

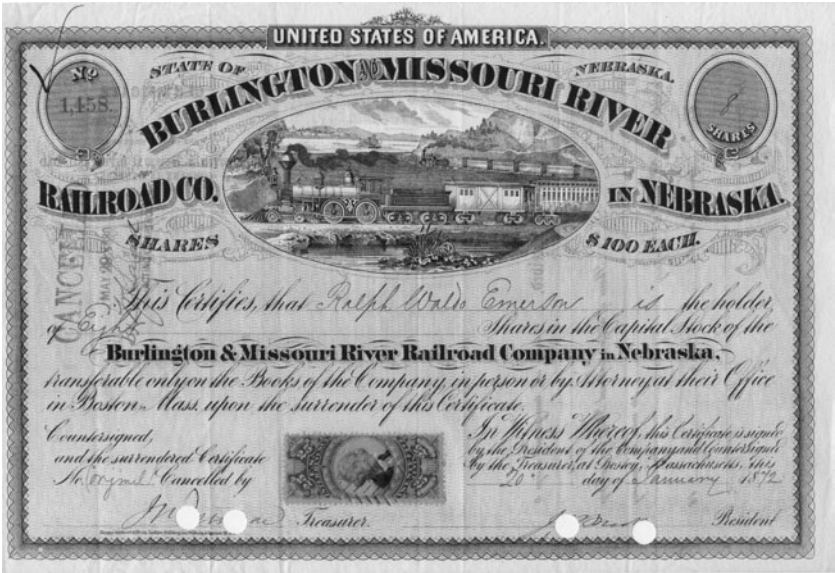
Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## RALPH WALDO EMERSON IN CONTEXT

This collection of newly commissioned essays maps the vital contextual backgrounds to Ralph Waldo Emerson's life and work. The volume begins with a detailed chronology of Emerson's life and publishing history, setting the stage for a wide-ranging discussion of the geographical and environmental contexts of his early and later life, including his travels and intellectual encounters with the United States, Europe, and Asia. It goes on to survey the intellectual terrain of the nineteenth century, exploring Emerson's relationship with key philosophical, aesthetic, theological, scientific, familial, social, and political contexts and issues. Finally, it assesses the popular and critical receptions that have solidified Emerson's legacy as a towering figure in American literature, criticism, and culture today. Fans, students, and scholars will turn to this reference time and again for a fuller understanding of this seminal American writer.

Wesley T. Mott is a professor of English at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. He organized the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society in 1989 and served as president for two terms. Author of *"The Strains of Eloquence": Emerson and His Sermons* (1989), he also edited volume four of *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1992) as well as several reference works, including *Biographical Dictionary of Transcendentalism* (1996) and *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (1996), and the three-volume *American Renaissance in New England* (2000–2001). He is the recipient of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society Distinguished Achievement Award.



Certificate showing Emerson owned stock in the Burlington and Missouri Railroad.  
By kind permission of the Joel Myerson Collection of Nineteenth-Century American  
Literature, University of South Carolina.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

# RALPH WALDO EMERSON IN CONTEXT

Edited by  
WESLEY T. MOTT  
*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*



Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.  
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of  
education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107028012](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107028012)  
© Cambridge University Press 2014

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2014

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context / [compiled and edited by] Wesley Mott,  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

pages    cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-02801-2 (hardback)

1. Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 1803–1882.    I. Mott, Wesley T., editor of compilation.

PS1631.R36    2013

814'.3–dc23

[B]    2013020644

ISBN 978-1-107-02801-2 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs  
for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not  
guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

*For Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson*  
*Celebrating the completion of*  
The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xxiii
<i>Chronology</i>	xxv
<i>Sterling F. Delano</i>	

PART I. EMERSON AND A SENSE OF PLACE(S)

1. Boston and Concord	3
<i>Jacob Risinger</i>	
2. America	12
<i>Roger Thompson</i>	
3. Britain	21
<i>Wesley T. Mott</i>	
4. Europe	31
<i>Jan Stievermann</i>	
5. Asia	40
<i>Alan Hodder</i>	
6. Travel	49
<i>Jason Berger</i>	

PART II. EMERSON AND IDEAS: “THE WIDE WORLD”

7. Reading	59
<i>Jennifer Gurley</i>	

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
8. Literature		67
<i>Albert J. von Frank</i>		
9. Poetry and Poetics		75
<i>Saundra Morris</i>		
10. Nature		84
<i>David Greenham</i>		
11. Divinity		92
<i>David M. Robinson</i>		
12. Human Mind		101
<i>Kristin Boudreau</i>		
13. History		109
<i>Neal Dolan</i>		
14. Democracy		118
<i>Daniel S. Malachuk</i>		
15. Revolution		127
<i>Daniel R. Koch</i>		
16. Science and Technology		136
<i>Jennifer J. Baker</i>		
PART III. EMERSON AND SOCIETY: “HODIERNAL CIRCLES”		
17. Life against Death		147
<i>Ronald A. Bosco</i>		
18. Family		155
<i>Noelle A. Baker</i>		
19. Friendship		163
<i>John Lysaker</i>		
20. Ethics		171
<i>Susan L. Dunston</i>		
21. Clubs		180
<i>Alfred G. Litton</i>		
22. Gender		188
<i>Leslie Elizabeth Eckel</i>		

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

	<i>Contents</i>	ix
23. Race		196
	<i>Len Gougeon</i>	
24. Reform		204
	<i>Todd H. Richardson</i>	
25. Money		213
	<i>Joel Myerson</i>	
26. Publishers		221
	<i>David O. Dowling</i>	
PART IV. EMERSON AND HIS LEGACIES: FROM INFIDEL TO ICON		
27. Portraits		233
	<i>Leslie Perrin Wilson</i>	
28. Fame		248
	<i>Bonnie Carr O'Neill</i>	
29. Biography		257
	<i>Robert D. Habich</i>	
30. Critics: 1836–1948		265
	<i>Glen M. Johnson</i>	
31. Critics: 1948–2013		274
	<i>Randall Fuller</i>	
32. A National Icon		283
	<i>Jillmarie Murphy</i>	
<i>Index</i>		293

*Illustrations*

27.1. Earliest surviving photograph of Emerson, 1846.	<i>page</i> 236
27.2. Emerson ca. 1848 – carte de visite, late 1850s, from a daguerreotype by Southworth and Hawes.	238
27.3. Emerson in the mid-1850s, paper print from a daguerreotype by Southworth and Hawes.	239
27.4. Emerson ca. 1858, carte de visite from an ambrotype possibly by Mathew Brady.	240
27.5. Emerson in the mid-1850s, carte de visite from a photograph by James Wallace Black.	241
27.6. Emerson ca. 1857, carte de visite from a photograph by James Wallace Black.	242
27.7. Emerson ca. 1868, mounted print from a photograph by John Sloan Notman.	244
27.8. Emerson in 1873, cabinet card from a photograph by Eliphalet Foss.	245

**Picture Acknowledgments**

For kind permissions, the editor thanks the Joel Myerson Collection of Nineteenth-Century American Literature; Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, for use of the frontispiece image, a railroad-stock certificate owned by Ralph Waldo Emerson; and the William Munroe Special Collections, Concord Free Public Library, Concord, Massachusetts, for supplying digital versions of portraits of Emerson and allowing their reproduction.

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
 Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

## *Notes on Contributors*

JENNIFER J. BAKER is an associate professor of English at New York University, where she specializes in American literature and intellectual history. She is the author of *Securing the Commonwealth: Debt, Speculation and Writing in the Making of Early America* (Johns Hopkins, 2005) and is currently writing a book on American Romanticism and Victorian life science.

NOELLE A. BAKER is an editorial consultant for the Princeton edition of Henry D. Thoreau's *Writings*. Her publications have focused on Transcendentalism, women's writing, and manuscript culture. She is preparing *Stanton in Her Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of Her Life, Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates* (in progress, Iowa) and, in collaboration with the Women Writers Project, coediting (with Sandra Harbert Petrulionis) *The Almanacks of Mary Moody Emerson: A Scholarly Digital Edition*.

JASON BERGER is an assistant professor of early American literature at the University of South Dakota. He is the author of *Antebellum at Sea: Maritime Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century America* (Minnesota, 2012) and has published in journals such as *Early American Literature*, *Criticism*, and *The Minnesota Review*.

RONALD A. BOSCO is the Vincent O'Leary Professor of English and American Literature and Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University at Albany, State University of New York, where he has taught since 1975. A past president of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, the Thoreau Society, and the Association for Documentary Editing, he served as general editor of *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Harvard) from 2003 to 2012, overseeing the production and publication of the final four volumes of the series and coediting volumes 7, 8, and 10.

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
 Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

KRISTIN BOUDREAU is a professor of English and the head of the Department of Humanities and Arts at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. She has published *Sympathy in American Literature* (Florida, 2002), *The Spectacle of Death* (Prometheus, 2006), and *Henry James's Narrative Technique* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), and she coedited with Megan Stoner Morgan a Broadview edition of Henry James's *Daisy Miller* (Broadview, 2012).

STERLING F. ("RICK") DELANO, Emeritus Professor of American Literature at Villanova University, is the author of *"The Harbinger" and New England Transcendentalism* (Fairleigh Dickinson, 1983), *Brook Farm: The Dark Side of Utopia* (Harvard, 2004), and many articles related to the Transcendentalists and their world. He was codirector (2009–2012) of the National Endowment for the Humanities' (NEH) "Landmarks of American History and Culture" program in Concord, Massachusetts, and director (2013) of the NEH Summer Institute on "Transcendentalism and Social Action in the Age of Emerson, Thoreau, and Fuller."

NEAL DOLAN is an associate professor of English at the University of Toronto, Scarborough. He received his PhD from Harvard in 1999. He is the author of *Emerson's Liberalism* (Wisconsin, 2009).

DAVID O. DOWLING, assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Iowa, is the author of numerous books and articles on media and publishing in nineteenth-century American history and contemporary culture. His books include *Literary Partnerships and the Marketplace: Writers and Mentors in Nineteenth-Century America* (LSU, 2012); *The Business of Literary Circles in Nineteenth-Century America* (Palgrave, 2011); *Chasing the White Whale: The Moby-Dick Marathon; or, What Melville Means Today* (Iowa, 2010); and *Capital Letters: Authorship in the Antebellum Literary Market* (Iowa, 2009).

SUSAN L. DUNSTON is an associate professor of English at New Mexico Tech and president-elect of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society. She is the author of *The Romance of Desire: Emerson's Commitment to Incompletion* (Fairleigh Dickinson, 1997) and has published on Emerson relative to Italian Catholicism, contemporary feminist theory, and Eastern philosophy in *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, *ATQ*, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, and *Emerson for the Twenty-First Century* (ed. Barry Tharaud, Delaware, 2010).

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
 Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

*Notes on Contributors*

xiii

LESLIE ELIZABETH ECKEL is an associate professor of English at Suffolk University in Boston. She is the author of *Atlantic Citizens: Nineteenth-Century American Writers at Work in the World* (Edinburgh, 2013), which includes a study of Emerson's national criticism. Her articles on Emerson, Fuller, Longfellow, and Melville have appeared in *Arizona Quarterly*, *Common-place*, *Dante Studies*, *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, and *Literature Compass*. She is coeditor (with Joel Pace) of "Boston and the New Atlantic World," a special issue of *Symbiosis: A Journal of Anglo-American Literary Relations* 15.1 (2011).

RANDALL FULLER is the Chapman Professor of English at The University of Tulsa and the author of *Emerson's Ghosts: Literature, Politics, and the Making of Americanists* (Oxford, 2007) and *From Battlefields Rising: How the Civil War Transformed American Literature* (Oxford, 2011), which won the Christian Gauss Award. He is the coeditor, with Robert Milder, of *The Business of Reflection: Hawthorne in His Notebooks* (Ohio State, 2009).

LEN GOUGEON is a professor of American literature and Distinguished University Fellow at the University of Scranton. He is the author of *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform* (Georgia, 1990) and *Emerson & Eros: The Making of a Cultural Hero* (SUNY, 2007) and the coeditor, with Joel Myerson, of *Emerson's Antislavery Writings* (Yale, 1995). In 2008, he received the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society. He is currently at work on a book dealing with the cultural warfare that occurred between America and Great Britain as a result of tensions and conflicts arising from the American Civil War and the struggle to end slavery.

DAVID GREENHAM is the associate head of the Department of Arts at the University of the West of England. He has written widely on British and American literature from Jane Austen to Philip Roth. His most recent book is *Emerson's Transatlantic Romanticism* (Palgrave, 2012). Dr. Greenham is currently working on Emerson and Fate alongside a project on the pedagogies of close reading.

JENNIFER GURLEY is an associate professor of English at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York. She is editor of *Emerson Society Papers* and has written a number of articles on nineteenth-century American literature and philosophy. She is currently completing two books, one on Emerson as a religious thinker and writer and another on the American Transcendentalist poets.

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
 Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

ROBERT D. HABICH is a professor of English at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, and the president of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society. He has written *Building Their Own Waldos: Emerson's First Biographers and the Politics of Life-Writing in the Gilded Age* (Iowa, 2011), cowritten (with Robert C. Nowatzki) *Romanticism and Transcendentalism, 1820–1865* (Facts on File, 2010), edited *Lives Out of Letters: Essays on American Literary Biography and Documentation in Honor of Robert N. Hudspeth* (Fairleigh Dickinson, 2004), and written *Transcendentalism and the "Western Messenger": A History of the Magazine and Its Contributors, 1835–1841* (Fairleigh Dickinson, 1985).

ALAN HODDER is the Rosamond Stewardson Taylor Professor of comparative religion at Hampshire College, where he teaches classes in the comparative history of religion, and American literature and culture. He is the author of *Thoreau's Ecstatic Witness* (Yale, 2001) and *Emerson's Rhetoric of Revelation* (Pennsylvania State, 1989), and coeditor with Robert Meagher of *The Epic Voice* (Praeger, 2002). He has published numerous articles and reviews on American Transcendentalism, New England Puritanism, and early American interest in Asian religions.

GLEN M. JOHNSON is a professor of English at The Catholic University of America, where he teaches American literature and media studies. He is an editor of Emerson's *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* (vol. 16, Harvard), *Topical Notebooks* (vol. 3, Missouri), and *Collected Works* (vols. 8 and 10, Harvard), and he has also published on fiction and performance.

DANIEL R. KOCH completed doctoral studies in the History Faculty at the University of Oxford. He is the author of *Ralph Waldo Emerson in Europe: Class, Race, and Revolution in the Making of an American Thinker* (Tauris, 2012). He lives and works in London, England, pursuing research alongside a career as teacher and Head of Sixth Form at South Hampstead High School.

ALFRED G. LITTON is an associate professor of English and the director of the Honors Scholar Program at Texas Woman's University. He is the author of several articles on Emerson and Transcendentalism that have appeared in *New England Quarterly*, *Emerson Society Papers*, *Studies in the American Renaissance*, *Studies in American Fiction*, *Journal of Unitarian-Universalist History*, and other journals.

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
 Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

*Notes on Contributors*

xv

JOHN LYSAKER is a professor of philosophy at Emory University. He is the author of *Emerson and Self-Culture* (Indiana, 2008) and, with William Rossi, coeditor of *Emerson and Thoreau: Figures of Friendship* (Indiana, 2010). His work concerning aesthetics and philosophical psychology includes *Poetry and the Birth of Sense* (Pennsylvania State, 2002) and *Schizophrenia and the Fate of the Self* (Oxford, 2008), the latter cowritten with Paul Lysaker.

DANIEL S. MALACHUK is an associate professor of English at Western Illinois University. He is the author of *Perfection, the State, and Victorian Liberalism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) and coeditor (with Alan M. Levine) of *A Political Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Kentucky, 2011).

SAUNDRA MORRIS is a professor of English and a Posse Foundation mentor at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. She coedited, with the late Joel Porte, the Norton Critical Edition *Emerson's Prose and Poetry* (Norton, 2001) and *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge, 1999), with essays in each of these and other venues, including *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism* and *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry*.

WESLEY T. MOTT, a professor of English at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, organized the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society in 1989. He is the author of *"The Strains of Eloquence": Emerson and His Sermons* (Pennsylvania State, 1989) and editor of volume 4 of *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Missouri, 1992) as well as several reference books on antebellum American literature including *Biographical Dictionary of Transcendentalism* (Greenwood, 1996) and *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (Greenwood, 1996).

JILLMARIE MURPHY is the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Assistant Professor of English at Union College in Schenectady, New York. She is the author of *Monstrous Kinships: Realism and Attachment Theory in the Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Novel* (Delaware, 2011) and coeditor with Ronald A. Bosco of *Hawthorne in His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life, Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by His Family, Friends, and Associates* (Iowa, 2007). She is also a contributor to the *Oxford Handbook of Early American Literature*.

JOEL MYERSON, Carolina Distinguished Professor of American Literature, Emeritus, at the University of South Carolina, has published

numerous books on the Transcendentalists and was the textual editor for the final volumes of Harvard's edition of Emerson's *Collected Works*. Together with Ronald A. Bosco, he is editing *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Essential Prose* for the John Harvard Library and preparing an edition of Emerson's account books.

BONNIE CARR O'NEILL is an assistant professor of English at Mississippi State University. Her current book project, *They Are the Age: Literary Celebrity and Public Life in America, 1835–1895*, studies the formation of literary celebrity in the nineteenth-century United States.

TODD H. RICHARDSON is an associate professor of English at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin. His work has appeared in the *New England Quarterly*, *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, *Resources for American Literary Study*, and the *Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism*. At work on a book project on Emerson and the construction of celebrity in nineteenth-century reform communities, he serves as secretary and treasurer of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society.

JACOB RISINGER is a PhD candidate and teaching Fellow in the English Department at Harvard University. He is working on a dissertation about the malleable inheritance of stoicism in British and American Romanticism. His work has been published in *Romanticism*, and he was a 2011 recipient of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society's Graduate Student Paper Award.

DAVID M. ROBINSON is Oregon Professor of English and the director of the Center for the Humanities at Oregon State University. He was author of the chapter "Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller and Transcendentalism" in the annual *American Literary Scholarship* from 1988 through 2008. Among his publications on the Transcendentalist movement are *Emerson and the Conduct of Life* (Cambridge, 1993) and *Natural Life: Thoreau's Worldly Transcendentalism* (Cornell, 2004).

JAN STIEVERMANN is a professor of the history of Christianity in the United States at Heidelberg University. The author of *Der Sündenfall der Nachahmung: Zum Problem der Mittelbarkeit im Werk Ralph Waldo Emersons* (2007; *The Original Fall of Imitation: The Problem of Mediacy in the Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*), he has written on American religious history and American literature in such journals as *Early American Literature* and *William and Mary Quarterly*. Together with Reiner Smolinski, he heads a team editing Cotton Mather's hitherto

*Notes on Contributors*

xvii

unpublished *Biblia Americana*, the first comprehensive Bible commentary produced in British North America.

ROGER THOMPSON is an associate professor in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric at Stony Brook University. His work has appeared in *College English*, *RSQ*, *Pedagogy*, and others, and his current work focuses on democratic expression in the public sphere. He has served on the advisory board of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society and is the recipient of a Houghton Library Fellowship for work in the Emerson family manuscripts.

ALBERT J. VON FRANK, emeritus professor of English at Washington State University, is coeditor of *The Poetry Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Missouri, 1986) and *Poems: A Variorum Edition*, volume 9 of *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Harvard, 2011), as well as general editor of *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 4 volumes (Missouri, 1989–92). He is the author of *An Emerson Chronology* (G. K. Hall, 1994) and *The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston* (Harvard, 1998). He has published numerous essays and articles, including a few on writers other than Emerson.

LESLIE PERRIN WILSON has been curator of the William Munroe Special Collections at the Concord (Massachusetts) Free Public Library since 1996. Also a writer on local historical and literary topics for general and scholarly readers, she is the author of *In History's Embrace: Past and Present in Concord, Massachusetts* (Hollis, 2007) and the guidebook *Historic Concord and the Lexington Fight* (Friends of the Concord Free Public Library, 2010).

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
 Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

## Preface

The voice in Ralph Waldo Emerson's great essay "Circles" memorably defines itself as *beyond* context. "There are no fixtures to men, if we appeal to consciousness" (*CW* 2:182). History and influence seem nothing in an eternal present of fluctuating moods, impulses, and events: "I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker, with no Past at my back" (188). Selective quoters of Emerson (and who is not?) usually ignore the paragraph that follows this declaration of freedom, of unmoored self:

Yet this incessant movement and progression, which all things partake, could never become sensible to us, but by contrast to some principle of fixture or stability in the soul. Whilst the eternal generation of circles proceeds, the eternal generator abides. (p. 188)

That "central life" is what braces us for incessant "life, transition, the energizing spirit." "People wish to be settled: only as far as they are unsettled, is there any hope for them" (p. 189).

In the early twenty-first century, we can assess Emerson in his own dynamic terms. An enduring stance – stubbornly maintained by his admirers and detractors alike – depicts Emerson as a wise, "representative" American removed from the din of the messy world. Seeking to overturn this static sense of Emerson, some critics have portrayed him as a proto-modernist unhinging all established truths. The inadequacy of both concepts has been exposed in recent decades by a richly diverse outpouring of scholarship, fueled by a massive body of newly edited works and previously unpublished journals, correspondence, sermons, and lectures – all revealing Emerson as a man and writer living a life not only of the mind but also very much in the world.

This book seeks to capture Emerson's active engagement with significant contexts of his life and times. The book is divided into four parts, dealing with Emerson's sense of place (as actual and as trope), his immersion

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
 Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

in the life of ideas (he titled his first journal, at age sixteen, “The Wide World” [*JMN* 1:3]), and his daily engagements with society (the “hodiernal” realm [*CW* 2:185] that radiated from domestic to professional to political), as well as the critical and popular reception that transformed him into a national and global icon.

Many people were indispensable in producing this book. I thank the contributors for their sparkling appraisals of Emerson, their cooperation through the editorial process, and the spirited, collegial e-mail and telephone conversations in which we all engaged. For particularly helpful advice I thank Ronald A. Bosco, David O. Dowling, Leslie Elizabeth Eckel, Len Gougeon, Robert D. Habich, Joel Myerson, Albert J. von Frank, and Leslie Perrin Wilson. For the frontispiece, Joel Myerson kindly offered a railroad-stock certificate owned by Emerson, an image that immediately evokes an unexpected context of the life of a man regarded for too long as a purely ethereal sage; the original is now in the Joel Myerson Collection of Nineteenth-Century American Literature, Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia. At the Concord Free Public Library, Leslie Perrin Wilson, curator of the William Munroe Special Collections, selected all the portraits of Emerson and arranged permission to reproduce them; and Robert C. W. Hall Jr., technical services associate librarian, created digital images of the Emerson photographs. At Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Debra L. Dexter, Jim Monaco, and Patrick Moody at the Computing and Communications Center gave expert technical help with the manuscript; and Kristin Boudreau, head of the Department of Humanities and Arts, and other WPI colleagues supported a sabbatical leave during which the book was finished. At Cambridge University Press, Dr. Ray Ryan, senior editor of English and American Literature, championed the book from the beginning; and Louis Gulino, senior editorial assistant, coordinated its production. At Newgen Knowledge Works, Ami Naramor was an exemplary copy editor; and Bhavani Ganesh Kumar was a superb project manager – both were unfailingly professional and cordial. On the home front, my wife, Sandy, has helped me keep Emerson in context.

The list of abbreviations includes standard critical editions of Emerson’s writings, and the two best biographies (Rusk’s “external” life and Richardson’s intellectual study), all cited parenthetically in the text. This is the first book able to cite the complete *Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (*CW* [1971–2013]), the tenth and final volume of which, *Uncollected Prose Writings*, appeared just before the manuscript for this book went to press. I am grateful to *CW* general editor Ronald A. Bosco,

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

*Preface*

xxi

who kindly made available an advance copy of volume 10. The present volume occasionally cites texts from volumes 10–12 of *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (*W*, the Centenary Edition [1903–1904]), three posthumous volumes that contain essays and lectures attributed to Emerson that were actually edited, arranged, or improvised by his literary executors, whereas *CW* publishes only those writings that Emerson personally wrote in their entirety, authorized for publication, and saw into print.

The dedication recognizes the editorial achievement of general editor Ronald A. Bosco and textual editor Joel Myerson in bringing to completion *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. They are already renowned for accomplishing what conventional wisdom deemed editorially impossible, and at the appearance of *CW* 10 all Emersonians rejoice.

Wesley T. Mott  
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, 2013

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## *Abbreviations*

- AW* *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, ed. Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).
- CEC* *The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle*, ed. Joseph Slater (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964).
- CS* *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 4 vols., ed. Albert J. von Frank et al. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989–92).
- CW* *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 10 vols., ed. Alfred R. Ferguson, Joseph Slater, Douglas Emory Wilson, Ronald A. Bosco et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971–2013).
- EL* *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 3 vols., ed. Robert E. Spiller, Stephen E. Whicher, and Wallace E. Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959–72).
- JMN* *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 16 vols., ed. William H. Gilman, Ralph H. Orth et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960–82).
- L* *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 10 vols., ed. Ralph L. Rusk and Eleanor M. Tilton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939, 1990–95).
- Life* Ralph L. Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Scribner's, 1949).
- LL* *The Later Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 2 vols., ed. Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).
- Mind* Robert D. Richardson Jr., *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
- W* *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 12 vols., ed. Edward Waldo Emerson (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1903–04).

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

*Chronology*

*Sterling F. Delano*

<b>1796</b> October 25	William Emerson and Ruth Haskins, RWE’s parents, wed in Boston.
<b>1803</b> May 25	Ralph Waldo Emerson born in Boston, the fourth of eight children: Phebe Ripley (1798), John Clarke (1799), William (1801), Edward Bliss (1805), Robert Bulkeley (1807), Charles Chauncy (1808), and Mary Caroline (1811).
<b>1811</b> May 12	William Emerson, RWE’s father, dies.
<b>1812</b> Spring June 18	RWE enters the Boston Latin School. United States declares war on Great Britain, initiating the War of 1812.
<b>1814</b> April 14	Three-year-old sister Mary Caroline dies.
<b>1817</b> October 10	RWE enrolls and begins classes at Harvard College.
<b>1818</b> January	Between terms at Harvard, RWE’s first teaching experience at his Uncle Samuel Ripley’s school in Waltham.
<b>1820</b>	Awarded Bowdoin Prize for essay on “The Character of Socrates.” Awarded Boylston Prize for public speaking.

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-02801-2 - Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context  
 Edited by Wesley T. Mott  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

xxvi	<i>Chronology</i>
<b>1821</b>	
August 21	Hears Sampson Reed deliver his “Oration on Genius” at Harvard.
August 29	Graduates from Harvard College.
Autumn	Begins teaching (unhappily) at brother William’s school for young ladies in Boston.
<b>1822</b>	
November-December	RWE’s first publication, “Thoughts on the Religion of the Middle Ages,” appears in the <i>Christian Disciple and Theological Review</i> .
<b>1823</b>	
May	Emerson family moves from Boston to nearby Roxbury.
December 5	William Emerson sails for Europe. RWE manages William’s school.
<b>1825</b>	
February	RWE enrolls in the Harvard Divinity School.
May 25	American Unitarian Association is formed.
September 12	RWE opens school in Chelmsford. In December he closes school.
<b>1826</b>	
April 1	Opens school in Cambridge.
September	Reads <i>Observations on the Growth of the Mind</i> by Sampson Reed.
October 10	RWE is approbated to preach.
October 23	By end of month RWE closes his school in Cambridge, ends career as a teacher.
November 25	RWE’s tubercular symptoms prompt trip to Charleston, SC.
<b>1827</b>	
	RWE preaches forty-eight sermons this year.
January 13	Departs Charleston, SC, arrives in St. Augustine, FL.
April 28	Arrives in Alexandria, VA, after a brief stop in Baltimore.
May 24	Visits William Henry Furness, his childhood friend, in Philadelphia.
June 1	Visits brother William in New York.
December 25	Preaching in Concord, NH, RWE introduced to Ellen Louisa Tucker, whom RWE will marry in 1829.

<b>1828</b>	
August 28	RWE preaches 109 sermons this year.
December 17	RWE elected honorary member of Phi Beta Kappa. RWE and Ellen Louisa Tucker become engaged.
<b>1829</b>	
March	RWE preaches ninety-four sermons this year. RWE ordained junior pastor at Second Church in Boston.
March 4	Andrew Jackson takes office as the seventh president of the United States.
July 1	Henry Ware Jr., senior pastor of Second Church, having stepped down because of illness, RWE's annual salary is increased to \$1,800.
September 30	RWE and Ellen Louisa Tucker married in Concord, NH.
<b>1830</b>	
January 1	RWE preaches just over 100 sermons this year. RWE withdraws two books from the Boston Athenaeum, from which he would withdraw more than 435 books in his lifetime.
March 13	Ellen Tucker Emerson is introduced to RWE's aunt Mary Moody Emerson.
May 28	President Andrew Jackson signs "Indian Removal Act" into law.
<b>1831</b>	
February 8	RWE preaches 108 sermons this year. Ellen Tucker Emerson dies of tuberculosis; she was nineteen years old. She is buried in her family's tomb in Roxbury.
<b>1832</b>	
March 29	RWE preaches sixty-eight sermons this year. RWE visits Ellen's tomb and opens her coffin.
September	RWE notifies Second Church that he will resign.
December 22	Farewell letter sent to the Second Church.
December 25	RWE leaves for Europe.
<b>1833</b>	
February	RWE's first trip to Europe. Travels to Malta, Italy, France, England, and Scotland, along the way meeting

xxviii

*Chronology*

	Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and Thomas Carlyle, among other notables.
October 9	Arrives in Boston from European trip.
December 3	RWE's brother William marries Susan Woodward Haven.
<b>1834</b>	
	RWE preaches seventy-eight sermons this year.
May 13	RWE receives \$11,600, half of the inheritance from Ellen Tucker.
October 3	RWE's brother Edward dies of tuberculosis in Puerto Rico.
October 9	RWE moves to Concord, MA, where his mother has been living.
<b>1835</b>	
	RWE preaches seventy-one sermons and delivers twenty-six lectures this year.
January 24	RWE proposes marriage, by mail, to Lydia Jackson of Plymouth, MA.
July 7	Purchases Coolidge House on the Cambridge Road in Concord.
September 12	Delivers <i>Historical Discourse</i> marking Concord bicentennial. RWE is the fourth choice of the Selection Committee.
September 14	RWE marries Lydia Jackson in Plymouth.
<b>1836</b>	
	RWE preaches seventy-three sermons and delivers twenty-seven lectures this year.
May 9	RWE's brother Charles dies in New York.
July 24	Margaret Fuller arrives in Concord and meets RWE for first time; she stays at the Emerson home for three weeks.
September 8	First meeting of Transcendental Club. RWE will attend twenty of the twenty-five documented meetings.
September 9	Publication of RWE's first book, <i>Nature</i> .
October 30	Waldo Emerson is born.
<b>1837</b>	
	RWE preaches seventy-three sermons and delivers twenty-nine lectures this year.

*Chronology* xxix

May 12	Financial Panic of 1837. New York and Boston banks suspend specie payments.
July 27	RWE receives second half of Ellen Tucker inheritance – \$11,674.49.
August 31	Delivers Phi Beta Kappa “American Scholar Address.”
September 1	Transcendental Club meets at RWE’s home. First time women are included (Margaret Fuller; Elizabeth Hoar; Sarah Bradford Ripley).
September 23	James Munroe & Co. print 500 copies of the “American Scholar Address.”

**1838**

	RWE preaches thirteen sermons and delivers forty-four lectures this year.
February 24	Second edition of the “American Scholar Address” published.
March 14	RWE relinquishes his “ecclesiastical charge” at East Lexington and indicates he will no longer preach except at the Lyceum.
May 14	RWE’s letter to President Martin Van Buren protesting the Cherokee Removal published in the <i>Daily National Intelligencer</i> (Washington, DC).
July 15	Delivers address to Harvard Divinity School graduates.
August 21	James Munroe & Co. publishes Divinity School Address.

**1839**

	RWE preaches three sermons and delivers twenty-one lectures this year.
January 20	RWE makes final pulpit appearance.
February 23	Birth of second child and first daughter, Ellen.

**1840**

	RWE delivers thirty-one lectures this year.
March	Bronson Alcott and family move to Concord.
July	First issue of <i>The Dial</i> (1840–44) is published. RWE persuades Margaret Fuller to serve as editor.
October 16	George and Sophia Ripley meet with RWE, Fuller, and Alcott in Concord to discuss “new social plans” (i.e., the organization of Brook Farm).

xxx	<i>Chronology</i>
December 15	RWE notifies the Ripleys he will neither join nor support the new community.
<b>1841</b>	
March 19	RWE delivers eleven lectures this year.
November 22	<i>Essays [First Series]</i> published.
	Birth of third child and second daughter, Edith.
<b>1842</b>	
January 11	RWE delivers nineteen lectures this year.
January 27	Henry Thoreau's brother, John, dies of lockjaw.
	Waldo Emerson dies of scarlatina after a three-day illness.
May 6	Bronson Alcott departs for England; RWE underwrites the trip.
July	First issue of <i>The Dial</i> under RWE's editorship.
July 9	Nathaniel Hawthorne and Sophia Peabody are wed and move into the Emerson ancestral home in Concord known as the "Old Manse."
<b>1843</b>	
	RWE delivers twenty-six lectures this year.
<b>1844</b>	
January	RWE delivers thirty lectures this year.
July 10	RWE makes sixth and final visit to Brook Farm.
August 1	Birth of fourth child and second son, Edward Waldo.
	Delivers address on "Emancipation in the British West Indies" in Concord.
September	Purchases forty-one-acre lot by Walden Pond.
October 19	<i>Essays: Second Series</i> published.
<b>1845</b>	
July 4	RWE delivers fourteen lectures this year.
	Thoreau begins residence at Walden Pond on property owned by RWE.
<b>1846</b>	
December 25	RWE delivers fifty-three lectures this year.
	<i>Poems</i> published (Boston edition).
<b>1847</b>	
September	RWE delivers fifty-five lectures this year.
	Thoreau leaves Walden Pond cabin and moves back to Concord.