



R.W.E.

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EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

Distinguished Achievement Award Presented to David LaRocca

David LaRocca (www.davidlarocca.org), recipient of the 2022 Ralph Waldo Emerson Society Distinguished Achievement Award, joins a group of individuals distinguished by their formative contributions to the study of Emerson, contributions that not only put students and scholars in “a working mood,” as Emerson might say, but also in many cases make work possible.

In 2009 Stanley Cavell received the award at the ALA annual meeting in Boston. When I self-consciously asked him to sign my tattered, coffee-stained, dog-eared copy of his book *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* (Stanford 2003)—a book edited by LaRocca under the name David Justin Hodge—Cavell said, “I love beat-up books.” My copy of LaRocca's *Estimating Emerson: Criticism from Carlyle to Cavell* (Bloomsbury 2012), is equally beat up; or put otherwise, well loved. An invaluable resource, it compiles substantive portions of texts written by poets, philosophers, artists, and critics from the nineteenth century to now, who provoked—or were provoked by—Emerson. LaRocca's concise and helpfully contextualizing introductions accompany each selection. This book in many ways embodies what distinguishes LaRocca's contribution to Emerson studies: His work, in breadth and depth alike, enables us to better see the many circles of conversation in which Emerson participates, circles that extend far beyond nineteenth-century Concord and well beyond the often-narrow parameters of specialized disciplines, methodological conventions, and academia more generally.

An overview of LaRocca's scholarship on Emerson offers a partial portrait of this achievement. His books focused on Emerson include the intellectual biography *On Emerson* (Wadsworth 2003, published under the name David Justin Hodge) and *Emerson's English Traits and the Natural History of Metaphor* (Bloomsbury 2013). His edited books include *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* by Stanley Cavell (Stanford 2003), *Estimating Emerson: An Anthology of Criticism from Carlyle to Cavell* (Bloomsbury 2012), *A Power to Translate the World: New Essays on*

Emerson and International Culture co-edited with Ricardo Miguel-Alfonso (Dartmouth College Press 2015), and *The Bloomsbury Anthology of Transcendental Thought: From Antiquity to the Anthropocene* (Bloomsbury 2017). His articles on Emerson range from “Reforming Emerson: A Review of Recent Scholarship” (*Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 2001), to “Not Following Emerson: Intelligibility and Identity in the Authorship of Literature, Science, and Philosophy” (*The Midwest Quarterly* 2013), to “Translating Carlyle: Ruminating on the Models of Metafiction at the Emergence of an Emersonian Vernacular” (*Religions* 2017). His book chapters highlight varieties of Emerson's reception and influence: Emerson and *The Gates* in Central Park; Emerson and film; Emerson and Nietzsche; Emerson and John Stuart Mill; Emerson and Maurice Maeterlinck. Taken as a living body of thinking, LaRocca's scholarship demonstrates, in Emerson's words, the “broad, radiating, immensely distributive action of nature and of mind.”

In fact, one might say of LaRocca's scholarship what LaRocca says of the commonplace book for Emerson: it “is not a repository of finished thoughts ... but an atmosphere in which to think. Possessing an idea does not come from jotting it down under some heading but from perceiving its connection to other terms and fields, concepts and features” (*Emerson's English* 149). LaRocca's *Emerson's English Traits and the Natural History of Metaphor* (Bloomsbury 2013) is an exemplar of a book that provides “an atmosphere in which to think.” It's a capacious, engaging, and much-needed study of Emerson's *English Traits* and of what this “uncharacteristic hybrid, [this] unique specimen” (1) in Emerson's oeuvre teaches us about Emerson's (and our own) ways of thinking. In LaRocca's account, *English Traits* is a “work about the interaction between a concept and a country—about how we know a place by name, and understand its people by their characteristics” yet it takes the form of “a kaleidoscopic, interdisciplinary account” (2). A “hybridized mode of cultural critique” (2), it occasions

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ESP welcomes notes and short articles (up to eight double-spaced, typed pages) on Emerson-related topics. Manuscripts are blind refereed. On matters of style, consult previous issues. We also solicit news about Emerson-related community, school, and other projects; information about editions, publications, and research in progress on Emerson and his circle; queries and requests for information in aid of research in these fields; and significant news of Emersonian scholars. Send manuscripts to the editor, Michael Weisenburg, Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of South Carolina, 1322 Greene Street, Columbia, SC 29208, or emersonsocietypapers.editor@gmail.com (email submissions are much preferred).

Review copies of books on Emerson should be sent to book reviews editor Krissie West at Kristina.west@btopenworld.com; please email regarding address for physical copies.

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search for it. "A man has got to learn that he must embrace the truth or shall never know it, that to be thankful for *a little is a way to get more*" (*JMN IV*: 51, emphasis added). We must be open to increasing our knowledge and better appreciating the truth, beauty and goodness of Spirit.

In sum, Emerson was a relativist because he thought that qualities in the world exist to the extent they partake of Spirit and an absolutist because he thought that ultimate existence and perfection were only properties of the ever-blessed ONE.

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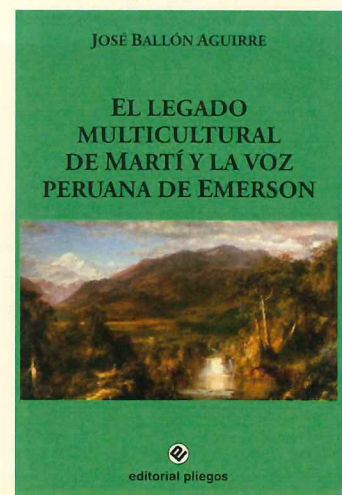
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Reviews

EL LEGADO MULTICULTURAL DE MARTÍ Y LA VOZ PERUANA DE EMERSON. José Ballón, Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 2022. 767 pp.

José Ballón's work discusses Emerson's literary influence on the Cuban patriot and writer José Martí. His latest book, *El Legado Multicultural de Martí y la voz Peruana de Emerson* [José Martí's Cultural Legacy and Emerson's Peruvian Voice], considers Emerson's multicultural background, with a focus on Emerson's early journals. Specifically, in Chapter II, Professor Ballón analyzes the presence of Emerson's "Peruvian voice" in journal entries written during Emerson's time at Harvard and shortly thereafter (1820-1822). Influenced by George Ticknor, Edward Everett, and the writings of Alexander

von Humboldt, Charles Sismondi and William Robertson, Emerson reimagines Shakespeare's Ariel and Caliban in a poetic, counter-conquest. Other chapters address Martí's readings of Emerson's *Nature* (1836) as well as the later "Nature" from *Essays: Second Series* (1844), and the importance of Emerson and Martí from a hemispheric perspective.



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