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Ralph Waldo Emerson: From Uninvolved Transcendentalism to Involved Abolitionism

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From Uninvolved Transcendentalism

to

Involved Abolitionism

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Chapter One

Critical background

“What is man born for but to be a Reformer, a Remaker of
what man has made; a renouncer of lies; a restorer of truth
and good . . .”

(“Man the Reformer”)

Many critical viewpoints, often conflicting, exist of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Transcendentalism and its effect on his commitment to the anti-slavery/abolitionist movement, the great social issue of his lifetime. Even Emerson's earliest biographers disagreed on his level of intellectual and political involvement in the abolitionist movement. Oliver Wendell Holmes's Ralph Waldo Emerson, written two years after Emerson's death in 1882, stresses Emerson's lack of involvement. Holmes says “it must be remembered that Emerson had never been identified with the abolitionist movement” (234). Although Emerson's possible abolitionism is mentioned in the book, the scant attention that Holmes gives the issue makes it clear that he considered it a minor aspect of Emerson's career.

Two other biographies written shortly after Emerson's death portray a man far more intellectually and politically involved than Holmes's Emerson: George W. Cooke's Ralph Waldo Emerson: His Life, Writings, and Philosophy (1891) and

Moncure D. Conway's Emerson at Home and Abroad (1882). Cooke states that in 1831 and 1832, Emerson allowed anti-slavery speakers to lecture at his Second Church in Boston (28). Cooke says, "Though he was not inclined to adopt the methods of the radical agitators, he could but feel they were in the right in their aims, and that they represented the highest moral sense of the community . . . slavery could only be gotten rid of by raising the moral standard" (132). Conway's praise of Emerson's anti-slavery sentiment sharply contrasts with Holmes's opinion: "Emerson was the first American scholar to cast a dart at slavery" (299) and "he gave leaders their texts and their watchwords" (309). Cooke and Conway both quote from and discuss Emerson's strongly anti-slavery "Address on the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies" (first delivered in 1844); Holmes never mentions this address.

Two biographies from the 1920s vary from one another in their treatment of Emerson's abolitionism. Robert Gay's Emerson: A Study of the Poet as Seer (1928) says Emerson's refusal to join abolitionist organizations was due to the "bigotry and bitterness of many of the abolitionists" (147). Emerson had opposed slavery his entire life, and "he stood for liberty on every public question . . . -religion, literature, education, slavery, [and] women's rights" (217). He mentions Emerson's anti-slavery addresses of 1837 and 1844 and his public praise of lynched abolitionist publisher Eijah Lovejoy. Phillips Russell portrays an Emerson less enthusiastic about abolitionism. In Emerson: The Wisest American (1929), he says "Emerson's attitude

toward the Abolition movement was not only cool, but cold” (228). He also says, however, that Samuel Hoar's unsuccessful visit to South Carolina in 1844 softened in Emerson's views toward abolitionists.

Marjorie Moody's “The Evolution of Emerson as an Abolitionist” (1945) portrays an Emerson who moved from the consideration of slavery in abstract terms while a student to fervent support of the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation in the 1860s. She cites journal evidence from as early as 1822 of Emerson's anti-slavery sentiment, but says that at this point in his life he was “more concerned with the romantic possibilities of slavery as a literary subject, or the philosophic principles upon which it could be justified or condemned, than with plans for abolition” (3). Although she says his 1844 speech on the emancipation of British slaves in the West Indies was an important and early public declaration of anti-slavery sentiment, she considers his public response to the Fugitive Slave Act his debut as an abolitionist. Moody says his reason for opposing the Act was primarily the personal discomfort it caused him. By the 1860s, however, “Emerson welcomed the Civil War as a necessity of honor, a protest against slavery, and as a moral good” (19). She says that the motives which led to these changes in his sentiments were complex, but she largely avoids speculation on why the changes occurred.

In The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1949), Ralph Rusk shows Emerson slowly but certainly gaining respect for abolitionism. He says of the young Emerson, “Waldo had long used slavery in his sermons when he needed examples of man's

inhumanity to man” (153). While Emerson “kept out of the storm center of the political debates” in the 1830s, he had “political prejudices and did some serious political thinking . . .” (204). Although Emerson at this time “generally kept clear of all kinds of extremists” and “did not think it his business to march with the legions now ready for a frontal assault on slavery” (230), by 1845, Emerson was beginning to respect the abolitionists. In 1856, he became suspicious of friends such as Oliver Wendell Holmes who were more interested in saving the Union than in ending slavery immediately (389); by 1861, he was “avowedly an abolitionist” (408).

Stephen Whicher's Freedom and Fate: An Inner Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1953) shows an intensely introverted Emerson who bid a “farewell to action” (82) after his controversial Divinity School Address of 1838¹. He explains, “In a life lived so entirely in the mind as his, every serious engagement with the outer world had serious repercussions, as he gradually assimilated the implications of the brute event into the tissue of his thought” (75). His “evangelical attitude toward social change” became more “organic and evolutionary” (131). Whicher elaborates:

Necessarily, he comes to conceive the social order, not as a God in ruins that must be rebuilt by some impossible Reformer, but as a single growing entity, in which each pulse of energy, and each following pause, are the successive stages in one evolving process (131)

Concerning freedom and fate, Whicher clearly sees Emerson surrendering to fate.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr., in a chapter on intellectual responses to Jacksonian democracy in The Age of Jackson (1945), distinguishes between what he calls pure Transcendentalism and Emerson's less extreme Transcendentalism. Pure Transcendentalists found party politics "unedifying and vulgar" (382). Schlesinger says their emphasis on achieving perfection made impossible the responsibility which came with democracy (382). Democracy requires voting on issues which may be important to others, although not to oneself, and agreeing to live with the results; they considered it impossible to achieve perfection through a system affected by so many imperfect people. Schlesinger calls Emerson "the wisest man of the day," but then he says "politics were Emerson's greatest failure" (384). He says Emerson's views on societal involvement and government hovered between those of the pure Transcendentalists, which Schlesinger calls escapism, and those of the majority of Americans who accept and deal with reality. He offers as an explanation for Emerson's political tentativeness his break with the Unitarian Church, saying that he may have thought the platforms of political parties were too much like the restrictive church policies from which he had fled (384).

Some of the sharpest criticism of Emerson and the Transcendentalists occurs in Stanley Elkins's Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life (1959). He says the government they so disdained was the same government that allowed them the right not to participate and to complain all they wanted. They were troubled by their role in institutions they disapproved of, and their extreme

abstraction about most subjects kept them from action that might change these institutions:

Not only did these men fail to analyze slavery itself as an institution, but they failed equally to consider and exploit institutional means for subverting it. The primary choice as it appeared to most of them was simply, 'Shall I oppose it, or shall I ignore it?' (168)

Elkins believes that because Emerson and many of his contemporaries chose not to join anti-slavery societies or work within their churches to stop slavery, they had no positive impact on the abolitionist movement (168).

Maurice Gonnaud's An Uneasy Solitude: Individualism and Society in the Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1964) paints an Emerson who felt forced into "militant action" (394) by the passage and enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, but who was never comfortable with the thought of activism. The magnitude of slavery was slow to hit Emerson, and it had to directly involve him before he would act (394). Gonnaud says:

Even when Emerson engaged in political struggle with characteristic passion, his journals and letters reveal the distrust tinged with irritation that forms of the collective action continued to evoke in him even when they seemed clearly necessary (408).


Like Schlesinger, Taylor Stoehr says in Nay-Saying in Concord: Emerson, Alcott, and Thoreau (1979) that Emerson was the less politically abstemious than

either Alcott or Thoreau. That did not make him an active participant in abolition, however. Stoehr reports that, “At least until the Fugitive Slave Act, abolition remained a problematic crusade for him. The basic ethical questions were clear enough, but the matter of tactics and zeal were in doubt” (29). The Transcendentalists thought “the universe could be trusted to unfold without taking a vote” (20).

In Transcendentalism as a Social Movement (1981), Anne Rose acknowledges Emerson as the only Transcendentalist to publicly oppose slavery. Like Stoehr and Schlesinger, she both praises and criticizes him. Discussing his political beliefs, she says, “Slavery was the extension of the moral imperfection of the free society which tolerated it and thus, when Emerson did speak [on slavery], he lectured on character” (218). Rose criticizes this emphasis on character as a lame “moral mechanism” (219). In defense of Emerson, Rose disagrees with Elkins's contention that by refusing to work within existing institutions, Emerson was an accessory to slavery; work outside the system did not represent an abandonment of reform (219). She says Emerson believed that over time the personal interests of the individual and those of society were the same; however, “if the issue were pressed, he was willing to sacrifice the 'reformer' to the 'man' ” (115).

In Emerson's Emergence: Self and Society in the Transformation of New England (1989), Mary Kupiec Caylon also views Emerson as a man primarily interested in reform of the individual rather than that of society, but she also

discusses his distaste for rising commercialism. To Emerson, slavery “was another example, particularly horrible, of the ways in which the pursuit of commerce and the consumer goods now readily available to large numbers of people led to a blindness to the moral issues surrounding their production” (239). Concerning these moral issues, and in reference to his desire for internal reform, she says true charity began at home for Emerson and did not mean converting others to one's views (239).

Scholarship on Emerson in the 1990s has placed far more emphasis on his anti-slavery sentiment and support for abolitionism (whatever the magnitude) than most of the previous work on him. Two of the strongest depictions of a politically involved Emerson occur in Len Gougeon's Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Abolition, and Reform (1990) and in Robert D. Richardson's Emerson: The Mind on Fire (1995). Both consider the beginning date of Emerson's active abolitionism to be his “Address on the Emancipation of the Negroes...,” delivered in 1844. Both writers also accuse some previous Emerson biographers, notably Holmes and Whicher, of deliberately  ignoring Emerson's more fervent anti-slavery sentiments.

In Virtue's Hero, Gougeon shows through journal entries and letters (both those of Emerson's and those of famous abolitionists of the era) an Emerson very committed to abolitionism by 1851, the year in which he delivered his first address on the Fugitive Slave Law. He says Emerson was “a concerned, sometimes frustrated, but always committed social activist who was very much involved with, and interested in, the abolition of slavery, as well as the other important social reforms of his day”

(19). His involvement was the result of a “lengthy and thoughtful prologue” (20) and underwent change throughout his life. He reports that by the 1850s Emerson was condemning the Constitution, encouraging civil disobedience, and working to raise money to buy Sharpe rifles for anti-slavery dissenters in Kansas (22).

Emerson's Anti-Slavery Writings (1995), compiled by Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson, is the first collection of Emerson's anti-slavery writings. The book contains a speech delivered in 1855 entitled “Lecture on Slavery” which had not been published before 1995. It also features a long introduction by Gougeon with a chronological listing of Emerson's political activities, amply supported by quotes from journals and letters. Gougeon does not ignore Emerson's questions about the worth of political activism or his belief that societal reform began with individual reform; rather, he is portrayed as a man who quit doubting long enough to sign petitions (xxvii) and to make himself conspicuous at the speaking events of abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Lucretia Mott by sitting on the main platform (xxxvii).

Richardson also lists community and political activities in which Emerson participated. Before the 1850s, Emerson was on numerous local committees, such as those for schools, cemeteries, libraries, and the Lyceum. As evidence of political involvement, he notes occasions on which Emerson signed petitions and discussed political events in letters (269). In 1851, Emerson campaigned for John Palfrey, a Free Soil candidate for Congress. By 1854, Emerson and his wife, Lidian, were a part

of the Underground Railroad. Clearly, his actions taken in the 1850s were not those of a man who believed opposition was merely speaking out against what bothered him, as Elkins states (168).

Like Gougeon, Richardson portrays an Emerson firmly committed to abolitionism early in his career. As early as 1837, Emerson “was firmly anti-slavery and had been so for many years.” Richardson adds, “Though he was firmly opposed to slavery, he was still not free of the casual racism of white society of the time.” Emerson “was not yet ready to call himself an abolitionist; but his defense of the movement was strong” (269). Richardson defines 1844 as the moment of Emerson's solid commitment to abolitionism “personally and publicly from now on” (399), and the Fugitive Slave Law Address of 1851 as a strengthening of this commitment (496). At the end of his chapter on the Fugitive Slave Law Address, Richardson says, “Emerson's long campaign against slavery is a practical validation and concrete result of his even longer habit of affirming freedom of will and action in opposition to determinism” (499). By asserting that Emerson's anti-slavery sentiment did not clash, but coordinated, with his Transcendentalist views, this statement marks a clear departure from much of earlier criticism.

In his essay “Who Was an Abolitionist,” Larry Gara discusses the difficulty of absolutely defining the term “abolitionist.” What was meant by calling someone an abolitionist changed over time and depended on who was using the word.

Abolitionists often used the words anti-slavery and abolitionist interchangeably. In this study, the term “anti-slavery” will refer to persons who are against the institution of slavery but do not actively work to end it. Their approach to slavery is fairly passive--condemning it in letters or conversations or signing petitions. The term “abolitionist” will be used to refer to persons actively and publicly working to end slavery. Their approach to slavery is often far from passive and includes joining and/or giving money to organizations whose goal is end slavery, speaking against slavery on a public platform, or acting as “conductors” on the Underground Railroad. All abolitionists are anti-slavery; persons who are anti-slavery are not necessarily abolitionists.

There is ample evidence throughout Emerson's writing, in both what he published and did not publish during his lifetime, to prove that he was always anti-slavery. There is also evidence to show that he made the shift to abolitionism well in advance of the Civil War; the most crucial dates in this shift are 1844 (“Address on the Emancipation...”) and 1851 (the first address on the Fugitive Slave Law). The purpose of this study is to document Emerson's shift in attitude through evidence in his essays and journals; the difficulties his Transcendental background posed in making the shift will also be addressed. Finally, what manner of abolitionist Emerson became, as well as his reactions to the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation, and success, will be considered.

Chapter Two

Emerson Before 1840, or Uninvolved Transcendentalism

“Ne te quaesiveris extra”*

(“Self-Reliance”)

Within his family, Emerson was surrounded by anti-slavery sentiment. His father, William, supported the Smith Grammar School of Boston, which provided free education for black male and female children. Mary Moody Emerson, William's sister, began associating with abolitionists in 1835. She introduced Emerson to British abolitionist George Thompson; Emerson's journal entry for the day indicates he found Thompson pompous and uninterested in any objections regarding the movement. Emerson's grandfather, Reverend Ezra Ripley, allowed the Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society to meet at his Unitarian church. As early as 1835, Emerson's brother Charles spoke publicly in favor of immediate abolition. Emerson's second wife Lidian, whom he married in 1835, joined the Women's Anti-Slavery Society of Concord that same year (VH 24-7).

The town of Concord also favored the abolitionist cause. The local newspapers Yeoman's Gazette and Concord Freeman were markedly pro-abolition in their news coverage. Famous abolitionists such as Thompson, Harriet Martineau, and Angelina Grimke were frequent visitors. Concord was a well-known "depot" on the

* Latin: Do not seek outside yourself.

Underground Railroad. The Standing Committee for the Concord Social Library, which Emerson was a member of, made sure the library owned plenty of abolitionist texts. Texts the library did not own often could be purchased at the printing office of the Concord Freeman (VH 28-31).

Despite living in a hotbed of abolitionism, Emerson managed to avoid involving himself in the movement until the early 1840s. Still, the injustice of slavery concerned him early in life, even though it did not push him to action. As early as 1822, while still at Harvard, he had graphic dreams depicting Africans disturbed in their daily activities by foreign slave traders. In his dreams, Emerson tried to save the Africans; he never could. While vacationing in St. Augustine, Florida in 1827, he had the misfortune of attending a bible study inadvertently being held next door to a slave auction (VH 31-3). He describes the absurdity of the situation in his journal:

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

(JMN 3: 117)

Other journal entries from the late 1830s and early 1840s reveal an Emerson who disapproves of slavery but feels either unwilling or unable to do anything about it. In February 1835, he says, "Though the voice of society should demand a defence

of slavery from all its organs that service can never be expected from me.” Later in the same entry, he says he can never defend the Southern planter and does not “wish to live in a nation where slavery exists” (Porte 136). In an entry from October 1837, he appears to have regrets about his lack of action:

The young man relying on his instincts who has only a good intention is apt to feel ashamed of his inaction & the slightness of his virtue when in the presence of the active & zealous leaders of the philanthropic enterprizes [sic] of Universal Temperance, Peace, & Abolition of Slavery. (Porte 169)

It is difficult to know if Emerson was writing of his own feelings because he does not refer to himself, but speaks of young men as a group.

Emerson's developing views on slavery and abolitionism were strongly shaped by William Ellery Channing's Slavery (1835). Channing was a former teacher of his at Harvard whose opinion he greatly respected. Channing clearly and vehemently condemns slavery by listing the eight rights of man² that it violates. Still, he stresses that only slaveholders and slaves can end slavery. Persons not directly involved with slavery can only offer prayer and moral persuasion. Channing also believes slavery should be abolished within the law--which he calls the “one expression of the will or sovereignty of the people” (163)--and without violence.

Emerson's doubts about the efficacy of reform movements and political involvement reveal themselves clearly and repeatedly in several of his earliest

published essays. These include “Nature” (1836); “The Protest” (1839); “Self-Reliance,” “Spiritual Laws,” and “Man the Reformer” (1841); and “Experience” and “The Transcendentalist” (1842). In these essays he frequently criticizes the reform movements and reformers of the day; in rare instances, however, he comments positively on the reformer. He also makes strong statements regarding property and laws which should be considered before moving on to his later essays.

In “Nature,” Emerson draws a distinction between the self and the world in which the self exists. He refers to the soul as Me; he calls “all that is separate from us” Not Me (1091). Not Me includes nature (which he says consists of natural objects untouched by humankind), art (which he says occurs when humankind and nature come into contact), other individuals, and one's own body (1092). The Not Me he terms collectively as Nature. The highest use of Nature for humankind is the education it offers the understanding (the property of inference) and reasoning (the faculty of thinking and connecting thoughts). In order to receive this education from Nature, the soul must experience Nature in solitude.

Before discussing Emerson's sense of reform, it is important to note what he did not consider reform--the reform movements of the 1830s and 1840s. Mentioning several by name in “The Transcendentalist,” he says: Each 'cause' as it is called,--say Abolition, Temperance, say Calvinism, or Unitarianism,--becomes speedily a little shop, where the article, . . . is now made up into portable and convenient cakes, and retailed in small quantities to suit purchasers (349).

He is criticizing what he considered a common problem for reformers--that of selling their own brand of reform as a cure-all for the masses. The temperance movement believed alcohol to be the great vice crippling American society; the abolitionists, slavery. Emerson did not believe American societal troubles were so easily reducible. He says:

Every reformer is partial and exaggerates some grievance. You may even feel that there is somewhat ridiculous in his tenacious oppugnation of some one merely local and as it were cutaneous disorder as if he dreamed, good simple soul, that were this one great wrong righted a new era would begin. (‘‘The Protest’’ 91)

He did not believe it was enough to treat one of a person's vices; all must be treated simultaneously. An even better solution was to address and treat the cause of the vices.

Another criticism that Emerson had for reform movements was their emphasis on reforming others, rather than their participants. In a sentiment echoed throughout his early essays, he says ‘‘we should . . . do broad justice where we are, by whomsoever we deal with’’ (‘‘Experience’’ 1201). He feels it far more important to work on the self--Me--than on any aspect of the Not Me. He complains in ‘‘Self-Reliance’’: ‘‘Why should we assume the faults of our friend . . . All men have my blood, and I have all men's. Not for that will I adopt their petulance or folly, even to the extent of being ashamed of it’’ (1153). He does not understand how persons who

are imperfect themselves can profess to know how to perfect others. He says in his journal, "I told [William Lloyd] Garrison that I thought he must be a very young man or his time hang very heavy on his hands who can afford to think much & talk much about the foibles of his neighbors" (266). By this he means that Garrison must be either naive to believe that he can truly change others by such means, or that he is not spending enough time tending to his own concerns.

Far from saying that he has no faults of his own, Emerson suggests that he is busy enough working to perfect himself; he has little time left over to work on others' problems. Attempts to reform others take time and effort away from what should be every individual's main priority--him or herself. He says, "Every true man is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his design" ("Self-Reliance" 1149). The time spent on others could instead be spent on self-enrichment: working on relationships with family and friends, God, nature, or the self; reading and thinking; writing; or other pleasurable, fulfilling activities.

Emerson believes that charity benevolently handed out by reformers is harmful for both the recipient and the giver. He says, "do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situation. Are they my poor?" ("Self-Reliance" 1146). It is not Emerson's fault that some men are poor and others not. He feels it far more likely that, in many cases, the poor have none to blame but themselves for their condition. By giving out alms, the giver is encouraging the

recipient to remain dependent. After all, why should the poor try to pull themselves out of poverty as long as they know sympathetic persons will provide them with alms? In "Self-Reliance," he says "with shame" that he has sometimes given a dollar to the poor; he calls it a "wicked dollar" and hopes that he will someday have the "manhood to withhold" the charity (1146).

Better than giving out charity is helping those in need to help themselves. He says, "We come to them who weep foolishly, and sit down and cry for company, instead of imparting to them truth and health in rough, electric shocks, putting them once more in communication with their own reason" ("Self-Reliance" 1155-56). Emerson believes that as we learn to rely upon and care properly for ourselves, we acquire still more self-reliance, independence, and self-respect. He believes that we appreciate more what we work for than what we are given. He clearly agrees with the folk proverb that teaching a person how to fish, rather than giving the person the fish, will feed the person far longer than the gift.

Emerson also criticizes reformers who act less out of genuine zeal for their cause and more for the sake of their neighbors' opinions or to bolster their self-esteem. He says:

Men do what is called a good action, as some piece of courage or charity, much as they would pay a fine in expiation of daily non-appearance on parade. Their works are done as an apology or an extenuation of their living in the world . . . Their virtues are penances.

("Self-Reliance" 1146)

For Emerson, virtues do not make the self. He believes that the true self is what is there after our actions have been stripped away; actions are Not Me. He knows that he is, and he does not need actions of his or the approval of others regarding his actions to validate that fact. He says, "I do not wish to expiate, but to live. My life is for itself and not for a spectacle" ("Self-Reliance" 1146).

Although Emerson believes that we can only reform ourselves, he does believe that we can influence others. For instance, we can lead by example. If we reform ourselves, our friends and loved ones might see the good it has brought us and decide to reform themselves. As more and more people decide to reform themselves, the results will begin to show in society. All actions speak loudly.

The way to begin reforming one's self is to assume greater self-reliance. If we worry constantly about our neighbors, for whose essential welfare as persons we can do nothing directly, we have no time to be concerned with our own welfare. Our welfare is something only we can determine. Self-reliance means not worrying about others' opinions or worldly goods (all Not Me), but about our own. To reform the self it is necessary to isolate it from bad influences; therefore, we should not spend time talking with or listening to people who try to turn our attention away from ourselves.

Two issues considered in the early essays hint at the more politically involved Emerson of the future and need to be mentioned before moving on: 1) property, and its relation to the issues of self-reliance and work; and 2) the value of laws. He

discusses at length the issue of property, both human and inanimate, in the essay "Man the Reformer"; this essay will be discussed in chapter three in relation to Emerson's developing views on abolitionism. Regarding the issue of laws, Emerson speaks in "The Transcendentalist" of universal laws that transcend the written laws of humankind. He considers these unwritten laws more important than written law. The Transcendentalist "does not respect government, except as far as it reiterates the laws of his mind," and he "may with safety not only neglect, but even contravene every written commandment" (333, 336). This adherence to a higher law in opposition to laws made by government will become an important issue for Emerson after the strengthening of the Fugitive Slave Law Act in 1850. His reaction to the act will be discussed in chapter four.

In his essay "Spiritual Laws," Emerson speaks of the dangers of silence:

You think that because you have spoken nothing, when others spoke, and have given no opinion on the times . . . that your verdict is still expected with curiosity as a reserved wisdom. Far otherwise; your silence answers very loud. You have no oracle to utter, and your fellow men have learned that you cannot help them; for oracles, speak. Doth not wisdom cry, and understanding put forth her wisdom? ("The Protest" 90)

Events just on the horizon in the early 1840s would unsettle Emerson and make him less sure of the ideas he was able to promote with much assurance in the 1830s.

These events eventually would lead to radical changes in his beliefs about society and politics. These beliefs would be anything but silent.

Chapter Three

The 1840s: "The Address . . . on the Emancipation . . ."

"The word ABOLITIONIST, in its true meaning,
comprehends every man who feels himself bound
to exert his influence for removing slavery."

(W. E. Channing)

Although many of Emerson's essays written in the late 1830s and early 1840s discouraged attempts to reform others, his personal actions were not always consistent with his words. In 1837, Emerson wrote a letter of protest to President Van Buren regarding the forcible removal of the Cherokee Indians from Georgia³; he later allowed the letter to be published. In June 1838, he signed a petition for the release from jail of Abner Kneeland, a man imprisoned for blasphemy. He began attending abolitionist meetings in the late 1830s, and his introductions to abolitionists such as Wendell Phillips, Lucretia Mott, and William Lloyd Garrison convinced him that not all reformers were crazy.

At the same time, many of Emerson's prominent contemporaries were also relaxing their attitudes toward reform. Abolitionist converts were increasingly more respectable citizens, including Theodore Parker and William Henry Furness. Furness was a Unitarian minister who, like Emerson through much of the 1830s, disapproved

of slavery but avoided abolitionists. Under Margaret Fuller and later Emerson, The Dial ran abolitionist articles such as B.P. Hunt's "Saturday and Sunday Amongst the Creoles: A Letter from the West Indies." The Dial also featured Emerson's reviews of abolitionist poetry by men such as Garrison. Perhaps most importantly, shortly before his death in 1842, William Ellery Channing gave an address entitled "Emancipation in the British West Indies" (VH 60-69). The man who had preached political non-involvement his entire life appeared to have been in the process of conversion at the time of his death.

Emerson's beliefs about what could be done and what actions he was willing to take in order to ameliorate societal problems also seemed to be changing in the early 1840s. This change is evident in the essays "Man the Reformer" (1841) and "An Address Delivered in the Court-house in Concord, Massachusetts, on 1st August, 1844, on the Anniversary of the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies." His opinions in "Man the Reformer" regarding societal reform are at times in agreement with those in his earlier essays, and at others in disagreement; "An Address..." with its emphasis upon the problems of slavery, is a clearer departure from his earlier essays.

Emerson spends much of "Man the Reformer" criticizing the state of American trade in the 1840s; he quickly makes the word "trade" synonymous with the word "slavery." He says he cannot help thinking about the abuses of the world when he considers the difficulties presented to young men beginning their careers, particularly

those presented to young men entering commerce. Although commerce is not intrinsically criminal, its current immoral state is such that those who engage in it find their moral virtue hard to maintain. He explains, “it is only necessary to ask a few questions as to the progress of the articles of commerce from the field where they grew, to our houses, to become aware that we eat and drink and wear perjury and fraud in a hundred of commodities. How many articles of daily consumption are furnished us from the West Indies” (231). Commerce is tainted by the fact that much of what is traded is made by slave labor, including the sugar that one out of every ten Cuban slaves dies to produce. He calls trade a “system of selfishness” consisting “not of giving but of taking advantage” (232).

Emerson says the sins of trade lie not only with the traders, but also with those who enable the trade by purchasing the products: “one plucks, one distributes, one eats.” He complains that few seem to feel themselves responsible for the abuses of trade; he criticizes the man who says “he did not create the abuse” and so “cannot alter it” (233). This criticism is ideologically a long way from his complaint in “Self-Reliance” (written in 1841, the same year as “Man the Reformer”) that he should not be responsible for the poor because he did not make them poor. His self-contradiction suggests that his opinion on the responsibility of the individual for the many was by no means set in stone.

Emerson offers two solutions to those bothered by the immorality of trade; 1) for those employed in trade, leave the profession and its pursuit of tainted profit; and

2) for consumers, question how goods were made and, if necessary, quit using them. He says, "It is better to go without, than to have them [riches] at too great a cost" (245). While asking consumers to purchase fewer goods, he glorifies agriculture and manual labor. In promoting agriculture, he returns to an old theme: that of self-reliance. He speaks of the personal power gained by assuming a "primary" relationship with the earth. He is willing to give up some luxuries and grow his own food in order to deprive traders of their income. Those who produce their own goods are more self-reliant because they are not dependent upon a middleman to satisfy their needs and wants, and because they will not have to question how the goods were produced. Much of what people purchase, he says, they buy less out necessity and more out of a desire to conform or to impress. The items required for everyday living--adequate food, clothing, and shelter--are easily made for ourselves. He does not suggest that everyone quit using all of the convenient items offered by commerce because such action would cripple the country's economy; rather, everyone should give up some.

Clearly, the Emerson of "Man the Reformer" sees a need for reform; still, it is societal reform through the actions of the individual, rather than an individual attempting reform upon society. In stressing the need for each person to act, he speaks of "laying one stone aright every day" (247); "all reforms are the removing of some impediment" (249) on the road to self-reliance. He says it is possible to believe so strongly in a goal that it will occur because of the power of the enthusiasm

manifested. Although he speaks against slavery and offers examples of actions persons may take to eliminate its practice--leaving trade, purchasing fewer goods, and making one's own goods--he is not yet ready to enter the public forum on this particular issue. His wariness of reformers remains, as well. Even as he excuses the extravagances of reformers by noting the extravagances of the abuses they protest (229), he warns that they must distribute "the motion [of reform] equably over all the wheels" (255). "Man the Reformer" marks a shift, but not a substantial change, in Emerson's views on reform; "An Address...." does.

Emerson's attempt to deliver "An Address . . . on the Anniversary of the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies," hosted by the Women's Anti-Slavery Association of Concord, was met by some difficulty from his townspeople. None of Concord's churches would offer him a place to speak, and so he spoke at the courthouse. Henry David Thoreau, whose mother was a member of the Association, aided with publicity by going from door to door asking for attendance. When the First Parish Church refused to ring their bell to announce the meeting, Thoreau rang it himself. He would later arrange to have the speech published as a pamphlet (VH 75). Thoreau, previously more outspoken than Emerson, appeared excited that Emerson finally would speak publicly against slavery.

Although Emerson opens the address by refusing to apologize for his lack of expertise in speaking on slavery, he delivers a wealth of information on the condition

of slaves in the West Indies and Great Britain's efforts to emancipate them; in fact, he performed careful research in order to present his facts accurately.⁴ The information that would have been most shocking for his listeners was his description of how slaves were treated in the West Indies. Slaves were denied decent food, the right to marry or to own property, protection from their master's whims, authority over themselves, and honor. He speaks of how the children of slaves belonged to their parents' masters, rather than their parents. He also tells of the hard work slaves must perform without compensation. He does not simply list, however; he also describes:

pregnant women [were] set in the treadmill for refusing to work, when, not they, but the eternal law of animal nature refused to work;--if we saw men's backs flayed with cowhides, and 'hot rum poured on, superinduced with brine or pickle, rubbed in with a cornhusk, in the scorching heat of the sun';--if we saw the runaways hunted with bloodhounds into swamps and hills; and, in cases of passion, a planter throwing his negro into a copper of boiling cane-juice,--if we saw these things with eyes, we too should wince (969-70).

Emerson's purpose in including this information appears twofold: what he learned about slavery shocked and disgusted him, and he sought the same reaction in his listeners. He speaks of blood turning cold and stomachs churning when the truth about slavery is revealed. The truth had pulled him toward a movement he had previously resisted; he was trying to pull his listeners with him.

Emerson describes British efforts at emancipation to show that, although the process took more than sixty years and faced periodic setbacks, a combination of government officials and everyday citizens were able to achieve lasting and successful emancipation. He tells of how the 1772 intercession of Granville Sharp in the welfare of a West Indian slave brought to and mistreated in Great Britain led to a judiciary ruling stating that slavery was not supported by the laws of England; thus, the slave was free the moment he entered British soil. In 1791, 300,000 British pledged not to use products made by West Indian slave labor. He notes that the bill to outlaw the slave trade in Britain had to pass through Parliament twelve times before it was made into law on March 25, 1807. In describing the success of emancipation after it was achieved on August 1, 1834, he notes the good behavior of the former slaves:

On the night of the 31st July, they met everywhere at their churches and chapels, and at midnight, when the clock struck twelve, on their knees, the silent, weeping assembly became men; they rose and embraced each other; they cried, they sung, they prayed, they were wild with joy, but there was no riot, no feasting (975).

Finally, Emerson describes the failure of graduated emancipation. The British tried an apprentice system in which the now supposedly free slaves remained in the service of their former masters for a set period of time; the ex-masters were supposed to compensate them for their services and treat them as tenant farmers. Not

surprisingly, planters did not easily adjust to the changed status of their workers; by 1838, abuse of apprentices led to the abolition of the apprentice system.

Emancipation was then complete and final.

After describing most planters' resistance to emancipation, Emerson criticizes what he sees as the slaveowner mentality. He disagrees with the idea that the slaveowner own slaves only because of the "immunities and the luxuries which the slaves yield him" (977) and would give up his slaves if other means were given him to make money and get work done. Slavery exists, not simply because of "covetousness," but also because of "the love of power, [and] the voluptuousness of holding a human being in his absolute control" (977). He likens the planters to children who, in order to test their power over their parents, annoy their parents to see what type of reaction they will receive. Like bored children, planters seek entertainment, sometimes without regard for consequences: "The planter is the spoiled child of his unnatural habits, and has contracted in his indolent and luxurious climate the need of excitement by irritating and tormenting his slave" (977).

Emerson's sharpest criticism in the address is of commercial societies such as the United States and Great Britain, which place more emphasis on profit than on the welfare of persons. The human faculty most evident in a particular historical period "determines the civility of that age" (979). At present, the faculty most evident in the United States and Great Britain is "a shopkeeping civility" (979). He says, "The customer is the immediate jewel of our souls. Him we flatter, him we

feast, compliment, vote for, and will not contradict" (980). In these countries, well-being consists in having not only the items which make life comfortable, but also in having whatever items are necessary to keep up with the neighbors. Emerson is not surprised that slavery exists alongside the shopkeeping culture. Slavery produces cheaply the goods wanted by the citizens of a material culture; because the citizens cannot taste the slaves' blood in their sugar, slavery's harm is distant to them.

Emerson then returns to his criticism of planters by showing the disadvantages of the system sustained by the culture's material desires. Planters are slaves to their slaves because they depend on the slaves for their financial well-being. Because slaves are not paid for their labor, they have little incentive to work efficiently or suggest improvements that might improve the planter's profit. Many planters justly live in fear of their slaves rising violently: "like other robbers, they could not sleep in security" (981). Moreover, because much of the money made on the plantation is re-invested in the plantation, that money does not aid the larger culture. Unlike slaves, paid workers are able to invest money in the system that pays them by buying the goods they produce.

Emerson reserves his final criticism for the citizens of Massachusetts, and particularly their legislators. He says free black citizens of Massachusetts who work in shipping are sometimes taken prisoner unjustly when the ships enter the South.⁵ This practice violates the fourth article of the Constitution: "The citizens of each

State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states" (984). He adds:

If such a damnable outrage can be committed on the person of a citizen with impunity, let the Governor break the broad seal of the State; he bears the sword in vain. The Governor of Massachusetts is a trifler; the State-House in Boston is a play-house; the General Court is a dishonored body: if they make laws which they cannot execute (984).

He accuses the Massachusetts delegation in Congress of letting itself be bullied by Southerners and calls upon its members to demand of the president that Massachusetts's citizens held unjustly in the South be released immediately. He alleges that these black citizens do not matter to Massachusetts's legislators because they have no votes. He calls upon the state's citizens to defend free black men from Southern power if their legislators will not. He leaves the legislators (and the South) with a warning: "What great masses of men wish done, will be done . . . There are now other energies than force, other than political, which no man in future can allow himself to disregard" (988).

In "An Address. . .," Emerson makes some of his first public comments on the black race, and these are positive. He says the events of August 1, 1834, added a new member to "the human family"--meaning that those who were regarded as sub-human while enslaved would now be able to demonstrate to white society that they were not intrinsically inferior. While he celebrates the British "concession of the whites," he

adds that the event was also “the earning of the blacks. They won the pity and respect which they have received, by their powers and native endowments” (990). Although he says that if black persons should they prove themselves weak, they would be “exterminated,” he also says that if they can compete with the white race, they should be allowed to do so. He adds almost immediately that he thinks they can compete. He concludes: “the civility of no race can be perfect whilst another race is degraded . . . man is one, and . . . you cannot injure any member, without a sympathetic injury to all the members. America is not civil, whilst Africa is barbarous” (991).

As he did at the end of “Man the Reformer,” Emerson ends this address with a call to action. The considerations he has presented, he says, leave no room for skepticism or inaction. He is optimistic: he speaks of progress in society, and he hopes that “a single noble wind of sentiment will scatter them [coldness and blindness] away” (992). He ends by saying that the events on August 1, 1834, were a sign from God of his will.

“An Address. . . “ marks a departure from Emerson's earlier essays in several ways. He focuses on a particular issue of reform--slavery--an action he had not only never taken previously but had criticized vehemently. He knew that giving an abolitionist speech in public would lead to his name being associated with the extremist reformers he had previously criticized. In the speech, he calls his listeners to action. Although he does not give specific suggestions of what actions to take, the

call contrasts sharply with his constant exhortation in earlier essays that persons forsake the outside and look inside. His specific consideration of the black race also marks a first for him. The only continuities this speech has with his earlier essays are its attacks on materialism and the negative affects it has on a person's capacity for self-reliance. According to Channing's definition of an abolitionist (any person who wished to exert his or her influence to end slavery), and Gara's more narrow definition (which included speaking against slavery on a public platform), Emerson was now an abolitionist.

Emerson's association with the abolitionist movement steadily increased in the years following "An Address . . ." In December 1844, his neighbor Samuel Hoar went to South Carolina to investigate charges that free blacks were being held there illegally. Hoar was driven from Charleston by an angry mob before he could accomplish anything. Emerson's letter in his defense later appeared in Horace Greeley's pro-abolition Tribune (VH 92-3). In November 1845, he refused to speak before the New Bedford Lyceum after he heard from at least two members that the Lyceum had refused membership and tickets to blacks. His letter of refusal later appeared in Garrison's Liberator along with one by Charles Sumner (VH 101-07). On May 19, 1846, he attended the funeral of Charles Torrey, who died while serving time in a Maryland prison for aiding escaped slaves (VH 112). In the summer of 1847 he and newly converted abolitionist Theodore Parker founded the

Massachusetts Quarterly Review, which always printed an article on current slavery issues (VH 128).

Actions around Emerson at this time were raising the stakes in the slavery debate. On December 29, 1845, the slave state Texas was annexed by the United States. On May 11, 1846, the United States entered a two year war with Mexico over Texas. In September 1846, a stowaway slave from Louisiana aboard a ship to Massachusetts was sent back to Louisiana after discovery due to fear of commercial reprisal from Louisiana (VH 127). Once again, Massachusetts had been bullied by a Southern state.

Closer to home, Thoreau went to jail in July 1846 to protest his tax money being spent on a war to acquire a slave state. Gougeon reports that although Emerson approved of the sentiment involved in Thoreau's action, he objected to the action--he believed one man's impulsive action would change nothing. Gougeon continues:

negative action such as Thoreau's was indicative of a final rejection of human nature and the power of virtue in improving what is admittedly an imperfect world. Such an attitude is extremely destructive because it denies the possibility of reform and sets the rare individual of high moral character apart from others who are deemed irreparably immoral (VH 124).

As he considered Thoreau's seemingly extreme action, Emerson probably would have been surprised if he were told that in four short years, his politics would seem as extreme to others.

Chapter Four

The 1850s: The Fugitive Slave Law and Radicalism

“An immoral law makes it man's duty to break it, at every hazard.” (“Address to the Citizens of Concord”)

On March 7, 1850, Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts announced his support for the Compromise of 1850, a Congressional bill designed to ease the mounting tension between the northern and southern United States over the issue of slavery. Among the bill's many provisions⁶ was a fugitive slave law, which required all U.S. citizens to capture escaped slaves and return them to their owners or risk imprisonment and/or fines. Although a fugitive slave law had been passed in 1793, it had never been enforced in the North; this new law would be enforced. On September 18, the fugitive slave provision became law (VH 138, 142).

Fugitive slaves moving along the Underground Railroad typically entered Massachusetts through Boston Harbor; there were five “lines” out of Boston, of which Concord was one. Families in Concord who sheltered escaped slaves on their way to Canada included the Emersons, the Thoreaus, the Alcotts, the Brooks (Mary Merrick and Nathan), and several others (Richardson 495). Although these families placed themselves in danger by assisting escaped slaves after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, all continued. They assumed that the new law would be no better enforced than

the old (VH 143-47). The Emersons resisted the law quietly, but others were far more public in their refusal to obey.

True to the prediction of Emerson and others, the Fugitive Slave Law at first met with enough resistance to make a mockery of it. The first escaped slave captured under the new law was a man named James Hamlet, of Baltimore. Following his arrest, trial, and return to his owner, Northern citizens raised enough money to buy and then free him. Accounts of this triumph over the law appeared in the Tribune and the Liberator. Another triumph occurred in November, when the intervention of Theodore Parker's vigilance committee prevented the arrests of two escaped slaves. Members of the committee sent the escaped slaves out of town on the Underground Railroad; meanwhile, other members threatened would-be slave-catchers with violence. The slave-catchers promptly retreated. On February 18, 1851, a black waiter at a Boston coffeehouse alternately known as Fredrich Jenkins (or Wilkins) or as Shadrach was arrested as a fugitive slave. Parker's committee overran the courthouse and sent Jenkins to safety. Although six members of Parker's committee were later tried in court, all were acquitted (VH 144-53).

Despite the early success of resistance, the Fugitive Slave Law was soon enforced; President Fillmore demanded no further toleration of rescues. On April 3, 1851, while Emerson's first public statement on the law was being presented by way of a letter to a meeting of the Middlesex Anti-Slavery Society, the fugitive slave Thomas Sims was being arrested and placed in a well-guarded courthouse. All

attempts to free Sims were unsuccessful: legal efforts failed; the courthouse was too well guarded to storm; and attempts to purchase Sims's freedom were rebuffed. On April 13, Sims was sent back to Georgia; on April 19⁷, he was publicly whipped in Savannah. Emerson knew that he could no longer resist the law quietly; when the residents of Concord presented him with a petition on April 26 asking him to speak against the law, he accepted (VH 152-60).

At the outset of the address, later known as the "Address to the Citizens of Concord," Emerson states his reason for speaking publicly on politics, a subject which he usually avoided: he feels he must speak. He says, "I have lived all my life in this state, and never had any experience of personal inconvenience from the laws, until now" (EAS 53). If the necessity to speak pains him, the law pains him even more. He speaks of the almost physical pain knowledge of the law causes him; and of how he hates to read the newspaper because it contains news of the law. He is disgusted that otherwise upright American citizens, and particularly Bostonians, are acquiescing with the law. He then lists several reasons why the law is wrong.

His first objection to the law is that it violates the universal code of right and wrong. This code is the law of natural world, and thus, the law of God. Laws made by governments do not determine right and wrong, but are only expressions of what is already known to be right. Humankind's first duty is to the laws of nature, rather than government. Hence, "an immoral law makes it a man's duty to break it, at every hazard" (57). He is encouraging civil disobedience, not in the theoretical way in

which he discussed in it in "The Transcendentalist," but in regard to an actual law. Aside from breaking universal moral codes, the law also violates laws made by humankind. He cites the law of March 2, 1807, which outlawed the enslavement of individuals on the African coast by Americans; the Fugitive Slave Law requires the reenslaving of individuals on American soil, in the process condoning and even encouraging kidnapping.

Other objections to the law include its cruelty and the "mischief" (62) it causes in those who choose to live with it. He says it is a greater crime to reenslave persons who have proved themselves worthy of freedom by attaining it under immense odds than it is to enslave them in the first place. The drawbacks of the North's acquiescence to the law (loss of self-respect and the name of gentleman) far outweigh its benefits.* He warns that, the more the law is enforced, the easier it becomes to enforce. The greatest mischief caused by the law is its threat to the Union. He says, "I suppose the Union can be left to take care of itself. As much real union as there is, the statutes will be sure to express; as much disunion as there is, no statute can long conceal" (67), adding that the United States is really two nations held together primarily by mutual self-interest. Ominously, Emerson says he does not think the Union can survive if the Fugitive Slave Law is allowed to stand.

* As examples of benefits he lists trade with the South and the South's willingness to live with the high tariff that helped Northern industry but cost Southern consumers a great deal.

The only benefits Emerson can find in the law are the lesson it offers the nation about the pernicious influence of slavery and the way in which it opened discussion on the subject of slavery. Webster supported the law in the hope that it would settle some portion of the slavery issue for good; instead, the law made the topic impossible to ignore. To those who are now thinking and talking about slavery, Emerson offers several suggestions. Slavery must be confined to its present borders. He condones the reimbursement of planters for freed slaves, despite the massive expense involved. He feels the money would be well-spent; he does not dwell on where the money will come from. His most concrete plan to fight slavery is to resist the Fugitive Slave Law, and he calls upon the citizens of Massachusetts to lead the nation in resistance.

Later in 1851, Emerson again actively participated in the fight against slavery by campaigning for John G. Palfrey, a Free Soil candidate for legislative office in Massachusetts. The campaign brought upon the previously private Emerson the mean-spirited criticism often directed to public figures. During the campaign, a subsequent delivery of the "Address to the Citizens of Concord" in Cambridge was booed by students from Harvard. Although Palfrey lost in a close election, Emerson family friend and abolitionist Charles Sumner replaced the now aged Webster as senator (Webster would die on October 24, 1852). Following the campaign, Emerson turned down various speaking engagements and temporarily returned to non-political speaking and writing (VH 168-73).

Events in the years following the address and the campaign held both promise and difficulty for the anti-slavery movement. In October 1851, the rescue of a fugitive slave named Jerry in New York proved that law still could still be resisted. The best-selling and highly controversial anti-slavery novel Uncle Tom's Cabin was published in March 1852. Unfortunately for anti-slavery interests, the Compromise of 1850 was not enough for the South. On January 23, 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was introduced in Congress. The Act sought to introduce popular sovereignty into the two territories, in the process nullifying the Missouri Compromise of 1820.* Although popular sovereignty did not guarantee slavery in these states, it did not guarantee "free soil" either. Again, Emerson was faced with the proposition that slavery was not losing strength, but gaining strength and possibly spreading to new territory.

On March 7, 1854, the fourth anniversary of Webster's speech in support of the Compromise of 1850, Emerson spoke again on the Fugitive Slave Law, this time in New York City (VH 172-73, 191-92). Although he again begins with the statement that he is unaccustomed to speaking on public issues, the address betrays no lack of familiarity with slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law. The only obvious speaking fault Emerson can charged with is his sharp criticism of the society he is

* Prohibited slavery in the portion of the Louisiana Purchase north of 36°30', excepting Missouri

addressing, and this only if one believes that the only way to influence others is to flatter them.

Emerson's criticisms of American society are several. He attacks the superficiality which placed more importance on the eloquence of Webster's speech than its disturbing content. Americans followed Webster both out of respect and because following is easier than thinking. He says, "It is remarked of the Americans, that they value dexterity too much and honor too little. That the Americans praise a man by saying that he is smart than by saying he is right" (77). He criticizes conservatism, smug in the knowledge of its comfort and safety; the conservatism which would rather keep less than ideal matters as they are, rather than risk discomfort by attempting change. Because of the Fugitive Slave Law, slavery was closer to Northerners than ever; continued conservatism would allow its further encroachment upon Northern liberties.

Emerson refers to the North's willingness to accommodate slavery as a lack of progress: "liberty is a very accurate index in men and nations of general progress" (80). He says the theory of personal liberty can exist alongside only the finest moral sense; the further virtues of justice and civility are dependent upon this sense of liberty. He notes that even a "barbarous tribe" (80) will sacrifice the lives of its own in order to secure greater liberty. He even slights the manners of those who live thoughtlessly with slavery: "For it is, is it not? the very nature of courtesy, of politeness, of religion, of love, to prefer another, to postpone oneself, to protect

another from oneself? That is the distinction of the gentleman, to defend the weak, and redress the injured, as it is of the savage and the brute to usurp and use others” (230).

As with the first address on the Fugitive Slave Law, the second ends with a call to action. He feels firmly that slavery will eventually die because it is incompatible with the universal good, but admits that the patience required for the wait is almost too difficult to bear. If the wait is tedious, then that is all the better a reason to act in order to shorten the wait. He reminds the listener that “liberty is never cheap. It is made difficult because freedom is the accomplishment and perfectness of a man” (86). The attainment of freedom for an individual is worth great struggle; he asks his listener to ensure this freedom, not simply for themselves, but for all individuals.

Despite efforts of the abolitionists, the Kansas-Nebraska Act became law on May 30, 1854. In another mishap for the anti-slavery movement, an attempt on May 23 to rescue fugitive slave Anthony Burns ended with one abolitionist dead and three--Theodore Parker, Wendell Phillips, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson--arrested for treason. Burns’s subsequent return to Virginia was facilitated by 22 companies of the state militia, four platoons of marines, United States artillery, and all of Boston’s police. The display, undertaken less out of necessity and more out of a desire to impress, cost \$100,000. On July 4 of that year, Lidian draped their fenceposts with black bunting in protest of the country’s repression of freedom. The

only bright news in 1854 for abolitionists was the formation of the anti-slavery Republican Party in July (VH 200-06).

Outrages such as the Burns fiasco meant that Emerson would continue to speak publicly against slavery. He delivered the "Lecture on Slavery" first in Boston on January 25, 1855, and later in four other cities in the North. While the addresses on the Fugitive Slave Law are mainly angry in tone, "Lecture" sounds weary. He admits that so much has been said and done on the subject of slavery that further words and actions must be increasingly extravagant and intense just to receive notice. Still, slavery exists with more strength than ever.

Despite this acknowledgment that slavery is still strong, his sense of the inevitability of its demise is as strong. Convinced that health cannot exist next to disease indefinitely, he says "slavery is an evil, as cholera or typhus is, that will be purged out by the health of the system" (93). He defines the practice of justice as "allowing the largest liberty to each compatible with the liberty of all,--protection in seeking my benefit, as long as it does not interfere with your benefit," and adds "secret retributions are always restoring the level, when disturbed, of the Divine justice" (99).

An earlier idea of his own that Emerson backs away from in "Lecture" is his support of the concept of Union. Although he never excused Webster's support of the Fugitive Slave Law on the grounds that Webster did it to save the Union, he did understand why others defended this aim of Webster's. In "Lecture," he says the

United States's founders should never have agreed to the compromises which allowed slavery--the Northern states should have formed a nation separate from the Southern states. He ends with a warning: "We shall one day bring the states shoulder to shoulder, and the citizens man to man, to exterminate slavery" (106).

Tensions over slavery continued to build after Emerson's "Lecture on Slavery." On May 22, 1856, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts gave his "Crime Against Kansas" speech and was rewarded with a caning by Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina. On May 26, an indignation meeting at which Emerson was the featured speaker was held in Concord (VH 221). In his response to the attack, Emerson condemns the barbarism of the South and defends Sumner's character. The attack is evidence of the South's disregard for life. He defends Sumner's abolitionism by saying "every sane man" is a "believer that all men should be free" (EAS 109). Later in that year, Emerson offered more public proof of his anti-slavery sentiments by appearing in a lithographic print entitled "Champions of Freedom;" the print featured other abolitionists, including Theodore Parker, Wendell Phillips, Samuel May, and Gerrit Smith (VH 227-28). In March 1857, the Supreme Court case Dred Scott vs. Sanford decided that black Americans had no rights because they were not citizens, and the nation's founders had not intended for them to be citizens. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, a Jackson appointee, also said no legislature could prohibit slavery in a United States territory (Davidson 543-44).

This second half of Taney's decision finished the murder of the Missouri Compromise begun three years earlier by the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

By late 1855, John Brown had begun his raids in Kansas against slaveowners. From the beginning, Emerson publicly supported Brown's use of force. Emerson participated in Concord's fundraising efforts to assist Brown's purchase of weapons. Emerson's support of Brown was not at all unusual in Concord. Several of the men (called the Secret Six) who collected \$13,000 to finance Brown's Harper's Ferry raid were acquaintances of Emerson's--Theodore Parker, Thomas W. Higginson, Samuel G. Howe, and Franklin Sanborn. After Brown was condemned to death for the Harper's Ferry raid, Emerson was among those who raised money to cover his legal costs. After Brown was hanged on December 2, 1859, Emerson attended sympathy services in Concord with fellow abolitionists Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, and Sanborn. By 1860, Brown's daughters were living with Emerson and Lidian and attending school in Concord (VH 217-52).

His speeches from the late 1850s reveal an Emerson far more radical than that of the early 1840s. In his speech of September 10, 1856, (given the name "Kansas Relief Meeting" in EAS), Emerson says "there is no Union" (114) and speaks of impending conflict. He continues: "I am glad to see that the terror at disunion and anarchy is disappearing . . . A harder task will the new revolution of the nineteenth century be, than was the revolution of the eighteenth century" (EAS 115). In a speech he gave on November 18, 1859, at a meeting held for Brown's family, he

defends Brown by saying that he believes in the Golden Rule and the Declaration of Independence. He seems to want the members of his audience to decide that the difference between Brown and themselves is merely that of methodology--the ideologies are the same. Richardson addresses Emerson's radical views on Brown:

Emerson recognized and approved of John Brown's apocalyptic finality and his intransigent moral absolutism and he quoted what J.B. had said to him privately about the Golden Rule and the Declaration of Independence: 'Better that a whole generation of men, women and children should pass away by a violent death than that one word of either should be violated in this country' (498-99).

On this eve of the Civil War, Emerson was clearly on the side of disunion and violence as means to end slavery.

Chapter Five

The Civil War and Beyond

“The end of all political struggle, is, to establish morality as
the basis of all legislation . . . morality is the object of
government.” (‘Fortune of the Republic’)

Emerson was not alone in his acceptance of violence as a means to settle the slavery question. On December 2, 1859, abolitionists met at Tremont Temple in Boston to consider the question, “How Can American Slavery be Abolished?” A mob caused the meeting to disband early. Later in the day, a meeting at the Black Baptist Church across town met with the same fate. On January 24, 1861, Emerson was scheduled to speak at the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. Police were employed for this midday event. Rowdy crowd members made enough noise to delay the beginning of his speech, and during the speech they made enough noise that Emerson ended the speech early. Police dispersed the meeting. When organizers returned later in the day to resume the meeting, they found the doors to the Tremont Temple locked by the mayor's orders (VH 262-66).

While he did not mind that other persons used violence , Emerson had no taste for violence near his person. Gougeon says, “Despite the fact that his powerful social conscience would frequently compel his presence in the public arena, his

temperament was such that he always found these circumstances [rowdy, potentially violent crowds] uncomfortable in the extreme, and rarely satisfying” (VH 266). He had reason for concern regarding his personal safety--abolitionists were sometimes harmed in the pursuit of justice. He remembered what had happened to Elijah Lovejoy* and to Charles Sumner because they had dared to speak against slavery. Nor was he alone in his concern. By the 1860s, the equally visible Wendell Phillips was carrying a revolver and employing armed bodyguards (VH 263).

Lincoln's November election scared Southern Fireaters enough that they chose secession from the United States, with South Carolina leading the charge on December 20, 1860. South Carolina continued its role as leader by firing the first shots of what would become the Civil War on April 12, 1861. Although men such as Lincoln saw secession as disaster and Union as paramount, abolitionists saw in the conflict an opportunity. Gougeon says, “Emerson, like other abolitionists, had not actively sought violent confrontation w. the South, but now that the Southerners had taken the initiative and opened the attack, the opportunity to crush slavery absolutely was not to be missed” (VH 270). The war represented the inevitable end of immoral slavery that he had been predicting for years. The actions of man had created the problem; war was God's way of fixing the problem (VH 270). Richardson reports that Emerson did not support a war fought solely to repair a union of half

* Lovejoy was the abolitionist journalist killed by a mob in Alton, IL on November 8, 1837.

free/half slave states, and he refused to let his son enlist to fight such a war*. The war would only receive Emerson's full support once it began to combat slavery directly (547, 550).

Although early Union battle strategy appeared to consist of botched battles and lost opportunities, anti-slavery strategy fared far better. In the first year of the war, Lincoln insisted he was fighting the war to save the Union. He was afraid that attacking slavery head-on would alienate slaveholders in the border states, and the Union could not afford to lose the men and materials provided by these states. Slavery would have to be nibbled at slowly in order to give non-abolitionists time to adjust. Abolitionists, seeking whatever argument would work best, decided to urge emancipation on the grounds of military necessity. Slaves were being used in the Confederacy to plant crops, build buildings, nurse soldiers, and work in mines; they allowed the Confederacy to send a smaller percentage of its men of military age to fight than the Union. Clearly, their presence was a great advantage to the Confederacy. Confiscation of enemy property used in the war effort was legal under international law. On August 8, 1861, Lincoln authorized the seizure of all Confederate property used in military aid.

* Although Emerson gave Edward his blessing to enlist after the Emancipation Proclamation was announced, Edward decided not to fight in the war. He was Emerson's only surviving son, and friends of the family urged him not enlist (Richardson 550).

Military and Congressional measures contributed to slavery's slow death. In May 1861, Union General Benjamin Butler allowed three slaves who escaped to Fortress Monroe in Virginia, his position at the time, to remain with him. He considered them contraband of war. By August, 1000 escaped slaves had fled to the fortress, and abolitionists were making plans to establish schools for them. In 1862, Congress passed several bills in rapid succession regarding the abolition of slavery. On March 13, Union officers were prohibited from returning escaped slaves to the Confederacy. In April, all slaves in Washington D.C. were freed, and owners were promised no more than \$300 in compensation. In June, slavery was abolished in the territories; also, the United States would work with Great Britain to end the Atlantic slave trade. On July 17, all slaves who entered Union lines were freed forever (McPherson 265-70).

Even though Lincoln's primary war objective was to put the Union back together, he was by no means pro-slavery. Judging Lincoln by the definitions given in chapter one, he had been anti-slavery as long as he had been in public life. He had not been an abolitionist, having never taken active measures to end slavery. He knew how entrenched slavery was, and he knew ending it was not as simple as abolitionists wanted it to be. Still, he knew slavery to be both a moral wrong and a great aid to the Confederacy. In July, he asked the Border States to consider gradual emancipation; when they refused, he began drafting the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. On July 22, 1862, he convened his Cabinet to announce his

intentions. Secretary of State William Seward wisely warned Lincoln to hold the public announcement until after a big Union military victory. He received that win on September 17 at Antietam, Maryland, where Lee's invasion was repulsed. The preliminary Proclamation was made public on September 22.

After the war began, Emerson's circle of influence gained important new members. In January 1862, he traveled to Washington D.C. in order to speak at the Smithsonian. While there, he met Lincoln and several members of the Cabinet. Lincoln and Emerson made positive impressions on one another. In his journal, Emerson called Lincoln "frank, sincere, and well-meaning" (JMN 15: 187). Lincoln asked Emerson's opinion on a case currently pending: that of a slavetrader named Gordon who was to be hanged for his choice of profession. He encouraged Lincoln to have Gordon hanged, and he was on February 25, 1862. Emerson was also able to discuss with abolitionist Secretary of Treasury Salmon Chase the Port Royal (Louisiana) experiment in which slaves captured by the Union would be educated and trained to fight in the war. Emerson unreservedly supported both measures seeking to raise the status of the black individual (VH 276-78).

When Lincoln announced the proclamation in September, Emerson was, of course, delighted. Although he disagreed with segments of the proclamation--emancipation was in the areas still in rebellion rather than everywhere, and the bill allowed a hundred-day grace period rather than demanding immediate emancipation--he regarded the measure as an important and still meaningful step to end slavery

permanently (VH 286). His speech "The President's Proclamation," delivered on October 12, 1862, is supportive of the act. He ranks the proclamation with what he calls other great acts of liberation, including the founding of America, the Declaration of Independence, and the British emancipation of the West Indies. He praises Lincoln's timing and moderation even as he says the proclamation was inevitable. Negotiation to keep the Southern states in the Union would have been unending. He says the proclamation's purpose is to destroy an immoral South in order to force it to rebuild a less objectionable system. Slavery, now abolished, cannot be reinstated: "The war was and is an immense mischief, but brought with it the immense benefit of drawing a line, and rallying the Free States to fix it impassably. . . ." (134).

On January 1, 1863, Emerson read his poem "Boston Hymn" at a musical event held in Boston in honor of the proclamation. The poem, composed especially for the occasion, celebrates American equality and simplicity. God is weary of kings; if Americans still seek a king, let freedom be that king. He created the United States as a place where "fishers and choppers and ploughmen/Shall constitute a state," and all will toil equally (1214). God tells them to cut their own trees and build wooden houses. When others perform your work, you place yourself in eternal debt to them. God's final statement to Americans expresses Emerson's belief in the inevitability of freedom: "My will fulfilled shall be,/For, in daylight or in dark,/ My thunderbolt has eyes to see/His way home to the mark" (1215).

Emerson's speech "Fortune of the Republic," first delivered on December 1, 1863, contains encouragement for the future United States. He says the war is necessary to ensure peace and prosperity for a United States poised for world leadership. War has led to a better definition of "American" and greater patriotism. The North's early defeats prevented it from making generous concessions to an unfortunate South; rather, early defeats toughened the North and provided the focus a too-soon victorious South lacked. He applauds the war for leading people to think about larger issues (such as freedom, patriotism, and morality) instead of merely material ones. He reminds Americans that, to whom much has been given, much is expected.

"Fortune of the Republic" also directs sarcasm toward the Confederacy and Northern Copperheads*. Emerson thanks the South for its mistakes which led to the war. These include the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law which excited tensions against the South and the brash firing on Fort Sumter which began the war. He thanks the Confederacy for unapologetically announcing that slavery was the "cornerstone" (148) of their state, thus damning in the eyes of the world. He also thanks Northern Copperheads for weakening the Confederate cause by alienating decent men.

* Also referred to as Peace Democrats, Copperheads were Northern Democrats in favor of negotiation/compromise with the Confederacy in order to end the war quickly. The name was used derisively by opponents (McPherson 272).

Abolitionists received their long-time wish on January 31, 1865, when Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. The amendment abolishes slavery and all other involuntary servitude except as punishment for a convict. The joy granted by this act and Lee's surrender on April 9 ended suddenly with Lincoln's assassination on April 14. Emerson was shocked by the shooting, but not surprised. He considered Booth a barbaric Southerner of the same type as Preston Brooks. When he spoke of Lincoln on April 19 at a memorial service in Concord, he said Lincoln's contributions to the country were comparable only to Washington's (VH 315-16).

During and after the war, Emerson fully supported civil rights for freed slaves following the war. In March, 1863, he spoke at a fundraiser to support the Massachusetts Fifty-fourth, a black regiment. So many men enlisted that a Fifty-fifth regiment was formed. In February, 1864, he encouraged support for black education at a fundraiser for a black orphanage in Concord (VH 295-98, 306). Congress helped in the struggle for black civil rights by passing the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments*. The fourteenth made all persons born or naturalized in the United States citizens; the fifteenth gave men of any color or race the right to vote (McPherson 511-12). Charles Sumner's Civil Rights bill supposedly guaranteeing equal rights in conveyances, theaters, inns, juries, and the like passed posthumously

* The fourteenth was ratified on July 28, 1868; the fifteenth on March 30, 1870 (McPherson 511-12).

in 1875 (VH 333). By this time, his seventy-second year, Emerson had seen many of his hopes for increased American freedom come true.

By the late 1860s, Emerson's eyesight and physical strength were beginning to fail (VH 324). By the 1870s, embarrassment over failing memory caused to Emerson to lecture much less frequently than in the past. When he did lecture, he had difficulty remembering what to say. On July 23/24, 1872, a nighttime house fire disoriented him to a point from which he never fully returned. The neighbors he had lived with his entire life rushed to his aid, throwing water on the fire and possessions out the windows. Although the office containing his papers and books was not burned, his papers were disorganized and dampened by the efforts to save them. The extensive repairs to the house were performed and financed by friends and community members, and he was able to travel to Europe with what was left of the donations. Still, the fire largely ended his lecture career (Richardson 557, 565-68). Gougeon reports that in these later years Emerson received letters from "fans" and abolitionists, attesting to the influence his words and actions had on them. Gougeon says, "These [letters] must have been especially pleasing to him because he always felt that his true role in matters of social reform was that of the scholar/poet; to inspire and to offer a guiding light to those who mount the stump or bear the rifle" (VH 334).

The 1860s had begun a long series of deaths for Emerson. Theodore Parker was the first to die, in May 1860 (VH 258). May in each of the following years

included the death of a friend: Thoreau in 1862, Mary Moody Emerson in 1863, and Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1864 (Richardson 548, 551-52). Fellow abolitionists George Stearns and Charles Sumner died in 1867 and 1874, respectively (VH 324, 333). His brother William died in September 1868 (Richardson 560). On April 19, 1882, Emerson had the misfortune to get wet while taking a walk. By April 22, he was bedridden with pneumonia. On April 27, it became Emerson's time to die as well (Richardson 572-73).

Chapter Six

Conclusions

“It is not possible to extricate oneself from the questions in
which your age is involved.” (FSL Address, 1854)

Before forming an opinion of Ralph Waldo Emerson's level of intellectual and physical involvement in the anti-slavery/abolitionist movement, it is important to look at all his actions and writings. Although the previous statement may seem obvious, too many of the previous studies of his life neglected to look at the whole picture. Many seem to have limited their focus to either a few of his essays, or one phase of his life, to the exclusion of all others. Gougeon and Richardson have even accused some biographers of deliberately omitting information from their books which did not suit their visions of Emerson. In Virtue's Hero, Gougeon lists several explanations for Emerson's mistaken reputation as an apolitical Transcendentalist.

The main reason for confusion about Emerson's abolitionism was the difficulty of access to documents that gave evidence of his involvement. Many of his anti-slavery writings have been lost; accounts of their content exist only in old newspaper articles or eyewitness accounts, and these accounts are in no way certain to represent accurately what Emerson said. Emerson did not consider his political writings among his best and contributed to future confusion by often not bothering to publish them.

Most of the documents in Emerson's Anti-Slavery Writings (1995) were not available for researchers before 1903. These documents include some of his most radical--the address on the West Indian emancipation, the Fugitive Slave Law Addresses, and the speeches on John Brown. While reading these speeches leaves little doubt of his opinions, Holmes and others writing in the 1880s would not have had access to them. In 1903, these writings were included in a volume of The Complete Works entitled "Miscellanies." The title of the volume suggests that these writings were considered less important than earlier, less controversial writings. The title gives no suggestion of what type of writing is inside. Other anti-slavery lectures, such as the "Lecture on Slavery" from 1855, were not available in print before 1995.

Another aid not available to early researchers were Emerson's journals and notebooks. Portions of his journals were first published between 1909 and 1914. His journals and notebooks became fully available between 1960 and 1982. Both provide his private musings on the issues of his lifetime; changes in these musings often pre-date the changes evident in his speeches.

Although men such as Holmes did not have access to many of Emerson's anti-slavery writings, later biographers certainly did. It seems as if many of the later biographers read Holmes's account and did not question it. Oliver Wendell Holmes was a prominent figure in American politics after the Civil War, and his biography of Emerson was widely read and respected. His vision of Emerson became the vision to accept or refute. Those who knew differently--Emerson's abolitionist cohorts--were

either dead or aging. The knowledge they had of Emerson's actions and words died with them and was not revived until well into the twentieth century.

Emerson's level of involvement varies greatly depending on which period of his life is under consideration. Before the mid-1840s, he was anti-slavery but not an abolitionist. He saw slavery as a great moral wrong. Its presence troubled him, but he did not think he could do much to end it. His actions in protest of slavery consisted of prayer and the occasional dramatization of its cruelty in a church or public lecture. His focus in this period was on himself, rather than on society. He resented reformers who tried to turn his focus outward on a world he knew he had little control over. He still believed he could best make a difference by living in self-reliance, and encouraging others to do the same.

By 1844, he was leaning toward abolitionism; his views were less conservative. His horror at slavery and suspicion of the South were not radical beliefs. Although the concerns over commerce revealed in "Man the Reformer" may have seemed excessive to some of neighbors--for instance, the suggestion to produce one's own food and clothing, not out of necessity, but out of a desire to avoid sinful trade--they were still not radical. The only truly radical aspect of "The Address on the Emancipation . . ." is his defense of the black race. It was possible to hate slavery and actively seek its end while still feeling superior to the black race, and many abolitionists did.

The mid-1840s reveal a changing Emerson. At that time, he seems to have realized that slavery would not go away with prayer and the actions of a handful of

individuals. Speaking publicly on slavery was an important change for him in two ways. It was his first speech on a political issue of the day. Second, the choice of one issue--slavery--contradicted his previous assertions that single issues were not appropriate topics for discussion. He was moving toward his later belief that slavery corrupted the whole person, and thus, the society in which that person lived. Hence, the abolition of slavery was not simply the cure of one problem; it facilitated the cure of the entire individual.

The 1850s witnessed the height of Emerson's abolitionism. By the early 1850s, Emerson was a committed abolitionist. His views were becoming more radical. Although the distrust he voices about his political leaders and the laws they create is not radical, his solution for dealing with disliked laws is. Although Thoreau thought nothing of going to jail for his beliefs, the public resistance of a federal law was not for the timid. Opposition to the Fugitive Slave Law and participation in the Underground Railroad proved he was anything but timid. At this stage in his life, Emerson felt an intense need to both speak and act. By the late 1850s, Emerson had become a radical abolitionist. He had long had the sense that slavery's demise was inevitable, and he knew the time was near. John Brown, extreme in a way not easily ignored, symbolized the crisis point at which the nation had arrived. He was willing to support Brown's violence if it brought slavery to a faster death. He even came to believe in the necessity of a sundered Union and a war by which to recreate that

Union correctly. Channing would have had difficulty recognizing Emerson at this point; he had changed that much in twenty years.

Even as he advocated breaking the immoral laws that upheld slavery, Emerson still respected working within the law. He encouraged people to vote. He also encouraged communication with elected leaders either in person or through letters and petitions. If a person believed in a candidate for office, that person should campaign for the candidate. He believed change was possible and worth working toward. Throughout his career, Emerson would practice what he advocated. He voted; he campaigned; he wrote letters and signed petitions. He never shirked the duties he asked of others.

Despite obvious changes in tone and action in the 1850s, Emerson's Transcendental individualism was still present. He pursued the path he thought best based on universal law. If what was best appeared increasingly radical and required breaking the law, then that was what he must do. If what was best required greater interaction with an often unpleasant and sometimes dangerous public, then he had to sacrifice his love of peace and privacy to educate that public. As in the 1830s and early 1840s, he was often misunderstood or criticized; he never let that stop him. In these important ways, Emerson never changed.

Channing would have recognized him.

Notes

Chapter One

1. The "Divinity School Address" was first delivered on July 15, 1838, to six members of a senior divinity class at Harvard. Also attending were friends, family, and teachers. The address attacks formal Christianity's reliance on the second-hand God related by the minister to his congregation. Instead, Emerson advocates detaching oneself from organized religion and finding one's own relationship with God. The speech caused enough of a stir to prevent Emerson from speaking at Harvard again for thirty years. See Richardson, 288-92, and Gougeon, 59-62.

Chapter Two

2. Channing's eight rights of man: 1) to acquire knowledge; 2) to find his proper role and perform it; 3) to better himself; 4) to be respected, according to his moral worth; 5) to belong to a community and be protected within it; 6) to be free from undeserved punishment; 7) to be paid for his labor; and 8) to have a family and a home (36-7). Of these rights, he says, "Slavery violates not one, but all; and violates them, not incidentally, but necessarily, systematically, from its very nature" (51).

Chapter Three

3. Attempts to remove the Cherokee from Georgia began in 1830, when Congress passed a removal bill and Georgia declared the Cherokee constitution and its laws null and void. Although Chief Justice Marshall ruled in 1832 that Georgia's laws did not extend over Cherokee territory, President Jackson ignored the ruling and continued efforts at removal. Martin Van Buren continued Jackson's policies. Following an arrest, Chief John Ross agreed to have the Cherokee out of Georgia by 1838. It was this impending removal that Emerson was protesting. See Davidson, pp. 390-92.

4. He read The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament by Thomas Clarkson (1808/1839) and Emancipation in the West Indies: A Six Month's Tour in Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica, in the Year 1837 by James A. Thome and J. Horace Kimball (1838), which depicts how emancipation was a success. He also contacted his friend Ellis Gray Loring, a local abolitionist lawyer; Loring gave him information on black New Englanders held in the South, the English Act of Emancipation, and a copy of Lofft's Reports describing the Somerset case described in "An Address." See Gougeon, VH, 74-5 and 88-9.

5. The black seamen were arrested when the boats entered the South on the premise that they might cause trouble while the boat was docked. The shipmaster

was then called upon to pay the arrest costs. If he did not pay, the seaman was sold into slavery to pay the costs (Gougeon 127).

Chapter Four

6. Other provisions of the Compromise of 1850 included: 1) California's admission to the union as a free state; 2) New Mexico and Arizona were admitted as territories; whether they were free soil or not would be decided later; 3) the slave trade in Washington D.C. would cease; 4) the interstate slave trade was placed beyond the interference of the federal government; and 5) the United States would pay Texas's debts from its days as a nation. Because some parts of the bill were objectionable and others not, the parts were passed individually.

7. On April 19, 1775, Concord's minutemen had successfully defended the town against 700 British soldiers after Paul Revere's now famous ride warned of impending trouble. The Battle of Lexington and Concord would become the first battle of the American Revolution. For Emerson and others, the South's win on this date seemed to add insult to injury (Davidson 189).

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