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Emerson and His Ideas of Social Reform:

Evolution, Race, and Gender

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List of Abbreviations

- AW* Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Emerson's Antislavery Writings.*
- CW* Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson.*
- EL* Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson.*
- EMF* Richardson, Robert D., Jr. *Emerson: The Mind on Fire.*
- EWQ* Gougeon, Len. "Emerson and the Woman Question: The Evolution of his Thought."
- J* Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson.*
- JMN* Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson.*
- L* Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson.*
- LEE* Emerson, Ellen Tucker. *Letters of Ellen Tucker Emerson.*
- LL* Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Later Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson.*
- LLE* Emerson, Ellen Tucker. *The Life of Lidian Jackson Emerson.*
- LLJE* Emerson, Lidian Jackson. *Letters of Lidian Jackson Emerson.*
- LME* Emerson, Mary Moody. *Letters of Mary Moody Emerson.*
- LMF* Fuller, Margaret. *The Letters of Margaret Fuller.*

MF Myerson, Joel. "Margaret Fuller's 1842 Journal: At Concord with the Emersons."

VH Gougeon, Len. *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform.*

W Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

I. Introduction

Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. . . .

Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist. . . . Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. (*W* 2: 49-50)

Self-reliance has been the quintessence of Emersonian Transcendentalism. A stress on believing in sacredness and the boundless possibilities within the self is found everywhere throughout the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Society, as he states, has an "aversion" to self-reliance, requiring people to conform at the expense of their "liberty and culture." People are unable to establish their individual selves as long as they give in to the demands of society. Finding in a "nonconformist" "the integrity of your own mind," Emerson discourages people against social commitment. Being self-reliant is, for him, the ultimate goal of human beings. Focusing exclusively on his ideological importance, therefore, many critics have traditionally argued that the distinctly transcendental strain of Emerson's self-reliance can explain his detachment

from the public arena. This conventional view has inevitably prompted an image of Emerson as an aloof and disinterested Concord sage.

Mainly during the past three decades, however, literary criticism firmly connected with cultural studies has remarkably encouraged students of Emerson to examine his social, cultural, and political importance. Substantial scholarly attention has been paid to the philosopher in his cultural and historical contexts in accordance with the modern rise of social history and cultural studies (Collison 181). This critical development, which is associated with what Lawrence Buell terms the "de-Transcendentalization" of Emerson ("The Emerson Industry" 123), has considerably enabled readers to approach his relationship with respect to the American social structure of his times.¹ Dealing exclusively with Emerson's political thought, for instance, Alan M. Levine and Daniel S. Malachuk edited and published in 2011 *A Political Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, the first collection that prominently evaluated Emerson's politics in the light of these recently developed literary criticisms.

In particular, Emerson's involvement in the antislavery movement has attracted broad scholarly interest in the wake of the general attention to African-Americans and slavery since the 1960s (Collison 181). Dealing with copious documents, such as Emerson's unpublished speeches and newspaper accounts, Len Gougeon published his

voluminous research on Emerson and the abolition of slavery in his exhaustive *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform* in 1990. Following this study, in 1995, Gougeon and Joel Myerson collected the record of Emerson's significant contributions in the crusade against slavery in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, which included some significant manuscripts of Emerson that had been long ignored.

The most striking aspect of these recent scholarly studies in terms of what Levine and Malachuk call the "new history" (1) is that they make it possible for us to reassess Emerson as a political activist rather than a "cool philosopher" who firmly eschewed any organized reform efforts.² Reevaluating his salient contributions to the antislavery movement, the recent critics remarkably disclose the fact that Emerson has been misunderstood until now as the opposite of the liberal, humanistic reformer that he really was.

At the same time, however, the trajectory of Emerson's career and his interest in the antislavery campaign provides the fact that he was actually troubled about his inner conflict between his well-known temperamental reservation and his sense of social responsibility. Due to his own philosophy of self-reliance and his early views on race, Emerson at times showed an ambivalent and ambiguous attitude toward abolitionism. On close inspection, however, as the years went on, antislavery drew him irresistibly.

Emerson eventually became a strong advocate of the movement because the claim for freedom and human rights was, without doubt, compatible with his overall philosophy.

Emerson's attitude toward the abolitionist movement had been controversial among scholars and critics until late twentieth-century studies reestablished the facts of his stance (Stryck 139; *VH* 1). As is a common problem in posthumous memoirs and biographies, authorial selectivity as well as scant materials has limited public recognition of Emerson's position. In fact, the manuscripts for his antislavery speeches from 1837, 1845, 1846, and 1849 were "either lost or destroyed" (*VH* 15).

With limited sources, biographers have provided readers with the facts that they wanted to quote.³ For instance, George Willis Cooke and Moncure Conway underlined the growth of Emerson's engagement with the antislavery cause in their biographical studies of Emerson published in 1881 and 1882; Oliver Wendell Holmes opposed this in his *Ralph Waldo Emerson* in 1884, maintaining that "Emerson had never been identified with the abolitionists" (304). Pointing out that Holmes intentionally omitted the important fact that Emerson delivered one of the most significant addresses entitled "Emancipation in the British West Indies," Gougeon suggests that "Holmes just wasn't interested in such things, and they did not fit his image of Emerson" (*VH* 12). In spite of such biographical selectivity, Holmes's biography has been highly esteemed

and has enjoyed popularity since its publication. As a result, a distorted image of Emerson as a conservative in terms of abolition had been firmly planted in the public mind while Emerson's journals and letters were unpublished.

Challenging the established image of him, scholars in the 1990s have spent a great deal of time studying and rediscovering the facts of Emerson's relationship to antislavery, as has been stated. The in-depth argument on the issue drew these scholars to their interests in Emerson's contribution to the nineteenth-century women's movement, and they expanded Emersonian study further into gender politics. Since the late 1990s, Emerson's commitment to women's suffrage has been explicated by scholars, such as Phyllis Cole, Armida Gilbert, and Len Gougeon.⁴

Nevertheless, this approach is much less developed than that of Emerson's activities in the campaign against slavery, for firsthand information on the topic is mostly absent (*EWQ* 570-71). While critics have paid attention to his antislavery activities, Emerson's commitment to the cause of women's rights has still been mainly untouched, and serious scholarly efforts have not been made to rediscover all the substantive facts. The reason for this is, as Gilbert observes, that there was an assumption that "all pre-twentieth-century men feared and so hated women; therefore, as a nineteenth-century man Emerson must have been against women's rights"

(“Emerson” 242).

In addition, what has been decisive is the influence of James Elliot Cabot, one of the most influential early biographers of Emerson. Although he devotes a chapter in the biography to his treatment of Emerson’s reform activism, Cabot ignores the fact that Emerson had several opportunities to make speeches on the women’s rights movement (Garvey, “The Emerson Dilemma” xviii-xix; Gilbert, “Emerson” 243-45). Without mentioning Emerson’s significant public record on the women’s movement, Cabot quoted only enough of Emerson’s early statement about the issue, which Emerson himself corrected later, to give an impression that Emerson, like Cabot himself, was against women’s suffrage (Gilbert, “Emerson” 243).⁵ Due in part to the encouragement of other anti-suffragists, Cabot’s account has unfortunately established common opinion about Emerson’s position.

A close examination of Emerson’s letters and lectures reveals, however, that his stance toward the women’s rights movement is not that of an opponent but that of a friend of the cause. In spite of his initially reserved commitment to general organized reform campaigns, his increasingly active participation in the abolition of slavery irresistibly drew his attention to the political claims of the women’s rights movement. Inspired by a number of contemporary abolitionist women, including prominent

activists, such as Harriet Martineau and Lucretia Mott, and members of his own family, Emerson was continually engaged in the abolitionist movement (*EWQ* 574). Impressed by their outstanding contribution to abolitionism, Emerson also focused his attention on their bids for women's rights as other reformers did.

Moreover, like other reformers, finding similarities between the two causes, Emerson showed his sympathetic identification with a crusade to liberate American women. As Harriet Beecher Stowe writes in 1869, "the position of a married woman, under English common law, is, in many respects, precisely similar to that of the negro slave."⁶ As he always hated any kind of oppression, whether or not he had been an active campaigner from the outset, Emerson found the justification of the women's movement within their plights.

Emerson's full ideas on the topic were not substantially stated publicly; therefore, they must be surmised from his relation to other women and from the incidents of his life in the context of the cause of women's rights (Gilbert, "Pierced" 109). Examining not only his own voice in his letters and journals but also the responses and comments of women around the philosopher, this study will elaborate on his commitment to the issue and on the development of his thought, and it will eventually explicate Emersonian views on womanhood in terms of gender politics.

In the critical debate to date, there has not been enough space to engage a thorough study of Emerson within the framework of the reform age. There have not yet been scholarly efforts to approach Emerson and his ideas of social reform in terms of both race and gender comprehensively. While studies have independently focused on each fact of his relationship to antislavery and to the women's movement, very few have adequately explained about Emerson's attitude toward social reform in general. Therefore, this study will think of Emerson not only as an abolition-friendly or a suffrage-sensitive thinker but also as a reform-minded philosopher who inspired his countrymen and women by treating inclusively his substantial involvement in social betterment.

At stake here, furthermore, is our full understanding of how reform-minded Emerson applied his progressive ideas to his own life on a daily basis, for the relationship between Emerson and the women around him was ambivalent. Although he expressed progressive ideas on the freedom and equality of human beings regardless of sexual distinctions, his actual relationship with women indicates that he was little more than an idealist who had, in fact, demonstrated conventional, patriarchal attitudes to women.

The sine qua non of this study is to attempt to look at Emerson through the eyes

of women around him, such as his wife Lidian Jackson Emerson and his friend Margaret Fuller. By paying particular attention to the women close to him, we might be able to approach the thinker from the gendered standpoint of the twenty-first century, and in this context gain significant new insights. While previous scholarly studies have not substantially focused on reform-sensitive Emerson, who had shown an ambiguous attitude toward women in his household, this study will newly spotlight Emerson not merely as one of the leaders of the antebellum reform movement but also as a conventional man of the nineteenth century, drawing from copious materials across a variety of the background of his circle.

To be sure, Emerson was surely a leading figure in the context of American social reform, but from perspectives of this century his stance was consistently ideological and transcendental like everything else in his own life. As Emerson thought that we could save none but ourselves, reform on the individual level was much more important for the philosopher than social improvement. Believing in the unlimited possibilities of the human race, he insisted that change should begin with the individual in order to improve society. In an attempt to create a better world, he almost always put more emphasis on individual efforts and spiritual growth than on an active participation in any particular political campaign.

As several things came together to produce such Emersonian self-reliant attitudes toward reform, one of the most possible was, perhaps, evolutionary theory. His broad interest in science naturally led him to the doctrine of evolution, and he thought that the theory suggested everything should be inclined toward progress. Encouraged by the theory, he became more optimistic about human progress: paralleling the natural organism, the notion of changing and developing to the "higher" forms signified human capacity for self-improvement in his imagination (Whicher 162). Embodying his desire for human spiritual growth, evolutionism served as a model for solidifying Emerson's firm faith in human boundless possibilities and thereby in social improvement.

Ironically enough, however, it was the idea of evolution that had hampered Emerson's active involvement in the abolitionist movement in his early days. Like the vast majority of evolutionists and intellectuals of the early nineteenth century, Emerson was also convinced that Africans were in the way of their own progress, and that the inferior parts of the race should be naturally extinguished.⁷ This kind of idea was quite common even for the abolitionists in the age, yet it was problematic specifically for Emerson, who insistently required individual effort to achieve self-redemption (*VH* 66). Believing that each individual was fundamentally responsible for his or her moral

improvement, Emerson assumed that slaves should also have the obligation to be engaged in their own salvation. However, Emerson thought that Africans and other minorities did not have enough capabilities to fulfill their own moral amelioration. Abolitionism itself was, in conclusion, questionable to him as long as he believed in the basic inferiority of Africans. Hence, he eventually refrained from a more active participation in the field in his early days.

Furthermore, evolution may also explain Emerson's early halting gestures toward the women's rights movement. While rather sympathetic with women's demands throughout his lifetime, he had assumed an ambiguous attitude to their positive participation in the political arena in his early stages of the cause. Emerson possibly considered that women were also developing just as he believed the evolutionary notion that suggested that Africans were in the way of progress. Thus, Emerson in early times had probably discouraged women from taking social, political responsibilities and obligations that, he thought, would be too heavy and burdensome for them.

Perhaps, the greatest obstacle to his endorsement of the whole range of women's rights was an influential ideology of gender roles called "the cult of true womanhood."⁸ With the rise of the market economy after 1800, a variety of careers opened only to men, and they came to be engaged in businesses and public affairs, and women alone worked

at home. According to these social changes, people in the middle class shaped the ideas on sexual roles: while men worked outside the home to provide for their own families, women gave comfort to their families to help them survive the busy and competitive environment of the outside world. Showing the differences of sexual identity, therefore, this idea assigned men and women the wholly separate spheres of "public and private concerns, work and home life, politics and family," and women were both elevated and isolated by their special domestic role (DuBois and Dumenil 137). Like his contemporaries, Emerson also accepted the ideology that limited women to domesticity and believed that a "true woman" would refuse to play an active part outside the home.

Emerson showed his growing support of political campaigns, such as the abolitionist movement and the women's rights movement, despite his reluctant gestures toward them. Considerably inspired by many an activist, friend, and family member, he was continually engaged in these social reform movements. As the years wore on, he expressed the growth of his identification with these causes, for their goals were ultimately compatible with the idea of Emerson, who hardly hesitated to be committed to "clearly defined principles of human liberty, equality, and equal rights" (VH 337). Supposing unlimited possibilities in humankind, Emerson consistently believed in the

spiritual growth of each and every individual and thereby in the betterment of society.

Emersonian transcendental stance of reform based on individual effort may not fit in with the concept of what historians term "reform" (Frank, "Mrs. Brackett" 386). According to Albert J. Von Frank, historians have assumed that reform is not individual moral suasion but the political action to change institutional structures, and it would be difficult to find a definition of reformer that would fit Emerson ("Mrs. Brackett" 386, 394). Therefore, historians have for a long time adhered to the conclusion that Emersonian Transcendentalism must be "a philosophy of sitting on the sidelines" (Frank, "Mrs. Brackett" 386). Obviously, Emerson's transcendental attitude toward social reform based on individual effort may not correspond with the major historians' concept of "reform" – an action to improve social structure by alteration of laws.

Antebellum reform itself is, however, less political than we assume by present-day standards: it is also ideological and rather individualistic.⁹ As Ronald G. Walters defines, antebellum reform was "one of several means" by which contemporary Americans "attempted to impose moral direction on social, cultural, and economic turmoil" (*American Reformers* 9). After the War of 1812, people experienced "modernization" – a broad transformation of American society (Walters, *American Reformers* 3) that included not only territorial expansion and population growth caused

by an influx of immigrants but also economic and cultural development that followed urbanization and industrialization. These wide-scale social transformations of the United States led many men and women to assume that the world could be changed and the future direction of the nation could be shaped by individual effort; these optimistic ideas were also strengthened by the religious revivalism of the 1820s that taught people the significance of a spirit of goodwill as the sign of godliness.

For middle-class nineteenth-century Americans who were able to spare their money and leisure in social actions, in particular, their involvement in reform was the personal, spiritual process by which they sought to find a way to direct their moral impulse at significant changes throughout society. As Walters argues, they often found "rewards" for their engagement with reform: for men, it offered "a kind of moral authority that law, politics, business, and (in some circles) the ministry no longer had," while women sought to gain "the very few means of having public influence" through the reform commitment (*American Reformers* 13). However, the greatest satisfactions for antebellum reformers were "personal," and the activities for social reform transformed the participants "in much the same manner as a religious conversion" (Walters, *American Reformers* 13-14). Antebellum reform came from "the self-control, intellectual stimulation, and social contacts" it provided reformers, and it was a blessing

for them to have been able to ōput their lives in order, to have created emotional bonds with others, and to have done some good in the processö (Walters, *American Reformers* 15). For antebellum men and women, reform was more than just a demanding job, and it was significant for them especially when they found a resonance between their lives and a broader issue at a time of social turmoil.

In this context, Emerson, who consistently gave ōideasö to people, can be regarded as a typical leader in the age of American social reform. Instead of calling for specific political action to change laws, Emerson emphasized an importance of individual self-reliance and encouraged his contemporary men and women to think and speak for themselves. Paying particular attention to Emersonŕ contribution to the womenŕ movement, Cole points out the significance of his role: ōEmerson served as a source in part for what he said about women, but much more for what he provoked them to say for themselvesö (ōWoman Questionsö 440). Offering insights and inspirations to them, he played a pivotal role in encouraging reformers and giving them an impetus to social betterment. In this sense, we can say that Emerson was surely one of the precursors of the antebellum reform movement.

For this reconsideration of Emerson in the context of nineteenth-century American social reform, this study will refer to newly accessible materials—scholarly

accomplishments—during the last few decades. Moreover, a close reading of his journals and letters will uncover not only his devotion to the social movements but also his ideas of reform and progress, which will contribute to the explication of the new aspects of his thought.

In the first place, probing his idealistic principles in the political context, this study will examine Emerson's interest in science, which shaped the core of his philosophic insight. In particular, it is quite significant to see how Emerson established his stance on reform through his belief in evolution that implied our unlimited ability of improvement. Secondly, exploring his early concerns about antislavery and his views on race, we will consider how his ideas and stance on the issue changed and developed. Thirdly, we will focus on his role and contribution to the women's rights movement, dealing with his major lectures on the topic. This discussion will also look at the byways of his familial relationship with the aim of delving deeper into his attitude toward women in a daily context. Paying meticulous attention to Emerson in the household, this study will explicate the relationship between Emerson and the women around him in order to disclose the gap between the ideal and the reality that he actually internalized. Indicating that he was little more than an idealist who had, in fact, stuck closely to the conventional, patriarchal views on women,

we will gain a glimpse into his limitations as a social reformer. Finally, we will study how Emerson eventually narrowed the disparity that he experienced between being a prominent supporter of clearly defined principles of freedom and equality of human beings and a conventional man of the patriarchal tradition of society. In an attempt to provide comprehensive investigation into his reform philosophy, this study will make a careful examination of Emerson in an age of American social unrest.

II. Emerson as a Self-Reliant Reformer

A. Ideological Commitment to Reform Movements

The relationship of Emerson to the contemporary social problems such as slavery has often been discussed by scholars primarily during the last three decades, as has been noted. Challenging the conventional view that he stood aloof from reform movements in general, critics have made efforts to reevaluate the facts of his position. Nevertheless, as Michael Strydom points out, the dust has not yet settled over this issue, and it will likely be engaged for many more years (139). In other words, despite painstaking scholarly efforts, Emerson's stance on social issues is still controversial even now in the twenty-first century.

One of the possible reasons is that Emerson had frequently shown a complex and contradictory attitude toward the subject. As his voice at times disclosed, Emerson himself had an inner conflict between his own philosophy and pressing social issues even when he came to take an active participation in the abolitionist movement after the 1840s (Robinson, *Emerson* 50). As Lawrence Buell argues, Emerson has been certainly considered to be temperamentally more a thinker than a joiner or a doer during the era of social reform (*Emerson* 243). While he apparently felt compelled to express his ideas on this increasingly sensitive topic, he almost always preferred to

maintain a public silence.

Ultimately, however, Emerson was a committed social reformer throughout his lifetime. He was deeply engaged with the major reform movements of his age since he almost never hesitated to defend human rights and human liberty all of his life. The only serious doubt he ever had was, as Len Gougeon argues, “how *he* might best make his contribution” to the causes, for he did not want to waste his time and energies in “unproductive enterprise for which he was not fit” (*VH* 337).

The main reason for this point is that self-reliance—his firm belief in the boundless possibilities of human nature—preferred individual moral improvement, instead of any organized reform crusade, for the best development of human society. Even when he delivered his 1854 abolitionist address, one of the most fervent speeches that he made in the movement, Emerson began with the following unwilling, hesitant statement:

I do not often speak to public questions;—they are odious and hurtful, and it seems like meddling or leaving your work. . . . And then I see what havoc it makes with any good mind this dissipated philanthropy. The one thing not to be forgiven to intellectual persons is not to know their own task, or to take their ideas from others and believe in the ideas of others. (*AW* 73)

For Emerson, public questions are generally "odious and hurtful" since they meddle and interfere with his work. He views speaking to public questions merely as "dissipated philanthropy" because it forces people to be concerned with "the ideas of others," which is not forgiven. It is important for him to believe in his own ideas without being influenced by social circumstances. As this opening pronouncement indicates, Emerson was explicitly reluctant to take part in public debates.¹⁰ Although he established a career as a lecturer throughout his lifetime, he basically made a tentative gesture toward a commitment to social questions, in which he was not really interested. He highlighted the importance of individual moral suasion rather than that of collective efforts toward social amelioration as he went on to state in the same 1854 speech:

To make good the cause of Freedom you must draw off from all . . . foolish trusts on others. You must be citadels and warriors, yourselves Declarations of Independence, the charter, the battle, and the victory. . . . [S]elf-reliance, the height and perfection of man, is reliance on God. (*AW* 83-84)

Though this speech is generally known as one of the most fervent abolitionist statements that he made, what Emerson here calls for is not organized efforts but individual "self-reliance." He encourages people to believe in their own capabilities

and possibilities, maintaining that self-reliance is "the height and perfection of man" and is the only way to attain "Freedom." Suggested even in such a zealous oration against slavery, an emphasis on moral self-reliance is discovered everywhere throughout his addresses and essays, and thereby individualism can be thought of as the epitome of Emersonian philosophy.

"The key to this disjuncture between antisocial theory and socially engaged behavior is," as Buell observes, "that Emerson truly believed in the power of independent thinking to have not just a private result but also a social consequence" ("Individualism" 184). Emerson firmly believed that there was nothing that would exert direct influences for the good of society but an individual's self-improvement. Thus, while he committed himself to social reform movements throughout his entire life, he basically objected to the organizational structure of specific reform efforts, which often irritated and disappointed the contemporary activists.

Certainly, Emerson placed the greatest emphasis on self-redemption as William Ellery Channing did. Emerson sought an all-embracing moral development of human society, but he believed that this could be attained only by individual self-improvement. He discusses this point in his journal: "A man contains all that is needful to his government within himself. He is made a law unto himself. . . . He only can do

himself any good or any harm (JMN 4: 84). As he sees, we possess everything, including even the government and a law within the selves, and we need nothing but the integrity of our mind. Emerson observes that all social betterment should come from the individual because it is not the government but each of us that can do ourselves "any good or any harm." In other words, as David M. Robinson sees, Emerson locates an underlying cause of social problems in each individual's moral deficiency ("Emerson" 1).

Considering all social issues to be manifestations of individual moral deterioration, Emerson construed a single-issue reform movement like abolitionism as myopic and undesirable (Gougeon, "Emerson's Abolition" 173). In this regard, "New England Reformers," delivered in 1844, reflects his general attitude toward social reform. In this speech, he emphasizes that social reform should begin with individual moral amelioration rather than collective campaigns:

The criticism and attack on institutions which we have witnessed, has made one thing plain, that society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated, attempts to renovate things around him: he has become tediously good in some particular, but negligent or narrow in the rest; and hypocrisy and vanity are often the disgusting result. (CW 3: 154)

He stresses that social reform can be achieved only when individuals thoroughly reform themselves, for this is an ultimate solution to any kinds of social problem. For this reason, he says that "society gains nothing" unless people renovate themselves. Even though the reformers have become "tediously good in some particular," Emerson maintains that it is "hypocrisy and vanity" since they have been "negligent or narrow in the rest." In short, Emerson believes that all kinds of social ill can never be corrected without individual moral improvement because they are not a single issue to be dealt with.

Therefore, Emerson shows his resistance to focusing on a single social problem: "When we see an eager assailant of one of these wrongs, a special reformer, we feel like asking him, What right have you, sir, to your one virtue? Is virtue piecemeal?" (*CW* 3: 155). He finds "virtue piecemeal" in a single-issue reform movement because he does not see that coping with just one cause creates a fundamental solution to social problems. For Emerson, who maintains that all political problems are rooted in moral questions, it is partial and narrow that reformers make an attack against a particular cause (Robinson, "Emerson" 1). What he coherently punctuates is the need for individual moral refinement, through which people can accomplish total reform of society.

In fact, Emerson did not entirely deny social progress per se; on the contrary, his central belief was consistently in individual growth and thereby social improvement. In order to take a closer look at the core of his views on reform and progress, it is quite meaningful to examine his interest in science—and specifically in evolution—which molded his philosophic insight in this context.

B. Emerson and Science

Emerson's stance on social reform is transcendental as it can be considered to be self-reliant, individualistic, and optimistic. Emerson had optimistically believed that an individual's self-reliance was far more important to reform society than any collective action, for he had never doubted the limitless possibility of human spiritual growth that would finally promise social betterment.

What had strengthened his self-reliant attitude toward social problems was most probably his broad interest in science; in particular, his belief in the theory of evolution that implied our unlimited ability of improvement.¹¹ Finding the correspondence between matter and spirit, Emerson was willing to apply the law of the natural world to that of human nature. When we trace his understanding of science, we are to note a conspicuous enlargement of discussion of Emerson's views on human progress and

social reform.

It is of the highest significance that Emerson was a man who united the material world with the spiritual sphere (Obuchowski 625). The natural world, he observed, strictly corresponded to the spiritual world. Because all-embracing force, which he termed the "Over-soul," wholly vitalized nature, he thought that learning nature meant learning the human soul. The following passage written in 1836 uncovers how much weight Emerson attached to the analogy between nature and the human mind:

The world is emblematic. Parts of speech are metaphors because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind. The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass. "The visible world and the relation of its parts, is the dial plate of the invisible." The axioms of physics translate the laws of ethics. (*W* 1: 32-33)

This paragraph illustrates his assurance that matter precisely mirrors spirit. Emerson makes it explicit that natural study ultimately gives account for spiritual study since he identifies the physical principle with the mental one. He sees that the world is "a metaphor of the human mind," observing that the visible world should strictly indicate that of the invisible like "the dial plate" of a clock. Since the visible world is an embodiment of the invisible element, he finds the "axioms of physics" that "translate

the laws of ethics.ö

The following year, 1837, he more eloquently stressed a similar perspective as follows:

He shall see that nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it part for part. One is seal, and one is print. Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind. Its laws are the laws of his own mind. Nature then becomes to him the measure of his attainments. So much of nature as he is ignorant of, so much of his own mind does he not yet possess. And . . . the ancient precept, öKnow thyself,ö and the modern precept, öStudy nature,ö become at last one maxim. (*W* 1: 86-87)

Emerson predicates nature to be commensurate with the soul, depicting the relation between nature and the human mind as between ösealö and öprint.ö According to his apprehension, the whole of nature corresponds to the human soul, and the beauty and the laws of nature reflect those of our own mind. As he states that we cannot possess our own mind without learning nature because knowing ourselves connotes knowing nature, he encourages people to study nature hard.

This is Emerson's fundamental dogma of the correspondence between matter and spirit, between natural history and human history. This conception was, in various

degrees, sharpened by many sources he was well versed in (Clark 226-27).¹² Emerson showed more and more interest in natural phenomena as the spiritual symbolism. His special emphasis on nature led him to a scientific approach, for science was indubitably helpful to unmask the comprehensive principle of the mysterious nature (Obuchowski 629; Whicher 89). By pursuing scientific studies, Emerson sought to read spiritual figures in nature.

In the early nineteenth century, literature and science had not been yet opposed to each other (Fujita 5). As his contemporary Romantic poets had an interest in science in common with him, Emerson was much inspired by his literary colleagues, but his scientific concern was sustained throughout his long lifetime differently from their interest in science.¹³ His scientific knowledge extended far greater than that of the poets of the age, such as Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson (Clark 229). Emerson was much influenced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge's views on nature, yet he fully developed it from the point where the English poet left off (Beach, *The Concept* 336).

More significantly, Emerson's motivation for science was strongly based on his religious belief. In his essay "The Naturalist," he voices his opinion about the study of science, underscoring that science should be considered not as an end but as a means:

We only wish to insist upon their [the ordinary aids of science] being

considered as *Means*. We only wish to give equal and habitual prominence to the Love and Faith from which these should flow. This passion, the enthusiasm for nature, the love of the Whole, has burned in the breasts of the Fathers of Science. It was the ever present aim of Newton, of Linnaeus, of Davy, of Cuvier, to ascend from nomenclature to classification; from arbitrary to natural classes; from natural classes, to primary laws; from these, in an ever narrowing circle, to approach the elemental law, . . . the supernatural force. (*EL* 1: 80)

As regards the aids of science, this statement yields nothing more than a plain warning that we should always delve deeper into nature on a grand scale: we should eventually derive the most mystic law of nature from the primordial scientific research. By dealing not with mere technical knowledge, but with inclusive order, one can notice that the minute scientific approach becomes much less important than the discovery of the universal law controlling them. Considering scientific studies to be a means to approach "the supernatural force," Emerson believes that prominent scientists, such as Newton, Linnaeus, Davy, and Cuvier, also attempted to understand nature in order to see divine providence in this world, and the aim of science should be accomplished when we can read a divinity in nature through the study.

Natural science unraveled nature's meaning to Emerson. The more he learned natural science, he felt, the fuller the perception of the universal law was promised. With emphasis upon correspondence between the matter and the spirit, he sought to find a consequential key to the spiritual aspects of nature. His belief that the law of nature proved the all-embracing power of design encouraged him to accept new scientific findings and its advances.

What distinguishes Emerson's attitude to science from that of many of his literary contemporaries is, according to Peter A. Obuchowski, his openness to its values (625). Emerson, who admitted that the material world took the form of the spiritual, coupled natural science with his theological theme without any contradiction in his mind. He thought that science, which would uncover the mysterious law of the universe, helped to seize a divinity governing the whole of nature. As his religious recognition was honed by an acquaintance with science, it is quite meaningful for us to examine how he approached science in order that we can understand his central ideology.

Among his broad interests in science, astronomy was the most attractive for Emerson. He was imbued with astronomical knowledge mainly by the books of the scientists, such as Nicolaus Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, Pierre-Simon

Laplace, Isaac Newton, Immanuel Kant, the Harschels, and Mary Somerville (Clark 230).¹⁴ The first influential astronomer for him was Copernicus, whose discovery of the heliocentric system did shockingly attack the Christian view of nature. Besides Copernicus, as critics note, Emerson was subjected to various great influences: Galileo's significant findings by his application of the telescope, Kepler's laws of planetary motion, and the law of gravitation, established by Newton (Clark 231-34; Takanashi, "Emerson" 161).

Dramatically unfolding a dynamic principle existing both in the sky and on earth, these astronomical views did carry a certain implication for Emerson: the most impressive was the very fact that there was a great order over-arching the sky (Clark 230). Until Newton proved the law of universal gravitation, people had believed in the Ptolemaic system: the earth was fixed at the center of the universe, with the sun, the moon, and planets revolving around it. This classical view of the universe had suggested the definite distinction between the earth and the heavenly bodies. It is the Copernican system that did strikingly overturn the conventional belief of the universe by demonstrating that the earth was not at the center of the universe but moving as well as the other planets. This new system of belief was to show no distinction between the earth and the celestial space because it certified that the earth was just a part of space.

Explicitly indicating that the earth was also governed by the universal law, this new Copernican view made everything in the universe equal.

What is crucial here is the fact that the Copernican system strengthened Emerson's doubt on Calvinism, which had represented a firmly established theology from the early years of America.¹⁵ Calvinists asserted that human beings were innately sinful and were able to do nothing pleasing to God by their own free will. Emphasizing God's sovereignty, they maintained that God was able to do anything with people and that human salvation was arbitrarily predestined by an omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent deity. In a journal entry of 1832, Emerson summarized his astronomical conviction in a plain phrase: "Calvinism suited Ptolemaism" (*JMN* 4: 26). Emerson regarded this Christian teaching as the Ptolemaic system since their religious doctrines affirmed the unattainable distance not just between the earth and the heaven, but the human race and God as well. The following passage further reveals Emerson's understanding of this point:

The irresistible effect of Copernican Astronomy has been to make the great scheme for the Salvation of man absolutely incredible. Hence great geniuses who studied the mechanism of the heavens became unbelievers in the popular faith. Newton became a Unitarian, Laplace, in a Catholic

country, became an infidel, substituting necessity for God; but a self-intelligent necessity is God. Thus astronomy proves theism but disproves dogmatic theology. (*JMN* 4: 26)

Emerson conceives of the Ptolemaic system as Calvinism in terms of the conception that marks petty human beings under a great God. On the other hand, the Copernican system implies, for him, a new insight into religious faith, for this system unfolds the law controlling both the earth and the universe. Hence, as he remarks, the "irresistible effect of Copernican Astronomy" is to make the Calvinistic scheme for the Salvation of man "absolutely incredible." In this sense, according to Emerson, "great geniuses who studied the mechanism of the heavens became unbelievers in the popular faith" because they substituted "necessity" for the conventional Christian Deity. Becoming skeptical about "dogmatic theology," "Newton became a Unitarian," and Laplace became "an infidel." By studying the comprehensive law of the universe, the astronomers did find the Deity not to be the dogmatic God but to be a "self-intelligent necessity," which controls the order running through the whole of nature. As a result, in the words of Emerson, "astronomy proves theism but disproves dogmatic theology." In this way, it is proper to say that the Copernican system considerably solidified Emerson's doubt on the dogmatic Calvinism, but confirmed his faith in the "self-intelligent necessity,"

which he termed the "Over-soul," a universal divinity that acts as a center for all operations of the natural world.

Astronomical revelation, therefore, emphasized not only Emerson's religious belief but also his skepticism on the dogmatic nature of Christianity at the time. It is highly critical that we can apply his concern with astronomy to the explanation of the fact that he left the church, being fundamentally at odds with its dogmatic ecclesiasticism. The above journal entry appeared shortly before he raised an objection to the rite of the Lord's Supper, which was the direct background of his resignation from the Church.¹⁶

The obvious inference from the fact is that astronomy made Emerson reject dogmatic Christianity. Emerson discredited the conventional theology as "absolutely incredible" through astronomical studies. Deeming highly of astronomy in relation to religion, he established his religious concepts. He had no doubt that astronomy would be able to open the greater dimension of our spiritual insight. He represented his conviction that scientific ideas verified his own religious faith as "astronomy proves theism." For him, in other words, science was not incompatible with religion; on the contrary, scientific thoughts significantly intensified his religious belief.

After forming his religious notion through astronomy, Emerson was exposed to

every momentous influence that was to shape his scientific outlook. As astronomy remarkably impressed him with the law of the sky, he hoped that every natural science would offer him a comprehensive law of the whole of nature. Before long his strenuous reading developed his interest in botany, zoology, physiology, geology, and so on. It is altogether natural that his acquaintance with these fields of natural history finally led the philosopher to the doctrine of evolution, for it is a theory which arose directly from the attitude of seeking the all-encompassing order which controls the whole of nature.

C. Evolution and Emersonian Optimism

Science, for Emerson, was in line with religion: "Religion that is afraid of science dishonors God and commits suicide" (*J* 2: 362). Following not only after astronomy but also after broad natural history, he visited celebrated scientists and several museums or laboratories of natural history in Europe after his resignation from the Church (Clark 250-52). In particular, the mysterious experience he had in 1833 in the Paris Garden of Plants is quite famous. It is salutary to recall the passage so that we may start to analyze his treatment of evolutionary theory:

The universe is a more amazing puzzle than ever as you glance along this

bewildering series of animated forms, the hazy butterflies, the carved shells, the birds, beasts, fishes, insects, snakes, & the upheaving principle of life everywhere incipient in the very rock aping organized forms. Not a form so grotesque, so savage, nor so beautiful but is an expression of some property inherent in man the observer, an occult relation between the very scorpions and man. I feel the centipede in me—cayman, carp, eagle, & fox. I am moved by strange sympathies, I say continually "I will be a naturalist." (JMN 4: 199-200)

What is worthy of remark here is that this passage shows not only that Emerson finds a correspondence between human beings and nature, but also that he is ready for the doctrine of evolution as well (Beach, "Emerson" 483). He is struck by an impression that all animal forms are graded, from minimal beings like "the hazy butterflies" to larger ones, such as "eagles and foxes," in scale. He finds that "the upheaving principle of life" exists in butterflies, shells, or even in rock. However grotesque scorpions are, they have "an expression of some property inherent in man." Feeling the elements of the centipede, the cayman, or the fox in his body, he is moved by "strange sympathies" with them. In sum, this passage introduces his consideration that everything is likely to develop by "the upheaving principle of life," and human beings

stand on top of the natural world. This experience in Paris must have given him great impact, and when he visited the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow the following month, he was thrilled by the reiteration of this kind of experience (Clark 252).

After returning from Europe, Emerson delivered many lectures upon nature. He exhibited a more evolutionary-minded posture when he stated in his 1833 lecture "On the Relation of Man and the Globe":

By the study of the globe in very recent times we have become acquainted with a fact the most surprising—I may say the most sublime, to wit, that Man who stands in the globe so proud and powerful is no upstart in the creation, but has been prophesied in nature for a thousand thousand ages before he appeared; that from times incalculably remote there has been a progressive preparation for him; an effort . . . to produce him; the meaner creatures, the primitive sauri [saurian], containing the elements of his structure and pointing at it on every side, whilst the world was, at the same time, preparing to be habitable by him. He was not made sooner, because his house was not ready. (*EL* 1: 29)

Emerson is succinctly rendering the view that a human being was created long after the lower animals had emerged, not appeared all at once with other creatures in the

beginning of the world as the Bible suggests. What Emerson explicates here in his own distinctive way is that the human race had been prepared for throughout the ages, not appearing by the accidental mutation of the species. As is stated above, he contends that a human being "has been prophesied in nature for a thousand thousand ages before he appeared," and even such "meaner creatures" as the saurian contain the elements of human structure, "pointing at it on every side." This statement unveils his humanistic pronouncement that every condition had made "progressive preparation" for accommodating humankind. Making it clear that human beings emerged long after the lower animals, Emerson should have embodied here a conception of a "graduated scale of being" that has taken account of the chronological process of living things.¹⁷ This concept was rather new in his times because people had long kept, according to the Bible, the thought of a "chain of being": all living beings were created all at once without any consideration of chronology.

Up to the eighteenth century, the notion of a "chain of being" had been mainly held even by scientists and philosophers.¹⁸ This is a concept that all living things were created by God all at once in the beginning as Genesis indicates. This conventional notion is so static that it allows neither transformations of living things nor chronological sequences. At the end of the eighteenth century, however, the new

conception of a "scale of being" gradually appeared. The notion of a "scale of being" explains that living things appeared later than inorganic matter as the higher animal was created after the lower "in a graduated scale of ascent" (Beach, "Emerson" 478). In contrast with the former changeless view of a "chain of being," the latter view of a "scale of being" embraces the chronological sequences in proof of astronomical and geological discoveries of the age.¹⁹ However, we must bear in mind that these two views, a "chain of being" and a "scale of being," had not a tincture of modern evolutionary ideas; neither of them suggested the "transmutation of species" while modern evolutionary ideas maintain that the higher forms have been gradually transmuted from the lower.²⁰

Emerson, in the above lecture, "On the Relation of Man and the Globe," dwells upon the newer conception of a "scale of being" because he clearly illustrates the possibility that a human being "was not made sooner." Shortly after the lecture, as his journal entries reveal, Emerson read the book of Charles Lyell and *Animal Philosophy* written by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, who had persuasively elaborated on evolutionary theory fifty years earlier than Charles Darwin did (*JMN* 5: 83, 220). Constantly being affected by these writings, Emerson was acquainted with the modern evolutionary ideas "by insensible degrees" (Beach, *The Concept* 339).

Later, in his 1844 essay "Nature," Emerson deals at length with an expression that shows a more marked evolutionary cast:

All changes pass without violence. . . . Now we learn what patient periods must round . . . before the rock is formed. . . . It is a long way from granite to the oyster. . . . The direction is forever onward. . . . If we look at her [nature's] work, we seem to catch a glance of a system in transition. Plants are the young of the world, vessels of health and vigor; but they grope ever upward towards consciousness; the trees are imperfect men, and seem to bemoan their imprisonment, rooted in the ground. The animal is the novice and probationer of a more advanced order. (*W* 3: 179-81)

Explicit in this appeal is the admission that he has apparently embraced the theory of evolution with an understanding of the mutation of species. Despite "a long way from granite to the oyster," he believes that the direction of all changes is "forever onward." He finds trees to be "imperfect men" that "seem to bemoan their imprisonment," and animals to be more advanced than the trees. He imagines that plants, which "gripe ever upward towards consciousness," would evolve into human beings someday in the future, and he sees the germinal phase of human beings in their form. In sum, it can be said that Emerson's view of nature was more dynamic and more evolutionary in 1844

than his view in *Nature* (1836), in which he distinctly separated the human soul from natural objects.

As the years went on, he was more and more committed to the doctrine of evolution, and by that theory he proceeded to establish two substantial viewpoints: (1) dynamic spiral movement and (2) a new concept of an intelligent operator of the world. The first belief is that everything should be inclined to progress, following upward spiral movement.²¹ Evolution, for Emerson, was a mystic and comprehensive law penetrating throughout nature's dynamism; it indicated an ascending dynamic tendency in nature, where all of the forms should be repeatedly circulated in creation. He recognized that the theory of evolution implied that everything should develop in an ascending circular motion; in other words, every living thing should develop by following an upward spiral movement governed by nature. Emerson's final estimation of evolutionism is probably best summed up in the following simple statement: "The development of all individual forms will be spiral" (*J* 8: 77).²² As Vivian C. Hopkins suggests, Emerson is eventually convinced by his scientific studies that all forms evolve into a higher level ascending in a dynamic spiral movement (123).

How much weight Emerson gave to the spiral development of all individual forms is definitely explicated by the fact that he revised the epigraph of *Nature* when he

reprinted it in 1849.²³ Citing Plotinus's words, Emerson prefixed the following epigraph to the first edition in 1836:

Nature is but an image or imitation of wisdom,
the last thing of the soul; Nature being a thing
which doth only do, but not know. (*W* 1: 403-04)

When he issued the second edition of *Nature* in 1849, he replaced the above epigraph by the following poetry:

A subtle chain of countless rings
The next unto the furthest brings;
The eye reads omens where it goes,
And speaks all language the rose;
And, striving to be man, the worm
Mounts through all the spires of form. (*W* 1: 1)

His replacement of the epigraph is too important to be discounted. The implication of the former epigraph is that nature is only a passive "imitation" of wisdom. He considers nature not as a conscious living thing but as a mere "thing which . . . only do, but not know."

The revised version, however, dramatizes an active function of nature. As he

states that "the rose speaks all language," the whole of nature is portrayed as a living system. For Emerson, moreover, the greater importance of the natural system is strikingly suggested in the last expression of the above revised epigraph: "striving to be man, the worm / Mounts through all the spires of form." This poetic phrase obviously hits Emerson's central faith in an incessant development of all beings. In his estimation, nature itself continues to progress evermore upward in a spiral movement. Here, we can recall his journal entry in 1849 that the "development of all individual forms will be spiral." This expression evidently dominates the epigraph in *Nature* that he revised in the same year. By interpreting the evolutionary doctrine in his own way, Emerson arrived at his own conclusion that all living beings, even a worm, would everlastingly follow a dynamic upward spiral movement. In this way, therefore, his replacement of the epigraph explicitly unearths the fact that his own outlook upon nature had remarkably changed from static to dynamic by his acceptance of evolution theory.

The second belief Emerson established by evolutionism is that there certainly existed an intelligent operator to design evolution in nature (Beach, *The Concept* 343; Beach, "Emerson" 496; Clark 254; Duncan 13; Fujita 14). Since the concept of evolution first occurred in the eighteenth century, strong opposition had inevitably come

from the Christian world because the evolutionary notion repudiated one of the fundamental premises of Christianity about the Creation of the world. Those scientists who advocated evolutionism were denounced as atheists: Lamarck was bitterly criticized because of his evolutionary conception; Chambers could only anonymously publish his sensational book *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*; Darwin was undoubtedly under attack.²⁴

Under the circumstances, it is surprising that Emerson accepted evolution in the early nineteenth century, when even Lyell, who proved that “the Earth is still being moulded into new forms” (qtd. in Clark 248), rejected the modern evolutionary theory in his *Principles of Geology* (Beach, “Emerson” 478). Joseph Warren Beach argues that it was “Emerson’s” transcendentalism that made it possible for him to accept evolution without a qualm (The Concept 343). Even Coleridge, who was well-informed about contemporary science, refused the ape as our ancestor, regarding the view as “bestial theory” (qtd. in Beach, The Concept 337). Emerson still went as far as to sharpen his evolutionary idea, and lastly it seems that, as Carl F. Strauch concludes, Emerson transcendently wedded science to religion as the best compatible solution (“Emerson” 248; Beach, The Concept 339).

Thus, Emerson’s approach to scientific studies, evolution in particular, was also

transcendental and philosophical. We can say that his general attitude to evolution was, to be precise, different from so-called Social Darwinism that played a role in the development of literary Naturalism around the turn of the twentieth century.²⁵ The Naturalists in the late nineteenth century sought to apply the theories of Darwin to human social behavior, yet Emerson did not show his interest in this approach. Emerson had a belief in the incessant development of all beings, but he did not think that certain factors, such as heredity and social conditions, were unavoidable determinants in human life, as the Naturalists maintained. Unlike the Naturalists, Emerson consistently attached paramount importance to the notion of free will that enabled men and women to change in their circumstances.

In any event, the evolutionary theories that Emerson accepted to suggest the open possibilities of human beings were those of Lyell, Chambers, and Lamarck, not those of Darwin, which explained the concept of natural selection (Fujita 14). In fact, Emerson hardly developed his interest in the Darwinian theories of natural selection and of the preservation of favored races in the struggle for life. When Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859, Emerson only wrote down the incident in his journal (Fujita 14). It seems that he did not even read it and said later in 1873, "Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859, but Stallo, in 1849, writes, 'Animals are but

foetal forms of man" (*JMN* 16: 298). Emerson was apparently more attracted by the evolutionary theories developed before Darwin developed his, for Emerson had been already satisfied with the line of former theories that sought to explain the biological relationship between human beings and other species in the natural world.

Emerson developed his specific interest in science because he believed that it would uncover the nature of the human mind. In this regard, he writes in his journal: "Science must be studied humanly" (*JMN* 5: 169). Studying science was, for Emerson, studying the human race; therefore, he paid special attention to the doctrine of evolution, which would deal with the all-embracing order which penetrates the natural world.

Evolution never led Emerson to religious skepticism as it might have his contemporaries; on the contrary, it made his faith in the "Over-soul" stronger. In his thinking, his belief in the unlimited possibilities of humankind exactly matched the conception of evolutionary progress from the lower form to the higher. It is doubtless that Emerson happily granted that divine benevolence was working in every part of nature with the ultimate aim of driving the human soul toward an illimitable God. Evolution, for him, implied proof of an intelligent Deity, which fundamentally invigorated the spiral progression of all living things; everything should ascend within the scope of the aspiring circularity by the benevolent power of the "Over-soul," an

intelligent designer of nature.

In consequence, the theory of evolution greatly energized Emersonian optimism. Changes in the course of progressive transformation signify our capacity for self-improvement and thereby social amelioration (Whicher 162). For Emerson, change could be total, and perfection was finally possible not only for people but also for society. Embodying his desire for the spiritual growth of humankind, evolutionism considerably solidified his faith in the boundless possibility of humankind and society. Scarcely did the idea of our inherent evil occur to Emerson. He steadily held an idea of correspondence between the phenomenal and the spiritual world; therefore, he optimistically believed that the human soul and the world should develop ultimately toward a divinity just like a worm should mount through all the spires of form to strive to be a human being.

His optimism is generated, as Obuchowski notes, by the conviction that science could eventually aid in establishing spiritual truths with the same exactitude as physical truths (629). Indeed, Emerson later jotted down the following comment in his essay: "Modern science . . . generates a feeling of complacency and hope" (*W* 4: 80). It could be stated that Emerson carefully wove his own optimistic web of religious sight from various strands taken from the developing science of his times. Considering new

scientific discovery to be necessary to learn about nature and the human spirit, he truly welcomed science to build and shape his religious and philosophic insights.

Of course, his optimism and his tendency to look forward were also powerfully reinforced not merely by evolution but also by the American frontier spirit; the "yet untouched" land in the vast West, perhaps, symbolized brilliant hope in the eyes of the Concord sage (Clark 254). Along with scientific invention and with an extreme extension of the commercial system of his times, the frontier incontrovertibly contributed to the development of national property and gave Americans great hope for the future (Clark 254). Suitably encouraged, Emerson must have been given a positive image of the unlimited possibilities of humankind and society by evolution, by the knowledge of astronomy that unfolded an endless expansion of the universe, and by the enterprise in the vast open space to the West. It may well be that his optimistic faith had been totally confirmed by these "infinite" potentialities.

With his faith in the unbounded potentialities of human beings and society strengthened in this context, it definitely promised Emerson that Almighty God was a depersonalized great power immanent in nature, not a restrictedly personalized figure in Christianity (Clark 257). In "The Divinity School Address" he poignantly criticizes dogmatic Christianity on this point:

It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake. The true Christianity, a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man, is lost. None believeth in the soul of man, but only in some man or person old and departed. (*W* 1: 144)

In every detail, Emerson strongly speaks of "the error" in the dogmatic and traditional version of Christianity which is consecrated to "some man or person old and departed"—that is to say, Jesus Christ—instead of "the soul of man." For Emerson, God is impersonal and symbolizes the infinitude of the human soul, in which Christ believed. He denotes that the "true Christianity," the true religious devotion, should be a belief in "the infinitude of man," for he recognizes the open potentiality of each human being to approach and even to become God.

For Emerson, evolution indicates that every individual form unexceptionally has a growing tendency, and therefore encourages people to make efforts to attain their glittering future. When we take into consideration his self-reliant conviction that every individual has the boundless potentialities of development, we can say that his central ideology is in line with his interpretation of the evolutionary concept: it strikingly contributed to mold the core of his thought, such as self-reliance, individualism, and optimism, and also his self-reliant stance on social reform.

The essence of Emersonian philosophy is symbolized in a well-known paragraph he leaves in *Nature*: "I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all" (*W* 1: 10). To traverse this phrase, a remark by Jack Null is useful: "The eye is extremely important to Emerson. . . . [T]he eye is the first circle, then, because it is the spiracle of -It is that point of seeing / being which provides outlet for and inlet to Self" (269-70). Simply put, eye is "I," and it should be remembered that the eye is, for Emerson, the most fundamental and most important form of circle: "The eye is the first circle" (*W* 2: 301). As Emerson sees "all" by becoming "a transparent eye-ball," transparency obliquely accounts for infinitely protean potentialities. To sum it up, therefore, "a transparent eye-ball" represents an almighty self with limitless possibilities which epitomizes his central ideas.

While he enunciates his confidence in the endless evolutionary ascension of each individual, Emerson also hoped that America would show the boundless ascension of social progress. He ardently urged his contemporary men and women to be independent of the traditional version of Christianity and of European culture, seeking to drive the American creative mind in the direction of the evolutionary "spiral flowing" (Hopkins 143-44). Consequently, his optimistic idea was to form his country's tendency to look not backward but forward, which would later converge with prevalent

attitudes toward national development in mid-nineteenth-century America, commonly known as "Manifest Destiny."

He bursts out the exclamation in the first paragraph in *Nature*: "The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship" (*W* 1: 3). As this passage strikingly symbolizes Emersonian optimism, appreciation for indigenous American growth appears everywhere in Emerson to advise America to turn westward, onward, and upward.

III. Emerson in the Age of Antislavery

A. Self-Reliance and a Sense of Duty

The doctrine of evolution merges with Emersonian optimism. Carl F. Strauch lays it down that the "question of personal ethics in the cosmic process of progressive evolution is, undoubtedly, the most important for any student of Emerson, for it involves . . . optimism" ("The Daemonic" 45). For Emerson, evolution implied our unlimited ability of improvement. Confirmed by the implication of evolutionism, he believed that all men and women would expand their possibilities according to their own progressive tendencies. In this sense, evolution served as a model for laying the groundwork for Emerson's potential self-reliance, individualism, and optimism.

The limitless strength of the human mind signifies one of the basic ideas of the American Renaissance as it is also discovered in Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau. People of the period must have been encouraged by the "glorious" prospects for the future in the "ever-expanding" achievement of contemporary American experiences. In this respect, Emerson can be surely recognized as an advocate of "Americanism" in his times as well as a leading figure for those who were and are to follow him thereafter.

Emersonian optimism based on evolution can also explain his passivism for

participation in social reform movements in general. Although serious social issues, such as slavery and the "Indian" question, were evident in the United States in the era, Emerson was eagerly prone to avoid organizational cooperation for the improvement of society. What most prevented him from taking part in public reform campaigns was, perhaps, his individualism and his racism that was commonly shared by the vast majority of intellectuals of the early nineteenth century in the country.

For Emerson, evolution implied that people would attain their spiritual perfection in their own individual ways according to their progressive aspirations. Therefore, his exclusive emphasis upon the individual moral improvement irritated most social activists who attempted to reform society through their associations and their tireless efforts in that age.

Emerson basically thought that people could save none but themselves. He set forth his view upon the subject on March 2, 1837: "All philosophy, all theory, all hope are defeated when applied to society. There is in it an inconvertible brute force. . . . Progress is not for society. Progress belongs to the Individual" (*EL* 2: 176). Emerson maintains that "[a]ll philosophy, all theory, all hope" should not be applied to society, for progress is "not for society" but for "the Individual." As he articulates in this passage, he observes that reform should begin with the individual, for it will eventually

produce social improvement, and reformation on the individual level is even more important than collective efforts toward social betterment.

His special stress on the importance of individual responsibility impeded his early sanction for any associated agitation. This position generally separated him from abolitionists, and his aloof stance on social reform was a disappointment to them. Therefore, for some scholars who mainly give full consideration to Emerson's activities in the light of his self-reliant individualism, Emerson's contributions to the antislavery movement seem exceptional and inconsistent with the larger picture of his philosophy (Stryck 142).

However, it is certain that Emerson became gradually involved in the struggle with slavery. The 1850 national event particularly marked a new stage of development for Emerson's further commitment to the abolitionist movement: the Compromise of 1850 and Daniel Webster's speech in the Senate of the United States to support the compromise.²⁶ It consisted of five bills, but it is notable that provisions for the return of fugitive slaves, that is, the Fugitive Slave Law, which required even the Northern citizens to assist in the return of runaway slaves to their masters, terrified the abolitionists.²⁷ In one of his most famous speeches, Webster insisted that he supported the compromise for the preservation of the Union, and he was attacked by abolitionists

who had admired him in New England.

Disturbed at this national incident, Emerson launched his further adventure into the political world to take a more active involvement in the agitated question of slavery. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill and the öfallö of Webster had an enormous effect on Emerson and let him abandon for a time öhis distaste of philanthropyö (Moody 14). As he spent a great deal of his time in engagement with the public action against the cause, he wrote to Thomas Carlyle: öNo books . . . [and] a few lectures, each winter, I write & read. In the spring, the abomination of our Fugitive Slave-Bill drove me to some writing & speechmaking, without hope of effect, but to clear my own skirtsö (Emerson and Carlyle 470). The key to his eventual stance on the abolitionist movement may be found in these words. Notable is, as Marjory M. Moody examines, Emerson's confession that öhe had been *driven*ö to be concerned with the slavery question (15). Although he had had a hesitant attitude toward public action, the end result of his perturbation was his decision to write and make speeches publicly on the issue at the expense of his work against the grain. He had felt that he was more and more responsible for responding to expectations and pressures of people to cope with the impending crisis of the day.

A more careful assessment of the whole range of Emersonian pronouncements,

therefore, discloses the fact that his commitment to abolitionism is not an aberration but a natural extension of the principle of his own self-reliance (Stryck 141). As Michael Stryck indicates, Emerson's emphasis on self-reliance evolved over the course of his antislavery activities because it was "always tied to his other preoccupation: duty" (165).

Quite understandably, in the 1851 "Address to the Citizens of Concord" on the Fugitive Slave Law, censuring the inhumanity of the law, Emerson states: "It [the law] is contravened . . . [b]y the sentiment of duty. An immoral law makes it a man's duty to break it, at every hazard. For virtue is the very self of every man" (*AW* 57). People have a moral obligation to defy an immoral law as long as they show loyalty to virtue within the self. In his estimation, having self-reliance is, to sum up, taking responsibility for human goodness.

Furthermore, he underlines the importance of taking action in order to be a person who has self-trust. In his early speech "The American Scholar," he states:

Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it, he is not yet man. Without it, thought can never ripen into truth. . . . Inaction is cowardice, but there can be no scholar without the heroic mind. The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the

unconscious to the conscious, is action. (*CW* 1: 59)

In this statement, he emphasizes the significance of "action" for "the scholar," for it is the only way of shaping his or her thought into truth. For Emerson, the scholar is "Man Thinking," who has self-trust (*CW* 1: 53-54). Simply put, action is "essential" for self-reliance. Considering it a duty to take action, Emerson urges people to attain self-improvement.

In a word, self-reliance and a sense of duty are neither separable nor tangential in his philosophy. Rather, they are bound tightly: "They [duties] may all be comprised in self-trust" (*CW* 1: 62). In this regard, Strydom argues: "For Emerson, self-reliance was bound up with duty. Had he not felt any duty to his fellow individuals, had he not felt a sense of community, he would scarcely have bothered to lecture, preach, and write" (143). It is his sense of duty as well as his strong interest in human rights that eventually urged the philosopher of self-reliance to be involved in the social movements despite his temperamental reservation.

Furthermore, while he was drawn nearer and nearer to the vortex of abolitionist activity, he was apparently able to find a point of compromise between his sense of responsibility and his well-known tentative response to social issues by manipulating "the horses of his private and his public nature" as he illustrated in 1860:

One key, one solution to the mysteries of human condition, one solution to the old knots of fate, freedom, and foreknowledge, exists; the propounding, namely, of the double consciousness. A man must ride alternately on the horses of his private and his public nature, as the equestrians in the circus throw themselves nimbly from horse to horse, or plant one foot on the back of one and the other foot on the back of the other. (*W* 6: 47)

As he carefully describes, he finds a solution for his dilemma that is created by his commitment to the realm of public controversy in the equestrian performance: manipulating the two "horses of his private and his public natures," a man must control "the double consciousness."²⁸ To put it the other way around, this acrobatic maneuver, at the same time, implies Emerson's painstaking struggle for dealing with this emotional dilemma. Referring to "the double consciousness," he advises people to have two kinds of consciousness: private and public. When he was forced to participate in political actions, he tried to think of his private ideas and his public deeds in separate terms in order not to suffer from the emotional dilemma.

Emerson always felt the need for his participation in social reform campaigns in spite of his hesitation, for he was also incapable of detaching himself from the public arena. "It is impossible to extricate oneself from the questions in which your age is

involved" (*JMN* 15: 28), he writes in his 1863 journal: "You can no more keep out of politics than you can keep out of the frost" (*JMN* 15: 182). Drawing the analogy between politics and frost, Emerson opines that public issues should inexorably concern people as a natural phenomenon does.²⁹ Keenly aware that political consequences were as overwhelming and commanding as the laws of nature, he felt an unavoidable obligation to take part in the political domain in the age of social unrest.

B. The Personal Context and the Views on Race

Moreover, tracing his earliest material and his personal background makes it clear that social issues had long concerned Emerson and his family specifically in the antislavery context. His father, William Emerson, for all his small income, had supported "the Smith School in Boston, which provided free education for colored children of both sexes, from 1798 until his death in 1811" (Gougeon, "Abolition" 345; *VH* 24). Also, Emerson's own aunt Mary Moody Emerson and his stepfather, Reverend Ezra Ripley, had shown their enthusiastic engagement with the abolition of slavery since the early nineteenth century (Gougeon, "Abolition" 345-46; *VH* 24).

In particular, as critics have rediscovered the facts, Aunt Mary was Emerson's earliest, greatest teacher of the idealistic ethics that would carry him through the

controversy over slavery.³⁰ She had repudiated marriage and devoted her life to the antislavery movement and to mentoring her nephew. A perusal of the extant material reveals that Emerson was inspired by her and made his first statement on slavery much earlier than 1837, when he made his first speech on antislavery in public. When Emerson was preparing to write his student essay on "The Present State of Ethical Philosophy" in 1821, Mary wrote a letter to Emerson about British Enlightenment philosopher Richard Price's claim (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 70). She stated as follows: "Right and wrong have had claims prior to all rites—immutable & eternal in their nature" (LME 139). Profoundly influenced by Mary's idealistic certainties of moral law, Emerson referred to the following idea by making one of his earliest statements on slavery in an essay:

[T]he plague spot of slavery must be purged thoroughly out before any one will venture to predict any great consummation. . . . It is ennobling . . . to place ourselves on an eminence from whence we may survey at once the whole history of legislation and refer to our knowledge of ethical truth in judging of the good or bad spirit of laws. (*Two Unpublished Essays* 77-79)

Keeping his distance from the political arena, Emerson does not show any specific way

of abolishing slavery in this statement (Rao 73). He prefers to stay "on an eminence" from whence he can judge "the good or bad spirit of laws." Even more crucial is, however, that he here regarded slavery as a "plague" to "be purged thoroughly out" as early as 1821. In this period, the question of admitting Missouri to the Union caused a controversy between the Northern and Southern politicians, and people had just begun to deal with the issue of slavery in a very few antislavery newspapers, such as the *Emancipator*, the *Abolition Intelligencer*, and the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*.³¹

Thereafter Emerson was almost constantly aware of slavery. Showing his detestation of the institution, which deprives human beings of their freedom of will, his reference to the issue appears in his 1822 journal entry:

To establish, by whatever specious argumentation, the perfect expediency of the worst institution on earth is *prima facie* an assault upon Reason and Common Sense. No ingenious sophistry can ever reconcile the unperturbed mind to the pardon of *Slavery*. . . . (JMN 2: 57)³²

In his discussion about "the worst institution on earth," Emerson evokes "Slavery," which assaults "Reason and Common Sense." For him, it is indisputable that slavery is an unpardonable institution. Arguing for total equality of the human race on a spiritual level, he here obviously exhibits his basic moral position from which he would

never deviate in the future (*VH* 33). What we get here is, however, that slavery itself was largely an abstraction and an institution to be referred to as an example of moral corruption for the teenage Emerson, who lived in and near Boston most of his life.

In 1827, however, Emerson made his first comment about having directly witnessed the miseries of slavery.³³ When he visited St. Augustine, Florida, for his health, he attended the Bible Society, which was held next to a Slave Auction. He writes about the situation, highlighting the remarkable contradiction between Christianity and slavery in an ironic tone in his journal:

One ear therefore heard the glad tidings of great joy whilst the other was regaled with "Going gentlemen, Going!" And almost without changing our position we might aid in sending the Scriptures into Africa or bid for "four children without the mother who had been kidnapped therefrom."
(*JMN* 3: 117)

As his ironic description shows, while one ear heard "the glad tidings of great joy" at aiding in sending "the Scriptures into Africa," the other was regaled with a bid at the Slave Auction, "Going gentlemen, Going!" This experience symbolized a clear contradiction in the Christian country which justified slavery, and it was upsetting and nauseating for him. He wrote in his journals on the moral implication of slavery

several times in the years following this incident (Gougeon, "Abolition" 354). Nonetheless, he preferred not to make any comment on this subject in public in this period. During his silence, however, the conditions of slaves became worse. As the increasing demand for raw cotton more firmly systematized the Southern plantation business, antislavery sentiment within the nation became more vociferous (Moody 4; Rao 76). In this context, William Lloyd Garrison launched his antislavery publication the *Liberator*, in 1831, and Wendell Phillips established the New England Anti-Slavery Society in 1833; and moreover, Emerson also offered his pulpit at the Second Church to one of the abolitionist speakers in 1831 (Moody 4-5; Rao 76).

At that time, although sympathetic to the abolitionists, Emerson had still demurred from taking an active involvement in the movement, in which he failed to find any solution to the fundamental cause of the problem. As has already been examined, his early emphasis was consistently on individual effort, not on the collective campaign. He thought that any kind of social problem was caused by individual moral deterioration and that people should reform society by improving their morality. In order to ameliorate society, therefore, he believed that people should begin with their own moral reform, and so he eschewed participating in the abolitionist movement.

However, his emphasis on the significance of individuality was tested by the

social fray caused by the anti-abolition mob between 1834 and 1837.³⁴ Especially, in 1836, when a boatload of abolitionist writings from New York was impounded by the Charleston postmaster and publicly burned by a mob, the government adopted the "gag rule," which prevented all antislavery petitions from being read and discussed (Gougeon, "Abolition" 360; *VH* 36). In addition to this, as Len Gougeon sees, it was of the highest importance for Emerson that an anti-abolitionist mob killed Elijah P. Lovejoy, an abolitionist publisher, whom Emerson regarded as "an authentic hero" because of his self-sacrificing efforts for abolitionism ("Abolition" 362; *VH* 38). Under such circumstances, Emerson finally found the need for getting involved in the conflict, and he decided to deliver his first speech on the issue in public in 1837.

To the abolitionists' disappointment, however, his major focus in this 1837 statement was not on the antislavery claim but on the question of freedom of speech threatened by the "gag rule," as critics suggest (Gougeon, "Abolition" 345; Moody 5; *VH* 39). Concerning abolition, he still emphasizes in his speech the importance of individual moral suasion rather than collective engagement with social betterment: "Let our own evils check the bitterness of our condemnation of our brother, and . . . let us not reproach the planter, but own that his misfortune is at least as great as his sin."³⁵ As this statement illustrates, since he undoubtedly views slavery as a great "sin," it is

accurate to say that he never wavers in his commitment to the antislavery sentiment. Nonetheless, instead of taking his active engagement with the campaign for the abolition of slavery, he here urges people to "check the bitterness of [their] condemnation of [their] brother." This statement may indicate that Emerson even defends the planter since he maintains that people should not "reproach the planter, who suffer great "misfortune" in owning the slaves. As he has faith in individual capacity for redeeming oneself from sin, he believes that none but the planters can ultimately save themselves. In this manner, he clearly attacked the institution of slavery throughout the speech, yet he continued to stress the need for individual self-improvement, which sounded "rather cool and philosophical" and eventually disappointed the abolitionists (Cabot 2: 426).³⁶

Though the abolitionists were disheartened by his oration in 1837, it marked Emerson's initial commitment to the realm of public controversy. While the abolitionists had expected more than what the lecturer actually stated, people found some liberalism in his untypical announcement and viewed the speech as his foray into the field (Collison 187; *VH* 62).

Furthermore, Emerson's political engagement took shape into another public pronouncement in this period. Noteworthy is the fact that in the following year, 1838,

he showed a sympathetic response to the "Indian" question.³⁷ In addition to the discovery of gold on Cherokee land in 1828, the demand for more land to settle the growing white population contributed to the national agitation over "Indian" removal which reached a climax in the early 1830s.³⁸ In 1838-39, the Cherokees were eventually forced to cede their homelands in the Southeast and to remove to the West according to a treaty with the United States government that was signed unfairly by a faction of Cherokee leaders.

After delivering an oration entitled "Appeal of the Cherokees" at the town meeting to protest the forcible removal of the Cherokees, Emerson sent an open letter to Martin Van Buren, the president of the United States (*EMF* 276; Gougeon, "Historical Background" xviii; Maddox 16; *VH* 57). Emerson pungently condemns the government for making an unfair treaty with the Cherokees in his brief letter:

Such a dereliction of all faith and virtue, such a denial of justice, and such deafness to screams for mercy, were never heard of in times of peace, and in the dealing of a nation with its own allies and wards, since the earth was made. Sir, does the Government think that the People of the United States are become savage and mad? From their minds are the sentiments of love and of a good nature wiped clean out? The soul of man, the justice, the

mercy, that is the heart's heart in all men, from Maine to Georgia, does
abhor this business. (*AW* 3)

Depicting the removal of the Cherokees from their land as "a dereliction of all faith and virtue," "a denial of justice," and "deafness to screams for mercy," Emerson expresses dismay at the "savage" and "mad" action of the government in this letter. As a mouthpiece for those who protested against the treaty, he requested a reconsideration of government policy. His sympathetic attitude toward the Cherokees was later echoed in his final stance on the issue of African-Americans (*VH* 57). Showing his own disapproval of the government's policy, Emerson allowed himself to take a pivotal role in the social issue, which was absolutely against his moral sense and incompatible with the basic ideas of Emerson, who never hesitated to be committed to the principles of the freedom of human beings.

In addition to his first antislavery address in 1837, a letter to President Van Buren was thought of as his imminent entry onto the realm of political controversy (Collison 187; Gougeon, "Historical Background" xviii; *VH* 62). Printing Emerson's letter to the President on June 22, 1838, the *Liberator* added a comment on it:

The bold, energetic and independent tone of the following letter is worthy
of the highest admiration. It ought to be printed in every newspaper, and

sent to every family in the United States. Can it be possible that the mind and heart which gave it birth are unaffected by the woes of the slaves! We hope not. (2)³⁹

Thereafter, however, Emerson kept his silence for the following six years (Gougeon, "Historical Background" xx; *VH* 41). "Perhaps the greatest obstacle to Emerson's more active participation in the abolitionist movement at this time was," as Gougeon points out, "his belief in the basic inferiority of the Negro" (*VH* 66). In fact, the idea of racial inferiority of Africans had long haunted Emerson since his early days.⁴⁰ In his journal, as early as 1822, he disclosed his racist views:

Nature has plainly assigned different degrees of intellect to these different races, and the barriers between are insurmountable. This inequality is an indication of the design of Providence that some should lead, and some should serve. (*JMN* 2: 43)

From this comment, we can evidently note that Emerson acknowledges the clear hierarchy between races and does not consider that these races share equal intelligence. Finding "different degrees of intellect" in different races, Emerson takes the "inequality" for granted. The "barriers between are insurmountable" because he sees "the design of Providence" in the assumption. The implication of his words "some

should lead, and some should serve is apparently his approval for the institution of slavery.

However, this kind of idea did not belong to Emerson alone, for it was quite common even for the abolitionists in the age (Field 2; Gougeon, "Abolition" 355; *VH* 355). Indeed, a journal entry of the same year strikingly reveals Emerson's acceptance of the contemporary racial assumption that Africans are not equal in their intellectual ability and capacity to compete in society. He begins with the reflection on the difference between human beings and animals as follows:

I saw ten, twenty, a hundred large lipped, lowbrowed black men in the streets who, except in the mere matter of language, did not exceed the sagacity of the elephant. Now is it true that these were created superior to this wise animal, and designed to controul [control] it? And in the comparison with the highest orders of men, the Africans will stand so low as to make the difference which subsists between themselves & the sagacious beasts inconsiderable. (*JMN* 2: 48)

This passage overtly demonstrates that at an early date Emerson believed in the basic inferiority of Africans, who had a closer connection to the animal quality than to that of human beings. Maintaining that they are similar to "elephants" or "the sagacious

beasts,ö he wonders if öa hundred large lipped, lowbrowed black menö are öcreated superior to this wise animal.ö It is quite obvious that the teenage Emerson had a belief in racial inequality.

More importantly, what provided fertile ground on Emerson's racist views was his continuous interest in science, particularly in the theory of evolution. As has been already noted, he had shown his broad interests in scientific studies, such as astronomy, botany, zoology, physiology, and geology; his acquaintance with these fields ultimately led him to the theory of evolution, which impacted upon the issues of liberty and slavery in the period. Emerson shared essential concepts and patterns of thinking about issues regarding evolutionism with the contemporary scientists from the earliest days of its existence.

Not surprisingly, like the nineteenth-century evolutionists, Emerson was convinced that Africans were in the way of progress, and even that the inferior should be naturally extinguished (Matsunaga 82). In 1840 Emerson entered in his journal a general reflection about the racial claim:

Strange history this of *abolition*. The Negro must be very old & belongs, one would say, to the fossil formations. What right has he to be intruding into the late & civil daylight of this dynasty of the Caucasians & Saxons?

It is plain that so inferior a race must perish shortly. . . . That is the very fact of their inferiority. There is always place for the superior. (*JMN* 7: 393)

By his account, Africans belong to "the fossil formations" without a right to "be intruding into the late [and] civil daylight of this dynasty of the Caucasians [and] Saxons." Viewing the history of abolition as "strange," Emerson finally fails to approve abolitionism itself. He, at this time, considers enslaving Africans to be unavoidable because of their inferiority. He believes that "so inferior a race must perish shortly" because there is "always place for the superior" in the evolutionary struggle of races.

This is a very brief summary of the racial assumption that even the nineteenth-century abolitionists held in common. As David S. Reynolds rightly points out, several other abolitionists, such as Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, and Theodore Parker, also had racist views (462). "No doubt the African race is," in the words of Parker, "greatly inferior to the Caucasian in general intellectual power, and also in an instinct for liberty which is so strong in the Teutonic family."⁴¹ Even prominent abolitionists believed in the inferiority of Africans in intellect and the will. Emphasizing the superiority of the Caucasian race that could grant liberty to the slaves, they were engaged in the abolitionist movement from their own perspective. In this context,

“Emerson’s racism was,” as Lawrence Buell examines, “certainly no greater than that of most northern white abolitionists, and far less than the average northern white” (*Emerson* 259).

According to Peter S. Field, Emerson’s racial assumptions were conspicuously associated with his growing nationalism (8). Assuming the innate inferiority of non-white Americans, Emerson highlighted the “Anglo-Saxon independence and capacity for self-government” that had played a major role in establishing the great nation of the world (Field 2). With the aim of underscoring the historical attainment of the Saxons, Emerson needed to justify the claim that the “nation’s vitality as manifested in its territorial expansion, commercial might, democratic institutions, and promising future” was largely the product of Saxon genius by showing its racial superiority (Field 9).

As Emerson’s view of race was “the most troubling element” in his politics, it was problematic specifically for the thinker, who insistently required individual effort to achieve self-redemption (Read 166). Believing that each individual was responsible for his or her own moral improvement, Emerson assumed that slaves should also have the obligation to be engaged in their own salvation (*VH* 66). Thus, the belief in the basic inferiority of Africans and of other minorities made Emerson doubt their

capabilities of taking part in their own moral amelioration. Abolitionism itself was, in conclusion, rather questionable to him because, as the above journal entry reveals, he held that there was no "place" on earth for the inferior races. Hence, he probably refrained from a more active involvement in the field at that point in time.

Nevertheless, Emerson showed his growing concern for abolitionism. When it came to race, to be more precise, he truly believed in the spiritual equality of all men regardless of racial differences, and he could hardly get away from his conviction that slavery was fundamentally "iniquitous and malevolent" (Field 6). Certainly, this idea that "blacks were racially inferior but spiritually equal" was commonly held even by strident abolitionists of the age (Gougeon, "Abolition" 355; *VH* 355).⁴² Emerson stated in an 1834 journal entry: "Because every man has within him somewhat really divine therefore is slavery the unpardonable outrage it is" (*JMN* 4: 357).⁴³ As this passage indicates, Emerson believes in the spiritual equality of all men and women, and he asserts that slavery is "the unpardonable outrage." To put it plainly, therefore, while he had very little doubt that we evenly shared the divine element, he did not believe in the equality of all human beings in intellect (Field 27).

Although he saw that Africans and other minorities were unequal in their intelligence, he was constantly inspired by his families and by ardent abolitionists, such

as Parker and William Henry Furness. In addition to their influence, Emerson was willing to accept various scientific investigations through which the abolitionists aimed at establishing the fact of equality among the races. He became keenly aware of a need to challenge the assertion of African-American intellectual inferiority prevalent in his era, and he tried to rethink his own views on race.⁴⁴ Beginning to be emotionally sympathetic with the antislavery movement, Emerson printed in the 1844 April *Dial* an article entitled "Saturday and Sunday among the Creoles: A Letter from the West Indies" written by B. P. Hunt, an American businessman in Haiti (G. W. Allen 424; *VH* 68).⁴⁵ In this paper, Hunt reports his investigation into the difference between white and black children on his visit to one of the West Indian Sunday schools that contains "between four and five hundred pupils, white and colored" (522). The writer discusses as follows:

Mr. Symmes, [who kept the school], confirmed the remark which is often made, that colored children were fully equal to white, in point of intellect. . . . The colored children . . . appeared to be as bright and as clear-spirited as any set of children I ever saw. They were ready and clear in their answers, and I thought contrasted rather favorably with the white children intermingled with them. . . . Negro infants seldom have dull, lumpish features; much less often,

I think, than those of whites. (Hunt 522)

As Hunt mentions, in the words of Mr. Symmes, the keeper of the school, he found that the black children were "fully equal to white" in intellect. In addition to the point of intellect, moreover, he states that the black children could favorably compare with the white in ability and manners as well, discovering that they were "as bright and as clear-spirited" as any children he ever met.

Probably encouraged by this study, Emerson must have been willing to include the article in the Transcendental publication the *Dial*, for which he assumed full editorial responsibilities (G. W. Allen 424). As Gougeon indicates, Emerson was pleased with this report and actively accepted many other similar opinions that attempted to refute the assertion of racial inequality, and he apparently began to think that there was little perceptible difference between the races in terms of intellectual capabilities as well as the spiritual quality ("Emerson and Abolition" 571). As he later mentions, the "plea that the negro is an inferior race sounds very oddly in my ear from a slave-holder," it can be argued that his racial views began to change during this period (AW 85).⁴⁶

C. From Antislavery to Abolition⁴⁷

Emerson's evolving ideas about race probably fostered his antislavery sentiment, and he had come a long way from the racist views and basic detachment from the political field over time. A gradual change in his racial views inevitably had a substantial influence on his becoming a stronger advocate of the cause than ever before.

On August 1, 1844, on the occasion of the jubilee to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the emancipation of slaves of the British West Indies, Emerson addressed an abolitionist audience in Concord.⁴⁸ In the speech, Emerson demonstrated his revision of thought on the following three points, which were significant in the development of his stance toward slavery: (1) his views on race; (2) his opinion about illegal seizures of Africans in Massachusetts; (3) his attitude toward the planters.⁴⁹

In the first place, Emerson discloses in the lecture his new attitude toward racial difference that he did not hold in the previous 1837 address:

Not the least affecting part of this history of abolition, is, the annihilation of the old indecent nonsense about the nature of the negro. . . . It now appears, that the negro race is, more than any other, susceptible of rapid civilization. . . .

I have said that this event interests us because it came mainly from the concession of the whites; I add, that in part it is the earning of the

blacks. They won the pity and respect which they have received, by their powers and native endowments. . . . I esteem the occasion of this jubilee to be the proud discovery that the black race can contend with the white. . . .
(*AW* 29-31)

This statement exhibits a striking contrast with his journal entry in 1840, which approves the subordination of Africans because of their racial inferiority. Emerson in 1840 subscribed to a racialized assumption that Africans were "very old" and belonged to "the fossil formations," but he apparently gets rid of the idea here, construing it as "the old indecent nonsense about the nature of the negro." Averring that Africans are "susceptible of rapid civilization," he unhesitatingly assigns a special value to "the proud discovery that the black race can contend with the white." The achievement of the slaves of the British West Indies shows Emerson the fact that there is little difference between the races in ability and quality. Here, a liberal change in his racial views is manifest in the above statement, and accordingly, these new ideas enable him to give prominence to the abolitionist movement.

The second of the changes that had taken place in Emerson's attitude toward slavery by 1844 is, as Moody examines, shown in his outrage at illegal seizures of Africans in Massachusetts (9). He was often surprised to hear that Africans in

Massachusetts had been illegally captured and enslaved. Emerson vehemently expresses his anger at these inhuman actions by stating in this address that the "Union is already at an end, when the first citizen of Massachusetts is thus outraged" (*AW* 25).

The third point that shows his revision of thought in the 1844 speech is that he very much opposed the planters in public as follows:

We sometimes say, the planter does not want slaves, he only wants the immunities and the luxuries which the slave yields him; give him money, give him a machine that will yield him as much money as the slaves, and he will thankfully let them go. . . . But I think experience does not warrant this favorable distinction, but shows the existence, besides the covetousness, of a bitterer element, the love of power, the voluptuousness of holding a human being in his absolute control. (*AW* 17)

As he affirms, slavery is based on the immorality of the planters who desire money and power by exploiting human beings. While people say that the planter wants not only slaves but also "the immunities and the luxuries which the slave yields him," Emerson sharply notes that slavery is deeply rooted in "the covetousness" of human nature, such as "the love of power" and "the voluptuousness of holding a human being in his absolute control." He declares that it undeniably signifies moral corruption, and

through the harsh attack on the planters, he severely stresses the injustice of the institution itself.

In striking contrast to this speech, as has been already examined, Emerson emphasized the planters' misfortune in the previous 1837 statement. He did not find the need to reproach the planter, for he had faith in individual capacity for redeeming oneself from the sin, believing that none but the planters could save themselves. In other words, his preference in 1837 was for individual self-redemption rather than for an active attack on the planters. In this speech, however, he discards his reserved attitude toward the planters and does not hesitate to pronounce his strong opposition to them, leaving no room for taking account of their excuses.

Finally, significantly enough, he rounds off this 1844 address with a positive statement about the abolitionist movement itself:

Seen in masses, it cannot be disputed, there is progress in human society. There is a blessed necessity by which the interest of men is always driving them to the right; and, again, making all crime mean and ugly. . . . The Intellect, with blazing eye, looking through history from the beginning onward, gazes on this blot, and it disappears. (*AW* 32-33)

As this passage indicates, he finally shows his willingness to take a positive attitude

toward abolition, believing in a better future. In the tireless efforts of the "masses," he recognizes "progress in human society" and "a blessed necessity" which drives people to "the right." He eventually gives significance to engagement in collective action more than individual moral suasion and encourages people to be united to cope with the growing crisis.

In this respect, this 1844 speech is a "milestone" (*VH* 87) which signals his conversion from a detached philosopher of self-reliance to an active abolitionist, which a critic terms the "transition from antislavery to abolition" (*VH* 85).⁵⁰ While he certainly showed his "antislavery" sentiment from his early years, his positive participation in the organized "abolition" movement would continue to grow from this speech forward (*VH* 85). Regarding the 1844 speech as his active participation in the agitation, other abolitionists hailed Emerson as one of their members, and he aligned himself with them.⁵¹

Furthermore, as has been noted, many critics have agreed that the 1850 national event decisively marked a turning point in Emerson's further commitment to the abolitionist movement: the Compromise of 1850 and Daniel Webster's speech to help the bill to be passed (Collison 194; Field 21; Gougeon, "Historical Background" xxxviii; Moody 13; Rao 80; Stryck 161; *VH* 138-39). After California entered the

Union as a free state, which disrupted the balance between free and slave states, the Compromise of 1850 was introduced into the United States Congress in an attempt to settle the conflict between the North and the South.⁵² It consisted of five bills concerning the return of fugitive slaves, the admission of California as a free state, a boundary dispute between Texas and New Mexico, and so forth. Among them, in particular, the Fugitive Slave Law provoked the abolitionists. In the "Seventh of March Speech" in 1850, one of his most famous speeches, Webster insisted that he unequivocally supported the compromise; and consequently, he considerably disappointed abolitionists who had had respect for him in New England.

In response to this dramatic and disturbing national incident, Emerson decided to make a speech in order to take a positive action to articulate his fight against the law to the public. In the beginning of the address on the Fugitive Slave Law in 1851 called "Address to the Citizens of Concord," he underscored the need for a greater participation in the movement:

I accepted your invitation to speak to you on the great question of these days, with very little consideration of what I might have to offer; for there seems to be no option. The last year has forced us all into politics, and made it a paramount duty to seek what it is often a duty to shun. . . . I have

lived all my life in this State, and never had any experience of personal inconvenience from the laws, until now. (*AW* 53)

Although he was rarely in personal contact with slavery, he states here that the 1850 law irresistibly drew him into the political uproar. Emerson has “never had any experience of personal inconvenience from the laws,” yet there is “no option” for the thinker but to respond to the newly enacted law, which requires even him to participate in the institution. The statement suggests that he does feel that he has to take a more affirmative engagement in the matter than ever before, for he is disturbed and outraged by the passage of the law. On this point, he goes on to address:

The precedents are few. It is not easy to parallel the wickedness of this American law. And that is the head and body of this discontent, that the law is immoral. Here is a statute which enacts the crime of kidnapping,—a crime on one footing with arson and murder. A man’s right to liberty is as inalienable as his right to life. (*AW* 56-57)

It is obvious to Emerson that the law is “wicked” and “immoral.” He calls the law “a statute which enacts the crime of kidnapping” because the law inevitably forces even the Northern citizens to cooperate actively in the capture and return of escaped slaves to their masters.

In order to agitate the crowd and oppose the law successfully, the contemporary abolitionists often used the term "kidnapping." One of the most significant of the "kidnapping" incidents was the case of a fugitive slave named Anthony Burns, who was arrested in the streets of Boston and returned to his "owner" in 1854. With the aim of protesting the case, Parker resisted the law and printed a notice announcing, "A Man Was Stolen Last Night by the Fugitive Slave Bill Commissioner, He Will Hold His Mock Trial on Saturday, May 27, at 9 O'clock in the Kidnapper's Court," and the abolitionists carried the placard that read, "Shall Boston Steal Another Man?" (Commager 233).⁵³ As the above statement indicates, Emerson also undoubtedly censures the law for "kidnapping" citizens as an ardent spokesman for the abolitionists, showing his outrage at the barbarity and brutality caused by the law.⁵⁴

In addition to the passage of the bill, the "fall" (Moody 14) of Daniel Webster also gave momentum to Emerson's vigorous attack against the cause. As has been just noted, the Massachusetts senator had been the great hope of New England abolitionists, and therefore his unexpected support for the bill irresistibly roused them to anger. As Frank Shuffelton notes, since Emerson himself had also shown his greatest admiration for Webster for thirty years, the deed of the senator undoubtedly had a profound effect on Emerson's attitude toward the issue in addition to the passage of the Fugitive Slave

Law (59).

In the same 1851 address, "Address to the Citizens of Concord," Emerson expresses his disappointment and dismay at Webster:

[Mr. Webster] who was their pride in the woods and mountains of New England, is now their mortification. . . . I have as much charity for Mr. Webster, I think, as any one has. I need not say how much I have enjoyed his fame. Who has not helped to praise him? Simply, he was the one eminent American of our time. . . . But as the activity and growth of slavery began to be offensively felt by his constituents, the senator became less sensitive to these evils. . . . [H]e crossed the line, and became the head of the slavery party in this country. (*AW* 65-66)

For Emerson, who had long appreciated the senator's great gifts as a politician, Webster was one of the last persons who would make concessionary gestures toward slavery, and Emerson felt "the moral betrayal" from Webster's support for the passage of the law (Stryick 161). In the words of Emerson, while the senator was "the one eminent American" of his times, he "became less sensitive" and eventually "crossed the line" to be "the head of the slavery party in this country." Advocating the Fugitive Slave Bill, Senator Webster consequently created a sensation not only for Emerson but also for his

Boston neighbors who had admired him (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 76).

Finally, at the end of the speech, showing unambiguous support, Emerson was a strong advocate of the cause of abolitionism:

What shall we do? First, abrogate this law; then proceed to confine slavery to slavery states, and help them effectually to make an end of it.

Or shall we, as we are advised on all hands, lie by, and wait the progress of the census? But will Slavery lie by? I fear not. She is very industrious, gives herself no holidays. . . . She got Texas, and now will have Cuba. . . .

The experience of the past gives us no encouragement to lie by. . . . Let us correct this error. In this one fastness, let truth be spoken, and right done.

Here let there be no confusion in our ideas. . . . Let us know, that not by the public, but by ourselves, our safety must be brought. (*AW* 68-72)

This passage shows Emerson's heightened sense of crisis: he was seriously worried that the country might be overwhelmed by slavery without taking countermeasures. Eloquently warning a Concord audience of the threatening power of slavery, he urges people to respond by their actions. As slavery is so "industrious" that it gains immense influence on the public day by day, Emerson requires people to "abrogate this law" to put a conclusion to the institution. Through these statements he underlines the

importance of positive efforts to challenge a law that is against moral sense. Here, Emerson's voice is, no doubt, that of an active reformer who speaks for human liberty and human rights.⁵⁵

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was clearly a transition for Emerson (Collison 194; Field 21; Gougeon, "Historical Background" xxxviii; Moody 13; Rao 80; Stryck 161; *VH* 138). It gave him an opportunity to take an active role in the issue. Moreover, as the years went on, he was forcefully driven to greater participation in the cause. One of the most significant of the events that enormously moved him more into "the dusty lists of public agitation" in this period was the Kansas-Nebraska Act passed by the United States Congress in 1854 (*VH* 192). Developed by Illinois senator Stephen Douglas, it allowed people in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska to decide their own attitude either for or against slavery by majority vote, but the act virtually nullified the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which prohibited slavery north of the 36°30' (Jeffrey 176-77). While outraging many citizens in the North who had long accepted the Missouri Compromise as an agreement, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was approved by proslavery people in the South. As Julie Roy Jeffrey suggests, the passage of the act could be interpreted as a "victory for a rapacious Slave Power" (176).

Showing his considerable perturbation and dismay at the act, Emerson made up

his mind to deliver a new speech on the topic entitled "The Fugitive Slave Law" in New York in 1854, and he exhibited his identification with the abolitionist movement more than ever before:

Whilst the inconsistency of slavery with the principles on which the world is built guarantees its downfall, I own that the patience it requires is almost too sublime for mortals and seems to demand of us more than mere hoping. . . . I think we demand of superior men that they shall be superior in this, that the mind and the virtue give their verdict in their day and accelerate so far the progress of civilization. . . . I respect the Anti-Slavery Society. . . . I hope we have come to an end of our unbelief, have come to a belief that there is a Divine Providence in the world which will not save us but through our own co-operation. (*AW* 86-89)

Emerson's enthusiastic posture toward abolitionism reaches a peak in this statement. Paying his respects to the Anti-Slavery Society, he keenly finds himself sympathetic to abolitionists. Abandoning his early philosophic detachment and his optimistic views that society should be naturally progressing toward a better world, here he comes to feel the necessity of doing "more than mere hoping." Ultimately, Emerson demands a collective campaign in order to accelerate the progress of human society, coming to "a

belief that there is a Divine Providenceö that will save the world through
öco-operation.ö The Fugitive Slave Act brought Emerson face to face with slavery,
and his sympathy with the abolitionist movement gradually and definitely moved him to
take a role of encouraging his countrymen and women to defend their ethics and honour
against the institution.

Throughout the 1850s, Emerson became a tireless participant in the abolitionist
movement, and devoted much of his time and energies to numerous activities in support
of the campaign. In addition to countless informal lectures and talks, he delivered
more than nine antislavery addresses throughout the Northeast in the mid-1850s,
attending a number of other meetings and events.⁵⁶ Joining his family and friends in
raising money for the New England Emigrant Aid Society and other abolitionist causes,
he was willing to offer his home to prominent abolitionists, such as John Brown, who
led a raid on the Armory at Harpers Ferry in 1859 (Field 20; Moody 17-18). Also, in
1854, according to a critic, the Emersonsöresidence in Boston seems to have served as
öa stop on the Underground Railroad,ö which covertly assisted fugitive slaves, öjoining
those of the Alcotts, Brooks, and Thoreausö (Field 19). öIt is impossible to imagine,ö
as Field states, öthe Concord sage, who assiduously protected his solitude, becoming so
publicly engaged in any other issueö (19).

As Emerson had deeply engaged in many activities against slavery, his abolitionist sentiment eventually led to his endorsement of the Civil War. In his demand for emancipation, Emerson finally featured the war as a necessary protest against slavery (Collison 204-05; Field 21; Gougeon, "Emerson's Circle" 38; Moody 18-19). As Gougeon observes, Emerson is clearly "the first white American intellectual to call for the use of federal force in the defense of African Americans' civil rights" ("Militant Abolitionism" 624).⁵⁷

In a letter to James Elliot Cabot in 1861, Emerson wrote as follows: "the war with its defeats & uncertainties is immensely better than what we lately called the integrity of the Republic, as amputation is better than cancer" (*L* 5: 253).⁵⁸ As he is articulate about the need for the conflagration that is much better than "the integrity of the Republic," he prods people toward the Civil War to purge the greatest evil from the continent. Using the metaphor that "amputation is better than cancer," the war is, for Emerson, preferable to seeking peace with slaveholders (Field 21).

Like most abolitionists, Emerson was also at first disappointed at Abraham Lincoln, who attached greater importance to the preservation of the Union than the emancipation of slaves.⁵⁹ For "the Union with Slavery," wrote Emerson in a letter to Oliver Wendell Holmes, "no manly person will suffer a day to go by without

discrediting disintegrating & finally exploding it. [T]he "union" they talk of, is dead & rotten" (*L* 5: 18). Predicting that "the Union with Slavery" would be on the verge of dissolving, he saw that the country might not survive as long as the question of slavery remained unsolved. He took a swipe at Lincoln's inaction over the issue in his 1862 address.⁶⁰ He states as follows:

The evil you contend with has taken alarming proportions and you still content yourself with parrying the blows it aims, but, as if enchanted, abstain from striking at the cause. . . . [There is an] occasion which heaven offers to sense and virtue. It looks as if we held the fate of the fairest possession of mankind in our hands, to be saved by our firmness or to be lost by hesitation. . . . Emancipation is the demand of Civilization. (*W* 11: 300-04)

It is in the emancipation of slaves that Emerson finds a key to saving the country. In his estimation, Lincoln is unready and hesitates to tackle the case while there is obviously a great chance to perform a noble service for the cause of freedom and virtue. Since it seems to him that they held "the fate of the fairest possession of mankind" in their own hands, Emerson definitely requires the emancipation of slaves that is "the demand of Civilization."

Delivering the above speech entitled "American Civilization" at the Smithsonian

in Washington, D.C. in 1862, Emerson met the President the next day at the White House with Moncure Conway, a prominent abolitionist (*EMF* 547-48). As Robert D. Richardson, Jr. suggests, Emerson was more impressed than he had hoped (*EMF* 548), for Lincoln said to Conway: "I am not without hope that something of the desire of you and your friends may be accomplished" (Conway 1: 345).

Lincoln finally issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, and Emerson undoubtedly welcomed it and remarked a few days after its promulgation:

With this blot removed from our national honor, this heavy load lifted off the national heart, we shall not fear henceforward to show our faces among mankind. We shall cease to be hypocrites and pretenders, but what we have styled our free institutions shall be such. (*W* 11: 321)⁶¹

Emerson celebrates the Emancipation Proclamation, which would remove the heightened concern that stuck in his throat, fervently hoping that it would be the first step to avoid further national crisis. Now that "this blot" and "this heavy load" are removed from their "national honor," Americans can be proud of themselves, and they are no longer "hypocrites and pretenders." It is evident for Emerson that the institution of slavery discloses the fundamental contradiction of democracy, and its malignancy has had a destructive, pernicious effect on the entire nation.

Despite his long-standing reservations, the threatening power of slavery increasingly drove Emerson to take part in the ardent controversy from the 1820s to the Civil War. As an inspiring figure for his contemporaries, his contribution to the cause is highly significant in the context of the abolitionist movement. “Rather than a person active in responding to and shaping historical events,” as a critic puts it, Emerson served mostly “as a symbol—Apostle of Culture or the Transcendentalist *par excellence*” (Teichgraeber 505). There was, in fact, no one else who had lived a life like Emerson’s—his lifelong activities and ideas about the cultural and political concerns of everyday Americans shaped public debate about the antebellum and postbellum culture. In this sense, his prolonged detestation of slavery and his growing sympathy with the abolitionist movement doubtlessly gained national attention and urged men and women to make strenuous efforts to realize an end to slavery.

Charles Henry Brainard, an American print dealer, publisher, and historian, produced an antislavery lithographic print titled “Heralds of Freedom” in Boston in 1857.⁶² There are several prominent abolitionists portrayed on the poster, such as Wendell Phillips, Joshua Reed Giddings, Theodore Parker, Gerrit Smith, Samuel Joseph May, and William Lloyd Garrison.⁶³ The most noteworthy is, however, the fact that Emerson is placed at the top of these distinguished abolitionists on the poster. With

the abolitionist slogan "Heralds of Freedom: Truth, Love, Justice" printed on it, Emerson stands out from all the others, which undeniably implies Emerson's social and political importance as an important figure in the context of the nineteenth-century abolitionist movement. Reading from the poster Emerson's significant contributions to the cause and his final acceptance of the central role in the campaign, Gary Collison insightfully provides a fitting description of the portrait: "Emerson's likeness hovers directly above Garrison's, as if to suggest that he was the guardian spirit of the group" (207).

IV. Emerson and Women's Rights

A. Engagement with the Women's Movement

Emerson's eventually passionate engagement with the antislavery campaign naturally drew him to other social struggles. Among them, in particular, was the women's rights movement, which emerged from the context of the abolitionist movement in nineteenth-century America. The catalyzing incident for the women's rights movement was the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London.⁶⁴ Radical abolitionist women, such as Lucretia Mott and Sara Pugh, were invited to the international convention as delegates from the American Anti-Slavery Society, yet they were "rejected as delegates" and "were fenced off behind a bar and curtain" at the convention because of their sex upon their arrival (Stanton, Anthony, and Gage 1: 60, 61). They were so offended at this treatment that they organized the historic first Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848.

When another National Woman's Rights Convention was held in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1850, Paulina Wright Davis, a leader of the movement, sent Emerson a letter to ask him to attend it.⁶⁵ He declined the invitation because of his deep engagement with editing the *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, which, "he hoped, would be considered as service in the line of the objects of the meeting," according to

Julia Ward Howe, a prominent abolitionist (158).

In this context, Emerson unusually agreed to sign a statement of support, referring to his opinion on this subject in a letter to Davis:

The fact of the political & civil wrongs of woman I deny not. If women feel wronged, then they are wronged. But the mode of obtaining a redress, namely, a public convention called by women is not very agreeable to me, and the things to be agitated for do not seem to me the best. Perhaps I am superstitious & traditional, but whilst I should vote for every franchise for women,—vote that they should hold property, and vote, yes & be eligible to all offices as men—whilst I should vote thus, if women asked . . . these things, I should not wish women to wish political functions, nor, if granted[,] assume them. . . . I imagine that a woman whom all men would feel to be the best, would decline such privileges if offered, & feel them to be obstacles to her legitimate influence. (*L* 4: 230)

Emerson does not deny the “fact of the political” and “civil wrongs of woman,” and he by no means opposes the women’s claims. On the contrary, he dwells upon his full support for women’s rights as men possess. He maintains that women “should hold property, and vote” because they should “be eligible to all offices as men.” However,

he disagrees with òa public convention called by womenö since he does not think that all women truly desire to share with men an equal right in the public sphere. As he believes, the òbestö women do not wish to participate in social affairs. Concerning the above statement, Len Gougeon suggests that Emerson himself fears that a political role will òde-feminize the fairer sexö (*EWQ* 575).

Emerson's hesitant attitude toward women's involvement in politics reflects an influential nineteenth-century ideology of sexual roles called òthe cult of true womanhood.ö As historians explain, in the antebellum society where values changed frequently, where the chances for individuals would rapidly rise and sink on the social scale with economic upheavals, many men sought to find unchanged things which they could derive comfort from: the home as òa haven in a heartless worldö and women as òthe light of the homeö (qtd. in DuBois and Dumenil 138).⁶⁶ Being prevalent among people in an early nineteenth-century America that was coming into existence as an independent nation, this idea saw men and women as òcomplete and absolute oppositesö and posited the differences of gender roles: men and women were given the separate spheres, and women were excluded from participation in the public arena (DuBois and Dumenil 137).

To be sure, a basic dilemma of the women's rights movement was, as Nancy

Woloch argues, that "women were not aware of the need for rights" (135). In an 1849 speech, Mott suggested this problem, finding the cause in the oppressed status and role that women had been given:

[Woman] has been so long subject to the disabilities and restrictions, with which her progress has been embarrassed, that she has become enervated, her mind to some extent paralyzed; and like those still more degraded by personal bondage, she hugs her chains.⁶⁷

Emphasizing the images of "bondage" and "chains," Mott sees one of the major obstacles to the movement in the fact that most women have got used to suffering the "disabilities and restrictions" to which they have been subject. As she opines that women have become "enervated" and psychologically "paralyzed" in the sufferings of their own oppression, she tries to open their eyes to the need to challenge the status quo.

Suffrage specifically met objection even from many women's rights activists during the early stage of the cause (Woloch 135). At Seneca Falls, the demand for the vote was the only resolution of which they failed to obtain unanimous approval, for suffrage was viewed as "the extreme and unwarranted belligerence of its advocate" (Woloch 135). In a letter to Lucy Stone, an Oberlin graduate and an early advocate in the movement, her sister wrote: "I don't believe woman is groaning under half so heavy

a yoke of bondage as you imagine,ö and öI am sure I do not feel burdened by anything man has laid upon me, to be sure I canø vote, but what care I for that, I would not if I couldö (qtd. in Woloch 135). As she states, she does not öfeel burdened,ö and she would reject the right to vote even if she could. In this manner, many women of the times were not aware of the need for the right to vote because they did not believe that they were entitled to vote and were not willing to disregard womenø proper sphere. In more specific terms, they were disturbed by the demand that would go beyond the limitations of domestic ideology to pursue their rights and duties outside home and family.

One of the major impediments to the development of the womenø rights movement in the early nineteenth-century American context was the fact that the movement itself was essentially incompatible with the ideology of ötrue womanhood.ö öAmerica is the one country where the most consistent care has been taken to trace clearly distant spheres of action for the two sexes,ö observed Alexis de Tocqueville after his nine-month visit to America in 1831: öYou do not see American women directing concerns outside the range of the family, or handling business dealings, or entering politicsö (697).⁶⁸ As Tocqueville illustrates, people in antebellum America gave öclearly distant spheres of actionö to men and women, and they believed that American

women were not engaged in activities outside the domestic life. Following this system of ideas, Emerson also imagined that a "true woman," which he termed the "best woman," would decline political privileges if offered, for she would feel them to be "obstacles to her legitimate influence," as seen in his previous letter to Davis. In his estimation, to put it simply, even if women bid for autonomy, they did not really want to pursue their rights and duties beyond the boundary of the private domain.

On the other hand, Emerson showed an increasingly sympathetic response to the cause. The following year, 1851, Stone invited him to make a speech at a Woman's Rights Convention held in Worcester.⁶⁹ Although he declined her invitation because he was still engaged in writing his biography of Margaret Fuller, Emerson made a comment on the women's movement in his journal:

I think that, as long as they have not equal rights of property & right of voting, they are not on a right footing. But this wrong grew out of the savage & military period, when, because a woman could not defend herself, it was necessary that she should be assigned to some man who was paid for guarding her. Now in more tranquil & decorous times it is plain that she should have her property, &, when she marries, the parties should as regards property, go into a partnership full or limited, but explicit &

recorded. . . . I find the Evils real & great. . . . If it were possible to repair the rottenness of human nature, . . . all were well, & no specific reform, no legislation would be needed. (*JMN* 11: 444)

According to him, the law is influenced by social practices of the past, and it is necessary to revise it to make it acceptable in his age. It is no longer "the savage" and "military period," and women can "defend" themselves; therefore, they should have their own property after marriage. Taking it for granted that women should demand equality of civil rights, Emerson shows his opposition to the unjust law of his times that a husband had legal right to possess all of his wife's property, in which he finds "the Evils real" and "great." As he states, women need to have equal rights of property and right of voting in order that they may gain "a right footing."

In this way, on the one hand, Emerson held a conventional view that the "best" women would not wish to be politicized; on the other hand, he clearly manifested his identification with the women's movement from the beginning since he was encouraged by the abolitionists. In other words, during this time he confronted the contradiction of the contemporary feminist discourse. Though he totally sympathized with women's claims for liberty and equality, as Ralph L. Rusk puts it, his "imagination balked when he pictured women with masculine aggressiveness wrangling in public" (370).⁷⁰

Nowhere is this contradiction and conflict over the movement better disclosed than in his essay "Woman." It was based on his address delivered in the Second Annual New England Women's Rights Convention held in Boston in 1855.⁷¹ Accepting Davis's invitation, Emerson finally made a decision to take part in the Convention to speak on the topic (*EWQ* 579). It was the first time for him to give a speech on the topic in public, a bold step for a philosopher who generally preferred to abstain from being involved in any collective efforts of a particular social reform campaign (Gilbert, "Emerson" 213). Throughout the early 1850s, however, as noted earlier, he unusually showed his precisely sympathetic identification with the antislavery movement. Therefore, as Gougeon saw it, he might have become less cautious about making public pronouncements on specific social problems (*EWQ* 579).

Indeed, Emerson's positive participation in the abolitionist movement gave an impetus to his sympathetic commitment to the women's issue for several reasons: (1) he gradually got used to wrestling with public questions; (2) he came to view reform in general as a vehicle of social progress; (3) he was considerably inspired by the female abolitionists.

In the first place, Emerson repeatedly spoke out on the slavery issue, and it seems that he became less reluctant to make public announcements about social problems in

general (*EWQ* 579). As slavery became a more heated political debate, he felt it necessary to take action in spite of his temperamental reservations. Making speeches on dozens of occasions, he obviously developed into a more eloquent and ardent spokesman on the topic in his later years. According to Ellen DuBois, the women's rights movement developed in the context of abolitionism not only because they found the analogy of women to slaves but also because they learnt what to do to struggle with a problem and how to develop it into a social movement (55). Through his commitment to the abolitionist movement, Emerson had also come to know how to deal with human rights and social problems and therefore knew well how to confront these issues head-on.

In the second place, his gradually active engagement with abolitionism gave him a belief in the constant development of human society achieved by positive efforts at reform. In order to accelerate moral and social improvement, he came to feel it the duty of all to contribute to reform movements. As the most remarkable example of such contribution, Emerson clearly had the abolitionists in mind. When he attended an annual West India Emancipation celebration of 1849 in Worcester, Emerson delivered an impromptu lecture, in which he remarked on the abolitionists who contributed to the emancipation in laudatory words:

It should be praise enough for our friends who have carried forward this great work, friends to whom it seems to me always, the country is more and more indebted, that it is the glory of these preachers of freedom that they have strengthened the moral sense, that they have anticipated this triumph which I look upon as inevitable, and which it is not in man to retard. It is very natural to us all, perhaps, to exaggerate the importance of our services, but it is the order of Providence that we should conspire heartily in this work. (*AW* 49-50)

He expresses admiration for the achievement of the abolitionists. For Emerson, who has a firm belief in moral and social progress, the abolitionists "have strengthened the moral sense" that promises "this triumph" which he looks upon "as inevitable, and which it is not in man to retard." In this respect, he underlines the importance of their services, regarding them as "the order of Providence." Confronting the growing question of slavery, Emerson gained a renewed faith in the ability of individuals to achieve social and moral improvement through active participation in social betterment.

Similarly, the women's movement itself was, for Emerson, a representation of enormous potentiality to fulfill the positive development of human society. He stated in his 1867 address entitled "Progress of Culture": "the new claim of woman to a

political status is itself an honorable testimony to the civilization which has given her a civil status new in history" (*W* 8: 208). Furthermore, in his 1868 journal he viewed the women's movement as one of the most important prospective social reforms to be focused upon: "I wish the American Poet should let old times go & write on Tariff, Universal suffrage; Woman's suffrage" (*JMN* 16: 88).⁷² Through his participation in the antislavery movement, Emerson found significance for the development of human society in social reform in general, including the women's rights movement.

The third reason why the involvement in abolitionism gave an impetus to his commitment to the women's issue is found in the fact that Emerson was constantly inspired by a number of female activists in the former movement (*EWQ* 574; Maibor xxi). He was closely associated with well-known abolitionists, such as Harriet Martineau, Lucretia Mott, and Sarah and Angelina Grimké, who stayed at his house on the occasion of their visit to Concord to give an antislavery lecture (*EMF* 270; *EWQ* 574).⁷³ Also, it was Henry David Thoreau's mother and sisters, members of the Women's Anti-slavery Society established in Concord in 1835, who persuaded Emerson to give his 1844 landmark oration entitled "Emancipation in the British West Indies"; and most importantly, the Emerson women, including his wife, his mother, his aunt, and even his daughters, who also early on joined the Concord Women's Anti-slavery Society,

who made an enormous impact on Emerson (*EWQ* 574).

Encouraged by these women who played a major part in the abolitionist movement, Emerson came to show an active identification with the cause and shape his ideas on the issue. Their firm bonds naturally invited Emerson's attention to the women's rights movement in which the similarity with abolitionism was clearly discovered.

B. The "Woman" Speech and the Views on Womanhood

In comparison with the relatively copious material available to aid in the understanding of Emerson's public views on slavery, very little exists on the women's issue. Emerson's "Woman" address at the Second Annual New England Women's Rights Convention held in Boston in 1855 is his only published work on this topic (*EWQ* 571). In addition, it is presumably one of the two kinds of speeches on the issue that he delivered in his lifetime: the other address was made when the celebration of the anniversary of the New England Woman's Suffrage Association was held at Boston's Horticultural Hall on May 26, 1869 (*EWQ* 572; *LL* 2: 15-16). Given that this 1869 speech is mainly derived from the 1855 "Woman" address, Emerson's pattern of thinking about the issue is best revealed in "Woman." Therefore, it is proper to say

that we can largely examine Emersonian general ideas about the question exclusively by focusing on "Woman" (*EWQ* 571).

However, the 1855 "Woman" address has been long regarded as obscure and controversial (Gilbert, "Emerson" 214). To be sure, Emerson shows a complicated and outwardly contradictory opinion in the address. As is detailed later in this chapter, he seems to have a desire to supply women with an equal share in public affairs while he is also concerned that it might "contaminate" and "unsex" female virtue (*W* 11: 421).

His equivocation and intricacy in the argument may cloud the issue, inviting readers to a negative interpretation of his political intention. Albert J. Von Frank remarks, for instance, that the address is "full of ambivalence and ambiguity and could hardly have satisfied anyone" (*An Emerson* 301). Feminist critics have also attacked it for its failure to provide "a strong foundational feminism" even though it is one of the first lectures in support of the women's movement to be given by a major literary figure (Zwarg, "Emerson's 'Scene'" 133).

Also, Margaret Vanderhaar Allen argues that "Emerson's most forceful and unequivocal antifeminist statements appear" in this lecture, which is "a dismal compendium of almost every cliché ever designed to prevent women from thinking and acting for themselves by asserting their utter inability to do so" (38). Indeed, as is later

discussed, Emerson showed in this address the conventional images of women seen in the contemporary ideology of womanhood. Underlining female virtues, such as purity and piety, Emerson implies that these attributes would be unfavorable for political participation.

Certainly, his thinking on womanhood is something of a palimpsest. This kind of opinion was well-accepted, and it was commonly shared even by female activists in the age (Gilbert, "Emerson" 217). Rather, his views on the issue can be seen as somewhat liberal at least from the nineteenth-century perspective, for he is very clear in pointing out in the oration that women should not be denied any rights if they wish (*EWQ* 582). Maintaining openly that men have no right to refuse women's demands, he was rather liberal during his age because he was ready to allocate to women the whole range of rights they demanded if they really wished (*EWQ* 582).

Nevertheless, Emerson's rather liberal position in this address still remains unclear partly because, as Christina Zwarg examines, critics who have not been concerned with the movement have also tended to "suppress Emerson's 'feminizing' tendencies" ("Emerson's 'Scene'" 133). Studies of his feminist orientation in the lecture were until very recently hampered by critics who staunchly resisted the liberal aspect of the Concord sage.

A careful assessment of the lecture will allow us to understand Emerson's position in line with those of the activists of the women's movement. There is nothing that shows that he completely denied their basic claims in the end. The speech begins with Emerson's favorable attitude toward the movement: referring to the women's claims for political, social, and domestic equality, he observes that "none is more seriously interesting to every healthful and thoughtful mind" (*W* 11: 405). Considering the women's demands to be "seriously interesting," Emerson unequivocally shows his entire support for the movement.

Further in the speech, he describes with his characteristically optimistic tone such women's new demands as a sign of social development, which, he found, was also at the heart of the abolitionist movement:

All events of history are to be regarded as growths and offshoots of the expanding mind of the race, and this appearance of new opinions, their currency and force in many minds, is itself the wonderful fact. . . . The aspiration of this century will be the code of the next. . . . [L]et us deal with them [new opinions] greatly. . . . (*W* 11: 424-25)

Believing that society should be constantly progressing, he views a new claim as a stimulus for growth. In his eyes, the appearance of a new demand is itself "the

wonderful fact, and it is spontaneous and necessary for social advancement. Therefore, he celebrates new opinions that open up potential possibilities of humankind.

This positive attitude toward new claims characterizes Emersonian optimism. Expecting a glittering future, he discovered prospective possibilities in new thoughts. When he calls for newness that promises potentialities, he urges people to be independent of long-standing European cultural tradition in order to seek an American creative mind, and this is Emerson's significance in the context of nineteenth-century America.

Emerson's appreciation for American social growth overlaps with his positive attitude to women's empowerment in the 1855 "Woman" address. He goes on to state in the address: "I think it impossible to separate the interests and education of the sexes. Improve and refine the men, and you do the same by the women, whether you will or no" (*W* 11: 425). His opinion reveals that the more men and society are improved and refined, the more they are willing to advocate equality of women's rights: in today's terms, as Armida Gilbert paraphrases, social progress heralds feminism ("Emerson" 231-32; "Pierced" 101).

Undeniably, the most liberal affirmation that Emerson makes in this speech is that he offers his entire support for equality for women:

They [Women] have an unquestionable right to their own property. . . . Let the laws be purged of every barbarous remainder, every barbarous impediment to women. Let the public donations for education be equally shared by them, let them enter a school as freely as a church, let them have and hold and give their property as men do theirs;—and in a few years it will easily appear whether they wish a voice in making the laws that are to govern them. If you do refuse them a vote, you will also refuse to tax them,—according to our Teutonic principle, No representation, no tax. (*W* 11: 419-24)

Given the fact that the aim of the 1855 Convention was “to report, state by state, on the status of New England laws relating to women’s property rights,” Emerson’s position on this point is explicit here (*EMF* 532). As he enunciates, women should “hold and give their property as men do theirs.” More accurately, this passage also illustrates extremely well his advocacy of women’s rights not only to their own property but also to equal education and vote. In his own words, “the public donations for education” should be equally shared by women, and people should not “refuse them a vote” unless they “refuse to tax them.” As this passage demonstrates, he has no doubt that women should have a right not only to their own property but also to an education and to vote.

Nevertheless, this oration generates a complex and contradictory argument about the full range of women's rights. While he approves their equal rights, he states in the address that he does not "think it yet appears that women wish this equal share in public affairs" (*W* 11: 423-24). Emerson, during this period, was not sure if women truly wished as much right in the public sphere as men had. This statement reminds readers of his similar representation in the letter of 1850 to Davis, as has been noted earlier: "I imagine that a woman . . . would decline such privileges if offered" (*L* 9: 230).

Evolution may explain Emerson's halting gestures toward allocating the whole range of equal rights to women. While rather sympathetic with women's demands throughout his lifetime, he had assumed an ambiguous attitude to their active participation in the political arena in his early stages of the cause, for he possibly considered that women were developing only in the same manner as he believed that the evolutionary notion suggested that Africans were in the way of progress. In this 1855 "Woman" lecture, he shows the implication of this point:

Plato said, Women are the same as men in faculty, only less in degree. . . . As for Plato's opinion, it is true that . . . in no art or science, not in painting, poetry, or music, have they produced a master-piece. . . . [I]n general, no mastery in either of the fine arts . . . has yet been obtained by them [women],

equal to the mastery of men in the same. (*W* 11: 406-08)

Using Plato's words, Emerson maintains that women have the same faculty as men but they are less capable than men. As he tries to explain, women have not produced a master-piece in various fields, such as art, science, painting, poetry, and music, because they are underdeveloped in intellect and ability. He also states that women have not yet obtained mastery equal to that of men. This statement indicates that Emerson believes in the basic immaturity of women as he assumed that the evolutionary theory suggested that Africans were in the way of progress and they were not equal in their intellectual capacity to compete in society. Imagining that women generally wanted wisdom, Emerson probably discouraged women from taking political responsibility that would be too heavy and burdensome for them.

Perhaps, the greatest obstacle to his endorsement of the whole range of women's rights was, however, the socially defined sexual identity of antebellum America. According to most of the early nineteenth-century writers on the subject of gender, men were strong in body and mind, independent, aggressive, and sexual while women were submissive, dependent, passive, emotional, religious, and pure.⁷⁴ They had complementary qualities: men protected women, and women offered the sensitivity which men do not have. Such stereotypes offered men and women each proper role in

the separate spheres. Women were so pure and sensitive that they should be insulated from the striving and bustle of the public arena that men dominated. Instead, women were expected to assist their families to obey the laws of God to encourage their spiritual growth and religious enlightenment in domestic life as Catharine Beecher, who devoted her life to women's education, maintained in one of her writings on true womanhood (175).⁷⁵ From a twenty-first-century standpoint, such views of women may show female inability and weakness; however, as Ronald G. Walters argues, most of their contemporaries respected these notions of dealing with these roles in highly positive terms (*American Reformers* 105).

Caught by this set of beliefs called "the cult of domesticity," Emerson also demonstrates women's particular qualities and excellences in an attempt to make up for the previous Plato argument that implies the biologically undeveloped status of women. In the 1855 address, he describes as follows:

[T]here is an art which is better than painting, poetry, music, or architecture,—
better than botany, geology, or any science; namely, Conversation. . . .

Women are, by this and their social influence, the civilizers of mankind.

What is civilization? I answer, the power of good women. (*W* 11: 408-09)

As has been seen, Emerson argues that although women have not produced "a

master-pieceö in various fields, such as art and science, painting, poetry, and music, because of their intellectual inability, women can manipulate öConversationö much better than men instead. Viewing öConversationö as öan art which is better than painting, poetry, music, or architecture,—better than botany, geology, or any science,ö Emerson extols women for ötheir social influenceö as they öcivilizeö humankind through their conversation.

In addition to this statement, Emerson repeatedly offers some other öfeminineö features that he praises. As he mentions, öwomen had an oracular natureö and they are ömore delicate than menö and ömore impressionableö (*W* 11: 405). Emphasizing women's öoracular natureö that makes them ömore delicateö and ömore impressionableö than men, Emerson implies their inspirational and rather non-logical way of thinking. However problematic such sentiments may be to the twenty-first-century readers, Emerson's intention is to celebrate women. Even though he separates women's native gifts from logic and intelligence, as Phyllis Cole notes, he does not find fault with women but instead sees the good in them (öPain and Protestö 84).

Furthermore, Emerson goes on to show what he considers feminine traits. When he states, for instance, that öthe starry crown of woman is in the power of her affection and sentiment, and the infinite enlargements to which they lead,ö he clearly finds one of

the greatest powers that women have in their "affection and sentiment" (*W* 11: 412).

Also, attaching a high value to religious aspects assigned to women, Emerson gives the following expressions: "in every remarkable religious development in the world, women have taken a leading part. . . . This power, this religious character, is everywhere to be remarked in them [women]" (*W* 11: 414). These views on women are the run-of-the-mill images of femininity that strikingly correspond to antebellum ideology, as has been explicated. Like most of his contemporaries, Emerson also believed that such virtues as piety, purity, religion, sentiment, and affection belonged to women, and examples are numerous enough in this address.

Perhaps, however, as was also true with his contemporaries, Emerson appreciated these women's natures specifically when they created something useful to men, for women were expected to provide what men lacked (Walters, *American Reformers* 105). Implying this point, he includes the following remarks in the speech to underline the innate difference between the sexes:

[T]he general voice of mankind has agreed that they [women] have their own strength; that women are strong by sentiment; that the same mental height which their husbands attain by toil, they attain by sympathy with their husbands. Man is the will, and Woman the sentiment. (*W* 11: 406-07)

Assuming that men and women have their own qualities and excellences, Emerson exhibits the stereotypical image of the sexes: "women are strong by sentiment" while men are strong by "will." When he asserts that women attain their strength "by sympathy with their husbands" while men attain "by toil," Emerson expects women to wield a moral influence on their husbands who can act for themselves "by toil." Instead of "the will," women should have "the sentiment" unavailable to men so that women can serve their husbands by offering strength.

However, these statements also mirror Emerson's compliments to women's natures. He does not consider these "female" affectionate, sentimental qualities to be insignificant. Rather, he features them as an essential aspect of humanity: "In this ship of humanity, Will is the rudder, and Sentiment the sail" (*W* 11: 407). The analogy he draws here indicates that will and sentiment are both as all-important and necessary for human virtue as the rudder and the sail of a ship. Stated simply, in his estimation, male and female qualities are of equal merit, and it is impossible to say which of the two is better as long as they are complementary.

Emerson's views on men and women reflect antebellum images of masculinity and femininity, as has been seen. Enumerating in this address "feminine" features, Emerson discloses the essentialist discourse: men and women have intrinsically

different and characteristic dispositions (Gilbert, "Emerson" 217; Gilbert, "Pierced" 97).

Although he here failed to take into consideration a recognition that cultural and historical conditioning is profoundly connected to all gender differences, as Gilbert notes, his view was closely similar to that of the vanguard of women's liberation in his times ("Emerson" 217-18; "Pierced" 97).⁷⁶

In fact, Emerson was greatly influenced by his friend Margaret Fuller, one of the leading figures of American feminism, who died in a tragic shipwreck five years before this "Woman" address was delivered (Steele 115).⁷⁷ "In many ways," as Zwarg puts it, "Emerson's [1855] lecture should be cast in quotation marks: he speaks before the women because Fuller could not do so, and he says 'what it is that she prompted him to think' ("Emerson's 'Scene'" 133; *Feminist Conversations* 259). As Carolyn Maibor points out, Emerson was considerably influenced by Fuller's thinking when he was reading her writings in order to edit *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* (58).⁷⁸

As some critics also argue, there are several remarkable similarities between Emerson's statements in the "Woman" address and Fuller's sentiments (*EMF* 533; Gilbert, "Emerson" 216-17; Gilbert, "Pierced" 102; Maibor 53). For example, when Emerson states in the oration that "a masculine woman is not strong, but a lady is" (*W* 11: 425), one can notice an echo of Fuller's remark in her "The Great Lawsuit": "Were

they [women] free, were they wise fully to develop the strength and beauty of woman, they would never wish to be men, or manlike" (23). As Robert D. Richardson, Jr. suggests, Emerson accepted the notion that men and women had different qualities and different virtues (533). He believes that "a masculine woman is not strong" because, as Fuller maintains, it is much more important for women to "develop the strength and beauty of theirs than to be manlike." Deriving particularly from Fuller's early thought, in this way, Emerson repeatedly enlarges upon the positive differences between men and women to spotlight women's excellences in the speech.

Immediately following his careful list of several "feminine" features that he defines in this "Woman" speech is his illustration of the "position" in which women should be situated:

They [women] are, in their nature, more relative; the circumstance must always be fit; out of place they lose half their weight, out of place they are disfranchised. Position . . . is essential to the perfecting of beauty;—a fine building is lost in a dark lane; a statue should stand in the air; much more true is it of woman. (*W* 11: 409-10)

As this paragraph represents, he maintains that it is important for women to be in the proper sphere not to "lose half their weight," not to be "disfranchised." To undergird

his idea, Emerson presents the reason for this argument by taking women as an analogy of such architectural works as "a fine building" and "a statue." Like these artworks, he implies that women are required to be submissive and passive in order that men can maintain them in good condition.

Further in this address, Emerson underlines the point, encouraging women to play their given roles within the socially prescribed sphere:

Society, conversation, decorum, flowers, dances, colors, forms, are their [women's] homes and attendants. They should be found in fit surroundings—with fair approaches, with agreeable architecture, and with all advantages which the means of man collect. (*W* 11: 411)

Emerson thinks that "Society, conversation, decorum, flowers, dances, colors, forms" belong to women, and he advises women to stay inside their own sphere in which they can enjoy "fair approaches," "agreeable architecture," and "all advantages which the means of man collect." Using the imagery of a house (a big house) in which women should be sufficiently protected by men, Emerson implicitly prompts women not to go beyond the boundary of the private sphere assigned to them for their own sake.

To be precise, Emerson believed that the home was best suited for women's place. Caught by the contemporary ideology of womanhood, Emerson in this address shows

his idea that domestic roles are the best-fitted career for women.

The life of the affections is primary to them [women], so that there is usually no employment or career which they will not with their own applause and that of society quit for a suitable marriage. And they give entirely to their affections, set their whole fortune on the die, lose themselves eagerly in the glory of their husbands and children. (*W* 11: 407)

Supposing the life of the affections to be primary to women, Emerson construes marriage as their goal of life. In his own words, there is usually no employment or career which women will not quit for a suitable marriage because people of the times assumed that only a marriage could provide middle-class women with the best opportunity for a fulfilling life (Welter 160-61). Even if women decided to give up their career for a suitable marriage, their decision would be applauded not only by themselves but also by society as well. As Emerson goes on to argue, after women get married, they strive to devote their full attentions and pure affections to their family to lose themselves eagerly in the glory of their husbands and children as if they leave their whole fortune in the hands of their marital lives.

This image of selfless women who assiduously work for their family at the

expense of their lives is ironically in opposition to Emersonian Individualism.⁷⁹ When Emerson urges women to "lose themselves eagerly in the glory of their husbands and children," he simultaneously persuades them to relinquish self-reliance. On the one hand, therefore, Emerson typically insists on the need of an independent, self-reliant attitude; on the other hand, he, at the same time, calls for female submissiveness and selflessness.

Emerson's description of the best life for women also strikingly reflects the nineteenth-century cliché of true womanhood. In an attempt to redefine the attributes of true womanhood, Barbara Welter presents the idea that a "wife who submerged her own talents to work for her husband was extolled as an example of a true woman" (160), and as "mother, as well as wife, woman was required to submit to fortune" (161). Domesticity was more significant than any other virtue assigned to women in the age because, in accordance with the economic upheavals of the antebellum society, women were expected to serve men who worked outside the home to give comfort, and help them survive in the outside world. Accepting conventional views on womanhood, Emerson exclusively limits women's roles to wives and mothers who seek to contribute to "the glory of their husbands and children."

In this manner, Emerson narrows women's roles and spheres to the socially

defined range, but he thinks the "danger of contamination" as one of the possible barriers against women's political participation (*W* 11: 421). The reason why he contends that women may hesitate to share the whole range of equal rights with men is, in his terms, that women "cannot enter this [political] arena without being contaminated and unsexed" (*W* 11: 421). He fears that the allocation of political rights will de-feminize women because the women's privileged perspectives are related to the fact that they are excluded from the corrupted public sphere:

There is much in their nature, much in their social position which gives them a certain power of divination. . . . There is much that tends to give them a religious height which men do not attain. Their sequestration from affairs and from the injury to the moral sense which affairs often inflict, aids this. (*W* 11: 414)

As he asserts, women have "a religious height which men do not attain" because women are independent of public affairs that may inflict "the injury to the moral sense." Women are removed from the decadence of public business, and their religious nature is protected and remains intact. Emerson, who was afraid of forcing women to lose their faculties, did not wish to encourage them to take a public role in the political arena. Also, he still believed that there were those who preferred to be freed from these public

duties.

This assertion that participation in society would deprive women of their religious superiority reflects one of the nineteenth-century well-accepted ideas that excluded women from the public arena. Purity or piety was generally considered to be one of the most significant virtues assigned to a woman as the source of her strength because, according to Welter, "it did not take a woman away from her 'proper sphere,' her home" (153). Unlike involvement in other political activities, church work would allow women to stay domestic within the limit of "the cult of true womanhood" (Welter 153). Sharing the common discourse that impeded them from playing an active role outside home, Emerson discouraged women from participating in a public sphere that would make them less religious and less feminine.

"From today's perspective," according to Margaret Vanderhaar Allen, "this is a disgraceful performance" (38), for this address shows that "Emerson's Transcendentalist stance on the broadening of human possibility, human rights, and equality stopped short of women" (39). Even if Emerson might have been caught by the influential nineteenth-century ideology of womanhood, the twenty-first-century readers may think that he should not have limited women's possibilities and rights. Emerson always called on men to seek to realize their immense potentialities; nonetheless, he implied

that women were incapable of thinking and acting for themselves outside the home because of their innate qualities. Therefore, one might assume that Emerson's transcendentalist claim was directed only to men, not to women.

In the light of these arguments, the 1855 address rather reveals Emerson's contradictory stance on the women's movement. He entirely advocated the allocation of women's rights if they so wished, yet he was, at the same time, reluctant to provide them with an equal share in the social field. Zwarg gives an account of this point:

[Emerson] is less interested (though by no means uninterested) in clearing the route to 'equality' between men and women than in finding the source of their difference. Though his discussion of the political rights of women always returns to the argument that they 'must not be refused,' his discussion is everywhere cross-biased by his theoretical investigation of the rhetoric of those rights. ('Emerson's "Scene"' 136)

As the above discussion demonstrates, underlining the essential 'difference' between men and women rather than their 'equality,' Emerson hesitated to allocate women the full range of their political rights, which, he feared, would deprive them of their particular virtue. Thus, he did not believe that they would actually wish for their equalized political commitment though he never denied the political claims of women.

Wavering between a desire to give women public status and a fear that it might be a hindrance to their moral development, Emerson generated a “cross-biased” argument throughout the lecture.

Pointing out that Emerson voices “no pain and no protest,” Cole argues that the address is followed by “a definition of the “true woman” and only produces “a soft version of the domestic gospel” (“Pain and Protest” 84). Certainly, the address encapsulates Emerson’s sympathy with women’s sense of injustice done in any of the social fields in some measure, but it evokes no concrete political strategy for women’s empowerment.

In addition, Emerson hardly provides any analogy between wife and slave, which abolitionist women often found, and he illustrates women’s natures that he stereotypes in the address. Female abolitionists recognized the similarities between their status before the law and that of the chattel slave, and they often described their oppression by using the images of the slave during the antebellum women’s rights movement (DuBois 54). For instance, J. Elizabeth Jones, the author of *The Young Abolitionist*, stated in an address to the women of Ohio in 1848: “Slaves are we, politically and legally. How can we, who, it is said, are the educators of our children, present to this nation anything else but a generation of serviles, while we, ourselves, are in a servile condition, and

padlocks are on our lips?" (qtd. in Stanton, Anthony, and Gage 1: 108). Angelina Grimké also wrote in 1838: "For many years I felt as I was compelled to drag the chain and wear the collar on my struggling *spirit* as truly as the poor slave was on his body" (qtd. in Yellin 42). Scarcely exhibiting such an analogy between women and slaves as the female abolitionists found, Emerson instead repeatedly highlights the inherent difference between the sexes to show the analysis of an ideal woman in the mid-nineteenth century. Although he casts these views of women in highly positive terms, he consequently ends up indicating that women are too pious and too pure to take part in the bustle of public domain.

At the end of "Woman," however, Emerson underscores that "it is they [women] and not we [men] that are to determine it" (*W* 11: 424). In this statement, Gilbert finds Emerson's liberalism since he is certain that the right to choose eventually rests with women, not with men, even though he is apparently receiving a great deal of contradictory information about the true wishes of women at this time ("Emerson" 232; "Pierced" 102). Emerson is uncertain whether all women really wish to participate in public affairs or not, but he actively leaves the final decision to women, for he acknowledges that men's role is simply to support women and respect their determination.

Reiterating this point, Emerson often generates a progressive argument in terms of feminist perspective. In 1868, Emerson gives significance to women's self-determination in a letter to Caroline Sturgis Tappan, a Transcendentalist poet: "It is of course for women to determine this question! the part of men, if women decide to assume the suffrage, is simply to accept their determination & aid in carrying it out" (*L* 9: 326-27).⁸⁰ Moreover, Emerson also illustrated a similar opinion in his journal in 1843: "To me it sounded hoarsely the attempt to prescribe didactically to woman her duties. Man can never tell woman what her duties are" (*JMN* 8: 381). These statements strikingly demonstrate that Emerson, while being unsure of the true wishes of women, does consider their political claims to be fair and proper as their "birthright" as Fuller maintains (*Woman* 177), as Gilbert suggests ("Emerson" 233; "Pierced" 102). In this regard, Emerson's idea is thus rather progressive even in the 1850s; it anticipates the contemporary feminist perspective that women should not ask men for rights because those rights are not men's property to offer women as a gift and women should grasp their own rights for themselves (Gilbert, "Emerson" 233; Gilbert, "Pierced" 102).

Showing both progressiveness and the traditional stance on women's politicization, as a result, Emerson's announcement in the 1855 "Woman" speech attracted mixed comments (*EWQ* 582). An article appearing in *The Boston Traveller*,

a contemporary newspaper, the next day said, on the one hand, that people were uncertain whether Emerson was for or against the cause (*EMF* 533): "Mr. Emerson was introduced, and delivered a very fine oration, full of mythic grandeur and nonsense, but redeemed by passages of great beauty and brilliance. On the whole, it told far more against the cause than for it" (qtd. in *EWQ* 583). This comment observes that Emerson failed to show his support for the cause because of his ambivalent attitude toward the movement in the lecture; on the contrary, the oration, which was "full of mythic grandeur and nonsense," created an image of an Emerson who was "against the cause."

"From a late-twentieth-century perspective, at least," writes Helen R. Deese in her essay, "the lecture 'Woman' seems at best condescending" (248).⁸¹ She also doubts the strategy in the lecture, for it invites the reader to feel that Emerson exhibits nothing more than a "condescending" stance on the cause. Deese also states that "Emerson defines woman's sphere as one of moral influence on men; he concedes that if women want the franchise and legal equality, men should not deny it to them, but he finally is not convinced, he says, that women really want such equality" (248). Caught by the nineteenth-century ideology of true womanhood, as this argument suggests, Emerson showed the conventional view that woman should be protected in the home by men in

order not to lose their virtues. Certainly, he by no means denied the franchise and legal equality, yet he was not sure that women would really want them. Rather, he believed that they would have refused the rights even if they had obtained them.

On the other hand, however, an activist in the early women's rights movement Paulina Wright Davis sent the following letter to Emerson to express her profound appreciation of the address:

At the close of our meeting I thanked you almost coldly as it seemed to me at the time for your noble words to that audience, but my heart was too full for utterance—There was no language for it but tears and the "public eye" restrained them till in the sacredness of my room I could let them flow while I thanked our Father for his truth and love.

Our committee met on the following day and I was desired by them to express to you their cordial thanks for your ready compliance with their invitation and for the good service done to our Cause; and at the same time they desired me to request the favor of the address or such parts of it as you might be disposed to have published. . . . We should like to announce that the address will be published should you be so disposed. (qtd. in *EWQ* 583-84)

This expression of views explicitly suggests that Davis received Emerson's speech as his wholehearted endorsement of the cause. She discovered in his lecture "[Father's] truth and love," and her "heart was too full for utterance." Praising his "noble words," she asked Emerson to give her permission to publish the address (*LL* 2: 16). She also says that her comment reflects a consensus in her committee: not merely she but also the other members of the committee express to the lecturer "their cordial thanks" for his service.

Caroline Healey Dall, one of the most prominent feminists of the times, also applauded what seemed to her Emerson's unequivocal support of the women's movement (*EWQ* 584). As one of the organizers of a woman's rights convention in Boston in 1855, Dall was present at Emerson's lecture (Deese 248). Finding no fault with the address, she commented in her journal that it was "his finished poem" (qtd. in Deese 248). In the final analysis, as these reactions of Davis and Dall represent, as long as he clearly states in the oration that women should not be denied any rights if they wish, his views on the women's issue can be basically seen as progressive, at least from the nineteenth-century perspective.

Although the lecture may seem lukewarm to postmodern readers, as critics emphasize, Emerson was undoubtedly in the vanguard of women's rights advocates, for

he openly maintained that men have no right to refuse women's demands (*EWQ* 582; Gilbert, "Pierced" 94-95). He showed the conventional images of women in the lecture, but they were commonly shared even by female activists in the age, as has been seen. More importantly, he was rather liberal during his age as he was ready to allocate to women the whole range of rights if they wished.

C. Ideological Development

After he delivered the 1855 "Woman" address, Emerson repeated it once before the Parker Fraternity on 2 December, 1860, but he had basically kept silent on this issue for the ensuing fourteen years (*EWQ* 585-86). During this period, he was much more engaged in the campaign against slavery. Despite his silence, his personal interest in the women's issue was growing in no uncertain manner. After the fourteen-year silence, in 1869, he eventually demonstrated the development of his views on the cause in another address in response to solicitation from the activists in the movement (*EWQ* 588).

The most remarkable difference between "Woman" and the 1869 speech can be traced to his ideological development. While he asserted in the former speech that the "best" woman would decline her politicization, he later recognized that it was untrue

(Gilbert, "Emerson" 234). In the latter oration, he articulates the discovery that all women, including the "best" women, in fact, do desire to share a public role with men. As critics explain, by such women in his circle as Louisa May Alcott and Emerson's own aunt Mary Moody Emerson, who made a major contribution to abolitionism, Emerson had been persuaded that a change in women's status was at any rate essential, and he had finally realized that women themselves did wish the vote and an active participation in politics (Gilbert, "Emerson" 234; Gilbert, "Pierced" 99, 103; Maibor 58-59).

In addition to the campaign against slavery, in which abolitionist women sufficiently displayed their own capabilities, women's work during the Civil War may have greatly changed Emerson's mind about the social position of women.⁸² As Maibor points out, Emerson would have had first-hand reports of the work from Alcott, who connected "her own appreciation of the importance of work for women with the increased opportunities provided by the war," working as a nurse during the wartime (58).

Furthermore, through the life of single women in his family, Emerson might have gotten to acknowledge that women really needed to participate in society through the suffrage and the professions (Gilbert, "Emerson" 234; Gilbert, "Pierced" 99; Maibor 59).

In addition to Aunt Mary, his daughter Ellen Tucker Emerson also chose to remain unmarried, helping Emerson by completing personal care and domestic duties and responsibilities for a lifetime (Maibor 59). Not only accompanying her father on trips but also helping him to write and deliver speeches in his final years, Ellen notably performed various obligations to work with Emerson (*EMF* 570-71). Through her life, perhaps, Emerson naturally came to feel that women would also need full access to the public sphere.

Furthermore, it might well be that the examples of Aunt Mary and of Ellen compelled Emerson to enlarge his views on gender roles (Maibor 59-60). In the 1855 "Woman" address, he states that "the same mental height which their husbands attain by toil, they [women] attain by sympathy with their husbands" (*W* 11: 406-07) as he imagined any women were always wives (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 85). Announcing that women's proper place was in the shadow of their husbands, Emerson implied that women were strong only when their sympathies went toward their husbands (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 85; M. V. Allen 38). As has been already studied, Emerson found that the greatest possibility for women to achieve their goals was in marriage, believing that domestic roles were the best-fitted career for women. Like many people in his age, he also assumed that a marriage should provide women with the best opportunity for a

fulfilling life, as has been noted. However, the lives of single women around him, such as Aunt Mary, Ellen, and Alcott, probably taught Emerson an alternative achievement that women could attain: they showed that female roles were not limited just to wives and mothers but expanded to the public sphere outside the home.

In 1868, a year before his second address on the women's issue, Emerson remarkably disclosed the significant change in his thoughts in a letter to Tappan as follows:

[I had] believed that women did not wish [to enter into public life], that those whose decision would be final, the thoughtful serene typical minds shrank from it. . . . [However,] I have been much surprised to find that my saints or some of them have a feeling of duty that however odious the new order may appear in some of its details they must bravely accept & realize it. (*L* 9: 326-27)⁸³

This statement illustrates that Emerson has been "much surprised" to find that he had had a false opinion that women did not wish to take part in public affairs. Instead, as he recognizes, they are, in fact, ready to take new responsibilities, "however odious the new order may appear in some of its details," since they finally accept it as "a feeling of duty."

In the 1869 address, he also underscores this point in its conclusion:

She [Woman] asks for her property; she asks for her rights, for her vote; she asks for her share in education, for her share in all the institutions of society, for her half of the whole world; and to this she is entitled. (*EWQ* 589)⁸⁴

In the 1855 address Emerson maintains that some women, that is, the *ōbestō* women, do not want to participate in political service. However, the 1869 statement strikingly demonstrates a remarkable change in his thoughts: even the *ōbestō* women truly desire representative status to the full extent of public affairs. He is sure that women need rights to their own property, an education, and a vote, to which they are entitled. After all, he unhesitatingly reveals his total endorsement for the whole range of women's rights without any qualification (*EWQ* 590).

These developments of his ideas can surely be related to the influence of the female activists in the antislavery context. With regard to their remarkable contributions to the cause, Emerson highlights the importance in the 1869 speech as follows:

When the great enterprise of recent civilization, the putting down of slavery,—of that institution, so called, was done, it was done, as you know, in this country, by a society whose executive committee was composed of men and

women, and every step was taken by both. So they hung together till success was achieved. (*EWQ* 589)

Emerson gives high praise to the activists of both sexes who contributed to the abolition of slavery. Considering the abolitionist movement to be “the great enterprise of recent civilization,” he underlines that both “men and women” “hung together till success was achieved” in the above statement (emphasis added). Amidst his sympathetic engagement with the abolitionist movement, as has been previously examined, Emerson had been consistently inspired by a number of women, including the prominent activists and the members of his own family.

In particular, Emerson’s wife Lidian Jackson Emerson was well ahead of him in terms of social reform struggles, as we will examine later in the next chapter. Regarding the subject of abolition, she significantly urged her husband to take an interest in the suffering of slaves particularly in the early years (*EMF* 270; Gougeon, “Historical Background” xxv; *VH* 393). She was also a strong supporter of women’s rights as one of the initial members of the New England Woman Suffrage Association (Cole, “Pain and Protest” 87). As critical consensus largely supports, Lidian’s enthusiastic commitment to these social reform movements was, without doubt, so influential to Emerson that he was eventually drawn to the vortex of these activities

(Cole, "Pain and Protest" 67; *VH* 393). In so doing, probably finding a striking similarity between the abolition of slavery and women's liberation, Emerson also became more sympathetic toward the latter movement.

In the 1869 oration, moreover, Emerson finally presents an answer to his own objection to women's politicization, the danger of contamination and de-feminization, which had prevented him from taking a further involvement in the crusade in 1855. Approving women's suffrage, he is clear in pointing out in the latter 1869 speech that it is men and society that must take the responsibility for the change so as to accept women's new demands:

[N]ow at the moment when we are agitating the question of how to save society from the threatened mischief of the invasion of the purity of the ballot, by corrupt and purchased votes, and thus stultifying the will of the honest community—now, at this moment, woman asks for her vote. If the vote is to be granted to woman, and certainly it must be, then we must arrange to have the voting clean and honest and polite. The State must build houses, instead of dirty rooms and corner shops; the State must build palaces and halls in which women can deposit their votes in the presence of their sons and brothers and fathers. (*EWQ* 589)

As this view illustrates, Emerson eventually finds in the renovation of the political system the possible solution to his fear of what would follow with women's active participation in the public sphere (Gilbert, "Pierced" 101). In an attempt to "save society from the threatened mischief of the invasion of the purity of the ballot, by corrupt and purchased votes," he asserts that the country must deal with political corruption and restructure the framework. By requiring a systematic change in politics, he sloughs off a certain degree of his long-standing hesitation toward the cause to represent his greater support for women's suffrage; it is now no longer questionable for him that women should be allocated equal share of their whole rights.

Emerson's 1869 lecture also attracted the appreciation of women, and he was in the vanguard of women's rights advocates in the 1860s and 1870s in the upshot (*EWQ* 591; Gilbert, "Emerson" 235; Gilbert, "Pierced" 103). Shortly after the address, hoping that "his name and philosophical balance might win the ear of 'fastidious circles' and 'take [suffrage] out of the sphere of ridicule into that of rational consideration,'" Harriet Beecher Stowe eagerly persuaded Emerson to write for *Hearth and Home*, a new periodical that she was editing to treat such issues as woman's suffrage (qtd. in Hedrick 361).⁸⁵ Expecting that the reputation of the philosopher would help to shape opinions, Stowe asked Emerson to say something about women's rights in the following

letter to him:

You might with perhaps less offence and with more profit than any one give a little *well timed advice* to the zealous earnest leaders of this movement to avoid shocking the *public taste* . . . and at the same time give to the cause the support of a respectful and delicate consideration. (qtd. in Hedrick 361)

As this statement presents, Stowe believes that there is no one but Emerson who could give *well timed advice* to the leaders of the movement and also give *the support of a respectful and delicate consideration* without *shocking the public taste*. In her opinion, Emerson is the only one who could offer insight and suggestion to the activists to give an endorsement to the movement because it is likely that people would greatly accept his opinion. Knowing well how much respectability would affect public opinions, Stowe approached Emerson, who was surely expected to be one of the most influential supporters to the cause in the times (Hedrick 361).⁸⁶

In July of 1869, when he was requested to deliver a speech to the Essex County Woman's Suffrage Association, Emerson made a friendly statement in his letter, which was read at the meeting in Newburyport and also printed in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* and the *New-York Times*:

[W]hile I think their political claim founded in equity, and though perhaps

it does not yet appear to any what precise form in practice it will and ought to take, yet the seriousness and thoughtfulness with which it is urged seem to me to mark an important step in civilization. (*L* 6: 77-78)⁸⁷

The outline of his full endorsement is made overt in this comment. Even though he does not offer "precise form in practice it will and ought to take," he recognizes women's political claims as "serious" and "thoughtful," hailing it as "an important step in civilization." In the same year, Emerson was finally elected as vice-president of the New England Woman's Suffrage Association, and thereafter he was regarded as an icon of the women's rights movement until he died in 1882 (*EWQ* 590-91; Gilbert, "Emerson" 235; Gilbert, "Pierced" 103).

Emerson's outstanding contribution to the women's cause as a whole can be estimated from numerous contemporary articles in the *Woman's Journal*, a suffragist publication, which testified Emerson's consistent support of the movement.⁸⁸ Counting up these articles on the list, Gougeon rounds off his study on the topic with a citation from one of them, a memorial article written by Howe, which was published only weeks after Emerson's death:

Among all of Mr. Emerson's great merits, we of this *Journal* must especially mention his loyalty to woman. . . . He knew and cherished all the

feminine graces. But justice, as well as beauty, was to him a feminine ideal. . . . He was for us, knowing well enough our limitations and short-comings, and his golden words have done much both to fit us for the larger freedom, and to know that it belongs to us. (qtd. in *EWQ* 592)

Howe's pronouncement epitomizes Emerson's substantial contribution to the cause.⁸⁹

As she distinctly reveals, he had been highly appreciated, and "his loyalty to woman" had received very positive recognition by the female reformers who knew him (*EWQ* 591-92). Giving support and inspiration to women, he constantly encouraged them to achieve their well-being in the name of freedom. Therefore, it can be said that as one of the leading suffragists who spoke for "the feminine graces" and "a feminine ideal," Emerson was undeniably held in high esteem in the context of the women's rights movement.

V. Emerson in the Household

A. Emerson and Marriage

Very little is presently known in detail regarding Emerson's attitude toward women's rights, yet the scant materials available explicitly indicate his sympathetic attitude toward the women's movement. In spite of his well-known reservations about general organized efforts to deal with such a particular social problem as slavery, Emerson's public record on women's liberation strikingly shows his eventual identification with the cause. Close reading of his context underlines the fact that he was ultimately an advocate of freedom and equality for human beings and thereby optimistically believed in the improvement of human society.

No wonder the 1855 "Woman" speech ends in an upbeat fashion with his characteristically optimistic tone:

Slavery it is that makes slavery; freedom, freedom. The slavery of women happened when the men were slaves of kings. The melioration of manners brought their melioration of course. It could not be otherwise, and hence the new desire of better laws. . . .

The new movement is only a tide shared by the spirits of man and woman; and you may proceed in the faith that whatever the woman's heart

is prompted to desire, the man's mind is simultaneously prompted to accomplish. (*W* 11: 425-26)

New opinions and new movements in general are, for Emerson, a good sign of the growth of human culture; as the "melioration of manners brought their melioration of course," "the new desire of better laws" heralds social advancement and the new spirit of a better world. In his opinion, new claims are necessary in order that a mature country may be formed. As he was always resistant to any kind of oppression despite his first tentative commitment to any kind of collective effort, he considered that women's new bids for equality would help to propel moral and social development. When he notes that "whatever the woman's heart is prompted to desire, the man's mind is simultaneously prompted to accomplish," the issue of women's rights is, for him, a challenge to be tackled not only by women but also by men.

Repeating this point, Emerson emphasizes the importance of the movement in his 1869 oration:

I only feel the gladness with which such representations as you have heard, such arguments as you have heard, inspire me. It is certain that what is not given to-day will be given to-morrow, and what is asked for this year will be given in the next year; if not in the next year then in the next

lustrum. The claim now pressed by woman is a claim for nothing less than all, than her share in all. (*EWQ* 589)

Filled with "gladness," Emerson welcomes the arguments about women's rights, for they "inspire" the philosopher. As he is certain that "what is not given to-day will be given to-morrow," he has a firm belief in a future in which women's political demands are attained because their political claims are inevitable in the course of social development. Expressing his wholehearted support for the cause of women's rights, Emerson is, without doubt, convinced that women will acquire an equal share in the public domain in the near future.

As the years wore on, he expressed the growth of his identification with the women's movement; however, as has been seen, it is accurate to say that he was basically a friend to the movement from the earliest days of its existence, sharing essential notions about the issue with the activists. Women's claims for their autonomy were compatible with the ideas of Emerson, who never hesitated to be committed to the principles of freedom for human beings.

In fact, Emerson's commitment to women's empowerment can be traced to his early days. As a critic rightly points out, he apparently showed a sympathetic interest in the need for development of female education and the equal relationship between

wife and husband by reading Hannah More's *Strictures on a System of Female Education* as early as 1817, when he was just fourteen years old (Gilbert, "Emerson" 224). Paying attention to woman's intellect and logical nature, the author of this book maintains that "marriage should be a union based on educated, mutual understanding, common interests, genuine respect, and sexual equality" (Gilbert, "Emerson" 224). It is a startling fact that Emerson, as a young teenager, had been already interested in the germ of gender politics shown in the book in the context of early nineteenth-century America.

Also, in his journal, proving his interest in the institution of marriage, he opines that "the married couple should not take either the name of husband or wife, but a new name common to both" (*JMN* 8: 342). Citing the above journal entry, Armida Gilbert argues that Emerson's view is very progressive even for postmodern sensibilities, particularly in anticipating contemporary feminism's stress on sexual equality in marriage ("Emerson" 224).

In light of these facts, Emerson not only took a sympathetic stance on the women's rights movement but also showed his interest in the progressive ideas about the institution of marriage. Nevertheless, the relationship between Emerson and the women around him was ambiguous: Emerson was, in fact, regarded to be too cool and

aloof to answer the demands of these women. While he eventually demonstrated progressive ideas on the freedom and equality of men and women, his actual relationship with women, such as his wife and intellectual friends, shows that he might have been one of the typical nineteenth-century men who had traditional, patriarchal views about women.

Approaching Emerson in the household will, therefore, uncover the disparity between his theory and practice. By disclosing the gap between the ideal and the reality that he actually internalized, we will also gain a glimpse into the influence that the women in the household had on the philosopher to form his ideas in the context of social reform. Emerson, whose philosophy was considered to be inconsistent with his actual life, will be re-scrutinized across a variety of the backgrounds of his domestic and social relationships.

To be sure, Emerson was interested in the germ of gender politics; on the other hand, however, issues regarding Emerson's own marriage are open to question. It is not clear that he actually applied his progressive ideas about the institution of marriage in his relationship with his wife Lidian Jackson Emerson. Rather, holding the conventional views on sexual identity that he showed during the early stage of the women's movement, he might have been a stereotypical husband in the male-dominated

society of his age.

Thus, in this chapter, paying particular attention to his stance on marriage and his attitude toward women in the household, we will gauge a "suffrage-sensitive" Emerson in a new light in terms of gender studies. Commencing with a discussion about his marital relationship with the aim of arguing his ideas relating to women, this study will illuminate the thoughts of the real Emerson to clarify the new aspects of the philosopher in a domestic context. When we approach the real aspect of his ideas on freedom and equality of human beings, we can finally understand Emerson and his ideas of social reform.

It might be ironical for Emerson, who showed his sympathetic interest in the plight of women, that Lidian left the following opinion, when she was discussing "the dark side of matrimony" with her aunt:

[W]hat you said of marriage in general . . . is I am sure both true and false—that is[,] it is most true of marriage without love—and I suppose the majority of marriages are so. . . . A true marriage is "perfect freedom" there is no *yoke* there. But the yoke of an unfit marriage may I should say be more galling and degrading than that of the Negro Slave. (*LME* 518, 521; *LLJE* 174)⁹⁰

Finding a striking analogy between slavery and "an unfit marriage," Lidian shows her

critical views on the shortcomings of actual marriage. Rather, she thinks that the plight imposed by "an unfit marriage" is "more galling and degrading" than that of slavery. It is uncertain whether she had considered her own marriage to be "unfit" or not; however, if she had seen it as "marriage without love," she must have found the "yoke" in her own marital life. Just as slavery put slaves under the "yoke," Lidian believed that women would suffer from oppression and restraint caused by a "marriage without love."

This statement reminds us of the analogy between women and slaves that female abolitionists recognized during the antebellum women's rights movement. Finding the similarities between their status before the law and that of the chattel slave, they often described their oppression by using the images of the slave. Therefore, if Lidian had also seen the "yoke," she should have felt a sense of oppression in her own marital life much like female abolitionists had seen in the patriarchal structure of the antebellum society.

Extant materials suggest that Lidian had evidently felt a "painful sense of distance from her husband" (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 74). One of the most notable reasons was probably his deep affection for and attachment to his first wife, Ellen Louisa Tucker Emerson, who died of tuberculosis in 1831, soon after their wedding.⁹¹ Always

associated in Emerson's mind with a "strong, self-effacing religious faith," Ellen remained ideal and sacred in Emerson's memory (*EMF* 109).⁹²

Emerson's plain feeling toward his two marriages is best summed up in a letter to his brother William Emerson which was written shortly after Emerson got engaged to his second wife, Lidian, in 1835: "I am engaged to marry Miss Lydia [Lidian] Jackson of Plymouth. I announce this fact in a very different feeling from that with which I entered my first connexion [with Ellen.] This is a very sober joy" (*L* 1: 436). Suggesting that his marriage to Lidian brings "a very sober joy" to him in contrast to his marriage to Ellen, the above statement succinctly represents Emerson's relation to his two wives. By contrast, when he became engaged to Ellen, he expressed his blissful delight and gratification in a letter to William:

I have the happiness to inform you that I have been now for one week engaged to Ellen Louisa Tucker a young lady who if you will trust my account is the fairest & best of her kind. . . . [I am] as happy as it is safe in life to be in the affection of the lady & the approbation of the friends. (*L* 1: 256)⁹³

In this passage, he expresses the utmost happiness, for she is an idealized woman to him. While his second marriage to Lidian did not have the same "lyrical, romantic quality"

(*EMF* 190), his engagement to Ellen meant “delicious memories of youth, brief moments and meetings” (*EMF* 191).⁹⁴

Painfully aware that it was impossible to compete with the memory of Ellen, Lidian had an increasingly distressing sense of distance from her husband. When their first daughter was born in 1839, it was Lidian who named her “Ellen” after his first wife (Rusk 252). As Robert D. Richardson, Jr. sees, Lidian, perhaps, wished to provide what Emerson wanted by presenting him with “another Ellen” (312). Impressed by “Lidian’s magnanimity” (*EMF* 312), Emerson wrote in his journal as follows:

[A] daughter was born to me. . . . Lidian, who magnanimously makes my gods her gods, calls the babe Ellen. I can hardly ask more for thee, my babe, than that name implies. Be that vision & remain with us, & after us.
(*JMN* 7: 170)

Suffice it to say that Emerson here shows his deep affection and admiration for his first wife, Ellen, even after Lidian bore him a daughter. As the above passage indicates, to name the daughter Ellen is, for Emerson, to share his “gods” with his wife. Also, it sounds somewhat curious that he says, “[she] was born to *me*,” not to us (emphasis added).⁹⁵

Due to her personal sorrow, in addition to her excessive absorption in antislavery

sentiment, Lidian had had a difficult time especially between 1840 and 1870. She had suffered from a long-continued illness and indisposition and spent many of her days depressed and isolated in her bedchamber during that period.⁹⁶ In spite of this, in 1847 Emerson left her to lecture in England for almost a year. He had also felt sad and lonely in such a domestic situation during this period, and he really hoped that his absence would be a "relief" to her (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 77).⁹⁷

Far from giving her some relief, however, "Emerson's projected absence" made his wife feel abandoned by him (*EMF* 439).⁹⁸ Writing to Emerson about her personal sorrow and deep suffering, Lidian asked him to send more personally intimate letters to her frequently during the trip (*LLJE* 141, 157; Cole, "Pain and Protest" 77). Responding to her letter, however, Emerson wrote of his inability to communicate in such a way, as Lidian's letter implies (*LLJE* 157).⁹⁹ The implication of this incident is that Emerson apparently failed to find the best way of mitigating Lidian's suffering even though she was in the depths of illness and despair. In fact, he might have striven to alleviate her sense of depression, yet he also became restless and dissatisfied, possibly heightening her feelings of alienation.

The "finest non-family portrait of Emerson and his wife Lidian at home which survives from this period" is, as Joel Myerson examines, Margaret Fuller's vivid

description of the household in her 1842 journal (*MF* 321).¹⁰⁰ When she stayed with the Emersons at Concord for three weeks in that year, she provided in her journal an insightful account of Emerson's views on marriage and gave vivid details about the familial relationship.

From Fuller's depiction of one incident, we can also learn about Lidian's personal distress. One day during Fuller's stay, Lidian burst into tears at being left out of walks and conversation, which Emerson and Fuller often enjoyed in the Concord Woods (*MF* 331; Cole, "Pain and Protest" 74). They did not invite Lidian to join them simply because she had had a slow fever which had confined her to her chamber, but she did "feel perfectly desolate, and forlorn" (*MF* 331). After wondering whether she was considerate enough, Fuller tried to comfort Lidian: "I never keep him from any . . . duties, any more than a book would. . . . [H]is life is in the intellect not the affections. He has affection for me, but it is because I quicken his intellect" (*MF* 331). Stressing that her role is to stimulate his intellectual activity, Fuller gives an excuse for being with him. She tries to explain that she never interrupts him because their relationship is also based "in the intellect not the affections." This episode is a fascinating one, for it yields some revealing insights not only into Emerson's relationship with his wife and with Fuller but also into their friendship which got on Lidian's nerves and deepened her

sorrow, as we will see when we delve deeper into this subject later.

From her female perspective, Fuller doubted Emerson's speculations and conduct at home (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 74). When Lidian burst into tears, Emerson "said not a word" and never offered "his sweetness of look" (*MF* 331). As "he is so true to himself" and "lives in his own way," Fuller observes, he did not "soothe the illness, or morbid feelings of a friend [Lidian], because he would not wish any one to do it *for him*" (*MF* 331). Fuller "can never admire him enough at such times," and she goes on to represent her own mind and feelings about their relation:

[A] painful feeling flashed across me, such as I have not had, all has seemed so perfectly understood between us [Fuller and Lidian]. . . . I think she [Lidian] will always have these pains, because she has always a lurking hope that Waldo's character will alter, and that he will be capable of an intimate union; now I feel convinced that it will never be more perfect between them two. I do not believe it will be less: for he is sorely troubled by imperfections in the tie, because he *don't* [does not] believe in any thing better. (*MF* 331-32)

From a single woman's standpoint, Fuller has "perfectly understood" Lidian's "painful feeling" even though Fuller has not herself experienced such an emotion. Fuller sees

that Lidian has always ða lurking hopeð that her relation to Emerson will be more intimate and devoted. As a friend of theirs, however, Fuller considers that ðit will never be more perfect between them twoð because she knows Emerson well enough to know that he does not expect ðany thing better.ð

Fuller also found the ground for ðimperfections in the tieð in a fundamental difference of views on marriage between Emerson and Lidian. Emerson carefully offered his philosophic beliefs when Fuller discussed ðMan and Woman, and Marriageð with him as follows:

Love is only phenomenal, a contrivance of nature, in her circular motion. . . . The soul knows nothing of marriage, in the sense of a permanent union between two personal existences. The soul is married to each new thought as it enters into it. If this thought puts on the form of man or woman[,] if it last you seventy years, what then? . . . [A wifeð] conduct will always be to claim a devotion day by day that will be injurious to him [her husband], if he yields. (*MF* 330-31)

For Emerson, love and marriage are ðonly phenomenal,ð and it is no matter for ðthe soulð how long they last in the end. As he observes, the most important thing is, instead, that people meet ðeach new thoughtð through marriage in order that they may

attain individual development. In this sense, it will be ultimately "injurious" to a husband if his wife's everyday conduct is always "to claim a devotion" of him (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 74). Regarding a wife's conduct as claiming a daily devotion of her husband, Emerson generally advises a husband not to yield to his wife's requests if that would keep him from any other important duties.

Referring to the above statement, Carlos Baker suggests that Emerson's "down-to-earth attitude about marriage was patriarchal" since Emerson had "a built-in determination not to yield to the emotional importunities of the women around him" (193). Even though his wife, perhaps, determined to "cultivate invalidism as a spur to her husband's daily devotion" (Baker 193), he was staunchly unwilling to pay attention to her claims, which he considered to be "injurious" to him. Now that he saw that love was "only phenomenal," it was not very important for him to devote himself to his wife.

Emerson's views on marriage are thus transcendental and individualistic, as is typically the case with him.¹⁰¹ About a year before the above conversation with Fuller, Emerson had overtly shown a similar discussion about marriage in his journal as follows:

Marriage is not ideal but empirical. It is not in the plan or prospect of the soul, this fast union of one to one; the soul is alone & creates these images

of itself. . . . Every one of its thoughts it casts into an incarnation which is a man, woman, exhausts it of its sweetness & wisdom, & passes on to new. To a strong mind therefore the griefs incident to every earthly marriage are the less, because it has the resource of the all-creating, all-obliterating spirit; retreating on its grand essence the nearest persons become pictures merely. The Universe is his bride. (*JMN* 8: 34)

Bearing out Fuller's descriptions, the entry shows that Emerson underrates the marital relationship from his transcendental standpoint to the extent that "the Universe is his bride." He thinks of marriage not as "ideal" but as useful for his individual growth in terms of its "empirical" significance. When he maintains that "the soul is alone" and that marriage is only a "fast union," "the nearest persons become pictures merely." Therefore, the griefs and daily claims incident to "earthly marriage" are trivial for "a strong mind," and he implicitly refers to the weakness and "the lachrymosities of his wife" (Baker 193) in a cold tone.

However, this is not to say that Emerson is in opposition to the institution of marriage. As has just been examined, he finds empirical importance in matrimony. He often underlines his position on this topic:

[T]here is in the eyes of all men a certain evil light, a vague desire which

attaches them to the forms of many women, whilst their affections fasten on some one. Their natural eye is not fixed into coincidence with their spiritual eye. Therefore it will not do to abrogate the laws which make Marriage a relation for life, fit or unfit. Plainly marriage should be temporary relation, it should have its natural birth, climax, & decay, without violence of any kind,—violence to bind, or violence to rend. (*JMN* 8: 95)

Emerson acknowledges that all men have a natural tendency to be attracted by the forms of women regardless of their marital status. Even if they have affection for their wives, they are likely to be caught by their natural instinct, which Emerson terms “a certain evil light,” or “a vague desire.” However, it does not deny the institution of marriage because it is natural and necessary for life, even though it is a “temporary” relation. As his chief interest is in inner development on an individual level, familial intimacy enables him to learn about “a relation for life” and about society. As long as he sees a particular significance in marriage, he does not refuse the relationship from which he can make the best use of for his individualistic purpose.

This attitude about marriage corresponds precisely to Emerson’s realistic analysis of love and affection. About a year after the marriage with Lidian, he wrote in his journal:

A very good discourse on Marriage might be written by him who would preach the nature of things. Let him teach how fast the frivolous external fancying fades out of the mind. Let him teach both husband & wife to mourn for the rapid ebb of inclination not one moment, to yield it no tear. . . . They learn slowly that all other affection than that which rests upon what they are is superstitious & evanescent, that all concealment, all pretension is wholly Vain, . . . that there is no luck nor witchcraft nor destiny nor divinity in marriage that can produce affection but only those qualities that by their nature extort it, that all love is mathematical. (*JMN* 5: 208)

Despite being in just the early days after their marriage, Emerson's ideas about love, shown in the above passage, are far from romantic. Suggesting "how fast the frivolous external fancying fades out of the mind," he urges husbands and wives to keep "the nature of things" in mind in order that they may have "no tear." In other words, he states that they should bear in mind that their romantic feelings will not last so long. He sees that earthly affection is "superstitious, evanescent," and he negates any romantic qualities, such as "luck, witchcraft, destiny, and divinity," in marriage. All he learns from marriage is the fact that love is only "mathematical," not fancy and

frivolous.

Emerson's transcendental and individualistic stance on marriage gives an acceptable account for his unwillingness to open the doors to the inner recesses of his heart and mind (Warfel 578) even in the household. Emerson himself confided to his journal in 1839: "Most of the persons whom I see in my own house I see across a gulf. I cannot go to them nor they come to me. Nothing can exceed the frigidity" (*JMN* 7: 301). He saw "a gulf" that insulated him from his family members even within the home. Recognizing his own "frigidity," he drew a line between them, which might have given his wife a "painful sense of distance" from him (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 74).

In her journal during her stay at the Emersons, Fuller admitted that Lidian laid "undue stress on . . . the demands of the heart," stating that nothing made Fuller "so anti-marriage" as her talks with Lidian (*MF* 338). Lidian probably asked her husband for his daily devotion, and they were not able to fill the gap between their stances on marital life. No wonder Emerson exclaimed in his 1838 journal: "You must love me as I am. Do not tell me how much I should love you. . . . [D]o not by your sorrow or your affection solicit me to be somewhat else than I by nature am" (*JMN* 5: 452). This passage illustrates extremely well Emerson's adamant refusal to change himself to

answer the importunate solicitations and the emotional desires of his wife. At the same time, therefore, we can also say that this statement discloses the disparity that Emerson experienced between being a reformer and a husband. Emerson makes it clear that his reform stance, which supposes our unlimited potential to "evolve" into a higher level, stops short of his daily life when he refuses to make an effort to change and improve himself for the purpose of better relations with his wife.

Indeed, Emerson often had difficulty in handling Lidian's temperament because her intensity was conspicuous and troubling to him right from the start (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 69). Sometimes he called her "Asia" (*LLE* 68) because, as their daughter Ellen observed, "no New Englander that he knew had ever possessed such a depth of feeling that was continually called out on . . . trivial occasions" (*LLE* 69).¹⁰² For Emerson, in short, Lidian was a woman with an extraordinary feeling that "no New Englander that he knew had ever possessed." Since she was so emotional that her deep feeling was "continually called out on . . . trivial occasions," Emerson possibly felt that she deviated from the conventional standard of contemporary New Englanders. As his exotic nickname for her implies, Lidian was more than Emerson could handle since "a depth" of her feeling was somewhat out of his control.

Lidian was actually sensitive not only to "trivial occasions" in daily life but also

to the nation's political debates. Identifying with the pain of the powerless, she was often absorbed in major engines of reform in antebellum America (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 69). According to scholars, Lidian was well ahead of her husband on the subject of abolition (*EMF* 270) and significantly encouraged him to take an active interest in the plight of the slaves, especially in the early years (*VH* 393).¹⁰³

To be precise, Lidian was well ahead of her husband not only in abolition but also in other social issues in general. As some critics have suggested, Lidian's enthusiastic sympathy for the Cherokees was so influential to Emerson that he was eventually urged to send a letter to Martin Van Buren (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 69-70; Gougeon, "Historical Background" xxvi). She was also a strong supporter of women's rights as one of the initial members of the New England Woman Suffrage Association, and besides, she also found energy for commitment to the temperance movement (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 83, 87; *EMF* 533; Gougeon, "Historical Background" xxv).

At a time when men were the significant agency for the expression of women's ideas, Lidian spoke to her husband in their private domain to draw forth his public pronouncements. Regarding Lidian as "a vigilant crusader for human rights" (*VH* 393) whose influence on Emerson was incalculable, Len Gougeon includes a passing remark of Emerson's friend Mary Merrick Brooks: "Mr. Emerson wouldn't be the man he is if it

were not for Mrs. Emerson. People have no idea how much he owes to his wife" (qtd. in *VH* 393; *LLE* xiv). This statement bears special weight because it aptly encapsulates the importance of Lidian's influence over her husband and of the dynamics of household conversation that was a daily source of his thinking (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 73).

Emerson had been substantially inspired by Lidian's enthusiasm for social reform, yet he resisted her emotional excess. Trembling for family peace, he blamed her for her overly militant, aggressive reaction to political issues (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 69). He often expressed puzzlement at treating her grievously sentimental feeling in his comments about her to the children: "Your mammy has no sense of measure" (*LLE* 69), but "a gift to curse & swear" (*JMN* 8: 88), having "many holes in her mind" (*LEE* 1: 307). Taking particular note of these statements, Phyllis Cole suggests that Lidian's temperamental excess was so intolerably offensive for her husband that his comments about her over the years had a "decidedly caustic" tincture ("Pain and Protest" 69).

After all, it is actually difficult to estimate the real affection and affinity between the two of them. The utmost we can say is that Lidian must have found a marked analogy between slavery and her own domestic life if she had considered her matrimony to be "marriage without love," as has been noted earlier.¹⁰⁴

B. Love, Friendship, and "Literary Gossip"

A thorough examination of issues regarding Emerson and his marriage must come to grips with his attitude at home and his relationship with his wife. Lidian's distressing sense of distance from her husband can be explained to some degree when we realize Emerson's continuing deep affection for his first wife and his transcendental views on marriage.

In addition to these factors, Emerson's friendship is also a matter of primary importance for our examination, for it significantly offers a glimpse into his role and interests within the domestic context. As extant materials show, it becomes clear that the relationships between members among his circle have implications for those who wish to learn about the domestic view of the lives of the Emersons and their friends. Among others, an examination of Emerson's friendship with Fuller, and Lidian's companionship with Henry David Thoreau, is of the highest significance for the scholar of Emerson who seeks to find a reason why Emerson had apparently made ambivalent gestures toward his wife, providing new truths about the philosopher in the light of gender studies.

"More than any other person—except possibly Ellen," as a critic notes, "Margaret

Fuller got through to Emerson's emotional life" (*EMF* 240). As has been earlier studied, Fuller served as the catalyst for Emerson's work in the women's movement since the feminist conversation between them offered the most critical setting for his thoughts (Zwarg, "Emerson as 'Mythologist'" 213). However, noteworthy is the fact that she provided fertile ground not only for his intellectual milieu but also for his emotional life. As Margaret Vanderhaar Allen states, Emerson had also been closer to Fuller than any other man she had ever known except for Ossoli, her husband (39). Furthermore, Robert D. Richardson, Jr. goes as far as to identify their friendship as romance: "If Emerson guarded his heart with her, it was because he had to. He loved her, and he knew he loved her" (240).

Close reading of a copious amount of the materials in their letters and journals remarkably uncovers the possibility of their comradeship being based on mutual affection in a certain sense. Emerson's journal entries about Fuller are numerous enough, and, they bear testimony to his complicated, somewhat interesting, emotions to her:

I would that I could, I know afar off that I cannot give the lights & shades, the hopes & outlooks that come to me in these strange, cold-warm, attractive-repelling conversations with Margaret, whom I always admire,

most revere when I nearest see, and sometimes love, yet whom I freeze, &
who freezes me to silence, when we seem to promise to come nearest.

(*JMN* 8: 109)¹⁰⁵

This paragraph most strikingly suggests Emerson's contradictory emotions for Fuller that he, himself, considers to be "strange." On the one hand, he clearly shows his attachment to her as he states that he always admires, reveres, and sometimes even loves her. On the other hand, however, it is notable that the conversation with her elicits his "cold-warm, attractive-repelling" feeling that "freezes" him to "silence." As Carl F. Strauch puts it, "Emerson continually oscillated between the positive and negative poles of attraction and repulsion. He could not help himself; powerfully drawn to Margaret Fuller, he did and did not like her" ("Hatred's Swift Repulsions" 66). These contradictory and "strange" expressions amply reveal Emerson's confused emotions for her.

Emerson's repulsion toward Fuller might have reflected his negative feelings about intellectual women who would direct a defiant look at the male-centered structure of antebellum society. Viewed through the lens of nineteenth-century conventional images of womanhood, women were expected to assist their families within the purview of the domestic sphere. As people in that period did, Emerson might have felt

confusion about Fuller, who would think and act for herself to go beyond the boundary of this ideology of "true womanhood." In the *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, Emerson offers the following depiction of her personality: "She had a dangerous reputation for satire, in addition to her great scholarship. The men thought she carried too many guns, and the women did not like one who despised them" (1: 202).¹⁰⁶ According to Emerson, Fuller had "a dangerous reputation for satire" and "her great scholarship" that he represented as "too many guns" for men. This description concisely illustrates her combative attitude toward the patriarchal society of nineteenth-century America that she tried to challenge. Pointing "too many guns" at men, Fuller also "despised" women who did not attempt to defy the male-dominated structure of society. Thus, Emerson often enjoyed conversations with Fuller, but he might, at the same time, have had a repelling feeling toward her intellect and spirit with which she would intrepidly challenge the accepted social norms of the times.

For Emerson, as Harry R. Warfel puts it, Fuller was "a living riddle" to be solved, who "disturbed his equanimity as no one else had done" (591). In other words, she had unfathomable depths that had kept attracting his constant curiosity with. As newness was always interesting to Emerson, so was the relationship with Fuller, who always offered new thoughts to him.

Furthermore, Emerson presumably deemed their comradeship as important not only for his intellectual stimulus but also for maintenance of good relations with his wife. About a month before the above statement on Fuller in his journal, he recorded his opinion about the significance of "new love" for a married couple when they were wounded:

When each of two souls [in marriage] had exhausted the other of that good which each held for the other, they should part in the same peace in which they met, not parting from each other, but drawn to new society. The new love is the balm to prevent a wound from forming where the old love was detached. But now we could not trust even saints & sages with a boundless liberty. For the romance of new love is so delicious, that their unfixed fancies would betray them, and they would allow themselves to confound a whim with an instinct, the pleasure of the fancy with the dictates of the character. (*JMN* 8: 95)

Emerson encourages husbands and wives to part and meet "new society" when they exhaust each other. The "new love" is, in his words, "the balm to prevent a wound from forming where the old love was detached." By having new relationships, they can change the status quo and develop into the renewed partnership, for it opens a new

possible approach to the problems between them. However, he simultaneously warns them of the danger of "the romance of new love" that is "so delicious" that they would "confound a whim with an instinct, the pleasure of the fancy with the dictates of the character." In other words, he recommends that husbands and wives attempt to have chances to meet new people in order to refresh their partnership, but he asserts that they should not be too much absorbed in the new friendship so as not to lose themselves. If he indicates Fuller in this passage, he might have been aware of the possibility of "the romance of new love" in their friendship to compensate for his sense of crisis in his marital life.

Certainly, Emerson occasionally found ways to manifest a discontent with his domestic life in his conversation with Fuller. In a letter to her, Emerson complains about his wife: "Lidian sometimes taxes me at home with an egotism more virulent than any against which I rail. . . . I must unfold my own thought. . . . Pity me & comfort me, O my friend" (*L* 3: 20).¹⁰⁷ Emerson attributes friction with his wife to her "egotism" and his unwillingness to open his mind, and he seems to try to take comfort from the correspondence with Fuller in some small measure.

A careful examination of Fuller's attitude toward Emerson also yields some revealing insight. At the outset of their friendship, Fuller had long pursued a goal of

direct companionship with Emerson, for she, who had been frustrated by her father's death, had ardently sought "a kind of father figure" in the philosopher (Baker 66). Although they might have, at first, had negative feelings for each new acquaintance, they had soon begun to be attracted by the charm of each other's personalities and intellectual attainments (Baker 66-67; Warfel 578). Emerson had served as her spiritual adviser as she had demanded, and Fuller also as his harshest, earnest critic (Warfel 587). As Warfel puts it briefly, "Emerson alone in New England fulfilled her high requirements" (578), and "[n]o American critic has distributed more justly both praise and blame to Emerson's writings" than Fuller did (588).

Materials that disclose Fuller's affection for Emerson abound. "It was Emerson himself," Baker notes, "who stood at the center of Margaret's interest" (119). She often stayed at his house, where they read something together, walked, or had many a conversation that prevented her sleeping because of her excitement (Fuller, *Woman* 351; Warfel 581). She recorded one of her visits in her journal:

I have only an indefinite recollection of the moonlight and the river. We were more truly together than usual. . . . I have been fairly intoxicated with his mind. I am not in full possession of my own. I feel faint in the presence of too strong fragrance. . . . Farewell, dearest friend, there has been

dissonance between us, and may be again, for we do not fully meet, and to me you are too much and too little by turns, yet thanks be to the Parent of Souls, that gave us to be born into same age and the same country and to meet with so much of nobleness and sweetness as we do, & I think constantly with more and more. (*MF* 340)

During her stay, as she recollected, she remembered that she took ãa long moonlight walkö with Emerson (Baker 197), when she felt they were ãmore truly together than usual.ö He was, for Fuller, ãthe presence of too strong fragranceö while he is ãtoo much and too little by turns.ö

Fuller thought of Emerson as ãtoo littleö when he was too aloof to open his heart and mind, which she saw as his shortcomings. In a letter to Emerson, she writes very clearly of this point: ãWhen I come to yourself, I cannot receive you, and you cannot give yourself: it does not profitö (qtd. in Warfel 590). Complaining about his reluctance to ãgive himself,ö she was sometimes disappointed at his attitude of unfriendliness and philosophic detachment.

However, Fuller also found out that there were two sides in her relationship with the philosopher: ãIt is deeply tragic on the one side, any relation to him, but on the other, how noble, how dear! . . . Let me once know him and I shall not be disappointed. But

he is hard to know, the subtle Greek!ö (qtd. in Blanchard 209-10).¹⁰⁸ As this remark on their relationship demonstrates, Fuller saw it as ödeeply tragic on the one side,ö but, on the other hand, she appreciated it. Emerson was öhard to know,ö yet she felt that the more she knew him, the more she was considerably attracted by his thought and personality. Like öthe subtle Greek,ö for the intellectually-curious woman, Emerson was always a great source of ideas that prompted her desire to know about him more and more.

In spite of Fuller's anxiety for a closer relationship, Emerson tried to reject the claim without breaking off with her, by which she had been frequently frustrated (*EMF* 338). When he rode with her to Jamaica Plains in 1840, she taxed him with öinhospitality of soulö (*JMN* 7: 509) on behalf not only of her own but also of Caroline Sturgis Tappan (*EMF* 338); öShe [Margaret Fuller] & C. [Caroline Sturgis Tappan] would gladly be my friends,ö Emerson replied, öyet our intercourse is not friendship, but literary gossipö (*JMN* 7: 509). He knew fully well the fact that Fuller and Tappan felt öwronged in such relationö (*JMN* 7: 509), but he went on to represent his opinion on their relationship in his journal as follows:

I must do nothing to court their love which would lose my own. . . . Yet how joyfully would I form permanent relations with the three or four wise &

beautiful whom I hold so dear, and dwell under the same roof or in a strict neighborhood. That would at once ennoble life. And it is practicable.
(*JMN* 7: 510)

The above comments show that Emerson always made an effort to control his emotions rationally. In his firm determination not to "lose [his] own," he enunciates his conviction that he "must do nothing to court their love" (emphasis added). As he describes "how joyfully" he would form "permanent relations" with some "wise" and "beautiful" women whom he feels "so dear," he still longs to enjoy what he terms the "literary gossip" with them. These women are, for Emerson, not just friends but literary colleagues. He believes that it is meaningful and inspirational for him to be with them as long as their relationship is based on literary activity.

Fuller continued to discuss the nature of their relationship with Emerson.¹⁰⁹

About a month later she again wrote him to claim a new relationship since she had still sought a closer one: "I am yours and yours shall be, let me daily how long soever in this or that other temporary relation" (*L* 2: 336). Although she had often pressed for more intimate connectedness, he had to reject her claim and tried to pacify her frustration with his view of affection:

You would have me love you. What shall I love? Your body? The

supposition disgusts you. What you have thought & said? Well, whilst you were thinking & saying them, but not now. I see no possibility of loving any thing but what now is, & is becoming; your courage, your enterpri[s]e, your budding affection, your opening thought, your prayer, I can love,—but what else? (*JMN* 7: 400)

Strauch suggests that this entry supports a “suspicion” that “[Fuller’s] expression of love was more than Platonic” (“Hatred & Swift Repulsions” 70). As this passage illustrates, however, Emerson shows how he feels about Fuller in terms of intellectual, spiritual communion. Holding “what now is” in high estimation, he shows his respects for her inwardness, such as her “courage,” “enterprise,” “budding affection,” “opening thought,” and “prayer.” He clearly states that aside from these qualities he cannot love anything, including her “body” and previous thought, and he stays within the limit of what he calls the “literary gossip” with her.

Upon investigation within this context, Emerson kept little more than an intellectual friendship with Fuller by drawing a line between them. A perusal of a great amount of their correspondence leads to the final consensus that they were not romantically involved although she might have been “intoxicated” with him (*MF* 340).¹¹⁰ When “she paid a visit to Concord” while she lived in New York, she was

“deeply disappointed” at the meeting with him (Baker 261): “Our moods did not match,” she wrote her friend, “[h]e was with Plato, I with the instincts” (*LMF* 4: 167). The implication of this statement is that he treated her more coldly by being platonic than she had overly expected.

However, as has been already noted, Emerson was not altogether displeased at her affection for him, let alone rejecting the claimant. When he had Fuller as a house guest, he wrote in his journal: “if I could put any dependence in your word of love! but now whilst it still rings in my ear & sweetens the springs of life we are both changed, wiser, sadder, I dare not ask you if you love me still” (*JMN* 8: 108). This is cryptic, but it can be argued that Emerson appreciates her “word of love” that is unforgettable for him. At this time, Fuller’s chief interest was in Emerson, and she often had discussion about her relationship with him during her stay at his house.

In addition, their frequent correspondence makes it clear that mutual trust and communication were established. “Between October 1839 and the same date in 1840,” according to Baker, “they exchanged at least fifty-five letters, more than one a week” (135). Emerson wished to have letters every day from Fuller (Warfel 591). Their close communication naturally led Fuller to wish to live in his house. She wrote in her journal when she stayed with him:

Just at night he came into the red room [the guest room of his house] to read the passage he had inserted. This is to me the loveliest way to live that we have. I wish it would be so always that I could live in the red room, & Waldo be stimulated . . . by the fine days . . . to write poems and come the rainy days to read them to me. (*MF* 338)

For Fuller, it is "the loveliest way to live" that they can share their thoughts and opinions any time they like. As she believes that they could offer intellectual stimulation to each other, she finds the greatest importance for them in living together under the same roof.

Emerson also hoped to be together as Fuller did. Indeed, it was Emerson who had repeatedly attempted to persuade her to come back to live with him in Concord since she had left for her European enterprise, which would eventually lead to the tragic end of her life by a shipwreck. When he was in England in 1848, he sent a letter to Fuller, who had been deeply involved with the revolution in Italy: "[C]ome live with me at Concord!" (*L* 4: 28).¹¹¹ It is highly significant, however, that he had made such a major decision to "install her eventually in the small house he had built . . . just opposite his front gate" without talking with his wife (Baker 297). He apologized to Lidian for having distressed her with his "plans for Margaret," which must have "looked

calamitous enough to the poor invalid,“ as Baker notes, quoting from Emerson’s letter (297).¹¹²

The relationship between Emerson and Fuller was short-lived in the end. On the way to Concord, where she would be drawn back by the repeated claims of Emerson and other friends, her short life was ended due to the tragic accident in the Atlantic Ocean in 1850. Her sudden death, unprepared and undefended, was undoubtedly a shock to Emerson. “I have lost in her my audience” (*JMN* 11: 258), he wrote in his journals, paying a tribute to her:

To the last her country proves inhospitable to her; brave, eloquent, subtle, accomplished, devoted, constant soul! If nature availed in America to give birth to many such as she, freedom & honour & letters & art too were safe in this new world. . . . She had a wonderful power of inspiring confidence & drawing out of people their last secret. (*JMN* 11: 256)

Emerson was, to Fuller, a spiritual mentor, and she was also, to him, an intellectual adviser, whom he thought of as one of his best “audience.” As this last sentence indicates, she inspired confidence and drew out of Emerson his imagination. Understanding her strength and capability, he knew well that she had not been fully evaluated by people in the country. Emerson thought that she had a great soul that the

American people should have been proud of although many of them did not appreciate her.

Ironically enough, Emerson's involvement in editing Fuller's biography after her death shortened the distance between them. As he was urged to write about her life by William Ellery Channing, Emerson also agreed and said: "[It] must be written, but not post haste. It is an essential line of American history" (*JMN* 11: 258). Giving weight to her social importance and their close friendship, Emerson determined to join the project on her biography, for people considered that he was, no doubt, her "spiritual representative" (*L* 4: 227). To complete the memoir, Emerson read through her journals and papers in which he discovered her personal problems and what had been hidden in her mind (Baker 132). "The unlooked for trait in all these journals to me is," says he, "the Woman, poor woman: they are all hysterical," and he goes on to state:

She is bewailing her virginity and languishing for a husband. "I need help. No, I need a full, a godlike embrace from some sufficient love." . . . This I doubt not was all the more violent recoil from the exclusively literary & "educational" connections in which she had lived. Mrs Spring told me that Margaret said to her, "I am tired of these literary friendships, I long to be wife & mother." (*JMN* 11: 500)¹¹³

His new discovery about Fuller was the fact that she was a "poor woman" who was hysterically "bewailing her virginity and languishing for a husband." He found that there was in her mind "violent recoil from the exclusively literary [and] "educational" connections in which she had lived." Instead of keeping such a literary relationship, she was, in fact, anxious to marry and have children. Touching her reality and hidden desire, Emerson had a closer look at her real figure. As critics rightly note, despite several editorial faults, Emerson's love and admiration for Fuller showed through the biography (Baker 322; Zwarg, "Emerson as "Mythologist" 214). "His contribution to Fuller's *Memoirs* reads," as Christina Zwarg points out, as "the final chapter" to *Representative Men*, which he had just published shortly before her death ("Emerson as "Mythologist" 218).

All things considered, the relationship between Emerson and Fuller developed within the limitations of what Emerson termed "the exclusively literary and educational connections," and she had, perhaps, remained emotionally distraught because of her sexual jealousy. When she stayed at his house, she laid bare in her journal her envy toward Emerson's wife, who had their children: "They [women like Lidian] have so much that I have not, I cannot conceive of their wishing for what I have," but when Lidian "thinks me the most privileged of women . . . it does seem a little too insulting at

first blushö (*MF* 332). Counterpointing what she has with what women like Lidian have, Fuller sees that she is far from öthe most privileged of womenö as they extol. On the contrary, Fuller implies that it is Emerson's wife who is öthe most privileged of womenö since Lidian has öso muchö that Fuller has not. Fuller would challenge the accepted views on womanhood of the period, but she, in fact, wished to be fulfilled by marriage and children as the contemporary women did. Viewed through öthe cult of true womanhood,ö Lidian was certainly an example of a woman who assisted her family within the domestic sphere. Fuller shows her conflicted feeling concerning the women's lives when she states in her journal that women like Lidian have öso muchö that she has not.

Seen in a slightly different perspective, however, the above journal entry reveals that Lidian also considered Fuller to be a kind of rival of hers. Fuller felt it öa little too insulting,ö yet she knew that Lidian, at times, thought of Fuller as öthe most privileged of womenö and wished for what Fuller had. In addition to his attachment to his first wife and his transcendental views on marriage, Emerson's relationship with Fuller may have also frustrated Lidian and deepened her sense of alienation. At least at the depth of her unconsciousness, Lidian had to struggle with these factors as the wife of the much-admired preacher.

Looking at these women in this way might reduce their relationship to something melodramatic: readers might be invited to surmise that Lidian and Fuller were fighting over the Concord sage. Perhaps, more importantly, however, we have to bear in mind the need for thinking about Emerson's responsibility for these women from a twenty-first-century view. Indeed, nothing shows that Emerson kept more than an intellectual friendship with Fuller. It seems that he drew a line between them so that they would not be romantically involved even though Fuller might have been frustrated by his treatment. Also, given the fact that it was quite common for the contemporaries to stay at a friend's house in order to deepen their exchanges, their friendship was also acceptable within the range of the nineteenth-century practice of intellectual activity (Ara 255-56). Therefore, the utmost we can say is that they had an ordinarily fostered intellectual exchange among the Transcendentalists.

One might say, however, that Emerson conveniently made the best use of these women for his own philosophical attainment. Including his first wife, Ellen, Emerson may have offered each particular role to one of the three women: Ellen served as an ideal woman; Fuller as an intellectual adviser; Lidian as a manager in the household. Enshrining her in the innermost depths of his mind like an idol, Emerson had kept giving Ellen an elevated status as his idealized image of a sacred woman. Fuller,

providing Emerson with new thoughts, played a vital role in inspiring him to establish his ideas through insightful conversations. In his private life, Emerson assigned domestic and practical duties to Lidian, who took over most of the housekeeping tasks and child rearing. One might assume that, therefore, by giving these women their appropriate roles, Emerson, perhaps, arrived at a "solution" to keep a balance between philosophy and reality for his own advantage.

However, the figure of Lidian viewed through the eyes of Emerson can be possibly limited. In the light of the events of her life, she was not only a pious, submissive, and domestic "true woman," but also an active, independent, and, at times, combative reformer who had as much social importance as her husband. Thoughtful perusal of her actual relations with the people around her may unearth the fact that she really assumed a salient role not merely in her household but even outside the home.

Her friendship with Thoreau is one of the examples that may help to shed new light on Lidian, who was usually in the shadow of her husband. It was Thoreau who sometimes took Emerson's place in the household and moderated Lidian's feelings of loneliness to a certain degree. During Emerson's absences from home because of his lecture tours, Thoreau had occupied a room in their house, serving as "majordomo" to the household, gardener, carpenter, tree surgeon, companion to the children, and sometime

secretaryö (Baker 243). Among others, he was, without doubt, endeared to Lidianö
ömotherly heart through his brotherly-fatherlyö affection for her children, who, in turn,
adored him (*LLE* xlvii). Thoreau was also emotionally attached to Lidian; therefore,
their relationship has received careful treatment from a number of readers until now, and
they have finally agreed that öThoreau was what the common man would call in love
with Emersonö wife.ö¹⁴

öThoreau was,ö as Baker claims, öobviously placing Lidian upon a very high
pedestalö (249). His empathetic attachment and romantic sentiment to her find their
most explicit and emphatic expression in his letters to her (Baker 245, 249). öMy very
dear Friend,ö wrote Thoreau to Lidian in 1843 as follows:

I have only read a page of your letter and have come out to the top of the
hill at sunset where I can see the ocean to prepare to read the rest. . . . You
seem to me to speak out of a very clear and high heaven. . . . Your voice
seems not a voice, but comes as much from the blue heavens, as from the
paper. . . . The thought of you will constantly elevate my life . . . as when I
look up at the evening star. . . . Sometimes in Concord I found my actions
dictated . . . by your influence. . . . I cannot tell you the joy your letters give
me—which will not quite cease till the latest time. Let me accompany

your finest thought. (Thoreau 119-20)

This passage strikingly indicates that Thoreau gave special value to Lidian, who seemed to him "to speak out of a very clear and high heaven." By using an analogy of the beauty of nature, he explains how grand and sacred her voice and thoughts are to him. Given the fact that he had not had extensive experience with women and he was very shy in their presence, it is startling that he managed to give her "this transcendental love letter" full of romantic and poetic expressions (Baker 249). As he mentions, Lidian's words and thoughts were so meaningful to Thoreau that he found his "actions dictated by her influence." Thus, this letter shows how much he admired Emerson's wife and that he had developed a cordial relationship with her.

Thoreau sent another letter, which also conveyed his deep affection to Lidian as follows:

I think of you as some elder sister of mine whom I could not have avoided,—a sort of lunar influence,—only of such age as the moon, whose time is measured by her light. You must know that you represent to me woman. . . . I like to deal with you, for I believe you do not lie or steal, and these are very rare virtues. I thank you for your influence for two years. I was fortunate to be subjected to it, and am now to remember it. It is the

noblest gift we can make. . . . You have helped to keep my life ðon loft.ö . . .

I felt taxed not to disappoint your expectation; for could there be any accident so sad as to be respected for something better than we are?

(Thoreau 103)

This letter also encapsulates Thoreau's attitude toward Lidian. In these sentences, he deems highly of her ðinfluenceö that ennoble him. Referring to ða sort of lunar influenceö in the age of the lunar calendar, he tries to visualize her importance to him and shows how an unavoidable and inevitable impact she has on him. He idealizes their friendship to the extent that he wonders if there can be ðsomething better than [they are].ö As he states that she represents ðwomanö to him, she is his mature, female companion of the mind (*LLE* xlviii-xlix). In the upshot, implicit in this appeal is the admission that he declares his love for her. Indicating the former letter that has been just quoted, critics see that ð[t]o almost anyone who will read the text with an open mind, this is a love letter.ö¹¹⁵

Undeniably, Lidian had also put her confidence in Thoreau.¹¹⁶ She had depended upon him to the extent that she could not have managed the Concord household without him; and besides, she had heartily appreciated his personality (Baker 244-45). In a letter to her husband during his absence, Lidian wrote about the events

of the day, mentioning Thoreau:

Richard Fuller sent him a music box as a N. Yearsø[New Yearø] gift and it was delightful to see Henry[ø]s child[-]like joy. I never saw any one made so happy by a new possession. He said nothing could have been so acceptable. After we had heard its performance he said he must hasten to exhibit it to his sisters & mother. My heart really warmed with sympathy, and admiration at his whole demeanour on the occasion—and I like human nature better than I did. (*LLJE* 118)

This paragraph illustrates that Lidian was genuinely fond of Thoreauø sensibilities. Stating that her øheart really warmed with sympathy, and admiration at his whole demeanour,ö she goes as far as to say that she likes øhuman nature better than [she] did.ö Suffice it to say that Thoreau was undoubtedly one of her most respectable male companions and she sufficiently showed her affection to him, possibly more than to her husband at least during his absence. As for Emerson, by an account of one critic, øconsciously or subconsciously sensing their æchemistry,ø he helped to establish Thoreau in the home of Emersonø own brother in New York in order to separate his wife from the male friend (*LLE* xlviii).

In the last analysis, however, as Emersonø connection to Fuller was within the

boundaries of the contemporary practice of intellectual companionship, it is most probable that the relationship between Lidian and Thoreau did not also go beyond a very close friendship of the highest order (*LLE* xlviii). "Considering each person individually," Delores Bird Carpenter maintains that "there is absolutely nothing in the character of either Henry or Lidian that would suggest the possibility of a physically intimate relationship" (*LLE* xlvii); they were "mind-bonded" (*LLE* xlviii). As he also acknowledged, Thoreau established fraternal ties with Lidian, who was sixteen years older than he was.

C. Lidian and "The Cult of True Womanhood"

The familial relationship and the friendship among his coterie provide us with an extensive and detailed presentation of Emerson as a real life figure rather than as a detached philosopher of self-reliance. Emerson's relation with Fuller particularly offers an indication of his relationship with his wife Lidian, and her friendship with Thoreau may suggest something about their internalized familial structure. Uncovering his personal dilemmas and inner contradictions, such investigation of Emerson in a new light significantly remakes the marble-busted image of a withdrawn and philosophical Emerson into that of an accessible, passionate, human personage.

As an important investigation in the context of social reform, we have to think about how reform-minded Emerson reflected his revolutionary, progressive ideas in his own life. In an attempt to examine this point closely, we have to look at Emerson through the eyes of Lidian, the woman closest to him. Actually, Emerson hardly had a domestic consideration despite his friendly commitment to the women's rights movement. When it comes to domesticity, Emerson proves representative of his times; his relationship with his wife specifically discloses the fact that he was not only indifferent about domestic matters but also that he was an example of a conventional, patriarchal man of nineteenth-century America. When we approach Emerson in the household, we often receive a glimpse of the disparity that Emerson experienced between being a suffrage-sensitive thinker and a stereotypical husband in the patriarchal society of his age.

Careful attention to Emerson's wife will also rediscover the fact that Lidian, an ideal middle-class woman of the age, was, in fact, well ahead of her husband in social reform in general, being a harbinger of the female reformers in early nineteenth-century America. Much like the middle-class American women of her era, it is likely that Lidian also probably took part in the reform movements in an attempt to express her repressed desire for a role compatible with the age of democracy. In this context,

Lidian can be considered one of the prominent female reformers of her time: her experiences are in line with those of her contemporary activists. Therefore, it would be impossible to discuss Emerson as a social reformer without considering Lidian, who had much influence on her husband on a daily basis in the context of social betterment.

It may well be that Lidian required Thoreau's devotion and cultivated family-like ties with him, because, as mistress of the Emerson's estate, she needed substantial help to run the large establishment. Indeed, just before she accepted Emerson's proposal of marriage in 1835, she had felt considerable pressure to be the wife of the much-admired preacher, and she had already anticipated the burden that would be imposed on her as his wife. She had already expressed concern about her domestic ability and capability, foreseeing "a load of care and labor from which she shrank because she was terribly afraid that she would not be able to be a skillful mistress of a house" (*LLE* 48).

As she had rightly anticipated, it was really far from simple for Lidian to manage the Emerson household. She was destined to be not merely the wife of a notable lecturer but also the mother of their four children; supervisor of the servants in the large estate; hostess of a number of her husband's guests throughout the year.¹¹⁷ When Emerson had gone away from home for lecture tours for months, she had taken pains to accept all the domestic responsibilities, including handling the family finances that were

almost always "on the ragged edge" (Baker 357). In this context, it is no wonder that Lidian was emotionally attached to Thoreau, a reliable male friend who had abilities and sensibilities enough to cope with the everyday demands on behalf of her husband.

Viewed through the prism of an influential nineteenth-century ideology of sexual roles called "the cult of true womanhood," Lidian could be regarded as an example of a middle-class woman of that age. Managing to perform as a skillful housekeeper to build what is commonly called "a haven in a heartless world," she was greatly involved in a "domestic realm of home, family, childrearing, and caretaking," where true women were situated (DuBois and Dumenil 138).

On this point, their child Ellen offers rich materials in the biography of her mother for those studying the Emerson household. Meticulously depicting her parents in the family home from the standpoint of their daughter, she brings to light many details of their domestic life:

One of Mother's talents was making something out of nothing and there was room to afford it great play. Her house must be handsome and her children must be well dressed, these were necessities to Mother's mind while Father considered both as less important. . . . Economy was natural to Mother. . . . She was not an anxious person and felt as certain that we

should come out solvent as Father felt uncertain. . . . She knew she was practicing a vigilant and severe, yea an active and inventive economy in all departments of her housekeeping and it grieved her that Father far from appreciating it really thought her recklessly and even cruelly extravagant.

(*LLE* 95-96)

As Ellen describes her, Lidian was a very capable woman bearing in mind the standards of the middle class in nineteenth-century America. She was so creative a housewife that she made "something out of nothing." In addition to her homemaking skills, according to Ellen, her mother was better able to make the best of the limited budget than her father. Nonetheless, to her disappointment, deeming domesticities as "less important," Emerson, far from appreciating Lidian's economical efforts, "really thought her recklessly and even cruelly extravagant."

From this reaction to these aspects of his wife's personality and skills, we can learn that Emerson paid little attention to domestic particulars. Lidian is recorded as having said: "Husband knows best" was my creed in those days, and I really thought he did. . . . [Yet] I must not regard him as an oracle for my department; he could not be expected to know anything about the housekeeping" (*LLE* 69). Treating the housekeeping as "my department," she excluded her husband from the domestic domain

about which *“he couldn’t be expected to know anything”* (emphasis added). Stated quite simply, Lidian acknowledged that the private sphere was her arena, for there was also *“the ideology of separate spheres”* in their own home as well as in contemporary middle-class practice.

As wife, mother, and the center of the household, Lidian was also actively engaged in providing her husband and family with inspiration and assistance, obligations that were bestowed on women in that era. While an active and public role was prescribed for men, *“true women”* were expected to exert indirect influences for the good of society by inspiring or helping men *“behind the scenes.”* Indeed, it was Lidian who encouraged her husband to develop his participation in social reform. Since she was greatly interested in the plight of the socially weak, she drove her husband to become involved in public service to take action against slavery, the issue of the Cherokees, and so on.

In this manner, Lidian generally contributed to Emerson’s social action on a daily basis. Back in 1843, for instance, urging him to have his interest in Thoreau, she prompted Emerson to *“advertise”* their young friend as a Lyceum lecturer: *“Henry[’s] Lecture pleased me much—and I have reason to believe others liked it,”* wrote Lidian in a letter to her husband, *“Henry ought to be known as a man who can give a Lecture.”*

You must advertise him to the extent of your powerö (*LLJE* 128). The obvious inference from this statement is that Emerson's appreciation of Thoreau as a lecturer was developed by the recommendation of Lidian, who was keenly aware of Thoreau's potentialities (*LLE* xlv). Within the private sphere and in a similar vein, she raised numerous topics in an attempt to persuade her husband to express her ideas to the public, for she knew that was the available route to social participation for "true women" in the early nineteenth century.

A careful assessment of her life, however, will allow us to understand that Lidian did not hope to stay just within the limits of the ideology of true womanhood. On the contrary, being unconsciously anxious to go beyond the submissive, constricted role people expected of women within this ethical framework, she had a desire to go into the male-dominated realm of "a writer." Much like her husband, Lidian also hoped to present her ideas through writing, yet she hesitated to do so for the following reasons, as noted in a letter to her daughter:

I don't do it for a few good reasons, chief of which is that I am nobody & editors would not publish anything I wrote. Another, that I don't know well enough how to write English not to make myself ridiculous—and if I published in my language how would Papa like that? I have done enough in

that line already. (*LLJE* 309)¹¹⁸

This statement reflects Lidian's reserved attitude, for she does not believe she has the credentials and abilities to become a writer. She states, "I have done enough in that line already," as she has written many a letter to her family and friends, but she is truly anxious to "publish anything." For all her aspiration, she labels herself as "nobody" whose writings "editors would not publish." In addition, it worries her that her English would make herself look "ridiculous," which "Papa" might complain about. Stated another way, her serious concern is based on her sense of intellectual inferiority: her complex of discontentment, timidity, and a feeling of incompetence are profoundly mixed up to produce her hesitation in taking a step forward.

Moreover, as Lidian mentions that "editors would not publish anything [she] wrote," the androcentrism of Boston's publishing circles thwarted her desire for public expression. In that time, paying little attention to women's writings, male writers had traditionally excluded female peers from the business. Elizabeth Peabody, an American educational reformer, for example, attempted to publish her reflections in the prestigious *Christian Examiner*, yet editor Andrews Norton cut her off as she was "incompetent . . . from want of learning" by censoring gender of authorship (qtd. in Cole, "Woman's Rights" 225).

Shedding light on such "scribbling women," scholars of the twenty-first century have begun to acknowledge the literary importance of their works. Among them are critics who seek to increase the visibility of women, whose writings were expressed in private spaces, such as journals and letters; they regard this kind of writing as "both the liveliest writing of the period and a primary means of sharing ideas within the circle of friends" (Cole and Argersinger 7). For instance, Cole and Jana Argersinger argue that "writing originally intended for private audiences merits consideration equally with published writing" and that "private and public expression are intimately joined" (7).

Furthermore, Robert N. Hudspeth discovers more value in these unpublished writings. Deeming the immediate, personal writings between friends to be the "unpublished literature," he asserts that much more truth is revealed in them than in the published work shaped by "the intervention of the editing and publishing apparatus" (317).¹¹⁹ From this perspective, we can say that Lidian was also a prospective writer, who was ready to give her voice to the public through her voluminous private exchanges. Nevertheless, much like her contemporary women, Lidian was also discouraged from becoming a writer by the nineteenth-century convention of the male-centered industry.

Above all things, Lidian was concerned about her husband's response to her

writing, and it was his patriarchal views on women, which was common in the age, that most severely hampered her aspirations. Emerson himself did not, perhaps, raise questions about the passive, dependent role prescribed for women, caught by the cult of true womanhood. Emerson's journals record views that correspond rigidly with this contemporary prevalent ideology: "Education with the mothers is an affair of shoes & stockings, apron & bonnet. . . . Woman should not be expected to write or fight or build or compose scores, she does all by inspiring man to do all" (*JMN* 8: 149).¹²⁰ As this passage succinctly demonstrates, Emerson also shared with his contemporaries the widespread ideas that make clear distinctions between the actions for man and those for woman: "Action and leadership were reserved for man; inspiration and assistance were woman's province" (DuBois and Dumenil 138). Certainly, as Cole indicates, Emerson appreciated his own aunt Mary Moody Emerson's language in letters, seeing her as a genius akin even to Shakespeare and Paul, yet he never wondered why she had not become a writer or lecturer ("Woman Questions" 419). If he applied to his wife the view that "woman should not be expected to write" but only to inspire man, Lidian's reluctance to be a writer is understandable.

Instead of expressing herself in papers in public, Lidian finally found alternative avenues in which to utilize her ability and energy. She became a social medium in her

circle and participated in reform movements. As a very skillful conversationalist, Lidian played an active role in her circle; and, as hostess in their home, she frequently offered hospitality to "Menagerie" invited mainly by her husband (*LLE* 80). According to their daughter Ellen, they had "seventy or eighty" (*LLE* 182) people at a time for conversations at their home, for both "Father & Mother were hospitably disposed" (*LLE* 71).¹²¹ During the conversations, it was Lidian's witty talk as well as Emerson's discourse that entertained the guests. "Conversations seem to be Mother's natural field," observed their children Ellen and Edward Waldo Emerson:

"It was a failure because Mrs. E. wasn't there," or "Oh yes. . . at last Mrs. Emerson spoke, and then all the fools were silent." I always hear the same thing. . . . [People] do rejoice when she speaks. Father exults greatly, he often is present and hears her, and says "I like to see her security and I know that whatever stranger is present will soon recognize the weight of what she says. She is equal to anything they may bring up." (qtd. in *LLE* xiii)

As her children demonstrate, Lidian enjoys displaying her verbal skills in her circle. Emerson also "exults greatly," admiring "the weight of what she says." Furthermore, when she had several chances to speak out at a club that May Alcott founded for the

young and old, she received a high evaluation: "Why is it, asked a visitor to the club one night . . . , that we always hear of Mr Emerson and never of Mrs Emerson? It seems to me that she is quite as wonderful as he" (*LLE* 155). Ellen also adds her lasting impression on her mother's speeches at the club: "She did seem in her element, she looked animated and talked very well, all she said was sincere and real, and her voice never sounded prettier" (*LLE* 156). Being held in high esteem, Lidian's eloquence reached one of the highest points in her life when, as an excellent negotiator in the Shaker community, she had an opportunity to make a speech extemporaneously to a large audience of both men and women (*LLE* xiii).

Moreover, Lidian found energy for active participation in the social movements of the day. As previously mentioned, she was extremely involved in social issues in general, such as abolition and the women's rights movement. Among others, Ellen's biography discloses Lidian's strenuous engagement in the movement against cruelty to animals throughout her lifetime.¹²² She had been an associate annual member of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals since the year of its founding, and she was vice-president of the Concord branch in 1872. Presumably influenced by Lidian, Emerson was also involved in the movement. According to Ellen, her mother subscribed to receive many copies of its paper to distribute to her

friends and the schools; she even wrote articles to be published in it (*LLE* 167-68). Therefore, although she once expressed her hesitation to "write," Ellen reveals that Lidian finally acquired a chance to contribute to the publication, albeit anonymously. In other words, no longer did Lidian serve as a mere inspiring, assisting wife in the home; instead, she played the role of socially active medium in her circle during a period of social betterment, going beyond the boundary of "true womanhood" in its strict sense.

Taking part in such public activities, Lidian was considered to be much more combative than her husband in terms of social reform efforts. Remembering a past incident in which Emerson sent an open letter to Martin Van Buren, President of the United States, to protest the forcible removal of the Cherokees, Lidian wrote to her daughter Ellen in 1873: "Your father is not combative—*with exceptions!*—Yet he exercised great moral combativeness in writing to the Pres. of the U.S. [Van Buren] in defense of the Cherokee Indians" (*LLJE* 308).¹²³ Showing a somewhat frustrated attitude to her husband's usual rather laggard gestures toward social issues, Lidian applauds his "great moral combativeness" in writing to the President on behalf of "the Cherokee Indians." Though he had done it "against the grain," Lidian thought highly of his action (*LLJE* 308). Cole makes the point that "Lidian's praise indicates" that

she, more than Emerson, represented "family militance" ("Pain and Protest" 67).

From these comments on her husband, we can surely learn that Lidian was well ahead of him in terms of social reform struggles.

In addition, Lidian showed no sign of losing her combativeness by taking an active interest in the contemporary national policy to exterminate the Native American Modoc tribe. From 1872 to 1873, a conflict called the Modoc War occurred between the Modocs and the United States Army in California and Oregon.¹²⁴ In a letter to her daughter Ellen, she rather excitedly announces her opinion about the war:

If I had your father's powers and influence, quickly would I make something public about the Modoc Indians. . . . [O]ur white savages . . . are now in full cry for the extermination of all the Indian tribes . . . [that includes] men, *women & children!!!* . . . [W]hat is to be done with the women & children is not said. Now I wish I could speak for these Modocs in every paper in this land. (LLJE 308-09)

This clearly suggests that Lidian identified with the plight of the powerless, "women" and "children" in particular. The Modoc band, according to William Brandon, consisted of about 250 men, women, and children, and Lidian wishes she could be a mouthpiece for these women and children (295). When she also wishes she had her

husband's powers and influence, she simultaneously and implicitly complains that her husband does not like to make something public about the Modoc Indians. As Cole notes, these pronouncements allow us to imagine that Lidian was always exhortative in tone in an attempt to urge her husband to take an active participation in social problems, which would ultimately establish his daily context as a social reformer (Pain and Protest 67).

Like most of her contemporary female reformers, however, Lidian did not challenge male-dominance directly. As Walters examines, the first generation of female activists reinforced feminine stereotypes by displaying the moral impulses everyone expected of them, by doing little that was unladylike, and by deferring to masculine leadership, particularly of the clergy (*American Reformers* 107). Submitting to her husband, Lidian also showed the moral impulses through her involvement in social campaigns in order to make use of her ability and experience. Her intention was not to attack the patriarchy itself but to repudiate implicitly the notion that the female sphere was limited to the household. In other words, she longed to expand the female arena while she accepted the traditional sex-role prescriptions per se.

However, it is also reasonable to suppose that part of Lidian actually suffocated in the air of the patriarchal tradition. Carpenter considers Lidian's wit to be an outlet,

perhaps for her frustration over the nineteenth-century expectation of submissionö (*LLE* xi-xii). Moreover, Lidian's continued illness can be explained when we realize that she had been discontented with her family life and nineteenth-century marital practices. As mentioned earlier, she had suffered from a vague illness mainly associated with melancholy and desperation between 1840 and 1870, which was indisputably one of the major issues for her family during that period. Emerson's journal records some of Lidian's remarks during her invalidity: "Do not wake me" (*JMN* 8: 363); "Dear husband, I wish I had never been born. I do not see how God can compensate me for the sorrow of existence" (*JMN* 8: 365).¹²⁵ It is, of course, impossible to ascertain the cause of her illness, yet we can assume that it might have stemmed mainly from her abiding sense of repression in some of these contexts.¹²⁶ In addition to her relationship with Emerson, intertwined with his love for his first wife, Ellen, and Fuller, Lidian's discontent with the role and duties expected of her might have distressed and depressed her for a substantial period of time.

In her painful struggle with the illness, Lidian, perhaps, tried to alleviate a sense of oppression by channeling her energy and frustration into the social reform movements. In her analysis of female activism in the early nineteenth century, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg identifies the motivation in the contrast between the passive,

submissive, and sharply limited role prescribed for women and a generally accepted belief in the possibilities and prospects for social change in Jacksonian America (564). According to Smith-Rosenberg, during a period when people thought of change as a self-evident good and believed in the unbounded possibilities of society and of all humankind, American women were more keenly than ever before aware of the difference between this social climate and the real potentialities available to them (564). Nonetheless, most middle-class American women were unable to explicitly challenge their socially defined sexual roles, and they attempted to direct their repressed anger and frustration to the social reform movements of antebellum America (Smith-Rosenberg 564).

Much like these middle-class American women, Lidian, perhaps, also took part in the movements in order to express her repressed desire for a proper role that would be compatible with the age of democracy. In this context, Lidian stands as one of the vanguards of the female reformers in early nineteenth-century America: her experiences are considerably in line with those of the activists. No wonder Sarah Clarke, who was an artist and sister of a well-known Unitarian minister James Freeman Clarke, made a meaningful comment about Lidian as follows:

I think she is almost equal to Mr. Emerson, though very different; . . . as

remarkable among women as he among men. . . . [S]he is a soaring transcendentalist; she is full of sensibility, yet as independent in her mind as —who shall I say? Margaret Fuller. (*LLE* 49)

Upon close inspection, as Clarke illustrates, Lidian will appear to us as a woman who has as much social importance as Emerson and Fuller in their contexts.

Unfortunately for Emerson, however incomprehensible his wife's continuing tendency to melancholia, it was presumably related to her sense of oppression. Her precarious health had seriously plagued Emerson for decades, but it had been medically shrouded in mystery (*LLE* xvii). Calling her illness "evils," he had tried to ease her distresses in vain, for he might have never understood the specific reasons for his wife's stress and complaints (*L* 4: 455). He leaves the following notation in his journal: "I gave enough to eat & I never beat you: what more can the woman ask? said the Good Husband" (*JMN* 7: 454). This statement may show Emerson's confusion about the treatment of his wife. He might have been at odds as to how to ease her distresses, for she had been long confined in her bedchamber in spite of his effort as "the Good Husband." Whether or not this entry has personal reference, however, it offers a glimpse into his patriarchal views on the familial structure: a woman should not complain about anything as long as her husband is good enough to feed her and never

beat her. Sharing "the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres," Emerson is likely to have believed that a man's role was to engage in labor to earn money for his family, and he did not understand that it was probably this patriarchal tradition that caused Lidian's frustration.

In the light of these examinations, the disparity that Emerson experienced between being a reform-sensitive thinker and a stereotypical husband in a male-dominated society may loom large in the minds of the twenty-first-century readers. It is even more ironical that Emerson, whose transcendentalist reform stance supposed our unlimited potential to "evolve" evermore toward a divinity, failed to broaden the possibilities of Lidian, the woman closest to him.

"Self-reliance, the key term of Emersonian individualism," as one critic suggests, "signifies women's independence from men" in the context of the women's rights movement (Cole, "Stanton" 543). It is plausible to assume that Emerson contributed substantially to the cause because his ideal of self-reliance encouraged women to think and act for themselves. Receiving positive recognition from women reformers, he had been highly respected as one of the leading figures who spoke for women. Nevertheless, if, in fact, his liberal stance did fall short in his domestic life, we may also have to recognize his limitations as a social reformer.

VI. Conclusion

It seems that Emerson scarcely got rid of his stereotypical views on women even while he spoke for women as one of the central figures of the women's rights movement. In order to fill the gap between being a prominent supporter of the cause and a conventional man of the patriarchal tradition of society, he might finally have arrived at a solution by finding an ideological ideal in an androgynous trait. For Emerson, who eventually placed much value on both of the sexes, it was highly significant to flatten out any notion of superiority or inferiority in sexual differences by redefining the Divinity as a more neutral concept.

As has been already studied, Emerson's views on sexual roles surely had a patriarchal tincture; however, this idea was not unique to Emerson. According to antebellum images of masculinity and femininity, men were naturally strong in body and mind, aggressive, and sexual, while women were innately weak, passive, emotional, religious, and chaste, and men should support women; women should provide the sensitivity men lacked (Walters, *American Reformers* 105). In his 1855 address, Emerson also maintains that women should find in man her guardian, and when he is her guardian, fulfilled with all nobleness, knows and accepts his duties as her brother, all goes well for both (*W* 11: 426). It is men who should defend women

against all possible threats and danger they might meet in the world. Sharing such stereotypes with his contemporaries, Emerson thought that women should be protected due to their "unresistable might of weakness" (*JMN* 5: 505).

However, it seems that Emerson eventually came to take into consideration a recognition that cultural and historical conditioning should be profoundly connected to all gender differences. He ascribed "weakness" to "the defective education of women," not to their innate inability to be men's intellectual peers: Women "learn casually & irregularly, & are not systematically drilled from childhood to letters" (*JMN* 11: 276). In addition, he recognized that the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres arguably had a decisive influence over female natures. In stark contrast to men's work outside the home, the exclusively domestic role expected of women led them to go into the world of subjective emotion within the family. Finding women "all victims of their temperament" (*JMN* 11: 445), Emerson saw its very source in motherhood, which was considered to be at the center of women's domesticity and of their beings (DuBois and Dumenil 138). Of this point he goes on to write clearly in his journal:

Nature's end of maternity . . . was of so supreme importance, that it was to be secured at all events, even to the sacrifice of the highest beauty. . . . Men

are not, to the same degree, temperament; for there are multitudes of men who live to objects quite out of them, as to politics, to trade, to letters, or an art, unhindered by any influence of constitution. (*JMN* 11: 445)

As this passage demonstrates, Emerson underlines the temperamental difference between men and women in terms of their gender roles. While women develop emotion to exercise maternal power in the family, men are not overwhelmed by emotional condition because they "live to objects quite out of them, as to politics, to trade, to letters, or an art, unhindered by any influence of constitution." Following his contemporaries, Emerson also accepted the idea that there were constitutional differences between the sexes, but assumed that it stemmed simply from the cultural and historical conditioning that was profoundly connected to all gender roles.

In more specific terms, Emerson did not think of women as inferior to men. He was able to evaluate not only men's qualities and excellence but also those of women which he was taught by female members in his circle. To put it simply, he ultimately neither looked down upon women nor thought of women as inferior to men, for he was much inspired both outside and inside the private sphere to acknowledge women's capabilities.

To be sure, Emerson's relationship with women, such as abolitionists, literary

friends, and families, naturally invited his attention to women's abilities and potential. Through his participation in the campaign against slavery, Emerson was greatly impressed by the activities of many female abolitionists; inspired by such literary friends as Fuller, he was able to deepen his philosophy; also, Lidian took over most of the housekeeping duties, and her domestic management undoubtedly established the basis of Emerson's daily activities. The importance of Lidian's influence over Emerson was immeasurable as was the dynamics of household conversation which was a daily source of his thinking. Therefore, in the context of antebellum social reform, he was open to the words of women, and he showed his sympathetic interest in the plight of women from the very beginning of the women's movement.

As these women around him demonstrated, Emerson came to understand that women were not inferior in terms of their intellects and capacity; on the contrary, as is conventional, his views on womanhood underline women's superiority in religious terms. In this regard, he made a notable entry in his journal as early as 1828: "a child is connected to the womb of its mother by a cord from the navel. So it seems to me is man connected to God by his conscience" (*JMN* 3: 139).¹²⁷ In this description, Emerson considers a human being to be a child, viewing God as a mother, not the Father, the common image of God in his times. The above passage most strikingly suggests

that he finds the Divinity in maternity, the greatest women's strength.

In later years, however, by redefining the Divinity as a more neutral concept, Emerson might have conclusively attempted to neutralize religious superiority or inferiority in sexual differences. In his journal, he explains how unsuitable it is that people use for God a run-of-the-mill expression like "the Father," which assumes a specific individuality and sex:

I report to them [people] from my thought how little we know of God, and they reply "We think you have no Father. We love to address the Father." Yes, I say, but the Father is a convenient name & image to the affections; but drop all the images if you wish to come at the elements of your thought & use as mathematical words as you can. We must not be so wise. . . . We must come back to our initial stage & see & own that we have yet beheld but the first ray of Being. (*JMN* 5: 468)

In his estimation, the Divine is impersonal and sexless without specific images like "the Father," and he advises people to "drop all the images." If they think of God within the limits of the conventional name and images, it is difficult for them to gain a correct understanding of it. Therefore, the best encapsulated term for his God is the well-known "Over-soul" or "Law" that he here terms "mathematical words" which, he

thinks, only enables people to access "the elements" of thought and "the first ray of Being."¹²⁸

It might be closer to the truth to say that Emerson did, after all, find an ideal in an androgynous trait. His speculation on this point can be also discovered in his journal entry:

A highly endowed man with good intellect & good conscience is a Man-Woman, & does not so much need the complement of Woman to his being as another. Hence his relations to the sex are somewhat dislocated & unsatisfactory. He asks in woman sometimes the Woman, sometimes the Man. (*JMN* 10: 392)

Perhaps, Emerson's final estimation is that he finds no critical difference between men and women in intellect and morality, and so he construes "a Man-Woman" as a "highly endowed man with good intellect [and] good conscience." It is crucial for a person of considerable integrity to have the elements of both man and woman. He refers to a true humankind regardless of sexual difference when he considers that "[t]here is no sex in thought, in knowledge, in virtue" (*JMN* 3: 192). Quite understandably, in his 1869 speech on the women's issue, he observes that "superior women are rare as superior men are rare" (*EWQ* 589).

In the last analysis, Emerson probably placed little importance on sexual distinction in essence. Concerning this point, we can find that Emerson leaves the following entry in his journal:

It is folly to imagine that there can be anything very bad in the position of woman compared with that of man, at any time; for since every woman is a man's daughter & every man is a woman's son, every woman is too near to man, was too recently a man. . . . As is the man will be the woman; and as is the woman, the man. (*JMN* 8: 411)

This passage liberates the reader from the restrictive framework and from the general judgment of our sexual thought. Emerson sees the sexual distinction as mutable and the sexual politic even as "folly" since there is nothing crucial in sexual difference from a big-picture perspective of human beings. He subordinates biology to the all-embracing sphere of metaphysics: it is finally even more important for Emerson to highlight a sexually neutral concept, what he termed the "Over-soul," which worked within the existence of human beings, rather than to pay attention to the biological differences between the sexes (Finseth 742). Viewed from the standpoint of these arguments, therefore, Emerson was not an anti-suffragist who "feared" and "hated" women as he has been often labeled (Gilbert, "Emerson" 242; Gilbert, "Pierced" 112).

Instead, deeming it necessary to empower women if they claim the necessity, he concluded that all women should deserve to share totally equal rights with men.

Like everything else in his life, Emerson's views on gender are also transcendental in the end. He eventually placed more emphasis on the metaphysical significance than on biology. As he translated evolutionary theory into transcendental terms, he believed in the individual capacity for developing evermore toward a divinity regardless of sexual differences that he thought of as temporary, not as absolute.

Equally, this transcendental stance can be also traced in his final understanding of race.¹²⁹ It is useful to note that he writes in his journal as follows: "I believe, the races . . . must be used hypothetically or temporarily . . . for convenience simply, & not as true & ultimate" (*JMN* 13: 288). For Emerson, the ideas of racial groups must be treated expedientially as a matter of practical convenience since it is not "true" and "ultimate." He recognizes differences between races, yet he definitely construes racial categories as temporary and arbitrary, for he believes that racial characteristics may change in the course of progressive transformation. Emerson also states in *English Traits* (1856): "The fixity or inconvertibleness of races as we see them is a weak argument for the eternity of these frail boundaries" (*W* 5: 49). Finding changeable dividing lines in a physically defined racial categorization, Emerson, at last, doubts the

argument on fixed traits of races.¹³⁰ Imagining racial distinctions as mutable and transient through a process of evolution, Emerson may seem to have arrived at the transcendental conclusion that racial categories were even less important than human evolution and spiritual progress.

This argument has something important to say to modern society, in which biotechnological developments and the DNA revolution have produced a fundamental transformation in our understanding of race.¹³¹ As Paul Gilroy explains, the specific development of genetic technology disrupts the established notion of our species and racial differences and demands our new conception about how race is understood; the technological development enables us to manipulate genes and to scrutinize a human body at smaller than microscopic scales, which makes us wonder what categorizes human race and what racial differentiation is (14-15). Now that the idea of race is no longer fixed, we are asked to reconceptualize our attitudes toward racial differences and racial categories.

Intersecting with Gilroy's concepts of new humanism and a postracial society, we have begun to approach Emerson's cosmopolitan orientation that might recognize different racial identities and ethnic pluralism during the first decades of the twenty-first century.¹³² There are implications here for Lawrence Buell's recent depiction of

Emerson as ða national icon who at the same time anticipates the globalizing age in which we increasingly liveö (*Emerson* 3).¹³³

In the context of antebellum America, in conclusion, despite his long-standing temperamental reservations, Emerson was irresistibly drawn to the hurly-burly of social reform movements. As the ðSage of Concord,ö he was constantly expected to give shape to his general sympathy with the plight of the oppressed.

Nevertheless, for the same reason that he was revered as a great American thinker, it is also true that his views have been distorted by members of particular groups that desired to take the opposite attitude, such as anti-abolitionists and anti-suffragists.¹³⁴ They appropriated the memory of Emerson since they were eager to seek his support, which would wield enormous social and moral impact over contemporary American culture, for Emerson's reputation as America's stunning intellectual figure was firmly established.

Furthermore, in addition to the lack of available primary documents, the huge influences of the early biographies also forcefully hampered the new study of Emerson, as has been previously noted. Creating a very conservative notion about the philosopher, the biographies of Oliver Wendell Holmes and James Elliot Cabot in the 1880s particularly helped to falsify the image of Emerson that emerged in the waning

decades of the nineteenth century.

The period itself served as a crucial factor in this trend.¹³⁵ Prompted by Darwinian science and Herbert Spencer's social philosophy, the idea of "rugged individualism," which upheld personal liberty and free competition in society and economy without governmental interference, came to permeate postbellum America (VH 340). Viewing him as an icon of the inevitable advancement of American society, people tended to look to Emerson "for an understanding of, and justification for" the spirits of "self-made entrepreneurs," such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller (VH 340).

Refusing to see him in a new light, as a result, traditional critics staunchly resisted Emerson's unconventional, rather liberal orientation until very recently. In consequence, ironically enough, Emerson has been misrecognized as the opposite of the liberal, humanistic reformer that he actually was. The influence of this established notion is, unfortunately, so immense that even today's scholarly efforts to reexamine Emerson's connection with American culture cannot make a thorough revision of the facts (Gilbert, "Emerson" 245). William Dean Howells once referred to Emerson's popular reputation: "he was the most misunderstood man in America" (57). If Emerson were to return today, however, he would say: "Is it so bad then to be

misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstoodö (*CW* 2: 33-34).

When we trace Emerson's interest in social reform that, he thought, would promise the new possibilities of the coming age, we note a conspicuous enlargement of Emersonian humanism that advocates the genuine love for human virtue and commitment to social justice. All things considered, Emerson's importance in the context of nineteenth-century America is clearly that of a social reformer who was finally willing to accept the betterment of society. There is no question that he had a firm belief in individual limitless potentialities for development and thereby a boundless capacity for social progress because this is, to be short, a hallmark of the Emersonian philosophy of self-reliance.

Ultimately, in this sense, it can be argued that he approved of the reform movement of his age that would mark a new chapter in social renovation. Therefore, the following statement that he made in 1837 stands as a fitting conclusion to this examination of Emerson and the reform age:

If there is any period one would desire to be born in,—is it not the age of Revolution; when the old and the new stand side by side, and admit of

being compared; when the energies of all men are searched by fear and by hope; when the historic glories of the old can be compensated by the rich possibilities of the new era? This time . . . is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it. (*W* 1: 110)

Notes

¹ Referring to the de-Transcendentalized image of Emerson that Lawrence Buell suggests in "The Emerson Industry," T. Gregory Garvey argues that contemporary scholars are reevaluating Emerson's contextual and social importance ("The Emerson Dilemma" xxi).

² Alan M. Levine and Daniel S. Malachuk define the "new history" as follows:

The new history is the result of painstakingly careful research and has opened up to scholars a set of political writings and activities by Emerson that thoroughly debunk the old myth that Emerson's project . . . exhibit[s] one of the phenomenon Tocqueville most famously labeled "individualism," . . . [which] derives from feelings of isolation, alienation, and a sense of impotence to affect one's larger society. (1-2)

³ Len Gougeon carefully examines biographical studies of Emerson that have been published since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. See *VH* 4-18.

⁴ For the samplings of these studies, see Cole, "Woman Questions"; Gilbert, "Emerson"; and *EWQ*. Some revised elements of my previous works concerning this argument appear in this study. See Nakazawa, "Emerson in the Age of the Women's Movement" and Nishio, "Emerson and Social Reform."

⁵ Emerson's early statement that James Elliot Cabot includes is found in Emerson's 1850 letter to Paulina Wright Davis, who had invited him to a Women's Rights Convention. The detail is treated later in this study.

⁶ This is a quotation from her column "The Woman Question" in *Hearth and Home* (August 7, 1869), a weekly publication that she edited, which is cited in Hedrick

(360). Gougeon drew my attention to this citation (*EWQ* 587-88).

⁷ Arguing about the history of humankind, the nineteenth-century influential evolutionist Robert Chambers stated in his well-known book *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) that Caucasian had developed from Negro (Matsunaga 82).

According to Peter S. Field, in addition, many intellectuals of the early nineteenth century saw that the novel developments and discoveries in various fields, such as biology, zoology, geography and archeology, validated a racialized view of history:

Intellectuals from Thomas Carlyle and Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Victor Cousin and Johann Gottfried Herder justified European expansion, English domination of the Irish, the origins of popular government in North Atlantic societies, and much more on the basis of race. (8)

⁸ Regarding the social background of "the cult of true womanhood," see DuBois and Dumenil 136-68; Walters, *American Reformers* 103-06; and Welter.

⁹ For details of the nature of antebellum reform, see Walters, *American Reformers* 3-19.

¹⁰ Seeing from a slightly different perspective, Buell finds Emerson's "shrewd tactic" in this statement: "It underscores the gravity of the issue: only a crisis of the first magnitude could have wrenched me from my proper task" (*Emerson* 278).

¹¹ In examining Emerson's particular interest in science that ultimately shaped the core of his philosophic insight, this study owes much to the arguments of such scholars as Joseph Warren Beach, Harry Hayden Clark, Yoshiko Fujita, and Yoshio Takanashi, who drew my attention to the citations that follow in this chapter. For full details of

this argument, see Beach, "Emerson"; Beach, *The Concept*; Clark; Fujita; and Takanashi, "Emerson." There are some revised parts of my previous work that also discusses this topic in this study (Nakazawa, "Emerson's Upward Spiral").

¹² The thinkers by whom Emerson was influenced were, for instance, Plato, Isaac Newton, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Emanuel Swedenborg, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Joseph Butler, William Paley, and William Wollaston (Clark 226-27).

¹³ As for Emerson and his contemporaries' attitudes toward science, Beach's *The Concept* gives a detailed discussion.

¹⁴ Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) was a German astronomer who first explained planetary motion. Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749-1827) was a French mathematician and astronomer who formulated the nebular hypothesis concerning the origins of the solar system and who developed the theory of probability. Caroline Lucretia Herschel (1750-1848) and her brother Frederick William Herschel (1738-1822) were German-born British astronomers who became famous for their several significant discoveries, such as the planet Uranus and the existence of infrared radiation. Mary Somerville (1780-1872) was a Scottish astronomer who carried out experiments on magnetism, writing her well-known paper "The Magnetic Properties of the Violet Rays of the Solar Spectrum."

¹⁵ Paying attention to the fact that the Copernican system overturned the conventional belief of the universe, Takanashi also points out that the Copernican system strengthened Emerson's doubt on Calvinism ("Emerson" 161).

¹⁶ Clark and Takanashi also see Emerson's astronomical knowledge as the direct

reason for his resignation from the Church (236; ðEmersonö 161).

¹⁷ With a similar analysis, critics also recognize the germ of Emersonian evolutionism in this statement. See Beach, *The Concept* 337-38; Beach, ðEmersonö 482-83; Fujita 7-8; and Takanashi, ðEmersonö 165.

¹⁸ Regarding the concept of a ðchain of beingö and that of a ðscale of being,ö see Beach, ðEmersonö 476-78; Fujita 8; and Matsunaga 16-20.

¹⁹ The transition from the concept of a ðchain of beingö to that of a ðscale of beingö is attributed to the astronomical discoveries and the geological findings after the Industrial Revolution (Fujita 8; Yasugi 33).

²⁰ To the modern reader, evolutionary doctrine may suggest that of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and of Charles Darwin, which maintain the theory of the transmutation of species. However, as Takanashi argues, this discussion treats the term in the very broadest sense, including several views that do not explain the transmutation of species (ðEmersonö 164). Beach considers the notion of evolution in the following three ways:

- (1) It may be held in connection with the theory of the ðtransmutation of species,ö with the understanding that the ðhigherö forms have been derived from the lower by natural means such as those set forth by Lamarck and Darwin.
- (2) It may not imply evolution at all in this sense, but still be thought of as a series of events in chronological sequence; life being regarded historically as later in appearance than inorganic matter, and the higher forms of life as following the lower in a graduated scale of ascent.
- (3) It may not even imply chronological sequence, or take into account at all

the question of successive appearance in time. The several orders of living beings are then ranged from lowest to highest as a matter of classification, by way of showing the *unity of plan* which runs through the whole of nature. (Emerson 477-78)

Concerning the first view listed above, Lamarck's theory is similar to that of Darwin; however, distinctive are the Darwinian theories of natural selection and of the preservation of favored races in the struggle for life, which have been supported by a lot of scientific evidence. See Matsunaga 219-22.

²¹ The upward spiral movement can be considered a notion that most remarkably symbolizes Emerson's philosophical system, as is explained as follows:

In his essay "Circles," what Emerson most significantly stresses is that the eternally expanding movement of circularity strictly mirrors the process by which the human soul progresses evermore toward the godhead. . . . To describe [the human mind as] a circle . . . signifies . . . [making] a limitation, and he strives to create . . . [a] larger circle than the one before it in order to overcome its limitation. The way in which the created circle by degrees extends itself greater than the first implies the open possibility of the human's spirit toward God, which characterizes . . . [Emersonian] Transcendentalism. . . .

Moreover, the images of progress and ascension . . . symbolize [the] Emersonian quest for man's everlasting growth. From several pages of his essays we may gather together the more precise terms of this point. . . . [A]mong them, the implication of man's upward ascension is most apparent

in the figurative imagery of a "ladder" in the essay "Circles": "Step by step we scale this mysterious ladder" (*W* 2: 395). The "mysterious ladder" portrays the developmental phase of the human's spiritual achievement; climbing the ladder . . . implies the upward progress of . . . man's soul.

Man's internalized power exemplifies the course in which one small circle develops into a larger one in . . . [an] ever-expanding and ever-ascending motion: Emerson's basic movement is not only circular but also ascending. Emerson clearly designates, in this way, the spiral progress, the combination of successive circular movement with upward ascension, as the symbol of the human's infinite aspirations toward God.

As an even more telling representation of Emerson's rhetoric, the spiral quality can be applied to the explanation of the very structural form of his essays. In developing his paragraph[s], he exhibits its rhetorical scheme in which each successive sentence circulates around the central idea by elaborating it through details, examples, and analogies. . . . As the argument goes on, the same idea mounts to a higher level and extends itself greater than the first little by little; his narrative device is chastened into a spiraling ascension. (Nakazawa, "Emerson's Upward Spiral" 78-79)

For further discussion about the upward spiral movement, see Nakazawa, "Emerson's Upward Spiral."

²² Emerson directly quoted this expression from Johann Bernhard Stallo (1823-1900), a German-American jurist and philosopher, whose book much influenced Emerson's philosophic system. Stallo's major interest was in philosophy of science

and the principles and assumptions of various scientific studies, such as physics, chemistry, biology and sociology. See Beach, *The Concept* 340 and Beach, "Emerson" 489-90.

²³ About his replacement of the epigraph of *Nature*, critics explain Emerson's commitment to evolutionism. See *W* 1: 403-04; Beach, *The Concept* 340; Beach, "Emerson" 489-90; Clark 240; Fujita 5-6; and Takanashi, "Emerson" 166-67.

²⁴ Lamarck maintained that human beings were produced by changes from animals, which caused considerable controversy among Christians. In this context, Chambers took great pains to secure the secret of the authorship even from the publisher when he published his treatise, in which he suggested that everything, including humankind, had developed from earlier forms. For a detailed argument, see Matsunaga 16-103.

²⁵ Concerning American literary Naturalism, see "American Literature 1865-1914" 1248-49.

²⁶ Explaining the historical context, many critics argue this point. For the sampling of these studies, see Gougeon, "Historical Background" xxxviii-xxxix; Moody 12-17; and Rao 80. The details of the Fugitive Slave Law and Emerson's response to the law will be later discussed in this chapter.

²⁷ As Julie Roy Jeffrey points out, most northerners accepted the bill's passage because they hoped that it would avoid further conflict with the slaveholders, and particularly those who were concerned that the Union might dissolve over the issue of slavery were relieved to think that it would be a measure to avert political crisis (174-75). In contrast, abolitionists of both races were upset, showing their strong

resistance against the legislation. Black abolitionists especially gathered to prevent ex-slaves from being captured to be sent to their masters; Frederick Douglass, for example, encouraged black communities to protest the implementation of the law by all possible means (Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal* 29).

²⁸ The term "the double consciousness" does not imply what W. E. B. DuBois indicates.

²⁹ Citing these journal entries of Emerson, Eduardo Cadava argues this point (17).

³⁰ In her *Mary Moody Emerson and the Origins of Transcendentalism*, Phyllis Cole insightfully enlarges upon the deep, long-term influence of Mary on Emerson's idealistic principles. Paying attention to the citations that follow, critics argue Mary's influence over the teenage Emerson (Cole, "Pain and Protest" 70; Rao 73).

³¹ Until Missouri was finally admitted to the Union in 1820 without restriction, there was a clash of opinions within the nation: Senator Rufus King of New York denied the right of "one man to make a slave of another" in terms of the law of nature and of God; and Senator Walker of Alabama and William Smith of South Carolina delivered "militant pro-slavery speeches" (Rao 73).

³² Michael Stryck and Gougeon drew my attention to this citation (149; *VH* 32).

³³ Concerning this episode and the social context, critics, such as Marjory M. Moody, Adapa Ramakrishna Rao, and Robert D. Richardson, Jr., offer the detailed description. See Moody 3-5; Rao 75-76; and *EMF* 76.

³⁴ For details, see Gougeon, "Abolition" 360-62 and *VH* 35-38.

³⁵ This is quoted in Cabot 2: 426; the excerpts from Emerson's first antislavery speech delivered in 1837 can be found only in Cabot's *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo*

Emerson (Gougeon, "Abolition" 345).

³⁶ Noting this statement by Cabot, critics argue this point. See Gougeon, "Abolition" 364; Gougeon, "Historical Background" xvii; Moody 6; and *VH* 40.

³⁷ As regards the details of Emerson's commitment to the issue of the Cherokees, see *EMF* 275-79; Gougeon, "Historical Background" xvii-xix; and *VH* 57-58.

³⁸ For details of the Cherokee removal, see Maddox 15-18.

³⁹ Gougeon brought this newspaper account to my attention (*VH* 62).

⁴⁰ Gougeon and Rao study Emerson's early views on race by spotlighting his journal entries which this argument also deals with. See *VH* 32, 66 and Rao 74.

⁴¹ This is a quotation from Parker's letter to Francis Jackson, November 24, 1859. See Weiss 2: 174 and Reynolds 462.

⁴² For example, when one of the contemporary abolitionists Ellis Gray Loring conveyed his gratitude to Emerson, who delivered an antislavery speech on emancipation in the West Indies in 1844, Loring stated that the "negro may be inferior, but a man's man, for a that" (qtd. in Gougeon, "Abolition" 355; *VH* 355).

⁴³ In order to examine Emerson's views on race, Field takes note of this journal entry (27).

⁴⁴ Aptly noting this point, Field states that Emerson also read works on emancipation in the West Indies, such as James Thome and J. H. Kimball's *Emancipation in the British West Indies* and Thomas Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade*, which all shaped Emerson's egalitarian approach for the abolition of chattel slavery (15).

⁴⁵ As Gougeon suggests, the *Dial* was a publication designed to encourage its

audience to deal with issues of social reform, especially slavery (õOnly Justice Satisfies All, Emerson's Militant Transcendentalismö 492).

⁴⁶ As some critics point out, Emerson's views on race were still contradictory even after this period because some of his later entries in journals had a racist tincture (Collison 192; Field 5; *VH* 179). According to Gougeon, however, õit seems clear that while Emerson at times speculated about the possibility of an innate Negro inferiority, . . . in the final analysis he rejected the positionö (*VH* 185). Collison also agrees with this point (192).

⁴⁷ This title is derived from Gougeon's reference on Emerson's attitude toward the campaign against slavery after 1844 (*VH* 85).

⁴⁸ For detailed information about this speech, see Gougeon, õHistorical Backgroundö xxvii-xxxi; Moody 7-10; and Rao 77-79.

⁴⁹ Moody and Rao carefully examine these three points that show the development of Emerson's stance on slavery. See Moody 8-9 and Rao 77-78. This discussion refers to their suggestions including the citations that follow.

⁵⁰ The public record clearly shows Emerson's ardent involvement in abolition from the 1844 speech onward, yet some scholars do not accept the point. Such scholars, as Gougeon points out, continue to õmisrepresentö Emerson as a passive thinker (õMilitant Abolitionismö 639).

⁵¹ Agreeing with this point, Buell explains that the õadvent of the railroad to Concord in 1844 also quickened for Emerson . . . the sense of linkage to wider publicsö (*Emerson* 249).

⁵² For details of the Compromise of 1850, see Jeffrey 174-76 and Walters, *The*

⁵³ Gougeon suggests this point (*VH* 200). Theodore Parker was indicted for his agitation on behalf of Anthony Burns by a federal grand jury in 1854 (Field 20; Frank, *The Trials* 293).

⁵⁴ David S. Reynolds sees that the case of Anthony Burns "revealed graphically the Transcendentalists' turn toward violence" (465).

⁵⁵ With his uncompromising voice, Emerson delivered this address at least nine times (*VH* 374).

⁵⁶ For a detailed background of Emerson's activities during this period, see Field 19-21.

⁵⁷ Despite the fact that there is even now a widespread assumption that Emersonian Transcendentalism is associated with pacifism, Gougeon emphasizes that Emerson was "far from being [pacifist]," for he saw war as a necessary evil, and his "commitment to a militant antislavery stance was well-established" ("Only Justice Satisfies All: Emerson's Militant Transcendentalism" 487). For details, see Gougeon, "Only Justice Satisfies All: Emerson's Militant Transcendentalism."

⁵⁸ Field and Gougeon focus on Emerson's ideas in the context of the Civil War that are reflected in this statement. See Field 21 and *VH* 273.

⁵⁹ Paying attention to Emerson's statement in a letter to Oliver Wendell Holmes that follows, Field suggests this point (22).

⁶⁰ Citing the following statement, Moody argues this point (20).

⁶¹ Moody drew my attention to this remark (20).

⁶² See Fig. 1. With regard to the poster, Gary Collison and Garvey give a

detailed description (Collison 207; Garvey, ðPhoto Essayö xxxviii).

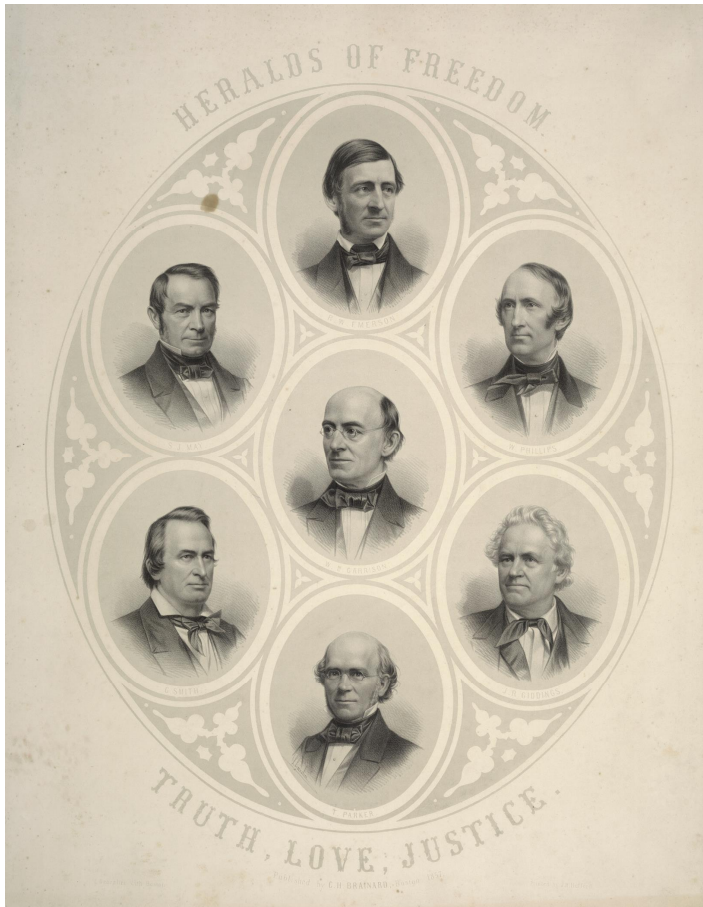


Fig. 1. The Lithograph printed by Leopold Grozelier (1830-65) from Charles Henry Brainard (1817-85), *Heralds of Freedom: Truth, Love, Justice*. Clockwise: Emerson, Wendell Phillips, Joshua Reed Giddings, Parker, Gerrit Smith, Samuel Joseph May, and William Lloyd Garrison.

⁶³ Joshua Reed Giddings (1795-1864) was an American attorney and politician who made a great contribution to abolition. Gerrit Smith (1797-1874) was an American politician and a leading figure in American social reform movement. Samuel Joseph May (1797-1871) was a Unitarian minister and a prominent social and educational reformer of the nineteenth century.

⁶⁴ For details, see Stanton, Anthony, and Gage 1: 53-62.

⁶⁵ For detailed information about this incident, see Gilbert, "Emerson" 212.

⁶⁶ On this point, see also Welter 151-52 and Walters, *American Reformers* 104.

⁶⁷ This is a quotation from "Discourse on Women," which Lucretia Mott delivered in 1849. See Hallowell 499 and Woloch 135.

⁶⁸ Nancy Woloch brought this citation to my attention (137-38).

⁶⁹ For detailed description of this event, see *EWQ* 576 and Gilbert, "Emerson" 213-14.

⁷⁰ Gougeon also sees that this comment of Ralph L. Rusk rightly shows Emerson's views during this period (*EWQ* 575).

⁷¹ For the background of this address, see *EWQ* 579; Gilbert, "Emerson" 214; *LL* 2: 15-16; and Zwarg, *Feminist Conversations* 257.

⁷² Armida Gilbert finds an opinion on women's issues that Emerson had "throughout his life" in this journal entry ("Emerson" 214).

⁷³ According to Alma Lutz, invitations for the Grimké sisters to speak poured in not only from New England but also from the West as well, for meeting and talking with them had been "even more rewarding for most of the women than the convention itself" (105).

⁷⁴ Walters amply explains the images of masculinity and femininity in the context of antebellum America. See Walters, *American Reformers* 104-05.

⁷⁵ Ellen Carol DuBois and Lynn Dumenil spotlight this statement of Catharine Beecher and enlarge upon the contemporary notion of womanhood and motherhood (139).

⁷⁶ John Carlos Rowe also underlines this point (39). However, Cole interprets

Emerson's description of women in this address as mythicized by "Romantic androcentrism" ("Woman Questions" 433).

Lydia Maria Child already criticized Emerson's inability to see women as intellectual peers in 1843, for she angrily suggested that he applied a double standard for men and women in his address "Being and Seeming":

Men were exhorted to be, rather than to seem, that they might fulfill the sacred mission for which their souls were embodied . . . but women were urged to simplicity and truthfulness, that they might become more pleasing.
(249)

Regarding this discussion, see Cole, "Woman Questions" 434 and Karcher 323.

⁷⁷ Fuller's influence on the American women's rights movement was so immeasurable that her central argument reflected in the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments, but it had not been closely scrutinized until recently (Cole, "The Nineteenth-Century" 2). Concerning her canonization in the context of the movement, see Cole's "The Nineteenth-Century" and "Stanton."

Also, it was Emerson's relationship with Fuller that encouraged Davis and Lucy Stone to invite him to attend the meetings of the New England Woman's Rights Organization (Zwarg, *Feminist Conversations* 257).

⁷⁸ As Christina Zwarg observes, it is the composition of the *Memoirs* that catalyzed Emerson's growing support of the women's movement ("Emerson as Mythologist" 213; *Feminist Conversations* 257).

⁷⁹ Pointing out the central contradiction of American culture, Joyce W. Warren indicates that American Individualism was based on "an unquestioning belief in male

self-assertion while it insisted on female selflessness (9).

⁸⁰ Gilbert drew my attention not only to this letter to Caroline Sturgis Tappan but also to the following journal entry in 1843 (Emerson 232; Pierced 102).

⁸¹ As is later suggested, Helen R. Deese presents the discussion of the relationship between Emerson and Caroline Healey Dall, the contemporary feminist, revealing Dall's reaction to his lecture (248). Gougeon brought the citations of Deese to my attention (*EWQ* 583-84).

⁸² Arguing this point, Carolyn Maibor also suggests that women worked during the Civil War not only as nurses but also as spies, scouts, couriers, cooks, and even soldiers. See Maibor 58-59 and 136.

⁸³ Focusing on this citation, Gilbert insightfully suggests Emerson's evolving views of women's issues (Emerson 234; Pierced 103).

⁸⁴ The complete text of Emerson's 1869 address, which is unpublished and untitled, can be available in *EWQ* 588-89, on which all of the following citations from this speech in this study depend.

⁸⁵ I am indebted to Gougeon for letting me pay attention to this incident (*EWQ* 591). See also *LL* 2: 16.

⁸⁶ According to critics, Emerson declined Stowe's offer because he had been already engaged in burdensome tasks (*EWQ* 591; Hedrick 465; *LL* 2: 16).

⁸⁷ Concerning the background and details of this remark, see also *EWQ* 591.

⁸⁸ For detailed information about these articles, Gougeon's itemization is helpful. See *EWQ* 591-92.

⁸⁹ Todd H. Richardson argues that the suffragists had appropriated Emerson in the

postbellum *Woman's Journal*, for they had been eager to "increase the cultural legitimacy of their campaign" (580). For details, see T. H. Richardson.

⁹⁰ I am indebted to Cole for bringing to my attention this remark of Lidian that shows her views on marriage ("Pain and Protest" 82).

⁹¹ Susan L. Roberson sees the greatest motivation for Emerson's rather positive actions in the political arena mainly from the 1840s in his personal depression caused by Ellen's death (8-13).

⁹² As it was probably difficult for Emerson to accept Ellen's death, he confided to his journal that he had visited her tomb and opened her coffin one year after her death (*JMN* 4: 7). See *EMF* 121 and Tanaka 281.

⁹³ Paying attention to the difference between Emerson's comments about Ellen and Lidian when he announced his engagement to each woman, Yuji Tanaka also examines Emerson's feeling toward his two marriages (278, 284).

⁹⁴ As Ellen's memory had occupied his heart after her death, Emerson still expressed his deep love to Ellen in his journal even during his engagement to Lidian in 1835: "I loved Ellen, & love her with an affection that would ask nothing but its indulgence to make me blessed" (*JMN* 5: 19). See Tanaka 284.

⁹⁵ Tanaka also suggests this point (285).

⁹⁶ One night during this time Lidian had a dream in which she and Emerson met Ellen in heaven, and Lidian withdrew to leave her husband with Ellen. Responding to her account of the dream, Emerson said in an attempt to comfort her: "None but the noble dream such dreams" (*LLE* 77). One might draw Lidian's psychological suppression on an unconscious level from a Freudian interpretation of the episode.

See Cole, "Pain and Protest" 74 and *EMF* 194.

⁹⁷ Emerson was basically very thoughtful to his wife, but he seemed sometimes obtuse about her emotional demands. As Carlos Baker points out, Emerson had often left her home for days, for he really believed that his absence would offer "a perfect tranquility" to her, as she did not like to hurry or be hurried, due to her husband's life full of deadlines (246): "Lidian dear," he wrote from Hanover in 1838, "I trust you have grown stronger each hour, not having the fear of Hurry in the shape of a husband ever at your elbow" (*L* 2: 145).

When he made his third trip to Europe in 1873, he wrote a letter from England as follows: "You have been good and forgiving, and have sent me welcome letters, and must try to believe this rest or absolute indolence was unavoidable and medicinal" (*L* 6: 234). These statements suggest that he truly supposed that his absence would contribute to her welfare.

⁹⁸ Cole argues this point ("Pain and Protest" 77). Soon after Emerson's leaving, Lidian asked Thoreau to come and stay at the home with her and her family (*EMF* 439). Answering the request, Thoreau left his hut a week later, putting an ending to "his two-year, two-month, and two-day stay at Walden Pond" (*EMF* 439).

⁹⁹ Cole carefully discusses this point ("Pain and Protest" 77). However, Lidian also stated, "I will try to be a good wife to you on your return, if I never was before" (*LLJE* 158). Speculating about the meaning of the statement, Cole suggests that "a new mutual commitment seems . . . to have sprung up through this difficult time" ("Pain and Protest" 77).

¹⁰⁰ Fuller's journal entries that follow in this argument are cited from Myerson's

article based on her journal fragments at the Houghton Library of Harvard University. See *MF* 321. Cole first drew my attention to this journal fragments that appeared in *MF* (öPain and Protestö 74).

¹⁰¹ Pointing out the following citations of Emerson, Baker deals with Emerson's views on marriage (194).

¹⁰² The nickname öAsiaö may also suggest both the mystic and religious tone of the character of Lidian. See Emerson and Carlyle 184; Cole, öMen and Women Conversingö 133; and Cole, öPain and Protestö 69.

¹⁰³ On this point, Emerson's daughter Ellen specifically mentions her mother's naturally sensitive personality and her intense devotion to the crusade against slavery as follows:

She read the papers faithfully and their pro-slavery tone made her hate her country. She learned all the horrors of slavery and dwelt upon them, so that it was as if she continually witnessed the whippings and the selling away of little children from their mothers. She joined the Anti-Slavery Society and remained a zealous member till Slavery was abolished. (*LLE* 83-84)

¹⁰⁴ It should be here added that Fuller nevertheless declares in her journal: Emerson öloved her [Lidian] first, he loves her alwaysö (*MF* 332). Revealing the fact that Lidian always called her husband öMr. Emerson,ö Robert D. Richardson, Jr. also states that we have to think of their actual relationship öacross the stone walls of traditional New England reserveö (192).

Concerning this point, their daughter Ellen also indicates: öThe tremendous manner in which she [mother] loved father was always as astonishing to me as the

coolness with which she treated himö (*LLE* 48). If Lidian did control a way of expressing her deep affection for Emerson with her reserved öNew Englandö manner, as is shown here, we have to take into consideration that he would have controlled his affection even more.

¹⁰⁵ Warfel also notes this journal entry to approach the relationship between Emerson and Fuller (590-91).

¹⁰⁶ I am indebted to Konomi Ara for letting me noting this citation (267).

¹⁰⁷ Baker also takes note of this remark that provides a glimpse into Emerson and Lidian at home (187-88).

¹⁰⁸ Baker first brought this statement to my attention (253-54).

¹⁰⁹ Paying attention to the following citations of Fuller and of Emerson, critics argue this point. See *EMF* 338-39 and Strauch, öHatredø Swift Repulsionsö 70-71.

¹¹⁰ Although the ökey documentsö letters by Margaret to Emerson containing any sort of declaration of love are not extant,ö Strauch determinately points out that the score of Fullerø friendship öhad by degrees grown into loveö (öHatredø Swift Repulsionsö 70).

¹¹¹ In 1848, Giuseppe Mazzini, an Italian activist, had written to Fuller:

I . . . feel fearful that he [Emerson] leads or will lead man to too much contemplation. His work, I think, is very greatly needed in America, but in our own old world we stand in need of one who will . . . inflame us to the Holy Crusade and appeal to the collective influences . . . more than to individual self-improvement. (qtd. in Deiss 107)

In contrast, Fuller held by Emersonian ideals although she admired Mazzini: öLove me

all you can, she asked Emerson in 1849, let me feel, that, amid the fearful agitations of the world, there are pure hands, with healthful even pulse, stretched out toward me, if I claim their grasp (LMF 5: 240). This statement uncovers the fact that Fuller had still relied most heavily on the Concord sage while she had been involved with the revolution in Italy. Baker also pays attention to this citation (316).

¹¹² As regards the citations from Emerson's letter, see L 4: 32.

¹¹³ I am indebted to Baker for showing me this journal entry (132).

¹¹⁴ This is the word of a critic Henry Seidel Canby quoted in LLE xlvii. Many critics also pay attention to this point. For example, see Baker 249; EMF 461; and Porte 214.

¹¹⁵ This is quoted from the editorial notes in *The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau*. See Thoreau 121.

In his journal, moreover, Thoreau leaves the following entry, referring to Lidian: "Others are of my kindred by blood or of my acquaintance but you are mine. You are of me and I of you. I can not tell where I leave off and you begin there is such harmony when your sphere meets mine" (qtd. in EMF 461).

¹¹⁶ In the biography of her mother, Ellen demonstrates how grateful her mother was for the letters from Thoreau: "Mr Thoreau had written Mother a grateful and affectionate letter, and she said to his mother 'I don't deserve it[;] he sets me higher than I am'" (LLE 64).

¹¹⁷ We can learn how overwhelming Lidian's roles at home were from various critical implications. For instance, see Baker 245-46; EMF 149; LLE xvi; and LLJE xiii.

¹¹⁸ Paying attention to this statement, Carpenter also points out Lidian's desire to become a writer (*LLE* xi).

¹¹⁹ Cole, who studies the protofeminist origins of Transcendentalism, states that private letters and journals express "the most unfiltered thoughts of Transcendentalist women" ("Woman's Rights" 226). Also, pinpointing new meaning of such private documents as letters and journals, Buell notes that the Transcendentalists left no autobiographies because they knew that their letters would come to be fragmented autobiographies (*Literary Transcendentalism* 268). As these arguments rightly suggest, we can see the importance of these unpublished writings especially for the Transcendentalists of the times.

¹²⁰ Warfel notes this citation to approach Emerson's early views on women (592).

¹²¹ Ellen goes on to state as follows:

[M]any people besides their invited guests came to see them and [Father and Mother] were asked to spend the night. Nancy Colesworthy, the cook, said one day, "I'm going to put a poster out at the gate 'This House is not a Hotel. . . for folks to see when they come in.'" (*LLE* 71)

¹²² For details, see *LLE* xiv, 250 and *LLJE* xvi.

¹²³ Paying attention to the statement in this letter, Cole deals with Lidian's interest in social issues, which surely had an influence on her husband on a daily basis ("Pain and Protest" 67).

¹²⁴ William Brandon gives details on the conflict (295-96).

¹²⁵ Baker takes particular note of these journal entries that probably show conversations between Emerson and Lidian (247).

¹²⁶ Suggesting a connection with *hypocondria*, Carpenter probes Lidian's health problems (*LLE* xvi). According to her views, as there is, perhaps, no single reason for these *psychosomatic* illnesses, we can take into consideration several possibilities, such as Lidian's *early, austere habits and childhood illnesses* (*LLE* xvi), *the hormonal changes in pregnancy and menopause*, and *the death of her firstborn child, Waldo* (*LLE* xvii).

¹²⁷ Quoting this journal entry, Takanashi suggests that Emerson becomes aware that the divine nature is found in motherhood rather than in fatherhood (*Tamashii*).

¹²⁸ By referring to this citation, Takanashi also finds that Emerson's God is characterized not by the personal *Father* but by the impersonal *Law* (*Tamashii*).

¹²⁹ Offering the similar discussion, Ian Finseth drew my attention to the citations that follow. See Finseth 742-43.

¹³⁰ In his essay on Emerson and Cosmopolitan identity, Garvey argues that Emerson never rigorously defined descriptions of racial categories, such as *Caucasian*, *Anglo-Saxon*, *Ethiopian*, and *Negro*, observing that Emerson *tended to use terms for race and ethnicity loosely and often interchangeably* (*Similar Man* 521).

¹³¹ For the more detailed argument, refer to my previous study (Nishio, *Racial Identity*).

¹³² Finseth and Garvey also offer the discussions of Emerson in terms of cosmopolitanism. Garvey indicates as follows:

Emerson's thought operates most effectively either on the pole of radical individuality or on the pole of universalized models for authentic or realized

human identity. This dual focus on the individual and the universal is a basic characteristic of recent cosmopolitan thought. (öSimular Manö 516)

Furthermore, Garvey rightly finds striking similarities between Emerson's context and that of the second half of the twentieth century that has surely brought cosmopolitanism into the foreground as follows:

In Emerson's America, national identity was unstable at best, and it was in a state of near collapse during the decades leading up to the Civil War. Immigration was creating ethnic and religious pluralism that . . . would become more pervasive in American culture over time. On a political level, the borders of the nation were expanding through wars and treaties that repeatedly brought questions of national identity and political sovereignty into the foreground of the public consciousness. . . . [T]he complex theories of race, culture, and ethnicity that characterized the mid-nineteenth century, parallel the dissolution of race and ethnicity as stable categories for identity in the second half of the twentieth century. (öSimular Manö 515-16)

¹³³ Studying Emerson from a twenty-first-century standpoint, Finseth appreciates this Buell's description of Emerson (729).

¹³⁴ Gilbert suggests this point (öEmersonö 241-45).

¹³⁵ For full details of this argument, see *VH* 340-42.

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