for forgotten languages, so to complete the annals of the forefathers of Asia, Africa and Europe.

Plutarch functions as "a repertory" and "a compend," and further, his writings bear translation well. When he is translated, his works work upon the English language a transformation. Emerson calls the American translation of *Morals* by William Goodwin "a monument of the English language at a period of singular vigor and freedom of style," and discussing the newly formed Commission of the Philological Society in London charged with preparing what would become the *Oxford English Dictionary,* he hopes that they will not overlook Goodwin's translations, "which show the wealth of their tongue to greater advantage than many books of more renown as models."

In the 1844 essay on "The Poet," Emerson had written, "the etymologist finds the deadest word to have once been a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry." Every word, once a poem, is continually quoted, until profane uses of the word kill it. Words can then come back into vogue through quotation, which is translation, or revivification. The process of literary revivification is translation. "The old forest is decomposed for the composition of the new forest," writes Emerson. The decay of language, of linguistic and literary forms, the decline of a writer's repute, is literally "decomposition," one in which quotes are decomposed and returned to a store of parts to be refashioned, recomposed into new compositions. Translation revivifies the decomposed elements, and such recovery can be religious in nature, as when a sermon revivifies Scripture through quotation.

Further, the translation upon translation approaches pure language, the aphorism or quotation that is shed of all local or temporal bounds, utterances that approach God's creative word. The revelation doesn't come from above or from outside the system, does not come from outside of literature. The revelation comes from uncovering, from the flashes that translation allows into the origins of language, from etymological studies. This experience of reading is the religious experience. Emerson, in considering world literature and quotation, compares the process to Swedenborg's theory that every soul exists in a society of souls, from which all thoughts pass into it, as blood from the mother passes into that of the fetus. Swedenborg imagines a time of alternating sleep and wakefulness: when asleep, he is surrounded by people disputing and offering opinions on one side and the other of a proposition. When he wakes, the people are gone, and the suggestions on both sides become his own thoughts. Emerson writes:

> And if we expand the image, does it not look as if we men were thinking and talking out of an enormous antiquity, as if we stood, not in a coterie of prompters that filled a sitting-room, but in a circle of intelligences that reached through all thinkers, poets, inventors, and wits, men and women, English, German, Celt, Aryan, Ninevite, Copt,--back to the first negro, who, with more health or better perception, gave a shriller sound or name for the thing he saw and dealt with?

Emerson considers the aptitude for quotation as collective memory, but the sublimation of the author does not sublimate the individual. The individual is the particular compiler in his present. For Emerson, "the profound apprehension of the Present is Genius," and the divine "resides in the new." This instantaneous divine, this present compiler, is the cosmopolitan prophet: "The divine gift is ever the instant life, which receives and uses

and creates, can well bury the old in the omnipotency with which Nature decomposes all her harvest for recomposition."

Goethe, who stands in Emerson's estimation as the representative modern writer, de-authorizes himself, and becomes a redactor. Emerson quotes Goethe: "Every one of my writings has been furnished to me by a thousand different persons, a thousand things: wise and foolish have brought me, without suspecting it, the offering of their thoughts, faculties, and experience. My work is an aggregation of beings taken from the whole of nature; it bears the name of Goethe." In the same way, names like Shakespeare, Plutarch, and Montaigne, like Luke, Mark, and Matthew, come to be the names we attach to compendiums of quotations.

Parnassus

One of Emerson's last major projects was a poetry anthology called *Parnassus* (1874). In *Parnassus*, Emerson as author disappears. The composition consists purely of his grouping and quoting. The volume was somewhat conventional, and it sold well. In the introduction, Emerson compares his volume to the anthologies of Robert Anderson and Alexander Chalmers, whose anthologies consisted of 14 and 21 volumes respectively. Emerson will not feign completion but will "author" a book containing none of his own writings. His selections are idiosyncratic: while leaving out himself, Poe, and Whitman, he includes his brother Edward, Jones Very, the Indian poet Kalidas, John Quincy Adams, and the young Wisconsin poet, Forceythe Willson.

His introduction describes the process, its origin in the collection of quotations with which he filled blank books.

> In many years, my selections filled the volume, and required another; and still the convenience of commanding all my favorites in one album, instead of searching my own and other libraries for a desired song or verse, and the belief that what charmed me probably might charm others, suggested the printing of my enlarged section. (*Emerson's Literary Criticism*, 144).

Walter Benjamin once wrote, "Quotations in my work are like wayside robbers who leap out armed and relieve the stroller of his conviction," a method that resembles that of Montaigne, or Emerson. Hannah Arendt writes of Benjamin as "a born writer, but his ambition was to produce a work consisting entirely of quotations." The unfinished *Arcades Project* approached such a project, and Emerson's *Parnassus* does, too. In *Parnassus,* the writer, the composer, the essayist, composes purely via others' work, and in so doing produces a Bible. The sections are arbitrary: Nature, Narratives, Ballads, Portraits, Songs, Dirges and Pathetic Poems, Comic and Satirical Verses, Oracles and Counsels, Poetry of Terror. There is no consistent standard of choice. Emerson denies even editorial authority: "The task of selection is easiest in poetry. What a signal convenience is fame! Do we read all authors to grope our way to the best? No; but the world selects for us the best, and we select from these our best" (*ELC* 145).

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[1] Ralph L. Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson.* (New York: Columbia, 1959), 152

[2] F.O. Mattheison, *The American Renaissaince: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (Oxford: Oxford U, 1968). See David S. Reynolds, *Beneath The American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1989), 16-24. Reynolds develops the literary ramifications of Emerson's relationship with Taylor.

[3] *The Works of William Ellery Channing* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1894), 273

[4] Lawrence Buell, "Unitarian Aesthetics and Emerson's Poet-Priest"…

[5] Susan Sontag, "On Being Translated," from *Where the Stress Falls* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001), 341-342.

[6] *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* ed. Albert J. von Frank, 4 vols. (Columbia: Univ. of MO Press, 1989-1992, 4:247; hereafter cited parenthetically as *CS*, with volume and page number.

[7] Packer, 98.

[8] Packer, 97.

[9] Benson Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution it Inspired* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2001).

[10] Victor Cousin, *Introduction to the History of Philosophy*, trans. HG Linberg (Boston, 1832). 70.

[11] Such translation "releases in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another." Between Cousin and Benjamin we find Romantic theorists of translation, whose work I will make use of in my discussion of Emerson's Shakespeare. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations.* Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1968, 80.

[12] *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Ralph L. Rusk, (New York: Columbia U Press, 1939. 6v.) 2:213; hereafter abbreviated as *L* with volume and page.

[13] Stanley Cavell points out that Emerson echoes this passage in "Self Reliance."

[14] Alexander Von Humboldt. *Cosmos: A Sketch of the Physical Description of the Universe.* 1848-1862. Trans EC Otte, 1858. Ed. Nichoaas A. Rupke, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1997) 7

[15] Sir William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones in Six Volumes.* Ed. Anna Maria Jones, (London: 1799).

[16] As Edward Said famously points out in *Orientalism,* the political context in which knowledge of the Orient was produced necessarily taints these texts. Steven Adisamito-Smith points out specific passages in the works of Jones that appear to be mistranslated for the purpose of promoting subjection to authority and deflation of the will. See Steven Adisamito-Smith, "The Self in Translation: British Orientalists, American Transcendentalists, and Sanskrit Scriptures in English," *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature.*Vol 47, 1999.

[17]Svami Chandrasekharendra posits the inarbitrary relationship between signifier and signified in Sanskrit, in a discourse about the Vedas, where he argues that learning the sound of the word is more important than understanding its meaning because in the Vedic language "Chandas," upon which Sanskrit is based, the very sound of the word completely denotes its true meaning. As an example, he uses the word "danta" meaning tooth. The d and the t are pronounced respectively as a soft and hard "th" sound. The tongue much touch the teeth. One physically invokes the tooth in order to produce the sound of the word. Whears, in derivatives of the word, such as the English "dental," one touches the tip of the tongue to the upper palate. "It is only in Sanskrit that the sound of the word itself signifies its meaning" (285).

[18] Edward Said writes of the new knowledge available about the East: "The difference between the representations of the Orient before the last third of the eighteenth century and those after it (that is, those belonging to what I call modern Orientalism) is that the range of representation expanded enormously in the later period. It is true that after William Jones and Anquetil-Duperron, and after Napoleon's Egyptian expedition, Europe came to know the Orient more scientifically, to live in it with greater authority and discipline than ever before… around the turn of the eighteenth century the Orient definitively relvealed the age of its languages—thus outdating Hebrew's divine pedigree—it was a group of Europeans who make the discovery, passed it on to other scholars, and presernved the discovery in the new science of Indo-European philology.

[19] Perry Miller, *The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1983).

[20] John McPhee, *Basin and Range* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982), 126.

[21] Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 5.

[22] Richard O'Keefe, *Mythic Archetypes in Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Blakean Reading* (Princeton: Kent Univ. Press, 1995), 6.

[23] See Perry Miller, *The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century.*

[24] David Damrosch. *What is World Literature* (Princeton: Princeton, 2003).

[25] Richard O'Keefe, *Mythic Archetypes in Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Blakean Reading* (Princeton: Kent Univ. Press, 1995), 16.

[26] Colleen Glenney Boggs, "Margaret Fuller's American Translation," *American Literature* 67:1 (2004), 31-58.

[27] Andrews Norton, "The New School in Literature and Religion" in *The Transcendentalists: A Classic Anthology*, ed. Perry Miller 1950 (New York: MJF Books, 1978), 194.

[28] "Modern Aspects of Letters," from *EL* 1:377-80

Chapter 4
John Brown and Arjuna:
Translating the *Bhagavad Gita* in a Time of War

In an 1854 journal entry, Ralph Waldo Emerson begins to cite India's Governor General. He writes, "Warren Hastings, in his Preface to the Translation of the Bhagvat, says."[1] Emerson leaves the rest of the page blank, and on the next page, he composes an original meditation on the individual's involvement with war:

> Heaven takes care to show us that war is a part of our education, as much as milk, or love, & is not to be escaped. We affect to put it all back in history, as the Trojan War, the War of the Roses, the Revolutionary War. Not so; it is *Your* war. Has that been declared? has that been fought out? & where did the Victory perch? The wars of other people & of history growl at a distance, but your war comes near, looks into your eyes, in Politics, in professional pursuit, in choices in the street, in daily habit, in all the questions of the times, in the keeping or surrendering the controul of your day, & your house, & your opinion, in the terrors of the night, in the frauds & skepticism of the day, the American independence! that is a legend. *Your independence*! that is the question of all the Present. Have you fought out that? & settled it once & again, & once for all in the minds of all persons with whom you have to do, that you & your sense of right & fit & fair, are an invincible, indestructible somewhat, which is not to be bought or cajoled or frighted away? That done, & victory inscribed on your eyes & brow & voice, the other American Freedom begins instantly to have some meaning & support. (*JMN* 13:344)

In this passage, which was written in the year of the Kansas-Nebraska Act's passage and Emerson's "Fugitive Slave Law" speech in New York, Emerson condenses the mythic and historic, the global and personal, and in so doing, approaches the essential martial question of the *Bhagavad Gita.* He begins by alluding to the significance of "past" wars. The Trojan War is a legendary war, "a fiction," as Shakespeare's Hamlet calls it when he notes how the player king, from "a dream of passion…could force his soul so to his own conceit" that he comes to tears on account of Hecuba.[2] In this manner of acting, the war becomes "*Your* war." And while the Revolutionary War would seem to be of a more proximate relevance, an occurrence of which Emerson and his readers walk the fields and know the veterans, this celebrated "independence" is merely "a legend," Emerson writes. As with the Trojan War, so with the Revolutionary War, it must be personally and continually enacted to be meaningful.

In this space—between the aborted citation of Hastings' 1785 preface to Charles Wilkins' translation of the *Gita* and Emerson's own composition—lies a translation of Arjuna's dilemma to the personal, professional, and political concerns of Emerson in 1854. Arjuna's dilemma, in the *Gita*, reduces to a personal and yet universally human conflict embedded in the context of the specific imminent fratricidal war at Kurukshetra. How might Emerson be responding to the resonance of this conflict in his own work in 1854, embedding his own universal philosophical system in the midst of an incumbent civil war?

I propose that a reading of the *Bhagavad Gita* can help elucidate Emerson's growing support for armed confrontation with the slave power, and his approach to vocation and duty in his anti-slavery writings, poetry, and published essays, in the years

between 1854 and 1867. Such a martial reading of the *Gita* can provide further insight into Emerson's somewhat extraordinary support for John Brown, whom he describes as a "pure idealist" who "saw how deceptive forms are," and "use[d] [his] eyes to see the fact behind the forms,"[3] much as Arjuna, having seen Krishna behind his placid form, becomes fixed in his resolve, free from doubt, and sure in action.[4] This is not to say that John Brown and Arjuna are purely analogous, or that Emerson sees them as such. Brown lacks Arjuna's despondency and hesitation, which precipitates Krishna's teaching in the *Gita*. Brown's faith in God was so complete that he did not waver, knew what he had to do, and felt little or no guilt. However, both Arjuna and John Brown share a particular relationship with their God that finally enables them to act out of their idealism, and this faith dispels their guilt in a particular way that impresses Emerson. Of Krishna's arguments convincing Arjuna to fight, Henry David Thoreau, in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack,* writes, "No sufficient reason is given why Arjoon should fight. Arjoon may be convinced, but the reader is not."[5] However, the reader is convinced that Arjuna is convinced. What differentiates Arjuna from the reader is what differentiates John Brown from the reader, from the spectator, from Thoreau and Emerson: a particular assurance derived from God that makes them pure actors.

David S. Reynolds, in his cultural biography, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights,* convincingly argues that government malfeasance of the 1850s, anarchistic individualism, and a turnaround in cultural attitudes towards Oliver Cromwell serve as primary explanations for Emerson and Thoreau's respective turns from a dismissal of reform movements and passive resistance, to a promotion of the nation's most violent Abolitionist.[6] My contribution

doesn't seek to negate these arguments, but seeks further to illuminate and reconcile the anti-slavery writings and the transcendental writings through an examination of literary correspondences between these writings and the *Bhagavad Gita.*

A look at Emerson's writings will show that both soldiers work in Emerson's imagination at the same time, evidenced by the overlap in language used while dealing with both Emerson's antislavery activities, which culminate in his support for John Brown, and in his philosophical writings on vocation, written in conversation with the *Gita*. Such a consideration of the *Gita* is useful in understanding how Emerson progresses from his persistence in "wearing this robe, all loose, and unbecoming as it is, of inaction" (*ASW* xxi) in 1839, to declaring, in 1856, that "it is impossible for the most recluse to extricate himself from the questions of the times" (*ASW* 111). It is Emerson whose struggle most closely resembles Arjuna's, but it is John Brown's example in the late 1850s that serves as representative of the idealist in action. I find value in considering John Brown and Arjuna together, when I consider the opening of Emerson's "Fate": "the question of the times resolved itself into a practical question of the conduct of life" (*CW* 1:86).

Emerson's 1860 book of essays, *The Conduct of Life*, is not only a book about conducting one's own life. The book itself acts as "a conduct," a conveyance of life, in the manner of what he expected from a "true preacher" in the Divinity School Address of 1838: "he deals out to the people his life—life passed through the fire of thought" (*CW* 1:86). Furthermore, the book acts as an assumption of leadership, in the sense of conducting. The question of the times resolves itself into a practical question of social leadership for Emerson, even as he maintains his secular and scholarly ministry. It is

remarkable and interesting that in the 1850s, as Emerson restricted his travels to the United States and became more deeply engaged in the domestic politics of his age, the transnational and cosmopolitan element of his reading and writing matured. I seek, with this final chapter, to contribute to a body of scholarship examining Emerson's political and literary notions of the national and the trans-national, and to provide an example of Emerson's literary cosmopolitanism.

In July 2006, the Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe Societies held a joint conference on *Transatlanticism in American Literature* at the Rothermere American Institute in Oxford. In her plenary speech, "Literary Friendship and Lateral Thinking," Susan Manning called for new ways of looking at literary history and correspondence, arguing that "influence implies a dominant prior relationship" that may not usefully describe the ways in which texts work together across spatial and temporal bounds.[7] Indeed, while studies involving Emerson's reading of Greek, German, Latin, and Asian texts have abounded since Andrews Norton's criticism of "the strong infusion of German barbarisms" in Emerson's Divinity School Address,[8] I seek to provide a reading of Emerson and the translation of the *Gita* outside the aegis of influence, a correspondence that is fruitful in our readings of both Emerson and the *Gita.* Such a reading helps us reconcile the political and expository strains of Emerson's writing[9] and helps us see the *Gita* manifested in the life and society of its reader in the United States. In reading Emerson reading Wilkins' *Gita,* I want to consider a specific way in which Emerson can "belong" and make texts "belong" to new contexts. Wai Chee Dimock's consideration of literature in "planetary time" is useful in this effort to recognize both the temporal and the spatial allowance necessary for full readings of Emerson and his books:

> Words are not pointlike. They spread out, spill over into unexpected historical periods, unexpectable human communities: the bidirectional flow of time is such as to fill any given text with recesses of antecedence and stretches of afterlife. These recursive and projective horizons will never gel with the chronology and territory of a single jurisdiction.[10]

Emerson himself considered the ways in which translation transcends national and temporal boundaries in a journal passage regarding Plato and the *Bhagavad Gita*:

> Plato is no Athenian. An Englishman says how English! A German, how Teutonic! An Italian, how Roman & how Greek! It transcends sectional lines, the great humane Plato…. A trans-national book again is the Bhagvat Geeta. (*JMN* 9:248)

For Emerson, the "trans-national" is not so much devoid of nationality as it is adaptable and multinational, existing as part of different national discourses and literatures at different times. Let us then try to consider the spatially and temporally translated *Bhagavad Gita* as an American text in the 19th century, and not merely the exotic ornament some earlier critics have sought to portray it as.

This will not be the first paper to study Emerson and the *Bhagavad Gita* in conjunction, though it is the first to coordinate readings of the *Gita* and Emerson's social activism.[11] Indian critics began to comment on Emerson's affinity to Hindu texts in the nineteenth century,[12] and in the early 1930s, two American critics wrote full-length book studies that continue to hold critical weight today.[13] I want to reconsider the extensive and useful but deeply flawed criticism by Frederic Ives Carpenter and Arthur Christy, respecting Emerson's relationship to "Asia" and "the Orient." As I am interested in

Emerson's concern with questions of national integrity, both as he read and as he wrote, especially in the 1850s, it seems necessary to read Carpenter and Christy in the context of post-World War I discourse in America regarding an anxiety over Indian national character. How did scholarly work by Carpenter and Christy both challenge and reinforce American notions of India? I argue that their studies assume or accept the impossibility of Indian national self-determination, and that they seek and find in Indian texts a confirmation of what they take to be the Indian character: essentially passive, inactive, impractical, and unworldly. Such a reading limits their critical appreciation of the ways in which Emerson, an eclectic and creative reader, could use a text such as the *Bhagavad Gita.*

This study is largely an exercise in contextualization. In reading Emerson reading Charles Wilkins' translation of the *Gita,* I see three different levels of contextualization coinciding meaningfully: (1) the *Gita* in the context of the *Mahabharata*; (2) Charles Wilkins' 1785 English translation of the *Gita* in the context of British imperialism in India; and (3) the 1854 context in which Emerson reads Wilkins' translation in the wake of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Within this last context of Emerson's reading, I will contextualize American critics reading Emerson reading the *Gita* in the 1920s and 30s. These critics, reflecting their era, wrongly associated Emerson's Asian reading solely with passivity and inaction, while a reconsideration of the *Gita* (especially its figure of Arjuna) suggests Emerson's responsiveness to a far more militant strain, paralleling his turn from nonviolence and his embrace of John Brown.

First, there is the context of the *Gita* in the larger epic, the *Mahabharata.* Arjuna, the most celebrated of five exiled princes cheated out of their kingdom, lines up in battle

against his cousins, teachers, uncle, granduncle, and countless warriors. Upon recognition of the impending carnage, he is reluctant to fight for the retrieval of the kingdom because he finds that the costs of such a war outweigh the benefit of such possession. Krishna, Arjuna's charioteer and counsel, a god and a king in his own right, convinces Arjuna that he must give up what Emerson might recognize as skepticism, the misguided desire for inaction, and he must perform his duty as a warrior, without self-interest, in order to free himself from the natural shocks of worldly bondage.[14]

Second, there is the context of the 1785 translation of the *Gita* by Charles Wilkins. Emerson, of course, did not know Sanskrit, but he was especially receptive to translation. He found value in a text's translatability, and he was interested in the varieties and circumstances of translation. This regard for and acceptance of translations differentiates him from Thoreau, who always sought to read texts in their original language. Emerson never insists on "original" texts, and his extraordinary championing of somewhat obscure translators such as Thomas Taylor and JJ Garth Wilkinson exemplifies the regard he holds for translation as a creative literary art.[15] Emerson recognized Sanskrit translations as English products, evidence of a Saxon cosmopolitanism that allowed that race to flourish on every continent in the nineteenth century. The editors of the *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* note that in the years between 1851 and 1854, as Emerson was composing *English Traits,* India "was no longer of interest to Emerson as a wellspring of oriental wisdom…but as the greatest land which Anglo Saxon genius had brought under its sway" (*JMN* 13:xiii). The preface to the *Gita* from which Emerson began to quote, with which I opened this essay, is a letter by

Warren Hastings to the chairman of the East India Company. It explains the motives for the *Gita*'s publication, a combination of literary appreciation and political tact:

> Every accumulation of knowledge, and especially such as is obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise a dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the state: it is the gain of humanity: in the specific instance which I have stated, it attracts and conciliates distant affections; it lessens the weight of the chain by which the natives are held in subjection; and it imprints on the hearts of our own countrymen the sense and obligation of benevolence.[16] (Wilkins 14)

Emerson recognized and obliquely commented on the colonial situation's impression on Sanskritists' work in India. In an 1873 letter to Max Muller, after Emerson details the history of his own exposure to translated texts of India, he distinguishes Muller's work for praise:

> I think it the best result of your possession of India, & a counterbalance of much bad politics & sad history there. In my limited experience you are the first writer who has treated Eastern matters with vivacity, which results from writing in England, & not in India, & I shall await with interest your future results.[17]

Emerson recognized British Orientalism as a product of British wealth and imperialism, once writing of Charles Wilkins simply, "Wilkins bought the Bhagavat" (*JMN* 12:594). In recognizing the political permutations the text undergoes, Emerson recognizes his *Gita* as being an English product of the late eighteenth century, further translated through importation to America in the nineteenth century.

Finally, there is the context of Emerson reading the *Gita* in Concord in 1854. In 1854, Emerson delivers his most forceful statement on American slavery, his New York speech denouncing the Fugitive Slave Law, strengthened by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. In the same year, Emerson also composed his essay on "Fate," later published in the 1860 volume *The Conduct of Life*. In "Fate," Emerson early seems to equate Hinduism with fatalism, and prior criticism of Emerson and Sanskrit texts has subsequently almost completely neglected to investigate how such reading may have affected his thinking and writing on questions of social action. I am arguing that in the afterlife of translation, the *Gita* speaks to a populace hesitant to engage in civil war, just as Emerson's poem, "Brahma," written in 1856 as he actively solicited funds to support paramilitary action in Kansas, can be found in the 1867 volume, *May Day and Other Pieces,* heading a section of poems celebrating the Civil War, emancipation, and the various forms of peace resulting from war and the transcendence of death.

Critical attention to Emerson's relationship with India has been limited to questions of Hindu influence on the "transcendental" aspects of Emerson's writings, the incorporation of overtly Hindu themes and terms into his writings. Two book-length studies by Arthur Christy and Frederic Ives Carpenter continue to hold scholars' regard as definitive studies. I find it significant that both studies were composed and written in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a time when the American discourse surrounding India was in a tumultous stage. It has become impossible to consider Emerson and India without considering Carpenter and Christy. I suggest that their studies, while important and valuable, show their limitations upon a historicist reading.

The work of literary critics can no more be divorced from its historical context than can the work of literary "figures." What were the critical and historic circumstances in which two professors from Harvard and Columbia devoted book-length studies to Emerson's relationship with Indian texts within two years of each other? It is useful to consider American attitudes towards India at the time in order to get a sense of the discourse within which these critics were working, and in so doing, it is not arbitrary to follow some of the literary and historic developments that accompanied Rabindranath Tagore's five visits to the United States in order to evaluate the context within which Carpenter and Christy worked.

Rabindranath Tagore had already visited the United States three times by the time he arrived in Los Angeles in 1929 with invitations to speak at Carpenter's and Christy's universities. Upon disembarking, he found "something in the air—a cultivated air of suspicion and general incivility towards Asiatics," so he boarded the next freighter, and sailed back to India, canceling his lectures at Harvard and Columbia.[18] In an earlier 1917 visit, he toured extensively, delivering his lectures on "Nationalism" to mostly welcoming audiences. In April of that year, the United States entered the First World War, and reviews of Tagore's lectures reflected changing attitudes towards India and its growing vocal protests against a U.S. ally. Where earlier, reporters saw "fire in this dreamy-eyed Oriental" and viewed him in the tradition of Swami Vivekananda and other Indian lecturers who had preceded Tagore,[19]a *Minneapolis Journal* reporter's comments represented a more critical approach: "Nationalism is today the greatest actual force in the world… We in America… are compelled to cultivate an intense nationalism. Woe to us if we do not… India has no nationalism and she is conquered."[20] As Tagore was

lecturing, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1917, which was primarily used to exclude Asian Indians based on a geographic criterion because of their unclear racial and ethnic status under earlier Asian exclusion acts. By the time Tagore came to visit the United States in 1920 and 1921 in order to raise money for his university at Santiniketan, he was decidedly less popular, and his trip was a failure.

We can glean some sense of the growing attitude towards India by looking at Susan Glaspell's 1921 play, *Inheritors.* Glaspell is best known for her oft-anthologized play, *Trifles,* and for being a founding member of the Provincetown Players. *Inheritors* is about a Midwestern "college in the cornfields" founded by a Civil War veteran in 1870. In the second and third acts, much of the drama involves a pair of off-stage "Hindu" students agitating for the release of one of their countrymen and for a free India. The majority of the students protest the Hindu students' presence, as does a visiting state senator. Decisive action against the Indians is necessary to secure state funding. In one exchange, the university president (Fejevary), the state senator, and the university president's son (Horace) discuss the Indians. Horace is upset that the Hindu students have quoted Abraham Lincoln to justify their right to revolution:

FEJEVARY: Hindus aren't dagoes you know, Horace.

HORACE: Well, what's the difference? This foreign element gets my goat.

SENATOR: My boy, you talk like an American. But what do you mean—Hindus?

FEJEVARY: There are two young Hindus here as students. And they're good students.

HORACE: Sissies.

FEJEVARY: But they preach the gospel of a free India—non British India.

SENATOR: Oh, that won't do.

HORACE: They're nothing but Reds, I'll say. Well, one of em's going back to get his (*grins)*

FEJEVARY: There were three of them last year. One of them is wanted back home.

SENATOR: I remember now. He's to be deported.

HORACE: And when they get him—(*movement as of pulling a rope*) They hang there.

FEJEVARY: The other two protest against our not fighting the deportation of their comrade. They insist it means death to him. (*brushing off a thing that is inclined to worry him*) But we can't handle India's affairs.

SENATOR: I should think not!

HORACE: Why, England's our ally! That's what I told them. But you can't argue with people like that. Just wait till I find the speeches of Abraham Lincoln![21]

The play illustrates sentiments regarding India in the United States that would prove consequential.[22] In 1923, the Supreme Court upheld a decision against Bhagat Singh Thind, in which Thind tried to argue that Indians, as Caucasians, were eligible for citizenship.[23] Approximately 40 of the 70-100 Indians that had been naturalized between 1907 and 1923 lost their citizenship. When Sen. Royal Copeland introduced the Hindu Citizenship Bill in 1927 in order to restore citizenship to Hindus, the author Katherine Mayo, who believed in a strong Anglo-US imperial alliance that would jointly keep at bay demands of various natives, went to work on her seminal bestseller, *Mother India* (1928).[24]

Mayo's sensationalist book, which opens with a scene of Hindu women lapping the blood of a sacrificed goat off the temple pavement in the hopes of conceiving a child, argues that the Indian male's sexual incontinence renders the Indians incapable of self-government.[25] In arguing that cultural and religious causes account for India's backwardness, she is able to counter claims of Indian moral superiority, and she exempts colonialism from responsibility for India's state. In 1928, *Mother India* was the second-best-selling nonfiction title in the United States.[26] Widely translated, it was also widely

reviled, with at least 50 books and pamphlets written in response. Nevertheless, as Mrinalini Sinha writes:

> The book continued to have an enormous influence in shaping perceptions about India and Indian women, especially in Mayo's home country. A survey of some 350 adults in the United States in the 1950s revealed that *Mother India* was second only to the works of Rudyard Kiping as the most popular source of information in the United States on India.[27]

While literary critics like Frederic Ives Carpenter and Arthur Christy did not endorse Mayo's views, it becomes apparent that Mayo's book to a certain extent shaped the discourse of India and things Indian, even among her rhetorical opponents. In 1930, the Columbia-trained popular philosopher Will Durant published *The Case for India.* Durant, popular for his *Story of Philosophy* and *Story of Civilization* series, wrote *A Case for India* at least partly in response to *Mother India,* "what may be long remembered as the unfairest book ever written."[28] But where Mayo's sensationalism serves to illustrate the irreconcilable racial divide between whites and Indians by highlighting the Indians' savagery, Durant's defense is equally troubling. He begins his case by asking us to remember "that in the northern and more important half of India the people are predominantly of the same race as the Greeks, the Romans, and ourselves—i.e., 'Indo-Europeans' or 'Aryans'; that though their skins have been browned by the tireless sun, their features resemble ours."[29]And yet Durant will also, in his *Case for India* as well as his sections on India in *The Story of Civilization*, continue to consider India as essentially and definitively "not a nation."[30] In his introduction to Gandhi, he writes, "Picture the

ugliest, slightest, weakest man in Asia…"[31] He goes on to praise Gandhi, while keeping India as starkly separated from American relevance as he can.

Frederic Ives Carpenter and Arthur Christy maintain a myopic view of India that prohibits them from seeing an India engaged intellectually or practically with the real world and a national struggle. Carpenter's 1930 book, *Emerson and Asia,* is valuable for its culling of Asian references throughout Emerson's *Journals*, with a helpful chronological appendix listing "all the Oriental titles appearing in Emerson's annual reading lists."[32] When describing Emerson's early encounters with India, through articles in the *Edinburgh Review* highlighting the "absurdity," "cruelty" and "sensuality" of India, Carpenter alludes to Mayo, writing, "Even in those days the 'Mother India' phase of the Orient was emphasized!"[33] Carpenter distances himself from Mayo, but, like Durant, maintains an essentialist view of India. Carpenter writes that "Asia," for Emerson, represents a vague set of generalizations connected to mysticism, religion, and the unknown.[34] And yet Carpenter, himself, seems to make the same generalizations. He writes of Emerson:

> Emerson's criticism as well as his facination for the Orient may perhaps be explained by the feminine analogy. Asia, as it embodied the feminine principle, was passive. It was a stay-at-home country. It devoted itself to social education to the exclusion of practical training for the world's affairs. The Orientals behaved well, because they had nothing else to do.[35]

In this passage, Carpenter is trying to paraphrase and summarize Emerson, but perhaps he more cogently betrays his own sentiments. He fails to consider the role Emerson's reading might have had in the question of right action. He writes:

> Further, although Oriental literature has little to do with temporal concerns, Emerson himself was a modern American, born in 1803, whose mind developed strikingly during the course of the nineteenth century. His interest in Asia increased gradually during that century, and the story of this interest is invaluable to an understanding of Emerson's relations with Asia.[36]

By assuming Oriental literature's innate remoteness from "temporal concerns," Carpenter never addresses the fact that, as he himself states, Emerson's interest in Asia increases he becomes more involved with the temporal concerns of his time.

Arthur Christy's 1932 book *The Orient in American Transcendentalism* has also remained a prominent secondary source for Emerson scholars interested in Emerson's use of Indian literature. With a fifty-page annotated bibliography of books and marginalia tabulating the Oriental reading of Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott, based on diaries, biographies, library records, and biographical information, the scholarship remains useful. And yet Christy also begins his undertaking with a limited scope tinged by common Orientalist assumptions:

> The Concord approach was not that of the theologian, metaphysician or specialist in comparative religions. It was the approach of the poet and mystic. Our interest, therefore, will largely be in the literary and mystical results of the Oriental influences in the Transcendentalism which flowered in Concord.[37]

When Christy begins his survey of Indian literature, he writes, "The religious aspect stands in the foreground, for the Indian mind is essentially of this temper."[38]

In an interesting passage, Arthur Christy describes the eclectic philosophy of Victor Cousin, whose sketches provided Emerson with his first exposure to the *Bhagavad Gita*. Christy writes:

> It might even be said that eclecticism is the method of cosmopolitanism. It is best suited to men who wish to range the whole gamut of history and human thought, accepting the congenial and rejecting that unsuited to their ends. The composite Orientalism of Concord was itself a result of an eclectic synthesis.[39]

And yet Christy describes the Transcendentalists as taking, discretely, Confucius for practicality, Sufism for ecstatic poetry, and Hinduism for idealism. I would argue that a cosmopolitan reading, or eclectic reading, need not limit the usefulness of certain books to designated purposes. Cosmopolitan reading can be selective, strategic, and allow for a coexistence of texts across spatial and temporal boundaries.

Most scholars studying Emerson's approach to India have uncritically accepted the premises and often the conclusions of Christy and Carpenter. Arthur Versluis, in his 1992 book *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* expands his study to include non-canonical American writers' approach to Asian literatures, and also considers a reading of American appropriation as intellectual colonization:

> Just as Western colonizers would send back physical artifacts from distant lands, artifacts thereby divorced from the cultures to which they belonged, so too the Transcendentalist intellectual colonizers sought to take from the world religions what suited them, be it moral injunctions, admonitions to self-transcendence, myths that were taken to support Christian doctrines, or imagined manifestations of a coming universal religion. Divorced from specific cultures and religions,

> however, these intellectual artifacts—religious texts—were no longer religiously meaningful.[40]

The criticism is valid, but I would argue that this kind of quoting out of context, in the case of Emerson's use of the *Gita* in the 1850s, enlivens a translated literature and makes it pertinent and dreadfully meaningful. Versluis denies meaning and relevance to such a mined text, or at least devalues such meaning, while I find such recontextualized readings to be useful and meaningful insofar as they seem to do real work.

One of the most famous readings of the *Gita* is that of Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi, like Emerson, first read the *Gita* in English. Gandhi read Sir Edwin Arnold's 1888-89 verse translation, *Song Celestial,* and then studied a Gujurati translation in prison, publishing his own translation, with commentary, in 1930. Gandhi's qualifications as a translator were notably not linguistic. He admits to a very rudimentary knowledge of Sanskrit and a non-scholarly knowledge of Gujurati. His authority as translator is based upon making the *Gita* active in his life. Gandhi writes in his preface:

> [Other translations] have their own place. But I am not aware of the claim made by the translators of enforcing their meaning of the Gita in their own lives. At the back of my reading there is the claim of an endeavour to enforce the meaning of my own conduct for an unbroken period of forty years.[41]

I find Gandhi's claim relevant to Emerson's literary ideas in the 1850s. In the opening of his essay, "Fate," Emerson writes, "The question of the times resolved itself into a practical question of the conduct of life. How shall I live?" (*CW* 6:1) For Gandhi, translation is not a mere linguistic mechanism that rephrases the works of other languages, but a practical revival of literature as action. For Emerson, literary questions

in the 1850s become increasingly bound to direct action, and Emerson comes to evaluate the meanings and usages of words and texts not upon a basis of etymology or use-history, but upon the relationship between those words and the actions they represent.

Gandhi defends his translation as a means of explaining how the *Gita* can be read as promoting nonviolence, despite the superficial message of Krishna to Arjuna. Gandhi explains that the *Gita* was not a historical work, but "under the guise of physical warfare, it described the duel that perpetually went on in the hearts of mankind."[42] This internal war as represented by the *Gita* is what Emerson describes in the 1854 journal entry with which I began this chapter. Both understand the *Gita,* and Emerson understands all war narratives, as being universally instructive and descriptive of the internal human experience.

And yet both Emerson and Gandhi were involved in extraordinary and specific external struggles. Gandhi writes, "Let it be granted, that according to the letter of the Gita it is possible to say that warfare is consistent with the renunciation of fruit,"[43] but Gandhi's own experience convinces him that such renunciation is impossible without nonviolence. Gandhi's reading was temporally bound to his experience and his revolutionary strategy. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a contemporary of Gandhi's and an apologist for violent resistance, differed in his commentary on the *Gita.* Written while imprisoned in Mandalay in 1910 for sedition, Tilak writes of his *Gita Rahasya,* "I differ from almost all the commentators when I say that the *Gita* enjoins Action even after the perfection in Jnana and Bhakti is attained and the Deity is reached through these mediums" (xxv-xxvi). Tilak further emphasizes that no absolute laws exist respecting such precepts as *ahimsa* (doing no harm), or even truth-telling, as he writes:

> If everyone becomes harmless, how is warriorship to continue? And when once warriorship has come to an end, subject-people will have no protectors and anybody will be in a position to destroy anybody else. In short, the ordinary rules of morality are not always sufficient, and even the most principle maxim of Ethics, namely that of Harmlessness, does not escape the necessity of discrimination between the duty and the non-duty.[44]

Gandhi's insistence upon non-violence, both in his political practice and in his reading of the *Gita,* did not prevent him from writing of Tilak's commentary: "I believe his commentary on the Gita will be a more lasting monument to his memory. It will survive even the successful termination of the struggle for Swarajya.[45]

When Henry David Thoreau refused to pay his tax and spent a night in jail in 1846, believing he might withdraw his participation from "the *slave*'s government," he suggested that such was "the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible."[46] Such was not possible. War was unavoidable because slavery was already war, and by 1860, John Brown had clarified this to the continent, and had shown that proper action demanded violence. The *Gita,* in 1860 America, was a completely different text than it was for Gandhi and for the American critics in 1930. For Emerson, the text serves to buttress support for violent revolution in the face of failed hopes of spiritual melioration. In his essay, "Aversive Thinking: Emersonian Representations in Heidegger and Nietzsche," Stanley Cavell demonstrates how "neither science nor religion nor morality has overcome [skepticism]. On the contrary, they as much as anything can cause skepticism, the withdrawal of the world."[47] For Emerson, it was political

engagement, a way of making his work as a writer into clear partisan action that led him to overcome skepticism.

Emerson revises his notion of the meditative scholar, much as the *Gita* revised the notion of the sannyasee. We can read the essays, "Worship," "Fate," and the 1854 "Fugitive Slave Law" speech in New York in conjunction with the *Gita* to see how Emerson's notion of work and duty, in their religious, philosophical, and political aspects, correspond to the disinterested action advocated by the *Gita.*

In his essay on "Worship," Emerson describes the inability of formal religion to overcome the devastating skepticism of a just thinker. He had come to identify skepticism as a "distrust in human virtue," and wrote in his journal, "I find no more flagrant proof of skepticism than the toleration of slavery" (*JMN* 14:129). "Worship" seeks to replace conventional prayer with disinterested work. By making work replace prayer as proper worship, Emerson is involved in the life-long project of fastening his words to things. "To make our word or act sublime, we must make it real," he writes. "Use what language you will, you can never say anything but what you are" (*CW* 6:120). Later in the essay, he writes:

> Where is the service which can escape its remuneration? What is vulgar, and the essence of all vulgarity, but the avarice of reward?[....] The man whose eyes are nailed not on the nature of his act, but on the wages, whether it be money, or office, or fame,--is almost equally low. He is great, whose eyes are opened to see that the reward of actions cannot be escaped, because he is transformed into his action, and taketh its nature, which bears its own fruit, like every other tree. (*CW* 6:123)

These passages echo Charles Wilkins' *Geeta.* Krishna says:

> Let the motive be in the deed, and not in the event. Be not one whose motive for action is the hope of reward. Let not thy life be spent in inaction. Depend upon application, perform thy duty, abandon all thought of consequence, and make the event equal, whether it terminate in good or evil. (Wilkins 40)

As far back as 1845, soon after the inauguration of his own antislavery activism Emerson considered the meaning of worship in its socially active aspect, and there his thoughts also corresponded with the *Gita:*

> Worship is the height of rectitude. "The world is no place for the man who doth not worship, & where, o Arjoon! Is there another?" [The Bhagvat Geeta…,1785,p.55] Worship, because the sailor & the ship & the sea are of one stuff; worship because though the bases of things are divided yet the summits are united, because not by thy private but by thy public or universal force canst thou share & so know the nature of things. (*JMN* 9:232)

Towards the end of "Worship," Emerson takes up the notion of immortality and religion. "The only path of escape known in all the worlds of God is performance. You must do your work, before you shall be released" (*CW* 6:127). Again, the resemblance to Wilkins' *Geeta* is clear. Krishna says, "Those who do not abandon works obtain a final release; not those who withdraw from action, and are denominated *Sannyasees"* (Wilkins 125-126)

There is nothing new in Emerson talking about "doing one's work." What is new in this period of Emerson's career is the kind of work that Emerson is doing when he becomes actively engaged in the antislavery movement in the 1850s. Cavell has shown

that when Emerson wrote the essay "Fate," which he calls "Emerson's principal statement about the human condition of freedom," he was clearly thinking about American slavery.[48] And in "Fate," as in "Worship," Emerson sees freedom residing in the performance of action without regard for fruit. He writes, "Once we were stepping a little this way, and a little that way; now, we are as men in a balloon, and do not think so much of the point we have left, or the point we would make, as of the liberty and glory of the way" (*CW* 6:14-25). For Emerson, his writing performs militant work that enables freedom. He writes, "A text of heroism, a name and anecdote of courage, are not arguments, but sallies of freedom" (*CW* 6:16). Emerson takes joy in what he sees as compulsory action that he once grudged as taking him away from what he saw as his true work. "We are sure, that, though we know not how, necessity does comport with liberty, the individual with the world, my polarity with the spirit of the times" (*CW* 6:2). It is this sense of liberated compulsion that marks Emerson's antislavery writings.

John Brown would illustrate in action what Emerson was developing in his theory. Emerson and Thoreau, and few others, championed Brown more than even the fiercest public Abolitionists of the late 1850s. Emerson, in particular, was at the height of his reputation. According to *Atlantic Monthly* in 1860, he was "the most singularly attractive lecturer in America….Mr. Emerson always draws."[49] His summation of Brown's impending martyrdom, according to David S. Reynolds, marks "the day when the roiling attitudes toward Brown separated into two main streams, one leading toward a primarily negative view of him and the other toward a primarily positive one."[50] Emerson, in his remarks on John Brown, summarized Brown as an avatar of Christ and Cromwell, "who, if he shall suffer, will make the gallows glorious like the cross" (*JMN*

14:333). Emerson had met Brown in 1857 when Brown visited Concord with Franklin Sanborn to raise funds. Emerson had him in his home for the night, and in his journals praised Brown's eloquent defense of violence. The image that Emerson began to build of Brown was of the transcendental hero, "so transparent that all men see him through… a pure idealist, with no by-ends of his own" (*JMN* 14:125-126). We might better understand Emerson's ability to let Brown's bloody deeds fall off him (Emerson had clearly read credible accounts of Brown's deeds at Pottawatomie) by recognizing the ways in which Krishna denies personal guilty agency to Arjuna as Arjuna embarks on his battle. It isn't that Emerson sees John Brown as Arjuna. If anything, it is Emerson who is in the role of Arjuna prior to the battle at Kurkshetra. But where John Brown acts as an inspiration and an impetus towards action, Arjuna and the *Gita* help Emerson have confidence in his particular action as useful, and to accept Brown's actions as righteous, despite their apparent distastefulness.

Throughout a number of his overtly activist writings and speeches, Emerson assumes the pose of the reluctant prophet, claiming that he is unwilling or unable to speak on such matters but is compelled to do so. In his 1844 address on Emancipation in the British West Indies, he protests that he comes from a different field of studies and has no intellectual or experiential authority on the matter, but declares, "I shall not apologize for my weakness" and he proceeds to speak. In his antislavery remarks at Worcester in 1849, he laments his "miserable state of health" and lack of power to express himself. In his March 7, 1854 "Fugitive Slave Law" address, he begins by writing: "I do not often speak to public questions. They are odious and hurtful and it seems like meddling or leaving your work." And in an 1855 lecture on slavery, he writes, "I have not found in

myself the right qualifications to serve this any more than other political questions, by my speech, and have therefore usually left it in [others'] honored hands." The refrain has a rhetorical tactic particularly visible in an 1856 speech to raise money for settlers in Kansas. Emerson says, "I had been wiser to have stayed at home, unskilled as I am to address a political meeting, but it is impossible for the most recluse to extricate himself from the questions of his times."[51]

This impossibility is both specific to the summer of 1856, and is a general observation. Emerson leaves it ambiguous as to whether "the most recluse" is self-referential. In Wilkins' *Geeta*, Krishna says, "To be a *Sannyasee,* or recluse, without application, is to obtain pain and trouble" (Wilkins 58). Gandhi argues that the *Gita* is original in changing the true meaning of the recluse or the *sannyasee*, from a non-actor to a disinterested actor. Krishna says, "The man enjoyeth not freedom from action, from the non-commencement of that which he hath to do…Every man is involuntarily urged to act by these principles which are inherent in his nature" (Wilkins 44-45).

And so it remains important for Emerson, as an antislavery lecturer, to maintain his vocation, to "act by these principles which are inherent in his nature." At the opening of the 1854 "Fugitive Slave Law" address, he says:

> The only thing not to be forgiven to intellectual persons is not to know their own task….My own habitual view is to the well-being of students or scholars, and it is only when the public event affects them, that it very seriously affects me. (*ASW* 73-74)

In reading the *Gita* along with the antislavery writings, we become attentive to the way that Emerson is performing the same work in these as in his other writings. The

antislavery writings are not extracurricular activities. In his biography of John Brown, David S. Reynolds writes of Emerson's anti-slavery writings, "The philosophical conundrums that had entangled Emerson in earlier works like 'Circles' and 'Experience' were replaced by certainty."[52] Indeed, when reading Emerson's "Kansas Relief Meeting" speech, it is hard not to be struck by marked differences in style from his other work, including the sensationalism of his descriptions: "We hear the screams of hunted wives and children answered by the howl of butchers" (*ASW* 111). His very direct appeal for aid is also remarkable: "The people of Kansas ask for bread, clothes, arms, and men, to save them alive, and enable them to stand against these enemies of the human race" (*ASW* 112).

One of the elements that these writings contain, linking them to Emerson's broader corpus, is his attempt at a reformation of language. In the short "Kansas Relief Meeting" speech, he writes:

> Language has lost its meaning in the universal cant. *Representative Government* is really misrepresentative; *Union* is a conspiracy against the Northern States which Northern States are to have the privilege of paying for… *Manifest Destiny, Democracy, Freedom,* fine names for an ugly thing. They call it otto of rose and lavender,--I call it bilge water. (*ASW,* 113-114)[53]

And in a passage from the "Fugitive Slave Law," Emerson succinctly clarifies the premise of "Fate" through an original and new definition of terms:

> There are two forces in nature by whose antagonism we exist: the power of Fate, of Fortune, the laws of the world, the order of things, or however else we choose to phrase it,--the material necessities, on the one hand; and Will, or Duty, or

> Freedom, on the other. *May* and *Must*: the sense of right and duty, on the one hand; and the material necessities, on the other. *May* and *must.* In vulgar politics, the Whig goes for what has been, for the old necessities, the *musts*; the reformer goes for the better, the ideal good, for the *mays.* (*ASW* 87)

May is the mode in which one overcomes skepticism, the distrust in human virtue that leaves us inactive. Len Gougeon, in his *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform,* has illustrated the way in which poetry was the last literary mode that Emerson's activism reached. But by the late 1850s, he had, in Gougeon's words, "won the cooperation" of the muses.[54]

I argue that we can read Emerson's poetry and antislavery writings in a more fruitful and integrated way when we look at the particular correspondences with the *Bhagavad Gita* in his writings in the 1850s and 1860s. In particular, we can consider Emerson's distortion of the word "may" and consider its usage in *May Day and Other Pieces.*

Stanley Cavell, reading "Fate" in the context of Emerson's "Fugitive Slave Law" address, writes, "We have to ask what kind of writing—philosophical? political? religious?—takes the form of the pent, prophetic prose of 'Fate.'"[55] Let us ask the same of a book called *May Day and other Pieces*. It is emphatically not titled "poems," but pieces, and I suggest that pieces are not only deliberately different from poems, but might be homonymously linked with the word "peace."

Each piece in the book offers a peace. The book celebrates a peace after war, the peace of spring, and varieties of peace produced by death. While "May Day" is a traditional celebration of spring, renewal, and rebirth, Emerson was writing in the

presence of many significant deaths. His aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, had died on May Day in 1863. Henry Thoreau died of tuberculosis in May 1862. His brother Bulkeley died in May 1859, his brother Charles in May 1836, and his friend Nathaniel Hawthorne in May 1864.[56] By the time Emerson published *May Day and Other Pieces* in 1867, John Brown had been executed, President Lincoln assassinated, and 500,000 men had died during the Civil War. *May Day and Other Pieces* offers peaces available through death, modes of death and rebirth in the wake of war: martyrdom ("Voluntaries," "Boston Hymn"), transcendence ("Brahma"), posthumous publication ("Farewell" by Edward Bliss Emerson), inspiration ("In Memoriam"), translation as literary afterlife[57] ("Translations"), cyclical and seasonal rebirth ("May Day"), and the prospect of death as a voyage ("Terminus"). Furthermore, Emerson recontextualizes and republishes extracts from his own earlier work.

While the poems are not formally innovative, and not ostentatiously "free" like the verse of Whitman, they are renewals, changes, fragments of peace and peaces. The book is a product of 1867, even as it is steeped in an autobiographical and historical past. Emerson includes an 1832 poem written by his brother Edward, along with the poetic mottoes of his own earlier essays. He titles a section of poems entitled "Nature and Life" with as much a reference to *Nature* (1836) and his own life, as to the generic entities of nature and life. Other sections include translations of the poetry of Michel Angelo Buonaroti, and the Sufi poetry of the 13th century. The "quatrains" section, as well, consciously renews an older formal style of poetry. Indeed, in celebrating May Day, Emerson is harkening back to a traditional Saxon celebration of nature outlawed in Europe and later in New England by the Puritans.[58]

In looking at *May Day and Other Pieces* as a book about war, war's justifications, war's beauties, and war's consequences, "Brahma" takes on a different tenor, especially when we consider its source in the *Katha Upanishad* and *Bhagavad Gita.* The opening lines to "Brahma" quote both Krishna from the *Gita* and Yama (death) from the *Katha Upanishad.* Both offer refutations of the common notions of death. May Day celebrates the ability to "may," and be among the mays as opposed to the musts. To may traditionally can mean to celebrate the May Day, and for Emerson, "maying," as expressed in "The Fugitive Slave Law" refers to the adherence of a liberated compulsion. Poetry's "may" allows for a liberating deformation of language accompanying political and personal reform, and so I am arguing that "May Day and Other Pieces," can be read as a post-war volume celebrating the day in which we may, a day of peace, and other "peaces" that arise from partaking in the compulsory liberating actions of "maying."

The poem, "Brahma" written in 1856, in the wake of John Brown's Pottawatomie massacre and Black Jack victory, can be seen as a response to Emerson's worldly concerns. Critical evaluations have ranged from mockery by his contemporaries to ridiculous praise by such critics as Carpenter, who writes, "Emerson's poem 'Brahma' probably expresses the central idea of Hindu philosophy more clearly and concisely than any other writing in the English language—perhaps better than any writing in Hindu literature itself,"[59] Such criticism is limited by the perceptions of what an Indian poem is and what the influence of an Indian text can be, both in the 1850s and in the 1930s. The better critics have only gone so far as to try to analyze Emerson's use of source material. The famous opening lines, "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,"[60] feature an

extrapolation of the *Gita* and the *Katha Upanishad.* Emerson first composed the poem in the midst of an extensive transcription and rewriting, in his own words, of the *Katha Upanishad*. And much as Cavell asked us to read "Fate" in the context of "The Fugitive Slave Law" speech, I ask that we read "Brahma" in the context of his "Kansas Relief Meeting" speech. Both are about the illusoriness of agency as regards death. In the "Kansas" speech, Emerson illustrates the ways in which language has lost its meaning and deceives. In "Brahma," Emerson denies agency to the killers and to the killed, and in the first person, as language maker and poet, takes the blood guilt away from John Brown, among others, much as Krishna does for Arjuna, absolving him from death, guilt, and grief, so that he may resolve to act.

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[1] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson.* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1960-1982. 16v.) vol. 13:344. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *JMN,* with volume and page number.

[2] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* II.ii.552-558, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, second edition, ed. G Blakemore Evans, et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

[3] Ralph Waldo Emerson. *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, ed. Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson. (New Haven: Yale, 1995.). p118,119. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *ASW,* with page number.

[4] For the purposes of this paper, I use Charles Wilkins' 1785 translation of the *Bhagavad Gita,* the first European translation of the text, and the one Emerson most often referred to: *The Bhagavat-Geeta, or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon; in Eighteen Lectures; with Notes.* Translated from the Original, in the Sanskreet, or Ancient Language of the Brahmans, By Charles Wilkins, Senior Merchant in the Service of the Honourable The East India Company, on their Bengal Establishment. A Facsimile Reproduction with an Introduction by George Hendrick, University of Colorado. (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1959). Hereafter cited parenthetically as Wilkins, with page number.

See Steven Adisamoto-Smith, "The Self in Translation: British Orientalists, American Transcendentalists, and Sanskrit Scriptures in English," *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, vol 47 (Bloomington: Indiana U, 1999.) Adisamoto-Smith details specific ways in which the colonial situation of the translators affects the quality of the Royal Asiatic Society's translations.

[5] Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on The Concord and Merrimack Rivers, Walden; or, Life in the Woods; The Maine Woods; Cape Cod*. (New York: Library of America, 1985), 114.

[6] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, (New York: Knopf, 2005). 24.

[7] Susan Manning, "Literary Friendship and Lateral Thinking" (paper presented at the Transatlanticism in American Literature conference, St. Catherine's College, Oxford UK, July 15, 2006.)

[8] Andrews Norton, "The New School in Literature and Religion" (1838) from *The Transcendentalists: The Classic Anthology,* ed. Perry Miller, 1950 (New York: MJF Books, 1978)

[9] See John Carlos Rowe, *At Emerson's Tomb: The Politics of Classic American Literature,* (New York: Columbia U Press, 1996). Rowe opposes two critical strains that unsuccessfully try to reconcile Emerson's political and expository writings. On the one hand, in *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America* (New York: Routledge, 1992), Sacvan Bercovitch defends Emerson's philosophical transcendentalism against charges of unqualified support for Jacksonian democracy and emergent capitalism. Bercovitch argues that Emersonian "individuality" or "self-reliance" must be distinguished from the "individualism" of industrial capitalism. The synthesis of these opposing ideas forms for Bercovitch a critical tradition of "liberal dissent" within American progressivism. Rowe argues that Bercovitch neglects to examine Emerson's essays on slavery and women's rights, or else Bercovitch would see that the opposition is not an "energetic 'paradox,'" but "rather the fundamental contradiction beyond which Emerson cannot take his transcendentalism" (Rowe 24). On the other hand, Len Gougeon, who co-edited a scholarly edition of *Emerson's Antislavery Writings* and wrote *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform* (Athens: U of GA, 1990), seeks to redeem Emerson's reputation as a committed social reformer throughout his career. However, Rowe writes, "just as Bercovitch only treats Emerson's philosophical transcendentalism, so Gougeon treats only Emerson's political affiliations and commitments" (25).

[10] Wai Chee Dimock, "Planetary Time and Global Translation: 'Context' in Literary Studies." *Common Knowledge* 9:3 (Durham: Duke U Press, 2003), p493.

[11] See Robert C. Gordon's "Bibliography: Emerson and India" compiled November, 2003. http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/i_rs/i_rs_emerson.htm

[12] Among the earliest Indian receptions of Emerson are Protap Chunder Mozoomdar's "Emerson as Seen from India" printed in *The Genius and Character of Emerson: Lectures at the Concord School of Philosophy*, ed. F.B. Sanborn, 1885 (New York: Kennikat Press, 1971), and Herambachandra Maitra, "Emerson From an Indian Point of View," *Harvard Theological Review* IV (October 1911).

[13]See Frederick Ives Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1930) and Arthur Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism: A Study of Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott*, (New York: Columbia U Press, 1932).

[14] The *Bhagavad Gita* is generally thought to date from the second or third century CE, a later interpolation in the *Mahabharata*, most of which describes India of a much earlier period, possibly 800 BCE. For textual scholarship, see: M.R. Yardi, *Mahabharata, Its Genesis and Growth, a Statistical Study* (Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1986) and Yardi, *The Bagvadgita as a Synthesis* (Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1991), and J.A.B. van Buitenen, *The Bhagavadgita in the Mahabharata: text and translation*, (Chicago: U of Chicago, 1981). For dissenting argument, see Bal Gandhar Tilak, *Om-Tat-Sat, Srimad Bhagavadgita Rahasya orKarma Yoga Sastra,* trans. Bhalchandra Sitaram Sukthankar (Poona: Tilak Bros, 1935). Tilak argues that similar stanzas and similarity of language, along with references within the *Mahabharata* to the *Gita* prove that the *Gita* and the *Mahabharata* were written by the same author.

[15] John James Garth Wilkinson translated Swedenborg. Thomas Taylor translated Plato and the Neoplatonists. Emerson understands them as underappreciated in England but valued by Americans. He joins Wilkinson with Carlyle and Coleridge as the only contemporary British writers unsusceptible to the debilitating materialism infecting British literature, and writes of Wilkinson, "There is in the action of his mind a long Atlantic roll not known except in deepest waters" (*CW* 5:141). Thomas Taylor was also unpopular in England. Coleridge described his translations as "difficult Greek translated into incomprehensible English" (Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia,* 53). Emerson, however found him to be "really a better man of imagination, a better poet, or perhaps I should say a better feeder to a poet, than any man between Milton and Wordsworth." ("Poetry and Imagination," *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo*

Emerson, Centenary Edition, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903-1904, 8:50). And he told Wordsworth, "it was not creditable that no-one in all the country knew anything of Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, whilst in every American library his translations are found" (*CW* 5:166).

[16] See Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (1978 Toronto: Vintage Books Edition, 1979), p.11: "I doubt that it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India or Egypt in the later nineteenth century took an interest in those countries that was never far from their status in his mind as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact—and yet *that is what I am saying* in this study of Orientalism."

[17] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Ralph L. Rusk, (New York: Columbia U Press, 1939. 6v.) 6:245-247. See also Tilak, *Gita Rahasya*, 21. Tilak argues that an adherence to the *Samkarabhasya* commentary on the *Gita,* which emphasizes the role of Jnana (knowledge) led to a more quietist reading of that text in translation: "…the English translation of the *Bhagavadgita* by the late Kashinath Trimbak Telang, published in the Sacred Books of the East Series brought out by Professor Max Muller, is stated by him at the end of the introduction to that translation, to be as far as possible consistent with Sri Samkracarya and the commentators of his school" (21).

[18] Sengupta, Gautam. "Tagore in America: Chronicling an important chapter in Indian American history" *India Currents Magazine*.(San Jose, 31 Mar 1994, Iss.12) pg. 24. For more on Tagore's visits to the United States, see Stephen N. Hay, "Rabindranath Tagore in America," *American Quarterly,* vol XIV, 1962, and Sunit Mukherjee, *Passage to America: The Reception of Rabindranath Tagore in the United States*, (Calcutta: Book Land Private Ltd, 1964).

[19] Sengupta, "Tagore in America," 24.

[20] Sengupta, "Tagore in America," 24.

[21] Susan Glaspell, *Inheritors* (Act II) from *The Plays of Susan Glaspell*, ed. C.W.E. Bigsby, (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1987). Pg 122-123.

[22] Harish K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Ortanization & Strategy* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev U Perss, 1983). Puri details the story of Indian agitators in North America.

[23] See Don T. Nakanishi and James S. Lai, *Asian American Politics: Law, Participation, and Policy,* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

[24] See Katherine Mayo, *Mother India*, (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co). Also see Mayo, *Mother India* ed. with an introduction by Mrinalini Sinha (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 2000) and Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham and London: Duke, 2006), and Manoranjan Jha, *Katherine Mayo and Mother India* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1971).

[25] Mayo, *Mother India*, 6, 31.

[26] John Unsworth, U of Illinois, Urbana Champaign. http://www3.isrl.uiuc.edu/~unsworth/courses/bestsellers/best20.cgi *Rankings from Bowker's Annual/Publisher's Weekly.*

[27] Sinha, *Mother India,* 2000, 5.

[28] Will Durant, *The Case for India* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1930). See Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (U of NC, 1992). Rubin places Will Durant in the context of literature of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s that served a desire for a liberal arts education by those without the resources traditionally necessary to secure one. While Durant's name will often go unrecognized by many critics

today, Rubin writes of the influence his outlines of philosophy had as far as motivating some readers to delve into his sources. "To mention Durant to practicing scholars today is to realize that an early encounter with his prose shaped many a distinguished career" (244).

[29] Durant, *The Case for India,* 4.

[30] Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization, Part One: Our Oriental Heritage,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935), 393.

[31] Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*, 626.

[32] Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia,* 257.

[33] Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia,* 6

[34] Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia,* ix.

[35] Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia,* 38.

[36] Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia,* xii.

[37] Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism,* viii.

[38] Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism,* 14.

[39] Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism,* xii

[40] Arthur Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* (New York: Oxford U Press, 1993).

[41] Mohandas K. Gandhi. *The Gospel of Selfless Action, or the Gita According to Gandhi.* Translation of the Gujurati by Mahadev Desai. (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1946), 127.

[42] Gandhi, *Gospel of Selfless Action,* 127.

[43] Gandhi, *Gospel of Selfless Action,* 133.

[44] Tilak, *Gita Rahasya,* 44. Also see A.K. Ramanujan, "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking" in *The Collected Essaqys of A.K. Ramanujan,* ed. Vinay Dharwadker (New Delhi: Oxford, 1999). Ramanujan argues that "in cultures like India's, the context-sensive kind of rule is the preferred formulation," and that a single law of *dharma* does not exist anywhere. Ramanujan then applies such notions to the specifically context-sensitive quality of classical Indian literature. (34-51).

[45] Tilak, *Gita Rahasya,* xvi.

[46] Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government," *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau: Reform Papers.* Ed. Wendell Glick. (Princeton: Princeton, 1973). 67.

[47] Stanley Cavell, *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes.* (Stanford: Stanford, 2003). 68.

[48] See Stanley Cavell, "Emerson's Constitutional Amending: Reading 'Fate'" in *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes.* 194.

[49] Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist,* 364

[50] Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist,* 367-368.

[51] *ASW,* 7, 47, 73, 91, 111.

[52] Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist,* 445

[53] See Michael Magee, "Emerson's Emancipation Proclamations," *Raritan* (vol 20, no.4, 2001). Magee analyzes Emerson's WO notebook in order to examine the ways in which Emerson's critiques government documents like the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and more recent laws, which are constructed of an outworn language that renders them useless. Magee sees Emerson as recognizing how pro-slavery forces use literary interpretation as political rhetoric while abolitionists, in neglecting to use the same apparatus, fail to temporally translate the documents in order to make them useful.

[54] Len Gougeon, *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform*, (Athens: U of GA Press, 1990) p232.

[55] Cavell, *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes,* 196.

[56] Robert D. Richardson Jr. *Emerson, the Mind on Fire*, (Berkeley: U of Cal, 1995).

[57] See Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken, 1968), 71.

[58] See Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story, "The May-pole of Merry Mount" in *The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, (New York: Random House, 1937), p. 882-890.

[59] Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia,* 110-111.

[60] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Collected Poems and Translations* (New York: Library of America, 1994).

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