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# Romantic elements in the poetry of Ralph Waldo Emerson

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# Romantic Elements in The Poetry of Ralph Waldo Emerson

by

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# FOREWORD

This thesis is to deal with the poems of Emerson considered from the point of view of the Romantic tendencies shown therein. Ralph Waldo Emerson was influenced by many schools of literature and thought but it is my purpose to pick out those passages in his poems which reflect romantic ideas and in which the choice of words and manner of expression give evidence that Emerson introduced to America the type of writing that was popular in Europe at the time of Shelley and Keats. If he had ever been accused of being a Romanticist he would probably have denied it flatly even as he so many times repudiated the statement that he was a transcendentalist. Nevertheless he was a transcendentalist and his works do show good evidence also that he was influenced by Romanticism.

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# I. LIFE OF THE WRITER AS AN INFLUENCE IN THE WRITING OF POETRY

## A. Early Influences

Although it is not the function of this thesis to write a biography, yet we all realize that the writing of any person is necessarily influenced by the events of his life and this is especially true of Emerson. It is not to be denied in this day and age that heredity and environment are powerful factors in the shaping of one's mind and thoughts. Emerson, born in Boston in May 1803, of eight generations of ministers, was brought up in poverty because his father, minister of the *"oldest church in Boston called the First or 'Old Brick Church,'" died when his four sons were all under ten. This lack of money, however, Emerson considered an advantage because while other boys were coasting, skating, and hunting, he and his brothers were acquiring an understanding and enjoyment of literature. **"They sigh for fine clothes, for rides, for the theatre, and premature freedom and dissipation, which others possess. Woe to them if their wishes were crowned! The angels that dwell with them and are weaving laurels of life for their youthful brows are

* The Early Poems of Ralph Waldo Emerson; Introduction by Nathan Haskell Dole, page VII
** Emerson - Poet And Thinker; E. L. Carey, page3

Toil and Want and Truth and Mutual Faith." Ralph Waldo Emerson had a tendency to consumption, a fact which restrained him from the activity of the games ordinarily played by boys.

B. Education

Early he took to rhyme and at ten wrote verse in the form of an heroic poem "Fortus". He also wrote verses on naval victories and spoke them. It is curious to note that his whole family was proud of him as a rhymer and yet in after years it is his lack of ability to use rhyme skillfully for which he is criticized. He had been put in school before the age of three and attended Latin school supplemented in the afternoon by a private school. He disliked mathematics concerning which he said himself he was a dunce. He was, however, always literary in his pursuits. He entered Harvard at the age of fourteen and pursued his studies there in a desultory fashion. He was much more fond of aimless, undirected reading than the routine subjects of mathematics and Latin because he could see no reason for doing these latter. Throughout college he remained by himself not as a grouch but merely alone and although he tried to draw himself out, he found it very difficult. *"He declared lifelong that his isolation, which he felt from boyhood, was not willful but inevitable - 'my doom to be solitary.'" His aunt, Mary

* Ralph Waldo Emerson; G. E. Woodberry, page 16

Moody, a very dominant character, who influenced Emerson probably more than his mother, encouraged him in his solitude, which she believed was the refuge of genius. To gain this the opinions of others must not be followed too closely. During his college career he took some prizes in English but otherwise did not show any remarkable or outstanding achievement. He was chosen class poet (after the refusals of seven others) and was pleased with the post. *"I was then delighted with recent honors, traversing my chamber, flushed and proud of a poet's fancies and the day when they were to be exhibited; pleased with ambitious prospects, and careless because ignorant of the future." Literature and especially poetry was has main interest from childhood up and because his commencement part did not concern poetry he took no interest in it, learned it carelessly, and required prompting several times. "Except that other 'peculiar pursuit' to which he more solemnly looked forward, poetry was the most dearly cherished in his solitude. It was, after all, the boyish rhymster that had lived in him through his four years at college."

C. Preparation for the Ministry

After graduation he taught with his brother William and took charge of the school while his brother went to Germany to study. He despised teaching because in

* Ralph Waldo Emerson; G. E. Woodberry, page 16

the first place it was a school for young ladies and he felt self-conscious and incompetent to cope with them. In the second place, if he could have taught them only the things which had inspired him he would have enjoyed it, but instead he was forced into the routine which he had always hated. He did, however, apply himself to such a degree that he could take full charge during his brother's studies in Göttingen. At twenty he wrote "Good-bye Proud World" and perhaps influenced by Channing then preaching in Boston penned these words, *"In a month I shall be legally a man. I deliberately dedicate my time, my talents, and my hopes to the church." To this end he attended Divinity School in Cambridge but was soon forced to leave because of ill health whereupon he turned to teaching again and managed to attend some of the theological school lectures.

D. Approbated to preach

In 1826 he was "approbated to preach" but he affirms himself that had he been tested he would not have been able to pass the examination. He preached one sermon and again his health failed, thereupon he went to Florida. While his attention was being concentrated on theology at this time still he wrote his aunt that when he chanced

* Raoph Waldo Emerson; G. E. Woodberry, page 23

to light on a verse of genuine poetry, even in the corner of a newspaper, a forcible sympathy awakened a legion of little goblins in the recesses of his soul, and if he had leisure to attend to the fine tiny rabble, he would straightway be a poet. After he returned to the North, he became established in the Old North Church and a few months later married Ellen Louise Tucker. It seemed to him at that time that life was too full of joy and so it proved to be.

E. Resignation from the church

His theological training had been so interrupted, so individual, and so superficial that he was really unprepared for the ministry. After three years the crisis came when he refused to administer communion using the symbols. Ex-tempore prayer was also irksome to him. He realized that he was not made to be a minister but it took daring and courage to withstand the storm of criticism that must have followed that outspoken denial of the communion custom. In this instance he showed the Romantic tendency to look at an age-old tradition, disapprove, and then frankly reject it. His wife died at about the same time leaving him as a ship afloat.

F. First trip to England

Therefore in December of that same year he sailed for Europe having been persuaded against his own will. The bright spot for him was the hope of seeing and talking

with his four heroes - Carlyle, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Landor. The most satisfactory interview was that with Carlyle probably because the *"Two men, despite trenchant differences of which each was aware, had sufficient ground on which to meet. Their early histories were similar - each had been intended for the ministry but had revolted against its halters. Each was by hature a prophet, Puritan, and seer; the one an ancient Jeremiah, the other a new John the Baptist. Both were at bottom Romantics, already shaping themselves as leaders of the reaction against classicism and dogmatic authority." He returned from the trip with a new self-confidence and assurance because he had matched wits with his "Four Horsemen of the European Apocalypse" and found his own intellect not to be scorned. He found willing ears at the lecture hall where he directed his efforts after giving up the ministry. Because he was so well received he spoke and wrote with a new surety.

At about this time he looked to Nature for inspiration and we find such as this from his journals: **"The pines glittered with their green needles in the light, and seemed to challenge me to read their riddle. The drab oak-leaves of the last year turned their little somersets and lay still again. And the wind bustled high overhead in the forest top. This gay and grand architecture,

* Emerson, the Wisest American; Phillips Russell, page 104
** Ralph Waldo Emerson; R. M. Gay, page 105

from the vault to the moss and lichen on which I lay - who shall explain to me the laws of its proportions and adornments." He says, "Knowledge of nature is most permanent; clouds and grass are older antiquities than pyramids or Athens." We see him here certainly as a romantic lover of the out-of-doors.

G. Return to Concord

After the death of his brother Edward he and his mother went to live with Dr. Ripley in the Old Manse at Concord in order to be near his brother Charles who was ailing. It was with a certain exuberance that he dedicated himself to this new life to be lived close to nature. *"Hail to the quiet fields of my fathers! Not wholly unattended by supernatural friendship and favor let me come hither! Bless my purposes as they are simple and virtuous!" Like the English Romanticists Emerson received pleasure from the simple sights of nature.

In 1835 Ralph Waldo married Lydia Jackson who at his request changed her name to Lydian for the sake of euphony. Even into the facts of life which we accept as final Emerson introduced his poetic conceptions. They settled in the John Coolidge house which Emerson bought and which now we fondly poiht out as one of the historic spots of Concord. His wife would like to have lived in

* Emerson, the Wisest American; Phillips Russell, page 118

Plymouth but he preferred Concord writing that he was born a poet, though his singing was very husky and mostly in prose and therefore must guard his rambling inclinations in Concord where he could see sunsets, forest, snowstorms, and river views.

In 1836 his younger brother Charles died. *"This second bereavement of a beloved brother was met by Emerson with his customary fortitude but he felt it as a deflowering of his life. Solemnized by such sorrow his youth became a sacred memory, he again and again returned to the deepest personal chord of his poetry." After three deaths in his immediate family he could still live quite happily by depending upon his philosophy of "the compensations of calamity". When his wife Ellen died he had said, "She was taken from me, the air was still sweet; the sun was not taken down from my firmament, and however sore was that particular loss, I still felt that it was peculiar that the Universe remained to us both, that the Universe abode in its light and in its power to replenish the heart with hope." His belief in something still to live for was justified because in that same year 1836 a son, Waldo, was born to him. This boy was everything to him and it was his death later which shattered the belief that had carried him safely through so much rough water. In this

* Ralph Waldo Emerson; G. E. Woodberry, page 24

same year also he published the essay "Nature" which is regarded as "the first document of that remarkable outburst of Romanticism on Puritan ground", but which gained little attention except by Carlyle who recognized it as a foundation for anything Emerson wished to build.

From 1842-1844 Emerson reluctantly accepted the editorship of "The Dial", the organ of the so-called transcendental movement, the paper which had already been struggling for existence two years under Margaret Fuller. Such a magazine was, however, doomed to defeat from the very outset.

His life in Concord was a joy to him because he said, *"When I bought my farm, I did not know what a bargain I had in the bluebirds, bobolinks, and thrushes which were not charged in the bill. As little did I guess what sublime mornings and sunsets I was buying, what reaches of landscape, and what fields and leaves for a tramp."

Emerson seemed to approve of extreme and extravagant actions but when they were at a distance. He spoke in advanced language but when it came to putting new ideas into active practice he did not wish to ally himself with the new project. A. Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Thoreau, and Ripley were great talkers and idealists and were eager to try all sorts of radical experiments.

* Emerson, the Wisest American; Phillips Russell, page 136

Brook Farm, the Fruitlands, School of Philosophy at the Orchard House were all pet ideas which were regarded by Emerson from a distance. The latter recognized and, to a certain degree, admired the sincerity of the reformers but at the same time he well knew the impractibility of the undertakings and would therefore not actively ally himself with them. "Emerson remained to the last a little afraid of the world and what it might do to him." In 1837 he made an antislavery speech but would not come out definitely with the Abolitionists because they were too noisy. Emerson was essentially Romantic. He was interested in progress but not of a raucous, radical kind. He did not like persons who were so good that they felt it their ordained task to reform the world. When annoyed by these Goodies, "his chief comforts were his afternoon walks through the woods, the sight of the stars at night - 'the calm, remote, and secular character of astronomical facts composes us to a sublime peace.'"

During this time he was lecturing as his chief occupation but it was verse to which he really aspired because he could get a larger and freer speech in rhyme. Four years after a bookseller had proposed to publish his poems he compiled them but he said, "It was a small venture. My poems did not pay. My cranberry meadows paid much better."

H. Second trip to England

In 1847 Emerson yielded to the entreaties of his

English friends and set sail for England. He witnessed for twenty-five days the Revolution in Paris and then was glad enough to return to London. He came back to Concord with a widened horizon and a feeling of contentment.

I. Attitude toward slavery

Mild as had been his attitude toward political issues, in 1851 when Webster endorsed the Fugitive Slave Law, Emerson issued this defiant declaration, "This is a law which everyone of you will break on the earliest occasion." He then favored Abolition but did not definitely declare himself with that side until John Brown's speech at Concord in 1857. On January 1, 1863 when Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation went into effect, a Jubilee Concert was held in Boston when Emerson delivered his Boston Hymn, which was very well received.

J. Burning of his home and third trip to Europe

From the age of sixty-two Emerson was content to grow old. Yet after that his life was still very active, lecturing and writing, even taking a six weeks' trip to California. In 1866 he was granted the degree of Doctor of Laws at Harvard and the year following delivered the Phi Beta Kappa Oration as Mr. Cabot said "not now as a promising young beginner from whom a fair poetical speech may be expected, but as the foremost man of letters of New England."

In 1872 his home was burned. To divert his thoughts

he went to England thence to Egypt and the Nile with his daughter Ellen. When he returned he found that his old home had been restored by his devoted friends. He still lectured a great deal but not without the assistance of his daughter, who saw to it that he didn't mix up his manuscripts. He died in 1882 and was buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. Walt Whitman said, "He was a just man, poised on himself, all-loving, all-enclosing and sane and clear as the sun." *"His disdain of mere form led him to produce verses which read with heaviness and halting, but the beauty of the thoughts atones for missing symmetry and freshness of rhyme, and Emerson as a poet will always have an audience of admirers and some worshippers, oblivious of his verse's fault."

* Early Poems of Ralph Waldo Emerson; Introducibon by Nathan Haskall Dole, page xl

## II. ROMANTICISM AND TRANSCENDENTALISM

In the brief biography of Emerson I have showed his love of poetry and mentioned his association with Romanticism. We must now consider what Romanticism is, how it is contrasted with classicism, and how it coincides with Transcendentalism.

### A. Derivation of the words, classic and romantic

By derivation classic, of course, means that which forms a class or order; therefore a sense of order, balance, or moderation are the essential qualities of the term, classic. Romantic meant originally works written in any of the vernaculars derived form Latin, but because of the imaginative character of these writings the term soon was understood to denote strange, unexpected, intense, extreme, unique, extraordinary. Each word taken by itself really has little significance but in contrasting the one against the other their identity is clearly seen.

### B. Contrast between the two words, classic and romantic

Romanticism cannot be defined absolutely without reference to classicism. Romanticism came as a revolt against the classic type of writing and differs from it in a number of respects. First let us note the attitude of the followers of the two schools toward imagination. During the eighteenth century when classicism was in vogue

imagination was not tolerated whereas the Romanticist maintained that imagination must have full sway without being hemmed in by imitation or certain forms. The first quality, then, which distinguishes the romantic movement from the other periods of English literature is that of the imagination which adds "strangeness to beauty". Arthur Symons points out this fact by saying: *"Simply, this movement is the reawakening of the imagination, a reawakening to a sense of beauty and strangeness in natural things, and in all impulses of the mind and senses." Irving Babbitt also gives importance to the imagination as a characteristic of romanticism. **"The essence of the Romantic mood is always a straining of the imagination away from the here and now, from a actuality that seems paltry and faded compared to the radiant hues of one's dreams. The classicist, according to A. W. Schlegel, is for making the most of the present, whereas the Romanticist hovers between recollection and hope."

Imagination cannot have full sway if poetry must be controlled by bonds of routine and convention; therefore when romanticism demanded free vent for the imagination it also asked that the possibilities of rhyme and rhythm become unlimited. Thus we arrive at the second main difference between classicism and romanticism, namely,

* Romantic Movement in English Poetry; Arthur Symons, page 16
** Rousseau and Romanticism; Irving Babbitt, page 92

the attitude toward specified forms. All romantic poets, although differing in subject matter and manner of expression united in one purpose - namely, to free poetry from convention and rules. Where imagination is, there is no place for formal speech and tradition of form. The genuine classicist always placed stress on form and design, whereas the real Romanticist rejected the discipline of technique in favor of spontaneity. Wordsworth then, typical of the real Romanticist, called upon poetry to cast away *"the bracelets and snuff-boxes, and adulterous trinkets of poetic diction and to return to her legitimate home in the heart of men and the language which is uttered by men under actual pressure of passion." Likewise Carlyle made a very earnest appeal to write honestly and truly without regarding the stock words and phrases used by others. He asked, in a very apt metaphor, that we be freed from classic literature which represents the order of the mind saying that our clothes no longer fit us, that our spiritual aspirations are being starved, our secular impulses are "cribb'd, cabin'd, and confin'd."

Then, in the third place, classicism had demanded not only that the method of expression should follow a definite model, but even that the people and subjects about which the poems were written must conform to a

* Classical and Romantic; H. J. C. Grierson, page 34

certain standard. Against this, also, romanticism staged a very emphatic revolt. The Romantics had two common characteristics - revolt and individualism. They continually urged that the right of the individual be recognized, that he be allowed to be himself, to be natural. According to the literary standards of the eighteenth century poetry must confine itself to the absolutely normal, allowing nothing out-of-the-ordinary to enter the realm. Reason and common sense held tight rein over enthusiasm and imagination. Romanticism, then, to combat this convention worked for less artifice, less order, and less convention. These non-conformists did what they liked. If they wished to write about an abnormal person, they did so, believing that that type of individual was as much worthy of poetry as he who follows the normal path of life.

Then there is a fourth quality in which the two schools of literature differ and which is closely allied with the two preceding characteristics - a sense of balance in expression. Classical literature, according to Brunetiere, has rather a good sense of balance of intellect and feeling, of form and matter, is national in concept, edifying and beautiful in form, whereas, according to Grierson: *"Romanticism lacks the confident clarity, the

* Classical and Romantic; H. J. C. Grierson, page 30

balanced humanism, the well-proportioned form, the finished correctness of the literature of a period which knows its own mind. But it is shot through and through with new and strange beauties of thought and vision, of phrase and rhythm. Language grows richer, for words become symbols, not labels, full of colour and suggestion as well as clear, definable meaning; and the rhythm of verse and prose grow more varied and subtle to express subtler if vaguer currents of thought and feeling."

Although romanticism was a period of revolt and reawakening, still there was a leaning toward certain topics for writing - some emphasizing one phase, some, another; such as, the weird and supernatural, love of nature, love of solitude, glorification of the humble, and idealization of the past. These same general topics for writing have been pointed out, also, by Grierson as characteristic of the romantic period: *"Most of the poetry of the nineteenth century has been romantic in the wider and looser acceptance of the term. Emotional stress, sensitiveness to the picturesque, love of natural scenery, interest in distant places, curiosity of the wonderful and mysterious, subjectivity, lyricism, intrusion of the ego, impatience of the limits of genres, eager experiment with new forms of art - these and the

* History of English Romanticism of the Nineteenth Century; Henry A. Beers, page 229

like marks of the romantic spirit are as common in the verse literature of the nineteenth century."

Taking one last look at the contrast between Romantic and Classic we can still see the original meanings under all the characteristics; namely, classic as conforming to the norm and romantic as a deviation from the norm. We may say that romanticism took a negative direction, turning aside from the practices of classicism, but in its eagerness to push aside standards it established for itself a free and beautiful poetry. Thus we see that it is impossible to define romanticism in positive terms, for Dr. Hancolk says: *"The Romantic Movement is an unfortunate phrase. No satisfactory definition can be given which will include all the facts. Indeed the Romantic Movement can be defined only in negative terms." Although the Romantics had no particular goal in mind except to cast out formalism, they brought about a wonderful era of writing. As Arthur Symons has said: **"Romance rose out of the grave of Chatterton, and poetry, after Burns, was no longer in bondage to the prose and rational mind."

* The French Revolution and the English Poets; Albert Elmer Hancock, page 44
** Romantic Movement in English Poetry; Arthur Symons, page 16

C. Romanticism allied with Transcendentalism

Romanticism, then, above all else is a reawakening, a revolt, a reaction against tradition, form, convention, against the status quo; it is a movement of youth. As C. H. Herford points out: *"Romanticism makes prominent the qualities conspicuous in the youth of the nation; bright aimless fancy, awe of the unknown, eager critical delight in the abundance of nature; impetuous joy and s sorrow, breaking forth into such free and instant tears and smiles as the Argonauts uttered." This same spirit of a realization for a new form of expression a greater freedom in material, was felt by the advocates of Transcendentalism. This new movement found the proper ground in which to take root - New England - because here only people were not bound by convention and age-old tradition.

Yet Transcendentalism was more than a reaction against formalism and tradition, against Puritan orthodoxy. It was a distinct philosophical system, asserting the inalienable worth of man. Transcendentalists believed in the Living God, in the soul, had faith in immediate inspiration, boundless possibility of mankind, limitless good. Rousseau, the forerunner of the principles of romanticism, perhaps, would not have agreed with Theodore Parker that man by nature is religious, that as soon as

* Essential Characteristics of Romantic and Classical Styles; C. H. Herford, page 17

consciousness begins, truth of religion is realized, but the French philosopher did certainly believe that man was naturally good and if unhampered by the regulations of society would pursue a good life. This could be accomplished by going "back to nature". The Transcendentalist tried this very literally in the Brook Farm episode.. In two quite fundamental principles - a desire for change, and a life near nature as a pure one - Romanticism and Transcendentalism touch.

This correlation between the transcendental poets of New England and the English Romantics of the nineteenth century Caroline Dall has pointed out. *"Channing's influence began to be felt early in the century and it must have occurred to some of my audience that that of the Lake poets ran parallel with it, and was felt in this country as well as in all English-speaking nations. I am not addressing students ignorant of the great change which the advent of Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth produced in English literature. The gradual development of Transcendentalism kept pace with it."

The two terms romanticism and transcendentalism are not synonomous. We have already discovered that to define the former is quite impossible, whereas a very satisfactory definition of Transcendentalism is given

* Transcendentalism in New England; Caroline Dall, page 18

by Frothingham: *"In the terminology of Kant the term 'transcendent' was employed to designate qualities that lie outside of all 'experience', that cannot be brought within the recognized formularies of thought, cannot be reached either by observation or reflection, or explained as the consequences of any discoverable antecedents. The term 'transcendental' designated the fundamental conceptions, the universal and necessary judgments which transcend the sphere of experience." Frothingham also asserts, "Transcendentalism was a distinct philosophical system. Practically it was an assertion of the inalienable worth of man; theoretically it was an assertion of the immanence of supernatural attributes to the natural constitution of mankind."

I have already called attention to the correlation between romanticism and transcendentalism and to the meaning of each term. The problem of the thesis, however, is still before us - to show that Emerson is a Romanticist. I shall not attempt to prove that he is a Transcendentalist but shall assume that fact as an hypothesis except for the brief statements following in this same paragraph. Emerson believed very strongly in the inspiration theory of genius and the inward feeling of religion as opposed to work and the necessity for dogma in religion. In

* Transcendentalism in New England; Octavius B. Frothingham, page 12

this phase at least he has followed the belief of Schliermacher as set forth by Frothingham. *"Schliermacher's position that religion was not a system of dogmas, but an inward experience; that it was not a speculation, but a feeling; that its primal verities rested not on miracle or tradition, not on the Bible letter or on ecclesiastical institution, but on the soul's sense of things divine; that this sense belonged by nature to the human race and gave to all forms of religion such genuineness as they had. .....He deprived rationalism of its primitive character a sense of divine things in the soul, and as having its seat not in knowledge, nor yet in action, neither in theology nor in morality, but in feeling, aspiration, longing, love, veneration, conscious dependence, filial trust." Emerson believed in inspiration and ecstasy and was convinced that within each of us is instinct for and longing toward religion and some spiritual power beyond ourselves.

Even as Emerson, an accepted Transcendentalist, is likewise a Romanticist, so Coleridge and Wordsworth, accepted as Romanticists, are also Transcendentalists. The former, a philosopher and man of thought, accepted the subjective as of primary importance and considered the objective, secondary - a "know thyself" philosophy.

* Transcendentalism in New England; Octavius B. Frothingham, page49

Emerson was also in accord with Wordsworth, the poet and man of imagination. Emerson said: "The fame of Wordsworth is a leading fact in modern literature when considered how hostile at first reigning taste was. 'The Excursion' awakened in every lover of nature the right feeling. We saw the stars shine, we felt the awe of the mountains, we heard the rustle of the wind in the grass and knew again the ineffable secret of solitude. It was nearer to nature than anything we had before. But the interest of the poem ended almost with the narrative of the influences of nature on the mind of the Boy .....There is in him the wisdom of humanity."

- In this second chapter I have discussed what romanticism was, how it was related to Transcendentalism, stated the assumption that Emerson was a Transcendentalist, and hinted that because of the romantic elements in transcendentalism and because of transcendental feelings in certain Romantics we will eventually conclude that Emerson's poetry was romantic. Although rather a broad statement we might say that New World Transcendentalism was Old World Romanticism under a new name.

## III. CLASSIFICATION OF HIS POETICAL SUBJECTS

Having considered Romanticism and Transcendentalism in the abstract, let us now turn our attention to Emerson and the type of subject material which he used. I have divided his poems into five groups all of which show definite romantic leanings except possibly the problem poems and even those follow lines in which the English Romantics were interested for surely the romantic poets were concerned with the problems of life.

### A. Nature Poems

Emerson, then, was a man of nature. He loved the out-of-doors, the flowers, the birds, the trees and he was happiest when he was wandering through the fields, his fields near Lake Walden. God spoke to him through Nature, so it was these communings which he recorded in his poems. He disliked conformity to the norm, the usual, therefore, perhaps, it was for this reason that he found such close comradship with Nature. Here things could be found as they are. No man had tried to line them up to a definite idea or standard. In the expression of his observations he, likewise, disdained to follow the beaten path of poetic forms. His first and probably most well liked type of poetry is that which takes its material from nature. Nature, to him, is supreme. To this group belong: "Hamatreya",

"Earth-Song", "Good-bye", "The Rhodora", "The Humblebee", "Berrying", "The Snow-Storm", "Woodnotes", "Monadnoc", "Musketquid", "Dirge", "My Garden", and "Two Rivers".

B. Problem Poems

Then secondly even as Emerson enjoyed Nature because she is a non-conformist so he resented the strict creeds of theology and forms of religion. He was an honest thinker and expressed his ideas frankly and openly even though they were at variance with the accepted theories of the times. Because a custom had always been so he would not adopt it with an unquestioning faith. He was uncertain in many cases as to just what attitude would be the truthful, honest, natural one to follow. This indecision shows up in his problem poems. It is perhaps this earnest attempt on his part to be entirely honest which accounts for his inconsistencies. If each one of us should be absolutely honest in his opinion and express that idea in writing, I am sure that those thoughts would not remain true to one school of thought day in and day out. The second type of poem to consider is the problem or thought poems. In this group we would include; "The Sphinx", "Each and All", "The Problem", "The Visit", "To Rhea", "The World-Soul", "Forerunners", "Fate", "Guy", "Tact", "Good-bye, Proud World", "Ode", "Etienne de la Boece", "Forbearance", "The Park", "Ode to Beauty", "Initial, Daemonic, and

Celestial Love", "The House", "Xenophanes", "Astraea", "Mithradates", and "Bacchus".

C. Mythological Poems

Throughout many of Emerson's poems we find mythological references. He must have enjoyed the stories of Greek Gods and Goddesses because there are many references to them and their abode on Mt. Olympus. I would establish, then, a third class of poems which are definitely influenced by Greek mythology. I do not list all those poems which contain Greek references but merely those whose title and entire content are dominated by the allusion. In this group I include the following: "Eros", "Hermione", "Uriel", "Alphonso of Castille", "Merlin", "Bacchus", and "Merops".

D. Personal Poems

Emerson loved his home, his family, and his friends so it is quite natural that he should have written poems dedicated to them and to their memory. In the fourth group of subject material we should consider the poems dealing with personalities, his appreciation of them and the lessons they taught him. Here we find: "Give All to Love", "To Ellen", "To Eva", "The Amulet", "Dirge", "Threnody", "Hymn", "The Apology", "My Garden", "Terminus", and "Good-bye".

E. Persian Influences

That Emerson should have been influenced to such a vast extent by Persian scholars and poets seems indeed strange to me because he was so local in his interests. Nevertheless it is true that Persian thought interested him a great deal. "Saadi" raises the Persian poet to a high level of achievement. He was interested enough in the Persian to translate some of the works of the poet Hafiz from German. Emerson's reading was erratic and inconsistent. He rarely read a novel and cared nothing for French literature but the Sacred Books of the East fascinated him and were an inspiration for some of his lines. Although Emerson began to read translations of Hindu literature as a youth, the charm of the books did not hold him until in middle age. The Eastern philosophy did not change his thought but reinforced certain tendencies in his thought. "Brahma" and "Hamatreya" are definitely based on Hindu works. Directly the Persian influence does not show up in any poems except the three mentioned. Therefore, while critics place high the Eastern influence on Emerson's thinking, it seems to me relatively unimportant in his poetry.

## IV. HIS CHARACTERISTIC ROMANTIC CONCEPTS

In order to make the subject of romanticism as concrete and definite as possible, I am submitting ten* topics which embody the characteristics of romantic works. These same ideas have been included in the discussion of romanticism in Chapter II in different words, perhaps, but in substance they are the same. If a sufficient number of Emerson's poems can be found which contain these characteristics, we then will feel justified in calling him a Romantic.

### A. Desire for freedom

We come, then, to the first topic, which directly points to Emerson as Romantic.

Emerson, like the Romantics of England, would not be bound by a rule of rhyme and rhythm but desired to express himself as he saw fit. He has given expression to this thought in "Merlin".

> "Great is the art,
> Great be the manners of the bard.
> He shall not his brain encumber
> With the coil of rhythm and number
> But leaving rule and pale forethought
> He shall aye climb
> For his rhyme."

* The basis for these ten points was found in "Some Paradoxes of the English Romantic Movement" by William Darnall McClintock. I have cut, added, and changed the material.

To the Romantics delirium was a perfect state because in that condition a person was absolutely free and unimpeded. In "Bacchus" Emerson desires utmost freedom in order that he, not blinded to things as they appear, might understand nature in its true state.

> "Bring me wine, but wine which never grew
> In the belly of the grape,
> ----------
> That I intoxicated,
> And by the draught assimilated,
> May float at pleasure through all natures;
> The bird-language rightly spell,
> And that which roses say so well."

In the "Ode" Emerson maintains that there is a law for man and a law for things but the latter has run wild and unkinged man. Man, however, should serve his own law and live for truth and harmony come what will,

> "The state may follow how it can,
> As Olympus follows Jove."

"The Muse", reference to which calls our attention to mythology of old, warns the poet not to be subject to flattery, not to follow falsehood or the way of the theist, atheist, or pantheist but to strike against old barriers, to be himself.

> "But thou, joy-giver and enjoyer,
> Unknowing war, unknowing crime,
> Gentle Saadi, mind thy rhyme;
> Heed not what the brawlers say,
> Heed thou only Saadi's lay."

In the poem "The Problem" Emerson certainly is seeking greater freedom in religion. England has built abbies and nature has given them a place, has accepted

them as a part of religion, but formal religious observances will never be able to surpass nature, the real religion. To a series of rhetorical questions revealing natural wonders, Emerson forces us to answer God. Free observance of religion among God's creatures is what Emerson ever seeks.

> "Know'st thou what wove yon woodbird's nest-
> Of leaves, and feathers from her breast?
> Or how the fish outbuilt her shell,
> Painting with morn each annual cell?
> Or how the sacred pine-tree adds
> To her old leaves new myriads?
> Such and so grew these holy piles
> Whilst love and terror laid the tiles."

B. Personal experience

Emerson did reveal his personal experiences in his poems. He enjoyed life and took a keen interest in what was going on about him especially in connection with nature.

"Each and All" is delightful poem expressing the thoughts that occur to all of us. If we should read this poem for the first time in a pine grove in Maine or Cape Cod where the sound of the sea can be heard in the distance, then only would we feel as Emerson does that we should take home some of the beauty to bottle it up for future time. But alas, the shell or the bird must be in its natural environment to be truly beautiful.

"The ground-pine curled its pretty wreath,
Running over the club-moss burrs;
I inhaled the violet's breath;
Around me stood the oaks and firs;
Pine-cones and acorns lay on the ground;
Over me soared the eternal sky,
Full of light and deity;
---
Beauty through my senses stole;
I yielded myself to the perfect whole."

Whether "To Rhea" expresses a true experience or not cannot be definitely stated, but it, at least, is written as if true. As a brother coming straight from his beloved woods on the shores of the murmuring waters of Lake Walden he gives sound advice to the love-lorn. To me it is not a very significant poem except as it is so frank and outspoken. He certainly recognized that love once gone can see no good whatsoever in a former sweetheart.

In the poem "Monadnoc" Emerson looks with adoration at the mountain and envies the people who live amid "royal pleasure-grounds outspread". With high exultation he looks for the fortunate inhabitant but,

"Woe is me for my hope's downfall!
Is yonder squalid peasant all
That this proud nursery could breed
For God's vicegerency and stead?"

The poet expresses personal disappointment and seems not to share the romanticist's discovery of beautiful traits even in the simplest people. Emerson is disturbed because, he feels, the grand old mountain has been desecrated. He finds consolation only in the fact that these churls

are the progenitors of a finer race to come.

Emerson wished not to be blamed for idleness in "The Apology" as he delays beside the brook or wanders in grove and glen. He feels that the flowers know all and share all the secrets of the birds. Gathering flowers is not as idle as it seems because every aster even takes home with it a thought.

The death of Emerson's son, Waldo, affected the poet more deeply than any other experience in his life and came nearer to shattering his belief and faith than any other grief which he had to bear. "The Threnody" expresses, at first in the poet's characteristic calm manner, the sorrow he feels but soon he frankly gives himself up to the penetrating pang of grief which he feels. With unveiled and unguarded sorrow he speaks:

> "O child of paradise,
> Boy who made dear his father's home,
> In whose deep eyes
> Men read the welfare of the times to come,
> I am too much bereft.
> The world dishonored thou hast left me.
> O truth's and nature's costly lie!
> O trusted broken prophecy!
> O richest fortune sourly crossed!
> Born for the future, to the future lost!"

"To Ellen" is a poem in which Emerson writes a letter to Ellen in the South telling her how wonderful it is in the North. It shows his personal experience but again that experience consists of his interest in nature. He speaks of the joy of spring - the opening

of the buds, the coming of the robin. He wants Ellen back to enjoy the springtime with him.

"'O come, then, quickly come!
We are budding, we are blowing;
And the wind that we perfume
Sings a tune that's worth the knowing!'"

"The Dirge" was written about the death of Emerson's two brothers and recalls the times when they all had walked in the woods together. Again his experience is an experience in nature. The loss of his brothers was a deep and heartfelt experience to him.

"My Garden" issues an urgent invitation for everyone to join Emerson in his garden, which consists not of a formal plot of cultivated flowers, but of the wild forest and banks of the lake. To him this garden is the perfect abode and he wants to share it with others.

"My garden is a forest ledge
Which older forests bound;
The banks slope down to the blue lake-edge,
Then plunge to depths profound."

In "Terminus" Emerson expresses his feelings about the end of life. He shows no sorrow at the end but rather accepts the fact with quiet acknowledgment that there is another who directs our path and directs it well. Although it expresses philosophy rather than personal experience, the person, Emerson, is very decidedly felt in the first five lines especially.

"It is time to be old,
To take in sail:-
The god of bounds,
Who sets to seas a shore,

Came to me in his fatal rounds,
And said: 'No more!'"

C. Use of Emotions

Emerson was a true New Englander and showed in all his poetry a New England self-restraint. Nevertheless we can sense the existence of deep feelings and emotions even though Emerson does not express them in a dramatic sort of way. Emerson's revealing of his feelings is rather the quiet sort found in Wordsworth than the explosive manner of Byron.

"I see my empty house,
I see my trees repair their boughs;
---
Now Love and Pride, alas! in vain,
Up and down their glances strain.
The painted sled stands where it stood;
The kennel by the corded wood;
His gathered sticks to stanch the wall
Of the snow-tower, when snow should fall;
The ominous hole he dug in the sand,
And childhood's castles built or planned;
His daily haunts I well discern,-
The poultry-yard, the shed, the barn,-
And every inch of garden ground
Paced by the blessed feet around,
From the roadside to the brook
Whereinto he loved to look."

"The Dirge" is a portrayal of grief at the loss of his brothers, but in this poem also he does not fully abandon intellect. His great loss is not sung unhesitatingly but is restrained. He feels the loss of his brothers intensely but he subdues the outburst of pathos. The following stanza expresses to me the great space left by their death:

"Five rosy boys with morning light
Had leaped from one fair mother's arms,
Fronted the sun with hope as bright,
And greeted God with Childnood's psalms."

There is nothing so sad to me as the past tense because it signifies that all is over now.

In the "Ode to Beauty" Emerson gives himself up entirely to Beauty and admits that she possesses him. Reason is utterly abandoned and emotion alone has become his ruling force.

"Queen of things! I dare not die
In Being's deeps past ear and eye;
Lest there I find the same deceiver,
And be the sport of Fate forever.
Dread Power, but dear! if God thou be,
Unmake me quite, or give thyself to me!"

"Thine Eyes Still Shined" is a short poem of three stanzas but might be included as possessing almost any one of the ten characteristics. Without hesitation he pours forth frankly and openly his love. In all the elements of nature the girl's picture stood out clearly before the young man: in the evening star, in the pastures, in the redbird of the sable wing, in the rosebud.

D. Sentiment and melancholy

"Hamatreya" presents the pride which folk feel in their possessions, the comfortable feeling which is theirs when they return from afar and find their lands as they left them. But what happens to them? Death takes them and they are returned to the earth which they were

so proud to own. It is a melancholy, gruesome thought which the Earth sings in this poem.

"'They called me theirs,
Who so controlled me;
Yet everyone
Wished to stay, and is gone,
How am I theirs,
If they cannot hold me,
But I hold them?'"

After reading that, I certainly feel as Emerson did:

"When I heard the Earth-song,
I was no longer brave;
My avarice cooled
Like lust in the chill of the grave."

"Good-bye" expresses a melancholy sentiment. Death seems to be very seriously on his mind in this poem. The world is proud, tossing him about in its foam. Such are not the thoughts of most young men just out of college. So he bids

"Good-bye to Flattery's fawning face;
To Grandeur with his wise grimace;
To supple office, low and high;
To crowded halls to court and street;"

The title "Give All to Love" certainly suggests sentiment and the poem sounds a melancholy note. Emerson seems to urge that we give up our entire selves to love, "friends, kindred, days, estate, good-fame, plans, credit" for love, but not attempt for a minute to detain our lover "when the first vague shadow of surmise flits across her bosom young ------free be she, fancy free." It presents the discouraging idea that we cannot hold another against her will.

While there is no melancholy in "To Eva" there is certainly a very sentimental strain. The first of the two stanzas shows a belief in astrology. These two people have been born under the same stars else how could

"Thy sweet dominion o'er my will
A sympathy divine."

be interpreted. Then a bit sadly even if with no melancholy Emerson asks permission to gaze upon her features without fear of her "watchful sentinels."

In the poem "Saadi" Emerson expresses the thought that to be a poet one must be alone. Trees, fish, birds, ducks, sheep, men, all work and play together but not the poet, for "when twain play together, shall the harp be dumb ------ two touch the string the harp is dumb". Though there come a million, wise Saadi dwells alone. Saadi loved the race of men whether servant or aristocrat; he desired all Persia as an audience to respond to his every mood yet alas no companion has he, for he must dwell alone. Saadi is the poet Emerson himself.

E. Discovery of human and beautiful characteristics in the simplest people

In "Woodnotes" Section II Emerson expresses great faith in the lowly. He who associates closely with the pine tree and with Nature is greater than a lord. He absorbs from Nature the strong, rugged qualities.

Quoth the pine tree,
"'I am the giver of honor.
My garden is cloven rock.
---
He is great who can live by me.
The rough and bearded forester
Is better than the lord;
God fills the scrip and cannister,
Sin piles the loaded board.
The lord is the peasant that was,
The peasant the lord that shall be;
The lord is hay, the peasant grass,
One dry, and one the living tree.
Who liveth by the ragged pine
Foundeth a heroic line;
Who liveth in the palace hall
Waneth fast and spendeth all."

In one part of "Monadnoc" we noticed a lack of sympathy with simple people but again we turn our attention to the poem and find a discovery of fine characteristics.

"Rallying round a parish steeple
Nestle warm the highland people,
Coarse and boisterous, yet mild,
Strong as giant, slow as child.
Sweat and season are their arts,
Their talismans are ploughs and carts."

From this point Emerson continues to elaborate upon the virtues and the accomplishments of the men who live close to the soil.

Emerson, by no means, feels that we must look among the wealthy to find people of noble ideas. For he says in "Ode to Beauty",

"Oft, in streets or humblest places,
I detect far-wandered graces,
Which from Eden wide astray,
In lowly homes have lost their way."

In "Saadi" our poet often raises humble folk to high position. It is very clear that to him people of low estate have as beautiful characteristics as those of high estate if not more lovely. The great poet, Saadi, Draws around him small and large alike.

"Gladly round that golden lamp
Sylvan deities encamp,
And simple maids and noble youth
Are welcome to the man of truth."

Again in the same poem Emerson elevates poverty when he speaks of the Dervish, one of the Mohammedan order taking vows of poverty and austerity. He is not poor as long as his mind and tongue are free to think, see, and express what he desires.

"Barefooted Dervish is not poor,
If fate unlock his bosom's door,
So that what his eye hath seen
His tongue can paint as bright, as keen;
And what his tender heart hath felt
With equal fire thy heart shall melt."

Yet again in the same poem the thought is expressed that not always will we find the greatest and the best in the castles nor on the other hand do we find that those in castles are always the best.

"Wish not to fill the isles with eyes
To fetch thee birds of paradise:
On thine orchard's edge belong
All the brags of plume and song;
Wise Ali's sunbright sayings pass
For proverbs in the market-place;
Through mountains bored by regal art,
Toil whistles as he drives his cart."

The simple things which are right at hand grow to magnificent heights if we will give attention to them and not always hunt far afield for good things.

"While thou sittest at thy door
On the desert's yellow floor,
Listening to the gray-haired crones,
Foolish gossips, ancient drones,
Saadi, see! they rise in stature
To the height of mighty nature."

F. Interest in what is rare and distant - escape from city and parks

The city and all it stands for - great buildings, hotels, offices - was scorned by Emerson even though he recognized the fact that sometimes really live human beings were entombed there. "The World-Soul" points out that destiny will seek out the person in factory pent. The city harbors vice and folly from which the inhabitants cannot escape unless they recognize:

"There in the parlor sits
Some figure of noble guise,-
Our angel, in a stranger's form,
Or woman's pleading eyes;
Or only a flashing sunbeam
In at the window pane;
Or Music pours on mortals
Its beautiful disdain.

The inevitable morning
Finds them who in cellars be;
And be sure the all-loving Nature
Will smile in a factory.
Yon ridge of purple landscape
Yon sky between the walls,
Hold all the hidden wonders
In scanty intervals."

Our only salvation is to find pure nature even if it is only a little patch of sky. We must escape from the net which the city spreads over all. There is always joy and love if we can see the life in nature below the snow.

"Love wakes anew the throbbing heart,
And we are never old.
Over the winter glaciers
I see the summer glow,
And through the wild-piled snowdrift,
The warm rosebuds below."

Although "My Garden" is a poem largely of personal experience in which Emerson attempts to interest others in nature, yet the first stanza is an appeal for the country rather than the city.

"If I could put my words in song
And tell what's there enjoyed,
All men would to my gardens throng,
And leave the cities void."

In "Good-bye" the poet's one desire seems to be to escape from the world with all its artificiality and pomp to a place true, sincere, wholesome, to a place where "vulgar feet have never trod a spot that is sacred to thought and God."

G. Pleasure in details rather than the general

At times Emerson takes pleasure in giving very detailed pictures of the nature he loved and described so vivdly. Such lines as these from the "Ode to Beauty" present a picture finely drawn:

"The frailest leaf, the mossy bark,
The acorn's cup, the raindrop's arc
The swinging spider's silver line,
The ruby of the drop of wine,
The shining pebble of the pond,
Thou inscribest with a bond,
In thy momentary play,
Would bankrupt nature to repay."

In "The Rhodora" Emerson paints in detail a picture of that insignificant flower.

"I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and sluggish brook.
The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Make the black water with their beauty gay;"

The poet treats Nature in a very simple way yet places this tiny flower on a level with himself:

"Why thou wert there ----- I never thought to ask ------- I suppose the self-same power that brought me there brought you."

In various passages in "Saadi" we find detailed description of nature.

"Yet before the listener's eye
Swims the world in ecstasy,
The forest waves, the morning breaks,
The pastures deep, ripple the lakes,
Leaves twinkle, flowers like persons be,
And life pulsates in rock or tree."

In "Good-bye" we find detailed description of the final resting place to which Emerson hopes to go.

"I am going to my own hearthstone,
Bosomed in yon green hills alone,-
A secret nook in a pleasant land
Where groves the frolic fairies planned;
Where arches green, the livelong day,
Echo the blackbirds roundelay."

In very exact language he describes the spring of New England in the poem "To Ellen". He bids her come to the North where everything is budding and singing "a tune worth the knowing."

H. Tendency to abstract thinking

In the poem "The Sphinx" Emerson is seeking the solution to life. The Sphinx, although not quite certain of the secret which he has kept through the ages feels that animals and nature are happy throughout life being "stirred by one deity" but man "jealous glancing around, he poisons the ground". The poet gives reply that it is because man seeks the perfect which his soul sees but for which his eyes seek in vain. The Sphinx retorts:

"So take thy quest in nature,
It through thousand natures ply.
---
Uprose the merry Sphinx,
And crouched no more in stone;
She melted into purple cloud,
She silvered in the moon;
She flowered in blossoms red;
She flowed into a foaming wave;
She stood Monadnoc's head."

Abstractedly Emerson is searching and striving for the eternal answer and like the Romanticist seems to look about him and discover the beauty and life in every blossom, wave, and cloud. There is no absolute answer because even the Sphinx is baffled:

"Who telleth one of my meanings,
Is master of all I am."

In tribute to the mighty mountain "Monadnoc" Emerson says:

> "Mute orator! well skilled to plead,
> And send conviction without phrase,
> Thou dost succor and remede
> The shortness of our days."

"O watchman tall" he speaks. The great mountain stands above watching, thinking, calling. We are hunting throughout life for good, and even though it eludes us the mountain is always there strong and firm.

"Hamatreya" shows the possessive instinct of man, pictures a man's pride in the acreage he owns, which, according to law forever passes as a heritage to his children. But the earth speaks to say that quite the opposite situation is true. She rather owns man. Eventually he returns to his own ground and becomes a part of it.

In "Guy" Emerson mentions the mythological character Polycrates but it is not for that which I notice the poem or for his references to Nature or for his detailed account of how the good things of life fall into the lap of Guy. The thought of the poem seems rather to be of a brooding, melancholy note in which he seems to be jealous of Guy because he receives material blessings with apparently little effort while others labor and are rewarded by poor crops.

> "Belonged to wind and world the toil
> And venture, and to Guy the oil."

In "Forerunners" he expresses his contentment to follow an ideal although he may never quite attain it. It portrays a joyous pursuit of unattainable beauty and though disappointed that he doesn't reach it, he always feels that it is not far distant. He pictures the camp kept by the "happy guides" of the ideal as ever before him:

"I tuneful voices overhear;
It may be in wood or waste,-
---
Their near camp my spirit knows
By signs gracious as rainbows."

Emerson's philsophy that good and evil alike lead to the final end, Good, is shown in "The Park."

"Night or Day, that Love or Crime,
Leads all souls to the Good."

In "Fate" Emerson is contemplating the essential for wisdom and beauty. There must be even in the wisest a certain spontaneous and untaught skill; in the most beautiful there must be a fire of inward and unsought loveliness.

Considering the factor in life which influences people to the greatest extent, Emerson in the poem, "Tact", very aptly points out that tact, finesse, address is the quality by which we may gain our end most effectively.

"The only credentials,
Passport to success;
Opens castle and parlor,-
Address, man, Address."

Xenophanes, a Greek philosopher and founder of the Eleatic School of thought whose chief doctrine was that the One or Absolute is alone real, evidently was the inspiration for Emerson's poem by that name. In that poem the thought is advanced that "all things are of one pattern made." We may seem to be considering things of an entirely different sort but in the last analysis they are actually one.

In "Terminus" Emerson expresses the confidence that the end of life makes worthwhile all the hardships that have been undergone before. He does not bewail the fact of growing old but rather thinks ahead to the new experience.

> "'Lowly faithful, banish fear,
> Right onward drive unharmed;
> The port, well worth the cruise, is near,
> And every wave is charmed.'"

Emerson, encouraged by his aunt, believed very strongly in isolation and independence of ideas. He thought that one should not follow another person blindly and this conception is told in the philosophical poem, "Etienne De La Boece".

> "I serve you not, if you I follow,
> Shadowlike, o'er hill and hollow;"

I. Skepticism of theology

Our great American poet spoke frankly and honestly day by day. "The Problem" shows us the admiration he

felt for the bishop, for cathedrals, for formalized religion and creeds

"And yet, for all his faith could see,
I would not the good bishop be."

The magnificent temples have been built for a truly holy purpose and Nature has given them room and adopted them but even if

"These temples grew as grows the grass;
Art might obey, but not surpass."

Man cannot build as well as nature. The theologian is dear to Emerson because he recognizes the good that that holy man does.

"His words are music in my ear;
I see his cowled portrait dear."

Emerson must still procure his inspiration from its natural source.

In "Sursum Corda", which translated means "Hearts on High", Emerson seems to attribute to Heaven the power of dealing absolutely with us humans. It only and nothing else can fully control life and death.

"Already Heaven with thee its lot has cast,
For only it can absolutely deal."

J. Idealism in Nature

To Emerson Nature was the supreme power in the universe, was in and over all things and all people. Then as the utmost tribute to Nature, Emerson makes of her a teacher. Because Emerson was preeminently a man

of nature and because nature was such an important factor in the poetry of the English Romantics, this last topic is the most extensive and probably the most essential of the ten characteristics.

In "Good-bye" Emerson pictured the world to come as a beautiful outdoor sanctuary such as his precious Lake Walden region was to him. At no time was he so happy as when he was strolling in the woods allowing the birds and trees to teach him. So he says:

> "I am going to my own hearth-stone,
> Bosomed in yon green hills alone,-
> A secret nook in a pleasant land,
> Whose groves the frolic fairies planned;
> Echo the blackbird's roundelay,
> And vulgar feet have never trod
> A spot that is sacred to thought and God."

Learning, pride, and schools! What are they in comparison with a beautiful woodsy place where communion with God is possible?

> "And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
> Where the evening star so holy shines,
> I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,
> At sophist schools and the learned clan,
> For what are they all, in their high conceit,
> When man in the bush with God may meet?"

"The Rhodora" is certainly an exquisite little bit of poetry. It pictures nature beautifully as a Romantic writer might have done. The scene is simply the delightful sight of a flower by a pool with its bright petals fallen on the surface of the water. Why the flower is there or where it came from we need not know. Sufficient

is it that we see it there to brighten the view. This tiny insignificant flower, because it is a part of nature, is as important and has as great a place in the world as the most beautiful cultivated rose. Emerson raises the unassuming Rhodora to such heights even as Wordsworth does the modest violet.

"In may, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook
The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew;
But in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me there brought you."

Emerson raises to a superhuman height of intelligence the bee in "Humble-Bee". This "zigzag steerer, desert cheerer" sees only the good in life, tastes only of "violets, and bilberry bells, maple-sap and daffodils". Then when the cold comes, he, insect, is sound asleep.

"Woodnotes" Section I is the greatest tribute to Nature. If it were possible I should like to quote it entirely because he tells the story of a man so closely associated with Nature that the mountains, the birds

taught him their secrets. In this poem Emerson makes nature the all-important thing. The man in the poem prizes knowledge of nature which seems fantastic to others. Like Wordsworth Emerson speaks of the person who loves nature for herself not for what she may yield.

> "He goes to the river-side,-
> Not hook nor line hath he;
> He stands in the meadows wide,-
> Nor gun nor scythe to see."

Then the poet points out the close association which the man enjoyed with nature.

> "He saw the partridge drum in the woods;
> He heard the wood cock's evening hymn;
> He found the tawny thrushes' broods;
> And the shy hawk did wait for him;
> What others did at distance hear,
> And guessed within the thicket's gloom,
> Was shown to this philosopher,
> And at his bidding seemed to come.
> ---
> Through these green tents, by eldest Nature dressed
> He roamed, content alike with man and beast,
> ---
> For Nature ever faithful is
> To such as trust her faithfulness."

It seems as if Wordsworth himself were speaking in this poem. I wonder if Emerson is referring to Thoreau who certainly understood the wild woodland life and seemed to be part of it. The frank expression of Nature shows a romantic tendency.

In "Forbearance" we read of the highest appreciation of nature; namely, the ability to love and cherish it without the desire to possess it. The greatest virtue

is to love the flower without plucking it, to enjoy the birds without shooting them, to admire high behavior without commenting on it.

All nature "repeats one note" we are taught in "Xenophanes".

Although:

> "One scent to hyson and to wallflower,
> One sound to pine groves and to waterfall,
> One aspect to the desert and the lake.

Still:

> All things are of but one pattern made."

In "Blight" Emerson bemoans the attitude in which men go to the woods to gather herbs. These folk know them only by their Latin names which give pluckers no sense of romance. With true affection he says;

> "These young scholars who invade our hills.
> ---
> Love not the flower they pluck, and know it not."

That one word "invade" certainly is significant of his close association with and love for nature. Nature is alive with spirit but the scientist does not realize it. Again we recall Wordsworth's contempt for the person who was eternally botanizing and not really enjoying or understanding nature.

No poem has expressed such complete contentment and such close companionship with nature as "Musketaquid". Emerson feels that because he was content with the poor fields, nature has richly rewarded him by teaching him

secrets and showing him haunts that otherwise he never could have enjoyed. Other folk like nature for what they can get from her;

> "They harness beast, bird, insect, to their work."

Not so, Emerson:

> "found I true liberty
> In the glad home plain - dealing Nature gave.
> ---
> I am a willow of the wilderness
> Loving the wind that bent me. All my hurts
> My garden spade can heal. A woodland walk,
> A quest of river grapes, a mocking thrush,
> A wild-rose, or rack-loving columbine,
> Salve my worst wounds."

I think I have never read a poem which paid such a high and sincere and tribute to nature as "May-Day". Emerson seems unable to say enough or to speak extravagant enough praise of nature. In May when the birds are returning from the South, the poplars are budding, the tulips are blooming, then Walden is a heavenly place and all the world is Nature conscious. How any person could express with greater conviction a "Back to nature" philosophy, I do not know. Nature is more powerful than an army! It can accomplish where all else fails.

> "Not for a regiment's parade,
> Nor evil laws or rulers made,
> Blue Walden rolls its cannonade,
> But for a lofty sign
> Which the zodiac threw,
> That the bondage days are told,
> And waters free as winds shall flow.
> ---
> The dead log touched bursts into leaf,
> The wheat-blade whispers of the sheaf.

What god is this imperial Heat?
---
Doth it bear hidden in its heart
Water-line patterns of all art,"

In "The Adirondacs" Emerson shows that in actual experience he enjoyed nature. His plea for the joys of nature was not entirely a theoretical thing, but he really derived the keenest pleasure from the out-of-doors. He describes in blank verse a trip of ten scholars with ten guides.

"Ten scholars, wonted to lie warm and soft
In well-hung chambers daintily bestowed,
Lie here on hemlock-boughs, like Sacs and Sioux,
And greet unanimous the joyful change.
So fast will Nature acclimate her sons,
---
Look to yourselves, ye polished gentlemen!
No city airs or arts pass current here.
Your rank is all reversed; let men of cloth
Bow to the stalwart churls in overalls:
They are the doctors of the wilderness,
And we the low-prized laymen."

After describing then how simply and lazily each day was spent, he pictures the summit of the day.

"And, that no day of life may lack romance,
The spiritual stars rise nightly, shedding down
A private beam in each several heart."

In "Hermione" Emerson raised nature to great heights. In her (nature) he sees the embodiment of Hermione. He needs no picture, no lock of hair because the mountains and misty plains reflect her personality. Once he lived apart, now, taught by Hermione he lives one of the whole; his heart has been unlocked and highways built through. Every twilight nook, forest way, water-

course shows her form.

"River, and rose, and crag, and bird,
Frost, and sun, and eldest night,
To me their aid preferred,
To me their comfort plight;-"

Nature has come to his rescue to replace Hermione.

To Emerson "Monadnoc" stands as a teacher to all those who climb its heights:

"Let him heed who can and will,
Enchantment fixed me here
To stand the hurts of time
---
And, credulous, through the granite seeming,
Seest the smile of Reason beaming;-"

Folk climb from the lowlands to the highlands for vision and blessing. It is the contact with nature which will inspire man and enrich his life.

## V. VERSE FORMS OF EMERSON

### A. Rhymed Couplets

In the type of subject matter used and in the details of his poems, I have pointed out that Emerson followed a romantic trend. Considering now the mechanical technique used in handling the subject, we notice that the heroic couplet of classic days has been discarded for a very free use of rhyme and meter.

Emerson wrote for the greatest part in rhymed couplets employing four feet to a line. It is almost impossible to find a poem which consistently throughout adheres to iambic tetrameter or trochaic tetrameter. Nor could I in most poems discover that one rhythm was maintained for a definite number of lines in each stanza then changed to another. The system of meter seems quite haphazard and inspirational. "The Problem" is an example of iambic tetrameter in rhymed couplets which is absolutely perfect and regular even exhibiting none of the atrocities of rhyme which now and again are discovered in Emerson's poetry. "The Visit" is an almost consistent poem in the trochaic tetrameter meter. The following poems also show regular trochaic tetrameter characteristics; "Mithradates", "The Humble-Bee", "Astraea", "Etienne de la Boece", "The Apology" (with exceptions). "Loss and Gain" has an interesting arrangement consisting of four lines of which the first and third contain three feet (trimeter) and the second

and fourth, four feet; all are usually trochaic. Uses of straight iambic tetrameter is found in; "Good-bye", "To Eva", "The Hymn", (given at Concord) and "Threnody". The same scheme of varying the length of the lines in four lined stanzas is noticed in iambic in the following poems; "Merops", "The House", and "The Dirge".

The short poem "Suum Cuique" consisting of only six lines follows a very regular arrangement. The first two lines iambic tetrameter, the next line iambic trimeter, then the next three lines repeat the first three. The rhyme scheme is likewise systematic; a a b c c b.

"The rain has spoiled the farmer's day;
Shall sorrow put my books away?
Thereby are two days lost:
Nature shall mind her own affairs
I will tend my proper cares,
In rain, or sun, or frost."

"Compensation" in two four lined stanzas of iambic alternates lines of tetrameter and trimeter length with rhyme order although methodical still taking poetic license in such uses as; "none" rhyming with "alone", "tongues" with "throngs".

Throughout Emerson's poems we come across several examples of forced rhymes. In "Forerunners" there are two in the coupling of "smokes" and "loch", in "waste" and "past". In the very familiar poem "Concord Hymn" the first and third line ending, "flood" and "stood". In "Saadi" there are three rather marked examples of

false rhyming in "most" and "exhaust", "wit" and "appetite", "eat" and "sweat". In "Etienne de la Boece" we are forced to pronounce "treading" with a long "e" sound to rhyme it with "leading". There are two others that are quite strained in "Astraea"; "form" and "worm" are intended for a rhyming couplet, also "flowed" and "abroad" from "Monadnoc". Many more could be found but after all what matters a few mismated rhymes among so many that work out so well. It seems to me disrespectful and irreverent to pick to pieces and pull apart these almost sacred poems.

The long poem "Woodnotes" is made up metrically of many smaller poems. The second stanza is a regular iambic tetrameter unit, followed by iambic pentameter in the third, then in the fourth back to iambic tetrameter. Part II is less systematic and makes very sudden changes from one type of verse to another. After many lines of iambic tetrameter right in the middle of a stanza a sudden shift is made to trochaic:

"My branches speak Italian,
English, German, Basque, Castilian,"

There are two poems of the anapestic tetrameter meter dividing one line into two lines. These are "Ode to Beauty" and "Tact". The first of these does not, however, cling constantly to that arrangement but employs a number of other types as well.

6

B. Blank Verse

Now in turning to blank verse we observe rather more of a list than might be expected in the works of a poet with the free tendencies which Emerson showed in his attitude to philosophy and consistencies. The poems belonging to this group are; "Hamatreya", "The Snow-Storm", "Forbearance", "Xenophanes", "A Day's Ration", "Blight", and "Musketaquid".

C. Free Verse

Then as forerunners of the modern wild, carefree, and form-free type of poetry there are certain poems which might be identified as free verse. I list here four; "Earth-Song", "Fable", "Give All to Love", and "Bacchus". These four are all unrhymed and so irregular as to meter and length of line that any regular scansion would be utterly impossible. This does not, of course, mean that they are bad poetry because quite the opposite is true. If we limit our conception of poetry to the definition, *"Poetry is the expression of beautiful thought in metrical or rhythmical language," there would be left little of today's works to come under the heading of poetry.

* Authorized Rules and Outlines for use in Senior High School, Somerville, Massachusetts, page 12

## VI. ESTIMATE OF EMERSON AS A POET

### A. By critics of his own day

The comments of Emerson's contemporaries idealize him completely, as a personality. His appearance was that of a scholar, tall, thin, sallow, and stooped. His gentle, melodious voice is commented upon universally as containing a peculiar resonance which gave spirit and life to its tones. His lectures were rambling and disorganized but always a joy to any audience. A lawyer remarked that he couldn't understand his lecture but that was to be expected. Emerson to his contemporaries seemed to speak as with an inner light, which although not wholly understood was, at the same time, appreciated. He was looked upon as one of the outstanding personalities of the times. An individualist, a lecturer of fascinating power.

As a poet, however, criticisms vary from the most adverse to those exalting him as the preeminent American poet of all times. James Russell Lowell acknowledges the mystic quality of Emerson but denies him as a poet:

*"As for Emerson's verse (though he has written some as exquisite as any in the language) I suppose we must give it up. That he had a sense of the higher harmonies no one that ever heard him lecture can doubt.

* The Library of Literary Criticism; C. W. Moulton, page 356
Lowell, James Russell, 1883, to James B. Thayer, Dec. 24
letters ed. Norton vol. II page 275

The structure of his prose, as one listened to it, was as nobly metrical as the King James version of the Old Testament, and this made it all the more puzzling that he should have been absolutely insensitive to the harmony of verse. For it was there he failed - single verses are musical enough. I never shall forget the good humoredly puzzled smile with which he once confessed to me his inability to apprehend the value of accent in verse."

Written in the same vein is a quotation of William Trent:

*"The fact that save for a few perfect pieces, such as the clear-cut 'Rhodora' and the impressive 'Days', and a slightly larger number of passages, stanzas, and lines, Emerson as a poet has not made his way with the English speaking people outside Northern and Western States, lends great support to the arguments of his unenthusiastic critics. It can scarcely be denied, furthermore, that poems like 'The Daemon in Love' deal with subjects unfitted for concrete treatment, that true poetic glow and flow are almost entirely absent from Emerson's verses, and that his ever recurring, and often faulty octosyllabic couplets become wearisome. That he is at once irritatingly obscure or else uncomfortably profound, that he is given to diffuseness, that he is rarely capable of sustaining himself at

* The Library of Literary Criticism; C. W. Moulton, page 360
Trent, William P., 1903, History of American Literature, page 331

a high level of execution, can almost be demonstrated. Worse still, he is prone to bathos, to lapses of taste."

Matthew Arnold expresses the same opinion:

*"One of the legitimate poets, Emerson in my opinion, is not. His poetry is interesting, it makes one think, but it is not the poetry of one of the born poets. ------- In general it lacks directness; it lacks completeness; it lacks energy ---------- A poem which shall be a plain, forcible, inevitable whole he hardly ever produces. Such good work as the noble lines graven on the Concord Monument is the exception with him; such ineffective work as the 'Fourth of July Ode' or the 'Boston Hymn' is the rule. Even passages and single lines of thorough plainness and commanding force are rare in his poetry. They exist, of course, but when we meet with them, they give us a sense of surprise so little has Emerson accustomed us to them."

Then in contrast to these opinions there are many more people who feel that whatever defects may be found in the rhyme and rhythm of Emerson's poetry, his deep understanding and appreciation of nature, the mystic quality of his lines, and the daring to use the word he wishes regardless of meter more than overbalance his deficiency in poetic technique. Charles Hubner has expressed it very tersely and concretely:

* The Library of Literary Criticism; C. W. Moulton, page 357
Arnold, Matthew, 1884, Emerson, Macmillan's Magazine vol. 50, pages 3 & 4

*"Although the range of Emerson's poetry is narrow, it is deep and suffused with pure light of imagination, and dominated by the supreme ideality of a philosophic mind. Its keynote is Beauty. What it lacks in mere technical excellence, what occasional flaws there may be, showing the absence of the subtle touches of the master verse-builder, in rhythm, and meter, are compensated for by the depth of insight, by the soul and heart uplifting power of inspiration, which characterize his best poems, and by the profound truths which shine like virgin gold in his virile lines are felt by the student, and cultured reader of Emerson's poems - by everyone who allows himself to be touched and purified by the Ithuriel spear of this rare poet."

Although Julian Hawthorne claims that Ralph Waldo's poetry is of the very highest order, he does admit that the reading of it requires thought, study, and understanding.

Essentially the same opinion is reiterated by Alfred Guernsey:

**"Here we conclude what we had to say by way of setting forth and elucidating Emerson's right to be ranked among the true poets of this country, of this age, and of

The Library of Literary Criticism; C. W. Moulton, pages 360 & 355
* Hubner, Charles W., 1903, Emerson the Poet, The Book-lover, vol. 4, page 107
** Guernsey, Alfred H., 1881, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Philosopher and Poet, page 327

many ages to come. We think it indisputable. Most likely his audience at any time will be comparatively small. In a single half generation the platitudes of a Tupper found more admirers than Emerson will have found for ages. But be his auditors many or few, they will surely be 'fit'. If voters were to be weighed, not counted, his would be a heavy vote. And, in the long result, it will be weight not numbers which will decide the final issue."

William Leonard Courtney has identified very directly and definitely the difference in attitude between the two extremes in attitude toward Emereson's work. *"Emerson's poetry will be interpreted differently according to the estimation held of the value of form in poetical composition." That is exactly the distinction. To those who believe traditional forms are a necessary part of a poem, Emerson cannot answer the requisites for a poet. To others who allow the spirit of the work to determine whether it may be kept in the ranks of poetry or not, Emerson stands preeminently at the peak as a poet.

Just two more quotations to show in what high esteem he was held by some of his contemporaries. George Wills Cooke says: **"Such a volume, however, could not soon grow into popular favor, and perhaps never have more

The Library of Literary Criticism; C. W. Moulton, pages 355 & 357
* Courtney, William Leonard, 1885, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Fortnightly Review, Vol., 44, page 329
** Cooke, George Willis 1881, Ralph Waldo Emerson, His Life, Writings, and Philosophy, page 114

than a limited circle of admirers. It is a book for poets and thinkers more than for the people; yet some of these poems will ever remain the admiration of all lovers of nature and of moral inspiration."

Finally a word from Walt Whitman:

*"Emerson, to me, stands unmistakably at the head (of Longfellow, Bryant, and Whittier) --------Emerson for his sweet, vital-tasting melody, rhym'd philosophy, and poems as amber-clear as the honey of the wild bee he loves to sing."

B. By Recent Standards

The same discriminating thought about the poetry of Emerson is noticed among recent critics as was observed in the case of the writers of Emerson's own time. **"His is the only great mind that America has produced in literature. --------One has often in reading him that feeling of eternity in the thought which is the sign of royal greatness. It is in his poems that I feel it most, and find there the flower of his mind." ***"He was not a great writer in the sense which Bacon, Montaigne, or Pascal are great writers; but he was a writer with greatness of mind, just as he was not a great poet, but a poet with greatness of imagination." George E. Woodberry says again that

* The Library of Literary Criticism; C. W. Moulton, page 355
Whitman, Walt, 1881, Autobiographia, Apr. 16, page 184
** Ralph Waldo Emerson; G. E. Woodberry, page 176
*** " " " " " " , page 186

Emerson was fundamentally a poet with a faulty technique in poetic expression.

O. W. Firkins has essentially the same idea in this statement: *"Few people would contradict us if we affirmed that for minds in whom the instinct of sequence preponderates over the feeling for poetry, Emerson cannot perform the service of a high poet; while contrariwise he can do the work of a high poet for minds in whom the poetic receptiveness is strong and the instinct for sequence merely normal or subnormal."

Matthew Arnold, Henry James, Mr. Morley all affirm as does every critic I have read that Emerson's poems lack construction. This fact Emerson well knew as is shown by this section in a letter to Carlyle: "In a fortnight or three weeks my little raft will be afloat. Expect nothing more of my powers of construction, no shipbuilding, no clipper, no smack nor skiff even, only boards and logs tied together."

Elizabeth Luther Carey makes a powerful appeal for the poetry of Emerson: **"Whatever my be said of his prose there is one thing that must be said by all men of his poetry, that it is the expression of a poet. We may search for lines that do not scan, for endings, that do not rhyme, for a metre that does not flow or march or sing

* Ralph Waldo Emerson; O. W. Firkins, page 296
**Emerson - Poet and Thinker; Elizabeth Luther Carey, page 205

for dialect and colloquialism, intricacy of diction, and grammatical inversion. We may find any or all of these and we shall not have disturbed by a hair's breadth our inner knowledge that we have been picking and quibbling over the loveliest product of our national life. --------
His poetry, however, is not popular poetry. Every poem is charged with thought and thinking is not popular. Every poem is an example of Emerson's own theory that poetry is 'the perpetual endeavour to express the spirit of the thing' and it is the presence of the spirit penetrating and informing the thought that makes Emerson's poetry permanently buoyant. The intellectual element strong as it is in it is borne upward in the flight of powerful sentiment."

Van Wyck Brooks echoes the same feeling about Emerson. *"In his verse he avoided conventional form, drawn from English poetry, which all the other American poets accepted; the sonnet, the romantic tale, the song. He liked to write gnomic lines, epigrams, and rules of life, conveyed in a lively image after the Greek or Persian fashion, sometimes contained in a single stanza." In rather a cold impersonal way Brooks criticizes Emerson with a clear-cut delineation. "He toiled endlessly over his verses, and in fact, he had developed a style of his own, as marked in his poems, as in his essays, a lean, spare,

* The Flowering of New England; Van Wyck Brooks, page 205

quick, intellectual style that could only have emerged, one felt, from Concord. In his more flaccid verses, one caught here and there glints of Shakespeare, Collins, Gray, and Wordsworth; but the Emersonian style at its best had none of the derivative Cambridge note, nor any of the smooth and facile charm of most of the other American writers. In his preference of the 'latent' to the 'patent' as a protest against the sort of jingles one'put round frosted cake', as he said, Emerson sometimes purposely roughened his verses, throwing in a dissonance or an ill-matched rhyme. Anything rather than rhetoric for himself."

To Bliss Perry Emerson shows himself as a poet with an ethical appeal yet also as a poet capable of writing purely objective poems about Nature as well as poetic meditations concerning his experiences out-of-doors. Mr. Perry says, *"That exquisite choice of the right word,- sometimes a surprising, daring word, which characterizes his prose style, often sparkles in his verse." On the other hand the Devil's Advocate is allowed to question thus, **"Emerson is a marvelous ejaculator of poetic phrases, no doubt, but is he a true builder of the lofty rhyme; has he the architectonic gift and training? And even as an artisan of the lesser units of verse-making, are not his

* Emerson Today; Bliss Perry, page 87
** " " " " , page 91

words frequently harsh, his stresses grotesque, his rhymes abominable? -------- In conclusion, - may it please the Court, - I like this gentleman personally, and have frequently been stimulated by his ideas, even if he does come out of a queer epoch and from a country as yet imperfectly civilized. But I can never submit to seeing him enthroned in the hierachy of the great poets, or even beatified among the poets of the second class."

Bliss Perry engages in a bit of prophecy. *"Whether the coming generation will turn to Emerson's writings primarily for their beauty or primarily for their truth, no one can say and guesses would be futile. Perhaps it makes little difference, for he seems certain, in any case, to be read. It is clear that the apparent swing in the current of scientific and philosophic thought is bringing Emerson's views afresh to the attention of the public. The drift away from positivism, from those mechanistic and deterministic theories so popular in the nineteenth century is generally admitted." Bliss Perry recognizes Emerson as sincere, as one who "is" not appears to be. **"Today we study Emerson through the printed page, and there we recognize, though perhaps not as clearly as our successors will, a literary artist, in some respects an

* Emerson Today; Bliss Perry, page 119
** " " " " , page 133

incomparable master of words. Yet behind the words - as with Francis of Assisi and Gandhi of India - there is something which eludes words and makes the printed page a mere suggestion of a spirit, an attitude, a way of envisaging life. The mere weighing of literary qualities does not touch the essence of Emerson. There is an imponderable personal force in this man, an emanation of spiritual energy."

The critics of today agree that he is a poet appealing to the intellect, one who demands a thoughtful rather then a cursory reading of his poems. While lacking in form the poems possess a charm, an attraction, and thought which overbalances and outweighs that lack of superficial form.

C. In my own opinion

Ralph Waldo Emerson had always been to me an essayist until I began to do research on his poetry. From reading, now, I feel that it is for his poetry that he will be remembered even more than because of his essays, because, as has been said, his poems express in more concrete form the thought of the essays. He thought independently and put his thoughts into words independently. What others were thinking, the forms of expression others were using influenced him not at all. Although

some of his ideas were apparently radical at the time later they appeared quite ordinary. As Edward Everett Hale said when reading forty years later the Phi Beta Kappa Oration of 1837: *"I read it then with absolute amazement. ------- For I could not find one extravagance, I could not find one word which should shock the most timid. It was impossible to understand where the craziness came in. So had he led the age in those forty years, or so had the God who sent him into the world led it, that the prophecy was fulfilled over and over again. The extravagance of one day had become the commonplace of another."

I feel quite certain Emerson's poetry could not be understood or appreciated at all without a study of his theories and ideas. One could not pick up the book and casually read a poem or two and gain any enjoyment or understanding of it. I am yet of the opinion that poetry should follow some rules of meter. It is that, to me, in which a poet is superior to a prose writer because the former must express his ideas and still keep within the bounds of certain rules and regulations. Emerson is a non-conformist in that respect. I do appreciate, however, that his poetry does exhibit a certain something which appeals. The close companionship he had with nature shows vividly in his poetry. Because Emerson knew his subject

* Ralph Waldo Emerson; Edward Everett Hale, page 39

material so well and was so fond of all of it, he instills in his reader a like enthusiasm. It would be impossible to read his works and not proceed from them with a love of his poems and a deep respect and admiration for Ralph Waldo Emerson as a man.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Daring as the statement may be I say, now after studying the life of Emerson and reading his poetry, that he had very definite Romantic tendencies. At an early age his attitude toward the ministry and its traditional habits exemplified his desire to break away from any bond that would make it imperative that he always do a certain thing each week at the same time. He would not say that he would offer prayer at a set point in the church ritual each Sunday. He would pray when he received the inspiration and then only. Here is the freedom of the English Romanticists.

His poetry as has been demonstrated follows the themes upon which the poets of the romantic era were pleased to write. Nature was to Emerson the supreme force in the Universe. Through and in it God spoke to him. He loved poetry and his soul was that of a true poet but not of one who would submit to the convention of meter. No person or custom could tell him that one subject should be expressed in blank verse while another in trochaic tetrameter if he wished to use the reverse. If, on the other hand, he desired to intermingle the types indiscriminately he felt it his privilege and exercised that right.

In the following passage by Van Wyck Brooks we can sense a romantic spirit and feel that Emerson possessed the heart of a Romanticist.

*"On evenings when the moon shone, the thrifty Concord folk turned out the street-lamps. Emerson did not need even the moon; he could see well enough in the dark. He saw honour in scamps and justice in thieves. He could see energy in beggars and elegance of manners in a peasant. He could see benevolence in misers and grandeur in porters and sweeps. Why this was, he could never have told; for he who had leisure for everything else had no time for introspection. None of his moments ever seemed empty in which he had given heed to some natural object, a gentian, a wild-apple tree with fruit that hung like berries, a thorn-bush with its red fruit, the musical, streaming south wind that turned all the trees into wind-harps, the fall of snow flakes in the still air, the blowing of sleet over a sheet of water."

**"He loved rhyme and return, period and musical reflection, rhyme that suggested not restraint but rather the wildest freedom. At Walden, on a winter day, he would stand on the edge of the pond and throw stones across the frozen surface. It charmed his ear as the stones fell and fell again on this crystal drum, repeating the note with just the right modulation. The rhyming and the chiming of this ice-harp filled him with exaltation. Well he could understand why poetry had been called the gaie science, why soldiers fought better for the drum and trumpet, why

* The Flowering of New England; Van Wyck Brooks, page 259
** " " " " " " " " , page 261

sailors worked better for their yo-heave-ho. He could understand the building power of music as the ancient myths described it. He could feel how the walls of Thebes had risen to the music of Amphion's harp. The excitement which the Persian bards produced exceeded that of the grape: they had driven warriors to combat, like Taileffer, who rode out at 'Hastings, singing Chanson de Roland, challenging the Saxons'. The poet set the intellectual world to action, awakened people from weariness and gave new life and hope."

The ten characteristics which are found exemplified in the poems of Emerson ally him with the Romantic Movement. While not an adherent of any one school of thought because he wished to be independent of all chains that might bind him fast he did display the same independence of thinking, a like freedom in verse expression, and a similar radical attitude toward organized religion which was demonstrated by the English Romanticists. The characteristics considered in Chapter IV and of which we have found so many examples from Emerson's poems are typical of Romantic poems. George Edward Woodberry has said, *"Emerson exhibited that trait of romanticism which sought out the primitive and the distant and brought into repute the early monuments of the Norse and Oriental novelties;

* Ralph Waldo Emerson; G. E. Woodberry, page 187

he read with delight Anglo-Saxon and early English verse, and German translations of Persian poets."

VIII. SUMMARY

1. This first section dealt with the life of Ralph Waldo Emerson showing how he gradually developed his individualistic ideas even though he seemed destined to be an ordinary minister and strangely enough even wanted to be at first. The urge for independent expression, however, became too strong and he was compelled to turn aside from the path of the five men of his family bearing the name of Emerson.

2. In Chapter II I showed what romanticism was by contrasting it with classicism. I pointed out how the transcendentalism of New England followed, in spirit, the romanticism of England as a background and preparation for the romantic concepts of Chapter IV.

3. In this part I divided the poems of Emerson into five main sections: Nature, Problem, Mythological, Personal, and those having Persian influence.

4. Ten romantic characteristic concepts shown in Emerson's poetry were listed. Passages from his poems were noted and commented upon as exhibiting one or many of these characteristics. This list in substance was taken from a list of romantic traits and therefore this section bears the burden of proof of the thesis.

5. In this part Emerson's poetry was discussed from a technical point of view. I could place the poems in

three divisions: rhymed couplets, blank verse, and free verse (not used in the present-day technical sense).

6. The poetry of Emerson was evaluated through the eyes of critics of his own time, of present day critics, and of the writer and found to be that of poet in spirit but lacking in the outward form of expression.

7. The conclusion drawn was that Emerson could be allied with the Romantic of England. His attitude toward freedom and subjects used in his poetry substantiate this statement.

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This discussed the various points of view in the philosophy of the American poet.

Dall, Caroline H.
Transcendentalism in New England, A Lecture Delivered before the Society for Philosophical Enquiry, Washington, D. C., May 7, 1895
Boston, Mass., Sold by Roberts Brothers
1897
This delightful book showed an intimate association with proponents of transcendentalism and a keen understanding of the movement.

Emerson, Edward Waldo
Emerson in Concord
Houghton, Mifflin, Co.

Riverside Press, Cambridge
1889
This book makes the reader feel on intimate terms with Emerson.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo
The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson
Essays - First Series
Essays - Second Series
Poems

Firkins, O. W.
Ralph Waldo Emerson
Houghton Mifflin Company
Riverside Press, Cambridge
1915
pp. 1-115, 274-297
Here the author ventures to give his opinion as to the particular niche each of his friends filled in the life of Emerson.

Foerster, Norman
American Criticism
Boston and New York
Houghton, Mifflin, Co.

Riverside Press Cambridge
1928
In a very learned way the philosophy of Emerson is discussed. Norman Foerster constantly reminds us of the connection Emerson showed with romanticism.

Frothingham, Octavius Brooks
Transcendentalism in New England, A History
New York
G. P. Putnam's Sons
1876
This book presents a thorough study of transcendentalism.

Fry, Prosser Hall
Romance and Tragedy
Boston
Marshall Jones Company, MDCCCCXXII
This book made its contribution toward defining classic and romantic.

Gay, Robert M.
Ralph Waldo Emerson - A Study of the Poet as Seer
Garden City, New York
Doubleday, Doran, & Co., Inc.
1928

The facts of the life of Emerson were treated as secondary material in this book. The biography created an atmosphere for understanding Emerson as a living person.

Gray, Henry David

Emerson - A Statement of New England Transcendentalism As Expressed in the Philosophy of Its Chief Exponent

Stanford University

1917

This gave a concise summary of the movement.

Grierson, H. J. C., LL. D., Litt. D.

Classical and Romantic, Leslie Stephen Lecture

University of Edinburgh, Cambridge

At the University Press

1923

This gave a helpful distinction between the terms classical and romantic.

Hale, Edward Everett

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Boston

Brown and Company

1899

This book shows the attitude of one of Emerson's contemporaries toward his work.

Hancock, Albert Elmer, Ph. D. (Harvard)
The French Revolution and The English Poets
New York
Henry Holt and Company
1899

This book showed the direct influence of the French revolt on the Romantic movement giving in a very definite way the philosophical contribution of Rousseau to the Revolution.

Heine, Heinrich
The Romantic School
Translated by S. L. Fleishman
New York
Henry Holt and Company
1882

This was not useful in composing the thesis because it carried through various tendencies in many schools of German literature.

Herford, C. H., B. A.
The Essential Characteristics of the Romantic and Classical Styles

Deighton, Bell and Co.
London: George Bell and Sons
1880

Although not as complete, this book followed the lines of "Rousseau and Romanticism" and clarified many aspects.

Jack, Adolphus Alfred
Poetry and Prose being Essays on Modern English Poetry
London
Constable and Company Ltd.
1911
pp. 146-177

Mr. Jack points out that Emerson was constantly trying to make poetry out of intellectual matter.

Lawton, William Cranston
Study of American Literature
Globe School Book Company
New York and Chicago
1902
pp. 122-150

This reading merely emphasized the views about Emerson held by other writers.

McClintock, William Darnall

Some Paradoxes of the English Romantic Movement

DeCennial Publications of University of Chicago

First Series VII

This essay contributed a concise list of characteristics of English Romanticism.

Moulton, Charles Wells, Editor

The Library of Literary Criticism, Vol VII

English and American Authors

Moulton Publishing Company

Buffalo, New York

1904

This book contains short quotations by many prominent people about authors. A number of pages are devoted to Emerson.

Perry, Bliss

Emerson Today

Princeton University Press

1931

The author shows a very sympathetic understanding of Emerson.

Russell, Phillips

Emerson, The Wisest American

New York

Brentano's Publishers

1929

This book was very helpful in the writing of this thesis. The facts of Emerson's life were stated in an interesting and complete way with additional comments as to the character of Emerson.

Symons, Arthur

The Romantic Movement in English Poetry

New York

E. P. Dutton and Company

The introduction in a very clear way and with a common sense point of view told the essential characteristics of the romantic movement.

Whipple, Edwin Percy

American Literature and other papers

Ticknor and Company

Boston

1887

pp. 234-298

The section concerning Emerson told the thought of the poems considered most important by the author.

Woodberry, George Edward

Ralph Waldo Emerson

New York

The Macmillan Company

London MacMillan and Co. Ltd.

1907

Chapters I, II, V, VI

This biography is concerned less with the facts of the life of Emerson and more with his philosophy.

PERIODICALS

Atlantic Monthly 1, 724 - 734

Persian Poetry by Emerson

Publications of the Modern Language Association of America

Edited by Carleton Brown

Vol XXXVII No. 1 1922

Emerson as a Poet of Nature by Norman Foerster

Atlantic, October 1930

Emerson Re-Read by James Truslow Adams