

“Transcendentalist Intersections: Literature, Philosophy, Religion”

University of Heidelberg, Germany, July 26 - 29, 2018

Sponsored by the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, the Margaret Fuller Society, and the Anglistisches Seminar and Center for American Studies at the University of Heidelberg

At its first meeting in 1836, the Transcendental Club declared an “organ of spiritual philosophy” to be essential to the project, and, when *The Dial* came forth in 1840 under Margaret Fuller’s editorship, its subtitle—“Literature, Philosophy, and Religion”—was meant to convey both the breadth and depth of the movement’s aims. As Emerson introduced it, the ambitious new journal would “share [in such] impulses of the time” as “special reforms to the state,” “modifications of the various callings of men,” “opening a new scope for literature and art,” “philosophical insight,” and “the vast solitudes of prayer.”

In the spirit of *The Dial*, and with its subtitle too, the organizers of “Transcendentalist Intersections” invite paper proposals seeking to do justice to that breadth and depth of the movement, generously construed. For this multi-disciplinary, international conference dedicated to new scholarship on American Transcendentalism, we are particularly interested in proposals engaging literature, philosophy, and religion, and especially encourage not only literary scholars but historians, philosophers, theologians, and others to share their ideas.

With regard to literature, we welcome papers examining texts and authors traditionally ignored or cast as “minor”; such forms as journalism, literature of reform or revolt, correspondence, travel writing, history, philosophy as literature; relations between literature and visual or musical arts; biographical approaches; transnational dialogues; reception history, the history of the book and the relevance of literary institutions; and revisionist approaches to or paradigms of Transcendentalism. We encourage papers that address the convergences and tensions between literature and philosophical issues on the one hand and/or issues of religion, spirituality, or the sacred on the other.

With regard to religion, we especially invite papers discussing the entanglements of Transcendentalists (major or minor) with other 19th-century American religious movements such as the Second Great Awakening, the Holiness and Spiritualist revivals, Catholic immigration, and the emergence of groups centered around new “American Scriptures” such as Mormonism. We are interested in the engagement of Transcendentalists with various Christian theological debates and scholarly discourses of the time, such as the higher criticism, the “New Christianity” of the Saint-Simonians, the Christian socialism of the Abbé Lammenais, the pantheism of Pierre Leroux, and the comparative study of religion. We also encourage papers investigating the contribution of Transcendentalists to the construction of religion as a category or of particular religious traditions

(e.g. “Hinduism” or “Buddhism”); as well as Transcendentalism’s role in the coming of the modern paradigm of “seeker spirituality.”

With regard to philosophy, we encourage proposals in all of the subfields that have been so vigorously engaged by Transcendentalist scholars in recent years. This would especially include work on the Transcendentalists in relation to social and political philosophy (e.g., feminism, antislavery, liberalism, democracy, socialism, environmentalism, human rights); religious philosophy (e.g., secularism and post-secularism); ethics (e.g., Kantian and post-Kantian, pragmatist ethics, virtue ethics); metaphysics (e.g., "neo-Platonism, Romantic theories of being and selfhood, Nietzscheanism, post-metaphysics"); epistemology (e.g., agnosticism, fallibilism, anti-foundationalism, skepticism); and aesthetics (symbolism, theories of metaphor and poetic expression, art and social reform, translation, and (again) music and the visual arts).

Please direct abstracts (300-500 words) and two-page CVs by August 1, 2017 to any of the members of the conference planning subcommittee: Charlene Avallone avallone000@gmail.com, Dan Malachuk ds-malachuk@wiu.edu, or Jan Stievermann jstievermann@hca.uni-heidelberg.de.

A conference webpage and announcement of keynote speakers are forthcoming. For more information about our hosts, see http://www.hca.uni-heidelberg.de/index_en.html and <http://www.as.uni-heidelberg.de/>