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Transcendentalism, Transnationalism, and Antislavery Violence: Concord's Embrace of John Brown

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Among the many critical approaches to Transcendentalism, three—the philosophical, the political, and the ecocritical—have in recent times emerged as particularly prominent. The philosophical approach, pioneered by Stanley Cavell, places the Concord thinkers on an intellectual continuum that stretched from classical thought through the Puritans and German idealism onward to Nietzsche, Heidegger, pragmatism, and modernism, with certain critics focusing on links to Asian philosophy.[1] The political approach, advanced by the likes of Len Gougeon, Joel Myerson, and Albert J. von Frank, shows that the Transcendentalists were far more deeply engaged in current political issues, especially slavery, than was once thought.[2] In the ecocritical or "green" view, led by Lawrence Buell and others, Transcendentalism's main interest lies in its attention to nature and environmental concerns.[3]

For years, these three approaches have advanced as an uneasy triumvirate, aware of each other but often ignoring each other. I want to suggest ways in which the three camps can combine, so that a fuller picture of Transcendentalism emerges. I shall also bring into the discussion a more recent scholarly trend, transnationalism. For the Transcendentalists themselves, philosophy, politics, ecology, and internationalism intermeshed.

The potent mixture of these tendencies becomes dramatically visible when we consider the Transcendentalists' embrace of antislavery vio-

lence, signified especially by their sanctification of the era's most violent abolitionist, John Brown. First I want to discuss the political and transnational dimension of their acceptance of antislavery violence; then I'll suggest how closely allied for them the political and transnational was with their conceptions of nature and philosophy.

It was a slow process for some of the Transcendentalists to put aside the racism prevalent in their era. In an early journal, Emerson wrote, "I think that it cannot be maintained by any candid person that the African race have ever occupied or do promise ever to occupy a very high place in the human family. Their present condition is the strongest proof that they cannot. The Irish cannot; the American Indian cannot; the Chinese cannot. Before the energy of the Caucasian race all the other races have quailed and done obeisance."[4] Several other Transcendentalists, including Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, and Theodore Parker, made similarly racist comments. Parker typically wrote, "No doubt the African race is greatly inferior to the Caucasian in general intellectual power, and also in an instinct for liberty which is so strong in the Teutonic family."[5] Such views were worlds apart from those of John Brown, who was one of the least racist white reformers of his time. W. E. B. Dubois described Brown as "the man who of all Americans has perhaps come nearest to touching the real souls of black folk."[6]

A few Transcendentalists also differed early in their careers from John Brown on the question of violence. Passive resistance was the typical protest gesture among American reformers of the 1830s and early '40s. The American Peace Society, founded in 1828, and the New England Non-Resistance Society, founded by William Lloyd Garrison a decade later, held that slavery must be opposed by pacifism. Many antislavery reformers embraced civil disobedience, allowing themselves to be taken to jail. Among the willingly incarcerated were the Abolitionist Stephen S. Foster, imprisoned for nonappearance in a military parade, and Nathaniel Allen, Erastus Brown, and Thomas P. Beach, all of whom did prison time for interrupting church meetings with antislavery statements.

These nonresistant protesters proudly assumed martyr roles. When Foster was jailed in May 1842 for civil disobedience, he announced, "My body is indeed incased in granite and iron, but I was never more free than

at this moment; I have at length triumphed over every foe."[7] Allen, likewise, wrote from his vermin-ridden jail cell, "I am better off than those for whom I plead. I am happy here, and I think I may be, in whatever situation my enemies may place me." Beach declared defiantly, "I want company here; I wish every jail in Massachusetts and New Hampshire filled with those who have boldness enough to go and charge upon these God-dishonoring corporations [i.e., churches] all the guilt" for slavery and other social ills.

In the early going, some Transcendentalists were allied to nonresistance. Bronson Alcott attended conventions of Garrison's peace society. Stating in his diary, "I regard Non-Resistance as the germ of the New Church,"[8] Alcott instituted versions of nonresistance at the Temple School, where naughty students were asked to punish their teachers, and at Fruitlands, his short-lived utopian community where pacifism was preached. In 1843 he followed the lead of others when he was jailed after protesting against slavery by refusing to pay a poll tax. Thoreau espoused his own kind of civil disobedience. During the 1840s Thoreau famously withdrew from society by living for two years at Walden Pond and by refusing to pay his poll tax for six years, for which he spent a night in the Middlesex County jail in Concord. The antislavery reformer he then most admired was the New Hampshire pacifist Nathaniel P. Rogers, whom Lewis Perry describes as the "non-resistant of non-resistants" because he utterly rejected the vote, legislation, and physical force.[9]

If, as Perry says, Rogers "out-Garrisoned Garrison" in his pacifism, Thoreau out-Rogered Rogers when in 1849 he produced his essay "Civil Disobedience." Virtuous people, Thoreau argued, would refuse loyalty to the American government as long as it is "the *slave's* government also."[10] He not only bragged about his jail sentence, as had the previous reformers, but he rhapsodized about justified criminality. "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly," he wrote, "the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place to-day, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons."

Emerson, never a pacifist, viewed war as a necessary evil. Nonetheless, when in 1838 he addressed the American Peace Society in 1838, he declared, "War is on its last legs; and a universal peace is as sure as is the

prevalence of civilization over barbarism, of liberal governments over feudal forms."[11] He assumed a militant stance six years later in his address "Emancipation in the West Indies," in which he called for the immediate abolition of slavery in America and emphasized the humanity of African Americans. Still, he called for calmness in dealing with slavery. "Let us withhold every reproachful and, if we can, every indignant remark," he advised antislavery reformers. "In this cause, we must renounce our temper, and the risings of pride."[12] He pointed to the emancipation in the West Indies as a model of bloodless abolition. He described how England became progressively more enlightened about slavery until in 1833 it passed a law freeing the slaves on its islands. The emancipated blacks accepted the news joyfully but quietly. Some whites had left the islands "anticipating insurrection and general murder," but, Emerson emphasized, there was "no riot, no feasting, ... not the least disposition to gayety," as "tranquillity pervaded the towns and country." He suggested that a similar kind of abolition could be effected in America. He pointed out that emancipation in the West Indies came from England's recognition of a basic moral truth: slavery was wrong. As a result, England made a conscious choice to abolish slavery, without resort to war and without the pressure of slave insurrections. "Other revolutions," Emerson wrote, "have been the insurrection of the oppressed; this was the repentance of the tyrant. It was the masters revolting from their mastery. The slaveholder said, I will not hold slaves." The dominant Saxon race in America, he continued, was naturally intolerant of slavery. He asserted: "The genius of the Saxon race, friendly to liberty; the enterprise, the very muscular vigor of this nation, are inconsistent with slavery. The Intellect, with blazing eye, looking through history from the beginning onward, gazes on this blot, and it disappears."

Despite such hopeful statements, Emerson and his fellow Transcendentalists soon learned that "the Intellect, with blazing eye" and the Saxon spirit "friendly to liberty" were insufficient to rid the nation of slavery. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 fanned the violent instincts of the Transcendentalists. This law, which made it a crime for Northerners not to help return fugitive slaves to their Southern owners, infuriated the North. While some, such as William Lloyd Garrison, clung to nonresistance, the Transcendentalists joined an intensified movement toward antislavery violence. Soon

even some mainstream politicians—notably the Republicans Charles Sumner, William Seward, and Joshua R. Giddings—defended armed resistance to slaveholders. The politicians talked about violence, but when it came to defending John Brown, they demurred. The Transcendentalists were different. First they promoted the *idea* of righteous violence. Then they boldly promoted John Brown, the most violent anarchist of the era. Finally, they promoted his principles during the war.

The Transcendentalists' open embrace of violence was begun by Theodore Parker, who formed a vigilance committee in Boston to fight those who tried to capture fugitive slaves. When Parker learned in 1850 that slave hunters were pursuing two black members of his congregation, William and Ellen Craft, he armed himself, keeping a sword and a loaded pistol in his desk as he wrote his sermons. He organized antislavery mobs that intimidated the slave hunters, who soon left town.

The case of the fugitive slave Anthony Burns in 1854 revealed graphically the Transcendentalists' turn toward violence. When Burns was confined in the Boston courthouse to await trial, Parker arranged for Burns's legal counsel while his fellow Transcendentalists Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Bronson Alcott attempted a rescue. Although the two leading Transcendentalists, Emerson and Thoreau, did not participate in the Burns affair, their response to it proved, in the long run, to be even more significant than that of those who did. They were appalled when a Massachusetts judge approved the rendition of Burns, who was led in chains through the Boston streets by federal troops who took him to the ship that returned him to slavery. This implementation of the Fugitive Slave Law fanned Emerson's and Thoreau's rage against the government and pushed them toward sympathy with anarchistic violence. Neither of them acted upon this sympathy. They were *theorizers* of violence, not *committers* of it. But had they not first theorized, they never would have extolled the violent John Brown later on.

Thoreau's view was made clear in "Slavery in Massachusetts," a speech he gave at an Abolitionist rally in Framingham on July 4, a month after Burns had been returned to slavery. At the rally were most of the leading Abolitionists, including Garrison, who created a sensation when he publicly burned copies of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Constitution. In his speech Thoreau did something even more shocking. Meta-

phorically, he burned all charters and laws, and he murdered the federal government. The Fugitive Slave Law? "Its natural habitat," he declared, "is in the dirt" along with "every venomous reptile."[13] The Constitution? An outdated proslavery document; we must follow "a higher law than the Constitution." The press? A gurgling "sewer" clogged with "slime." Massachusetts? "Morally covered with volcanic scoriae and cinders, such as Milton describes in the infernal regions." America? Thoreau felt "a vast and indefinite loss." "I did not know at first," he added, "what ailed me. At last it occurred to me that what I had lost was a country." The solution? "My thoughts are murder to the State, and involuntarily go plotting against her."

Like Thoreau, Emerson called for aggressive individual action against a corrupt system. "America, the most prosperous country in the world," he said, "has the greatest calamity in the universe, negro slavery."[14] Every bit as disgusted as Thoreau by the Fugitive Slave Law, he declared, "It is not easy to parallel the wickedness of this American law." For him, as for his friend, the law revealed the bankruptcy of all legislation: "These things show that nor forms, neither Constitutions nor laws nor covenants nor churches nor bibles, are of any use in themselves; the devil nestles comfortably into them all." In a nation where rescuing fugitive slaves is considered treasonous, he wrote, "I submit that all government is bankrupt, all law turned upside down; that the government itself is treason."[15] And "when the public fails in its duty, private men take its place." Emerson now prized armed resistance. He went so far as to maintain that California, where anarchy and vigilante justice ruled after the gold rush, "had the best government that ever existed," because "Every man throughout the country was armed with knife & revolver & perfect peace reigned. Instant justice was administered to each offense."[16]

Emerson and Thoreau admired John Brown because he did what they only talked about. He did not just theorize about fighting the government; he had actually fought government troops in Kansas. He not only contemplated vigilante justice; he enforced it, using real weapons. If he was a lawbreaker, all the better, since law itself was made a mockery—as evidenced yet again the month they met him—by the Dred Scott decision, which stripped American blacks of social rights. Emerson and Thoreau were exactly in the right frame of mind to embrace John Brown

when he arrived in Concord in March 1857 as part of a fund-raising tour. Their response to him showed that they were familiar with—and supportive of—his violent strategy. Thoreau greeted Brown and spent an afternoon hearing about his martial exploits in Kansas. Emerson, returning from a western lecture trip, joined the conversation and was so taken with Brown that he invited him to stay at his home. The conversation continued there, and arrangements were made to have Brown give a speech at the Concord Town Hall.

This speech prepared the way for the later canonization of John Brown. Brown gauged the Concord audience well, for his attack on nonresistance and his call for violence struck a chord among his listeners. Emerson wrote in his journal:

> Captain John Brown of Kansas gave a good account of himself in the Town Hall, last night to a meeting of citizens. One of his good points was the folly of the peace party in Kansas, who believed that their strength lay in the greatness of their wrongs, and so discountenanced resistance. He wished to know if their wrong was greater than the negro's, and what kind of strength that gave to the negro? He believes, on his own experience, that one good, believing, strong-minded man is worth a hundred—nay, twenty thousand—men without character, for a settler in a new country; and that the right men will give a permanent direction to the fortunes of a State. For one of these bullying, drinking rowdies, he seemed to think, cholera, smallpox, and consumption were as valuable recruits. The first man who went into Kansas from Missouri to interfere in the elections, he thought, "had a perfect right to be shot."[17]

From an hour-long speech Emerson here culls what he termed Brown's "good points," most of them related to violence. The "folly of the peace party" in opposing resistance; the right of blacks to avenge wrongs against them; the martial superiority of a principled person fighting against "bullying, drunken rowdies"; and, especially, the "perfect right" of border ruffians "to be shot"—these were the images Emerson highlighted with approval. Elsewhere he reported that John Brown "believed in two arti-

cles—two instruments, shall I say?—the Golden Rule and the Declaration of Independence; and used this expression in a conversation here concerning them: 'Better that a whole generation of men, women, children should pass away by a violent death, than that one word of either should be violated in this country.'"[18] In effect, Emerson was accepting Brown's vision of the abolition of slavery through apocalyptic bloodletting. Rather than recoil from Brown's violence, Emerson dwelt on it.

It was once argued that the Transcendentalists would not have supported John Brown had they suspected his role in the May 1856 murder of five proslavery settlers who lived on Pottawatomie Creek, Kansas. But the evidence suggests that they knew of it and yet embraced him anyway. A detailed report of the crime, and Brown's involvement in it, had been on public record since 1856, when the Committee to Investigate the Troubles in Kansas described it on the floor of the United States House of Representatives in vivid testimony that was subsequently published. Moreover, the Transcendentalists supported Brown even after his responsibility for the killings was widely talked about in the aftermath of Harpers Ferry. In november 1859, the nation's most widely read newspaper, the *New York Herald*, reported that Brown "took five respectable men—heads of families—out of their beds at dead hour of night, and mutilated and murdered them in cold blood."[19] Early the next month, at a huge rally in Boston's Faneuil Hall, Caleb Cushing denounced both Emerson and Brown, insisting that at Pottawatomie Brown had "ruthlessly slaughtered in cold blood" men who were "torn from the arms of their wives."[20] On December 12, 1859 future vice president Andrew Johnson branded Brown as a murderer who "seems to have had a great passion for cutting off hands," exhibited by his gory methods at Pottawatomie.[21]

Despite such open discussion of the bloody slayings, the Transcendentalists went on praising John Brown. Whether or not they knew every detail of the massacre is moot, since they were thoroughly familiar with—and supportive of—his violent strategy, as evidenced by Emerson's approval of Brown's comment about the possible violent death of a whole generation of men, women, and children, and Thoreau's statement (which Alcott interpreted as a direct reference to Pottawatomie) that we must honor a man like Brown "even though he were of late the vilest murderer, who has settled that matter with himself."[22]

How could the Transcendentalists support John Brown despite his brutal tactics? For an answer we must look beyond the Transcendentalists' violent impulses, which they never acted upon. We must consider their veneration of Brown's prototype Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the English civil wars and the ruler of England from 1653 to 1658. The New England intellectuals had been dreaming that someone like Cromwell would arise and make holy war against social corruption. When Emerson, for instance, said that to fight slavery, people must become "citadels and warriors," he gave this example: "Cromwell said, 'We can only resist the superior training of the king's soldiers, by having godly men.'"[23]

When John Brown's contemporaries compared him to historical figures, Cromwell was mentioned most often. In fact, he was known as "the Oliver Cromwell of America."[24] Thoreau made the connection eloquently when he wrote about Brown, "He died lately in the time of Cromwell, but he reappeared here."[25] It is hardly exaggerating to say that Brown's supporters venerated him because they had previously venerated Cromwell. They were *prepared* to support him by their initiation into the Cromwell cult.

Cromwell was not easy to admire. For over a century after his death he was reviled as a murderer and a harsh dictator. What had made Cromwell especially problematic was the fact that in the name of God he had slaughtered thousands of Irish priests, soldiers, and unoffending villagers. By the 1850s, however, he was revered by some as a self-reliant hero.

Why the change in attitude toward Cromwell? The Scottish author Thomas Carlyle had given it a strong impetus in his books of the 1840s *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* and his four-volume *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches with Elucidations*. If John Brown could be favorably compared to Cromwell, it was largely because Carlyle had helped make Cromwell a figure worthy of emulation: not a heartless murderer or an intolerant fanatic but rather the embodiment of sturdy heroism and sincere religious devotion. For Carlyle, the Irish bloodbath was a forgivable by-product of war carried out in the name of principle. Carlyle depicted Cromwell as the utterly sincere Puritan hero, "the soul of the Puritan revolt; without whom it had never been a revolt transcendently memorable, and an epoch in the world's history."[26]

Carlyle was not the only foreign author whose sympathetic position on Cromwell gained wide visibility in America. The intercultural influences that recent transnational criticism highlights are exemplified by the American reception of Cromwell, whose reputation was recuperated in a variety of British and Continental volumes published between 1820 and 1855. The Scottish author George Brodie had opened the way for a positive view of Cromwell in his *History of the British Empire from the Accession of Charles the first to the Restoration* (1822), which was followed by several pro-Cromwell volumes. From England came William Godwin's *History of the Commonwealth of England* (1824–28) and John Forster's biography of Cromwell in *Lives of the Statesmen of the Commonwealth* (1836–39); from France, François Guizot's *History of the English Revolution of 1640* (1846) and *History of Oliver Cromwell and the English Commonwealth* (1854); and from Switzerland, J. H. Merle D'Aubigné's *The Protector: A Vindication* (1847). These volumes, expressing attitudes toward Cromwell that ranged from tentative support (Brodie) to hagiographic praise (D'Aubigné), received wide coverage in America. Combined with Carlyle's volumes, they formed a foreign bloc of opinion that helped bring about a sea change in attitudes toward Cromwell.

The European defense of Cromwell had a strong impact on the Transcendentalists and spread into American popular culture. Cromwell proved to be a key instance of transnational influence. If the Transcendentalists prized John Brown because he resembled Cromwell, it was partly because Brown had already shaped himself after Cromwell as he was described by the American writer Joel Tyler Headley, whose 1848 biography of Cromwell recycled the positive view of Cromwell for the masses. Brown was inspired by Headley's book, which he kept on his bookshelf next to the Bible. Headley portrayed Cromwell as a God-directed Calvinist whose murderous tactics were justifiable because they fostered the democratic spirit behind the American Revolution. Brown accepted the book's premise that bloody violence was admirable if waged in the name of religion and democratic revolution. Brown admired Cromwell's using swords taken up in a righteous cause. Brown himself took such action in Kansas, where he used Cromwell's declaration. "Trust in God and keep your [gun]powder dry."

Having patterned himself after Cromwell, John Brown appealed to the Transcendentalists, who regarded Brown as a Cromwellian warrior in the name of a higher law. Even though Emerson's admiration for Cromwell was qualified by distaste for the Lord Protector's autocratic and theocratic methods as a ruler, he revered Cromwell as a principled fighter whose bloody actions during the English civil wars were justified. If he and the other Transcendentalists magnified John Brown to supernatural proportions, it was because they believed he might succeed where they had failed. They had tried for years to supplant their culture's materialism, conformity, and shady politics with spiritual-minded individualism. They began to realize, however, that they were waging an uphill battle. They believed that John Brown was better equipped than they to win this battle. They recognized themselves to be philosophical observers, theorizing about principles. He was an actual soldier in the field, fighting for principle.

When Brown and twenty-one followers attacked Harpers Ferry, Virginia in October 1859 in an effort to overthrow Southern slavery, the North recoiled, denouncing the raid and its leader. Most Northerners continued to denounce Brown after he was captured, imprisoned, and then sentenced to hang. A Chicago paper typically called Brown's raid a "stark-mad enterprise" produced by "addled brains," adding accurately, "There is not a public journal of any party, or public man of any shade of opinion found to approve their means or justify their end."[27] Even antislavery papers showed little sympathy for Brown. William Lloyd Garrison in the *Liberator* called Brown's raid "a misguided, wild, and apparently insane, though disinterested and well intended effort."[28] Horace Greeley's *New-York Tribune*, the most widely read antislavery paper, insisted that "this deplorable affair" was "the work of a madman" and predicted, "There will be enough to heap execration on these mistaken men." Saying that Brown had attacked slavery "in a manner which seems to us fatally wrong," Greeley explained that Kansas had driven Brown mad: "He was born of rapine, and cruelty, and murder."[29]

The Transcendentalists stood out among Northerners for championing both John Brown and his deed. It is important to recognize that in the immediate aftermath of Harpers Ferry, *only* Transcendentalists strongly defended John Brown. After their ardent admiration of him became

widely known, a positive view of Brown the man, if not for his deed, spread throughout the North. By the time of his hanging, seven weeks after the raid, widespread sympathy resulted in reverent memorial services throughout the North. Had Transcendentalism not been in the picture, what would have happened? The tide of negative commentary on Brown that initially flooded the Northern press would have continued. Northerners, realizing that Brown acted alone, would have come to regard him as a mistaken eccentric. Southerners would have had no ground for charging the North with widespread sympathy for Brown, since the charge would be patently false. In the end, John Brown would have been dismissed as a curious anomaly of history—an early sketch of, say, the Unabomber. His raid would have gotten momentary attention but then have disappeared from view. It would have been recognized for what it was—a unique action by a solitary warrior who had little support in the North. It would have anticipated not the Civil War but isolated acts of violence such as Waco, Oklahoma City, or Ruby Ridge.

The Transcendentalists alone rescued Brown from infamy and possible oblivion. Thoreau led the way by delivering his speech "A Plea for Captain John Brown," first in Concord and then in other venues. Thoreau portrayed Brown as a saintly hero, insisting that anyone who criticized him was amoral or thickheaded. Having long believed that the principled individual was worthier than the strongest government, Thoreau seized upon Brown as the one person in America who had Right on his side. Placing his hero among the greats of history, Thoreau said Brown "could not be tried by his peers, for his peers do not exist."[30]

Thoreau was eloquent about Brown, but he didn't come close to having Emerson's cultural clout. Known as a recluse, Thoreau generated respect but also a few snickers when he launched his one-man campaign on Brown's behalf. The *Liberator* mixed praise and mild sarcasm in its report of Thoreau's speech on Brown: "This exciting theme seemed to have awakened 'the hermit of Concord' from his usual state of philosophic indifference, and he spoke with real enthusiasm for an hour and a half."[31]

Although Emerson had never officially joined the abolitionist movement, his independent stance on social reform actually helped. He didn't have the problem of abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass or Republicans like William Henry Seward and

Charles Sumner, who had long been dragged over coals by their proslavery opponents as a result of their outspoken views. The religious controversy that had surrounded Emerson's 1838 address at the Harvard Divinity School was a thing of the past. By the late 1850s Emerson was widely regarded as America's leading intellectual, even by those who disliked his views. He was one of the nation's most popular lecturers, second only to Wendell Phillips in the fee he could demand as a speaker. As the *Atlantic Monthly* noted in 1860, "It is a singular fact, that Mr. Emerson is the most singularly attractive lecturer in America. ... Mr. Emerson always draws."[32] Even in 1871, after formidable speakers like Mark Twain had entered the field, the *Springfield Republican* could pronounce Emerson "the most widely known, the greatest, and the most attractive of all the present lecturers." An Emerson lecture was a cultural event.

When Emerson spoke, America listened. A pithy phrase from him could create shock waves. Countless people saw the American Revolution through his eyes, for his inspiring image of "the embattled farmers" on the "rude bridge" who "fired the shot heard round the world," in his poem about Concord, was universally known.[33] His few antislavery speeches gained high visibility. After the antislavery senator Charles Sumner was physically assaulted in the Senate chamber by a Southerner in 1856, he gave a talk that contained the exclamation: "As if every sane man were not an Abolitionist!" When this speech, with its curt interjection, was reprinted in newspapers throughout the nation, it aroused attention and swayed readers. The poet Ednah D. Cheney commented that the speech deserved "to be placed beside the famous orations of antiquity for its condensed power of thought and feeling, and for its influence in changing the minds of men."[34] The same, Cheney noted, was true of several other Emerson speeches. Indeed, she wrote, "The influences of these [Emerson's] lectures, from 1835 to 1865, on the growing mind of Boston in those days, is simply inestimable. In the language of one of his hearers, 'His words not only fired the thoughts of his hearers, quickened their consciences, and pierced their hearts, but they modeled their lives.'"

He was unobtrusive, even withdrawn, but influential. Julia Ward Howe explained that although Emerson was wary of rushing headlong into an issue, "When he distinctly saw what to aim at, a single shaft

from his bow flew far and hit the mark." After Emerson had given two widely reprinted speeches on John Brown in November 1859, Wendell Phillips begged him to keep up the Brown campaign, explaining, "You know what a vein and stratum of the public you can tap, far out of the range of our bore."[35] Phillips had good reason to be enthused over Emerson's contribution to Brown's cause. No person advanced this cause more than Emerson. Four years earlier, Emerson had rescued the besieged poet Walt Whitman from possible oblivion with the oft-reprinted statement, "I great you at the beginning of a great career."[36] Now he rescued the similarly besieged John Brown with an equally memorable remark.

The remark came in Emerson's lecture "Courage," which he gave before a large crowd at the Music Hall in Boston on November 8, five days after Brown's famous address to the Virginia court, in which he defended his military action as a necessary strategy for liberating millions of slaves. Emerson began by pointing out a major lesson of Harpers Ferry: Southerners did not have a corner on courage. "The Southerners reckon the New Englanders to be less brave than they," he declared, but John Brown proved otherwise.[37] And, unlike Southerners, Brown had Right on his side. Abolition, Emerson said, is unarguably right. Any ethical person is, by definition, an Abolitionist. Emerson asked rhetorically, "Why do we not say, with reference to the evil of the times, that we are Abolitionists of the most absolute abolition?—as every man must be; only the Hottentots, only the barbarians, or semi-barbarians, are not." Like Thoreau, he noted the instinctive admiration Brown elicited in his captors: "If Governor Wise be a superior man, and inasmuch as he is a superior man, he distinguished his captive John Brown." In their shared regard for courage, Emerson added, "Enemies become affectionate; become aware that they are nearer alike than any other two, and if circumstances did not keep them apart, they would fly into each other's arms."

Powerful statements. But they paled before Emerson's startling description of John Brown: "That new saint, than whom none purer or more brave was ever led by love of men into conflict and death,—the new saint awaiting his martyrdom, and who, if he shall suffer, will make the gallows glorious like the cross." The phrase Emerson had coined for Lexington—the shot heard round the world—was also descriptive of the impact of his remark that Brown would "make the gallows glorious like

the cross." The phrase sped through newspapers North and South like a ricocheting bullet. It outraged Brown's opponents and inspired his supporters. It was the most polarizing statement made about John Brown. It added fuel to the already inflamed sectional tensions that led to civil war.

One of Brown's most vocal opponents, the *New York Herald*, did what it could to refute Emerson in its report of the speech. The *Herald*, proslavery and Democratic, was the nation's most widely read newspaper. After quoting the "gallows glorious" image, the *Herald*'s columnist joked that Brown, a "murderer," would doubtless have a conspicuous place in the next edition of Emerson's *Representative Men*.[38] Then the writer brought up the two most controversial issues related to Brown. First, Pottawatomie. The columnist sneered at Emerson's proposal of "the apotheosis of John Brown, after he dies the death of a murderer on the gallows," a man who in Kansas had slaughtered five people in cold blood. Next, race. After Emerson's speech, John Brown's "gallows will be the emblem of nigger redemption, and bits of the rope with which he will be hanged, will be sold at enormous prices, and be venerated, like pieces of the cross. He will be regarded as a second Saviour, whose sacrificial blood has redeemed the black race."

For Brown's would-be supporters, in contrast, the "gallows glorious" comment was exactly what was needed: an imprimatur from the Sage of Concord. A typical response came from the Abolitionist orator Henry C. Wright, who asked in delight, "What means the almost universal applause bestowed on the remark of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the most prominent literary man, lecturer and moral philosopher in the nation, that the execution of the hero and saint of Harper's Ferry, 'Will make the gallows as glorious as the cross'?"[39] To Wright and others who wanted to believe in Brown, the answer was that Brown *did* have redeeming qualities.

Emerson made another strong statement on Brown's behalf at a fund-raising rally for Brown's family held in Boston's Tremont Temple on November 18, 1859. After speeches by John A. Andrew, Wendell Phillips, and others, Emerson gave an address in which he glorified Brown. "This commanding event which has brought us together," Emerson announced, "eclipses all others which have occurred for a long time in our history."[40] John Brown, he continued, "is so transparent that all men see him through. He is a man to make friends wherever on earth

courage and integrity are esteemed, the rarest of heroes, a pure idealist, with no by-ends of his own." Those who know him personally are "impressed alike by his simple, artless goodness, combined with his sublime courage." Rhapsodizing over Brown's speech before the Virginia court, Emerson insisted that it was the "*reductio ad absurdum* of Slavery, when the Governor of Virginia is forced to hang a man whom he declares to be a man of the most integrity, truthfulness, and courage he has ever met. Is that the kind of man the gallows was built for?" Emerson noted although the meeting had convened to consider relief for Brown's family, in fact "that family looks very large and very needy of relief," since it includes "almost every man who loves the Golden Rule and the Declaration of Independence, like him, and who sees what a tiger's thirst threatens him in the malignity of public sentiment in the slave states."

Through his widely reported speeches, Emerson helped open the floodgates of Northern appreciation of Brown. Emboldened by Emerson's comparison of Brown to Christ, others gave their own versions of the image. Praising to Emerson for his bold defense of Brown, Henry C. Wright declared: "The nation is to be saved, not by the blood of Christ, (as that is now administered,) but by the blood of John Brown. ... Redemption is to come to the slave and his oppressors, not by the Cross of Christ, as it is preached among us, but by the gallows of Brown."[41] A Dover, New Hampshire minister said of Brown, "The gallows from which he ascends into Heaven, *will be in our politics,* what the cross is in our religion.... To be hanged in Virginia, is like being crucified in Jerusalem—it is the last tribute which she pays to *Virtue*!"[42] The Milwaukee *Free Democrat,* affirming "that John Brown is CRUCIFIED as the representative of an idea," cited Emerson: "The gallows of John Brown, said Emerson, will be glorified ... like the cross, and so it will, because the gallows of John Brown, as the cross, is used to persecute ideas, or *great principles of enduring benefit* and necessity to humanity."

Soon Emerson's "gallows glorious" image circulated in popular poetry. One pro-Northern poem declared: "John Brown, to help the helpless slave,/ Counted all else but loss; /Henceforth that hateful gallows tree/ Is glorious like the cross."[43] Another predicted that history would remember Brown by "the scaffold—the modernized cross."[44] "Rear on high the scaffold-altar!" proclaimed a third, "All the world will turn to

see/ How a man has dared to suffer that his brothers may be free!"[45] For another, Brown and Christ were interchangeable:

> For as that cross of shame
> Forever thence became
> Earth's holiest shrine;
> So must this gallows tree,
> Redeemed from infamy
> Become for bond and free
> A sacred sign.[46]

And so Emerson and his fellow Transcendentalists planted the seed that eventually grew into the North's veneration of John Brown. In *Walden* Thoreau had said that a single idea could float an empire like a chip—a notion that would be borne out by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, both of whom would use a Thoreauvian concept, civil disobedience, to help float away social injustice. Emerson and his fellow Concordites did their part to rid America of slavery by introducing a radically new idea: the leader of the raid on Harpers Ferry was not a lunatic but a hero.

The Transcendentalist-prompted groundswell of support for Brown fed into the massive show of grief and sympathy throughout the North on December 2, the day of Brown's execution. Cities and towns throughout the North recognized the significance of the day, holding memorial services, ringing bells, and firing cannons. In Concord, Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott organized a service. Emerson read Brown's speech to the Virginia court and selections from his prison letters. Thoreau read some of his favorite poems and said Brown embodied "transcendent moral greatness."[47] Alcott read Plato and an ode he had written for the occasion.

The Transcendentalists remained continuously active in promoting John Brown's cause. They helped one of the Harpers Ferry soldiers, Francis Merriam, escape to Canada, and they continued to give speeches in praise of Brown. They came to accept Brown's racial views. In particular, Emerson, who as we saw had once reflected the racism common to his era, by the time of the Civil War embraced John Brown's racial agenda, to the extent that he argued long before Lincoln did that blacks 'emancipated by the war must be awarded both the vote and reparations for their past suffering. Anticipating the stance of the post-war Radical

Republicans, Emerson wanted to punish Southerners by confiscating their property.

For Emerson, there was a refreshing lack of ambiguity about the war. The North was right; the South was wrong. Slavery must go, at any cost. The philosophical conundrums that had entangled Emerson in earlier works like "Circles and "Experience" were replaced by certainty. The war, he wrote, "is a potent alterative, tonic, magnetiser, reinforces manly power a hundred & a thousand times."[48] He continued, "War ennobles the Country; searches it; fires it; acquaints it with its resources; turns it away from alliances, vain hopes, & theatric attitudes ...; systematizes everything. We began the war in vast confusion; when we end it, all will be in system."

All along, Emerson never forgot John Brown. Toward the end of the war, he wrote, "It has been impossible to keep the name & fame of John Brown out of the war from the first to the last."[49] He was thinking in part of the Union Army's favorite marching song, with its stirring lyrics, "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave,/ But his soul keeps marching on," which became the basis for Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Looking back at John Brown's speech to the Virginia court, Emerson declared that it and the Gettysburg Address were the two greatest speeches in American history.

As indicated at the beginning of this article, the Transcendentalists' involvement with the central political issue of the day, slavery, did not contradict or distract from their interest in nature and philosophy. Precisely the opposite was true: they were among the most radically political figures of their age *because of* their attention to philosophy and nature. Their central philosophical tenets—extreme individualism, antinomianism, nonconformity, and metaphysical idealism—coalesced in their violent reaction to proslavery laws and in their embrace of John Brown, the ultimate nonconformist whom Thoreau called "A Transcendentalist above all, a man of ideas and principles."[50]

And both their politics and their philosophy fused with their belief in the sacredness of the natural world. Thoreau memorably concludes his speech "Slavery in Massachusetts" by describing a white water lily growing out of the mud; the flower embodies the eternal purity and rightness of nature, a moral lesson for corrupt humans. In Thoreau's

eyes, John Brown was holy not only because of his political principles but because of his closeness to nature. He called Brown "a New England farmer" with "many original observations" of the natural world. "It is a pity," Thoreau said, "that he did not make a book of his observations."[51] For Thoreau, contemplating John Brown's violence went hand-in-hand with immersion in nature; Thoreau's journals for fall and winter 1859 oscillate continuously between passages extolling the violent Abolitionist and ones describing the Concord woods, fields, and ponds.

Emerson, too, drew heavily from his faith in nature during troubled political moments. "This law of nature is universal," he wrote; "gravity is only one of its languages; justice is another. ... The sky has not lost its azure because our eyes are sick; the seas & waters are not wasted if the cholera has swept the men."[52] America could follow the universal cycle and rid itself of corruption, as nature did. "Nature is not so helpless but it can rid itself of every crime," he averred. Like Thoreau, he thought John Brown had nature on his side. Praising Brown's early career as a farmer, he insisted that Brown possessed an almost supernatural intimacy with nature. Brown could spot a strange sheep among three thousand, Emerson said. He understood cows' signals. He befriended horses and deer. Even the weather favored him.[53] Small wonder that Emerson regarded Brown as wholly upright and protected by nature. "He stands for Truth," Emerson said, "& Truth & Nature help him unexpectedly & irresistibly at every step."[54]

For Emerson, what John Brown stood for was as true as anything in the universe, like physical laws. Sympathy for Brown, Emerson argued, was planted in nature itself. Complaints about Abolitionism were pointless. "As well complain of gravity, or the ebb of the tide. Who makes the Abolitionist? The Slaveholder."[55] The truth was crystal clear. Slavery was wrong. Abolitionism was right. There was no debate, no middle ground. Emerson said, "For the arch-Abolitionist, older than Brown, and older than the Shenandoah Mountains, is Love, whose other name is Justice, which was before Alfred, before Lycurgus, before Slavery, and will be after it."

How about Brown's violence? Nature too could be savagely violent. Think of the Battle of the Ants passage in *Walden*. Behind the mock-heroic rhetoric is a serious message: even in the tiniest reaches of nature,

huge battles rage. And these are not insignificant battles. As Thoreau says of the red and black ants, "I have no doubt that it was a principle they fought for, as much as our ancestors, and not to avoid a three-penny tax on their tea, and the results of this battle will be as important and memorable to those whom it concerns as those of the battle of Bunker Hill, at least."[56] For the Transcendentalists, the smallest of nature's battles—between ants—or the most important of human battles—over slavery—are grounded on principle. Nature's moral laws were the same everywhere, and they were serious on every level. Ethics, philosophy, politics, and ecology coalesced, and had powerful implications for human action. John Brown's battle, the one the Transcendentalists brought to national prominence, swept up the entire nation and rooted out its greatest social evil, chattel slavery.

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Notes

1. Studies taking a philosophical approach include Stanley Cavell, *This New Yet Unapproachable America: Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein* (Albuquerque, NM: Living Batch Press, 1989); S. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); S. Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); S. Cavell, *Philosophical Passages: Wittgenstein, Emerson, Austin, Derrida* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995); Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Russell B. Goodman, *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Michael Lopez, *Emerson and Power: Creative Antagonism in the Nineteenth Century* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); Pamela Schirmeister, *Less Legible Meanings: Between Poetry and Philosophy in the Work of Emerson* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press 1999); Joan Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism: The Fact of Feeling from Jonathan Edwards to Gertrude Stein* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For a consideration of Asian influences, see Arthur Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

2. See, for example, Len Gougeon, *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990); Russ Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation: American Genealogies of Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Anita Haya Patterson, *From Emerson to King: Democ-*

racy, Race, and the Politics of Protest (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Albert J. von Frank, *The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Joel Myerson, ed., *A Historical Guide to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); *The Emerson Dilemma: Essays on Emerson and Social Reform*, ed. T. Gregory (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Peter S. Field, *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Making of a Democratic Intellectual* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Linck C. Johnson, "'Liberty Is Never Cheap': Emerson, 'The Fugitive Slave Law,' and the Antislavery Lecture Series at the Broadway Tabernacle," *New England Quarterly*76 (December 2003): 550–92; David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Knopf, 2005); and Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, *To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

3. Some works stressing nature and the environment are Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); L. Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005); Daniel G. Payne, *Voices in the Wilderness: American Nature Writing and Environmental Politics* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1996); Louise Westling, *The Green Breast of the New World: Landscape, Gender, and American Fiction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996); Eduardo Cadava, *Emerson and the Climates of History* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997); Robert Kuhn McGregor, *A Wider View of the Universe: Henry Thoreau's Study of Nature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Eric Wilson, *Romantic Turbulence: Chaos, Ecology, and American Space* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); James C. McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000); David Mazel, *American Literary Environmentalism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000); Andrew McMurry, *Envirnomental Renaissance: Emerson, Thoreau, and the American System of Nature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003). See also Laura Dassow Walls, *Seeing New Worlds: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Natural Science* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), and L. D. Walls, *Emerson's Life in Science: The Culture of Truth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

4. Linda Allardt, ed. *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 12 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 152.

5. *John Brown: The Making of a Revolutionary. The Story of John Brown in*

His Own Words and in the Words of Those Who Knew Him, ed. Louis Ruchames (1969; New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971), 259.

6. W. E. B. DuBois, *John Brown* (1909; Armonk, NY: 1997), xxv.

7. In Parker Pillsbury, *Acts of the Anti-Slavery Apostles* (1883; New York: Arno, 1969), 266. The next two quotations in this paragraph are on pp. 293 and 303, respectively.

8. Quoted in Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 82.

9. Ibid., 118.

10. Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," *Collected Essays and Poems*, ed. Elizabeth Hall Witherell (New York: Library of America, 2001), 206. The next quotation in this paragraph is on p. 213.

11. R. W. Emerson, "War: An Address Before the American Peace Society ... in 1838," *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, http://www.rwe.org/comm/index.php?option=comcontent&task=view&id=74&Itemid=253/.

12. Brooks Atkinson, ed., *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 753–54. The remaining quotations in this paragraph are on pp. 760–61, 770, and 776. For Emerson's "conversion" to antislavery violence, see especially Len Gougeon, "Emerson's Abolition Conversion," in *The Emerson Dilemma*, ed. T. G. Garvey, 170–96.

13. "Slavery in Massachusetts," in H. D. Thoreau, *Collected Essays and Poems*, ed. Witherell, p. 337. The subsequent quotations in this paragraph are on pp. 343, 341, 345, and 346, respectively. The quotations in the next paragraph are on pp. 346–47.

14. Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson, eds., *Emerson's Antislavery Writings* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 57. The subsequent quotations in this paragraph are on pp. 57 and 83, respectively.

15. Susan Sutton Smith and Harrison Hayford, eds., *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), vol. 14, 423.

16. Gougeon and Myerson, *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, 102.

17. S. S. Smith and H. Hayford, eds., *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 14, 125–26.

18. Gougeon and Myerson, *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, 118.

19. Quoted in S. D. Carpenter, *Logic of History: Five Hundred Political Texts: Being Concentrated Extracts of Abolitionism* (Madison, WI: S. D. Carpenter, 1864), 71–72.

20. *Report of Union Meeting in Faneuil Hall* (Boston: n.p., 1859), 19; in Boyd Stutler Collection of John Brown, West Virginia State Archives.

21. Speech of Andrew Johnson, in *John Brown Pamphlets*, 13; in Boyd Stutler Collection of John Brown, Weest Birginia State Archives.

22. H. D. Thoreau, "A Plea for Captain John Brown," in Witherell, *Collected Essays and Poems*, 407.

23. Gougeon and Myerson, *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, 83.

24. Quoted in Richard J. Hinton, *John Brown and His Men* (1894; rpt., New York: Arno Press, 1968), 697.

25. H. D. Thoreau, "A Plea for Captain John Brown," in Witherell, ed., *Collected Essays and Poems*, 398.

26. Thomas Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches with Elucidations* (1845; rpt., New York: AMS Press, 1969), 1:12.

27. *Chicago Press and Tribune*, October 21, 1859.

28. *The Liberator*, October 21, 1859.

29. *New-York Tribune*, October 28, 1859.

30. *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Bradford Torrey (1906; New York: AMS, 1968), 18: 421.

31. *Liberator*, November 4, 1859.

32. Kenneth Walter Cameron, *Transcendental Log: Fresh Discoveries in Newspapers Concerning Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott and Others of the American Literary Renaissance* (Hartford, CT: Transcendental Books, 1973), 148. The next quotation in this paragraph, from the *Springfield Republican*, is on p. 244.

33. R. W. Emerson, "Hymn: Sung at the Completion of the Concord Monument," *Collected Poems and Translations*, ed. Harold Bloom and Paul Kane (New York: Library of America, 1994), 125.

34. Quoted in *The Genius and Character of Emerson*, ed. Franklin B. Sanborn (1885; Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971), 28. The next quotation in this paragraph is on p. 20. The first quotation in the next paragraph is on p. 292.

35. James Brewer Stewart, *Wendell Phillips, Liberty's Hero* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 304.

36. Harold Blodgett and Sculley Bradley, eds., *Leaves of Grass, Comprehensive Reader's Edition* (New York: New York University Press, 1985), 729–30.

37. R. W. Emerson "Courage," *New-York Tribune*, 8 November 1859. The remaining quotations in this paragraph and the quotation in the next one are also from this source.

38. S. D. Carpenter, *Logic of History*, 71–72.

39. *The Natick Resolution; or, Resistance to Slaveholders the Right and Duty of Southern Slaves and Northern Freemen* (Boston: n.p., 1859), 20.

40. Gougeon and Myerson, eds., *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, 117. The remaining quotations in this paragraph are on pp. 117–19.

41. H. C. Wright, *The Natick Resolution*, 3–4.

42. The Reverend E. D. Wheelock, quoted in S. D. Carpenter, *Logic of History*, 65. The next quotation in this paragraph is on p. 69.

43. R. W. T., "John Brown is Gone!," *The Liberator*, January 20, 1860.

44. Justita, "The Virginia Martyrs," *The Liberator*, March 30, 1860.

45. Dean, "The Virginia Scaffold," *New York Independent*, December 1, 1859.

46. Benjamin H. Clarke, "John Brown Avenged," *The Liberator*, June 27, 1862.

47. H. D. Thoreau, "Services at Concord," in James Redpath, *Echoes of Harpers Ferry* (Boston: Thayer and Eldridge, 1860), 439.

48. David W. Hill and Ruth H. Bennett, eds., *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), vol. 15, 453.

49. Hill and Bennett, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 15, 468.

50. *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, vol. 18, 408.

51. "A Plea for Captain John Brown," in H. D. Thoreau, *Collected Essays and Poems*, ed. Witherell, 397.

52. Smith and Hayford, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 14, 394–95. The next quotation in this paragraph is on p. 410.

53. Ibid., vol. 14, 126.

54. D. W. Hill and R. H. Bennett, eds., *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 15, 68.

55. Gougeon and Myerson, *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, 122–23. The next quotation in this paragraph is also from this source.

56. H. D. Thoreau, *Collected Essays and Poems*, ed. Witherell, 506–7.