

proclaimed his emancipated status by enlisting as Brister Freeman in 1779 (p. 108). Six years later, in another assertion of autonomy, he and another veteran, Charlestown Eaves, bought an acre of land near Walden Pond. There, as many as fifteen former slaves and their offspring eventually “clustered together within a larger enclave of other poor inhabitants” (p. 162). After the death of his wife, Fenda, Freeman entered into a relationship with a white neighbor, the widow Rachel LeGrosse; however, their union could not be formalized because of laws against interracial marriage in Massachusetts.

In her final chapters, Lemire responds to Thoreau’s question of why the small village failed by underscoring the overwhelming social, legal, and economic obstacles its black inhabitants faced—difficulties that were heightened by the hostility and racism of their distant white neighbors in Concord. After suffering a series of losses, Brister Freeman died in 1822, followed eighteen days later by his eight-year-old grandson; with these deaths, “the Freeman family disappeared from Concord” (p. 171). As Lemire wryly observes, the dwindling number of descendants of former slaves made it increasingly easy for the town to erase its “slave history,” so that by the time of the celebration of the centennial of the battle at the North Bridge, the proud white community “was able to claim that Concord’s farmers tilled their own soil and that in so doing they had garnered the strength to fight for and ultimately to secure a new nation’s liberty” (p. 173). By so movingly telling the story of another embattled group, whose resistance to slavery and racism forms a different strand in the struggle for liberty, Lemire has genuinely enriched our understanding not only of the history of Concord but also of the country for which that fabled town still so often stands.

Linck Johnson, *Charles A. Dana Professor of English at Colgate University, is the author of numerous works on Emerson, Thoreau, and transcendentalism and the coeditor, with Susan Belasco, of the two-volume* BEDFORD ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE (2008).

*Sargent’s Daughters: The Biography of a Painting.* By Erica E. Hirschler. (Boston: MFA Publications, 2009. Pp. x, 262. \$29.95.)

Among the notable achievements of expatriate John Singer Sargent’s artistic career was his creation of a sequence of innovative, masterful paintings during his first professional decade. Two of these paintings are now in Boston museums. Interestingly, they were

completed in the same year (1882) and were later acquired by their respective Boston institutions in similar ways and at almost the same time. Sargent's dramatic picture of a Spanish gypsy dancer, *El Jaleo*, entered Fenway Court (now the Gardner Museum) in 1914, when Mrs. Gardner constructed a special setting for it, persuading her kinsman Thomas Jefferson Coolidge, who had bought the work during the 1882 Paris Salon, to present it to her. Sargent's evocative painting of four young girls in the shadowy interior of their family home in Paris, *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, was exhibited in Paris in 1882 and again at the 1883 Salon, but it stayed in the Boits' possession until the family loaned it to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1912. There it remained on continuous display until 1919, when the four girls, now adult women, donated the portrait to the museum. In recent years, as part of the ongoing reconsideration of Sargent's achievement, both works have attracted enthusiastic, general admiration as well as serious scholarly scrutiny. The portrait of the Boit daughters, however, has proved more controversial in terms of interpretive writing.

It is within the context of interpretive writing that Erica Hirschler's *Sargent's Daughters* should be read. The author, a senior curator of American Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, with a special interest in Boston culture, utilizes a novel and informative approach. As the title suggests, Hirschler pursues a biographical perspective, setting forth the lives of the Boit family members in a detailed but highly readable chronicle. These sections, which comprise approximately half the book's chapters, represent its greatest strength. The author overcomes an unfortunate dearth of Boit family writings by making excellent use of other contemporary materials, notably the unpublished diaries of Edward Boit's younger brother, Robert (Bob), and letters and reminiscences by contemporaries who knew the family, such as the writer Henry James. We learn of the upper-class Boston background of handsome Edward (Ned) Boit and his vivacious, sociable wife, Mary Louisa (Isa) Cushing, their marriage, the arrival of their children, and their travels and eventual residence in Europe, particularly as part of the wealthy American expatriate community in Paris, where Ned obtained training as a painter and enjoyed modest success as a skilled amateur artist.

But there was a dark side to this seemingly gilded life. Ned and Isa's first-born child, a son named Edward after his father, failed to develop mentally and was institutionalized in 1870 at age five. Furthermore, their eldest daughter, Florence, and Jane, her younger

sibling by two years, became difficult personalities only a few years after Sargent's painting was completed, taxing Isa's abilities to mother them. Florence, "rude and ungrateful to her mother—unsympathetic to her parents," in Bob Boit's words (p. 135), refused to become the belle of Boston in her 1886 debutante season and, like her sisters, never married (although she later became an accomplished amateur golfer and craftswoman). Jane fared worse; by age eighteen her physical health was delicate and her psychological health erratic—"in a nervous state bordering on insanity," according to her uncle Bob (p. 137). She required special care for the rest of her life. Their mother, "utterly unnerved and unstrung" by this turn of events, died in 1894, at age forty-eight (p. 139). Ned remarried in 1897 and had two sons by his much younger wife; she died in 1902, shortly after the birth of the second child. He later resumed his artistic activities, and the high point of his career arguably came with two New York exhibitions of his watercolors in 1909 and 1912. These, at Ned's behest, were joint shows with his old friend Sargent, now internationally prominent, who complied in order to discharge an obligation made years before. Ned died in 1915, at the age of seventy-five.

The four Boit daughters lived on, however, and Hirschler recounts their later years in such detail that readers might find themselves wondering whether this elaboration of essentially uneventful lives is merited. The reason for this level of attention is, of course, that Sargent's painting of the four girls as children immortalized them. Haunting, mysterious, and executed with the disciplined painterly bravura Sargent displayed at his very best, the canvas has inspired—and will continue to inspire—curiosity about why Sargent presented them as he did. Hirschler helps to answer this question by providing the four girls with historical identities for the first time. Along the way, she also offers a corrective to various ahistorical interpretive methods that have been applied to the painting by other scholars—notably David Lubin in his 1985 book *Act of Portrayal*. She addresses these issues in the book's final chapter, where she outlines the history of published responses to the painting after its acquisition by the Museum of Fine Arts.

Hirschler's closing paragraphs offer some thoughtful observations on why Sargent's *Daughters*—both the painting and this book about it—merit our attention: "What seems more important than any of these individual interpretations is that Sargent's painting has continued to speak. . . . [T]he mystical potency of this canvas is not restricted to followers of one set of beliefs or another. . . . Viewers

find the painting memorable and remarkable whether or not they have a background in art, in history, or in psychology. . . . [T]he girls in this magical . . . picture still haunt our imagination” (pp. 217–19). As Hirschler acknowledges, this is what masterpieces always do. Her book arms us with welcome new material for continued consideration of this particular masterpiece and its very special appeal.

Mary Crawford-Volk, *author of SARGENT’S “EL JALEO” (1992), is completing SARGENT AT LARGE, a book about the artist’s mural projects, for Yale University Press.*

*Becoming American Jews: Temple Israel of Boston.* By Meaghan Dwyer-Ryan, Susan L. Porter, and Lisa Fagin Davis. (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press/Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2009. Pp. xvii, 259. \$24.95 paper.)

Perhaps no synagogue in American history has been better served by scholarship than has Boston’s Temple Israel. The melodies that have been integral to its liturgy were explored in Jeffrey A. Summit’s ethnomusicological study, *The Lord’s Song in a Strange Land* (2000). Joseph Reimer showed unusual faith in the effectiveness of religious schooling in his volume examining Temple Israel, *Succeeding at Jewish Education: How One Synagogue Made It Work* (1997). In 1954, during the tercentennial celebration of the Jewish arrival in Nieuw Amsterdam, Arthur Mann edited *Growth and Achievement: Temple Israel, 1854–1954*. Mann was a specialist in the rise of American progressivism (and of its ethnic inflections). Reform Judaism flourished at the same time as Christianity was being influenced by the Social Gospel, with its idealistic expectations of amelioration through humanitarian and enlightened activism.

More than six decades after the publication of Mann’s volume, significant changes in Reform Judaism have become evident—above all, the renewed appreciation of ritual as well as the shift from a universalist credo to the sense of distinctive peoplehood. The authors of *Becoming American Jews* have made full use of the oral histories, interviews, and minutes of temple board meetings that were unavailable to Mann and his collaborators. By updating the institution’s history to the present day, this excellent book emphasizes the go-with-the-flow resilience of a synagogue that became the flagship of the region’s Reform movement.

Henry David Thoreau himself pointed out the difficulty of understanding Transcendentalism in his well-known journal entry for March 5, 1853: The secretary of the Association for the Advancement of Science requests me . . . to fill the blank against certain questions, among which the most important one was what branch of science I was specially interested in . . . I felt that it would be to make myself the laughing-stock of the scientific community to describe to them that branch of science which specially interests me, inasmuch as they do not believe in a science which deals with the higher la...Â Emerson was, as a high-profile writer, lecturer, and editor of the Transcendental periodical *The Dial*, central among the Transcendentalists. Fuller was a friend of Emerson and Thoreau, and other intellectuals of her day. Because she was a woman, she could not attend Harvard, as it was a male-only institution for undergraduate students until 1973.Â Reading Paragraph 7 Some critics took issue with transcendentalismâ€™s emphasis on individualism by pointing out the destructive consequences of compulsive human behavior. Herman Melvilleâ€™s novel, *Moby Dick*, emphasized the problems with individual obsession by telling the tale of Captain Ahabâ€™s single-minded quest to kill a white whale, *Moby Dick*, which had destroyed Ahabâ€™s original ship and caused him to lose one of his legs .Â The roots of the crisis are diverse, but among them are two primary factors. Transcendentalism and politics, in a shifting variety of formulations and iterations, continued to be a key issue for the field in 2008, as best represented in John Michael's astute essay on Emerson, liberalism, and justice and in Richard J. Schneider's well-informed study of Thoreau and 19th-century ethnography.Â Several important biographical studies appeared this year, including William Rossi's analysis of the problematics of the Emerson-Thoreau friendship, Robert D. Richardson's account of Emerson as an impassioned "writer," Joel Myerson's sourcebook on Fuller's early reputation, and Meg McGavran Murray's psychologically oriented Fuller biography.

Learn to read, appreciate, and understand American literature as Bedford Anthology of American Literature, Volume One helps you reflect on why American literature is relevant and worth reading today. Read moreRead less. Books with Buzz Discover the latest buzz-worthy books, from mysteries and romance to humor and nonfiction. Explore more.Â This item: The Bedford Anthology of American Literature, Volume One: Beginnings to 1865 by Susan Belasco Paperback \$82.00. Only 1 left in stock - order soon.Â The recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship at the American Antiquarian Society, he is a member of the Editorial Board of the Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance. Tell the Publisher! Henry David Thoreau, American essayist, poet, and Transcendentalist. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (LC-DIG-ppmsca-42177).Â ã figures in the philosophy of Transcendentalism, which affected a great part of the regionâ€™s artistic output and thought for much of the century; in the abolitionist movement championed by the outspoken writer and editor William Lloyd Garrison and others; and in liberal high-mindedness in social causes, which preoccupied many 19th-centuryã Henry David Thoreau: Friendship with Emerson. ãand affirmatives came New England Transcendentalism. In retrospect, it was one of the most significant literary movements of 19th-century America, with at least two authors of world stature, Thoreau and Emerson, Beginnings to 1865Second Edition| Â©2014Susan Belasco; Linck Johnson. Here at last is an anthology that is not simply a collection of texts, but a carefully crafted tool for teaching and learning. With engaging author and selection introductions and generous gloss notes that supply the meaning of unfamiliar words, The Bedford Anthology of American Literature he...Â Through a Modern Lens sections in Volume One connect American writers of the past with writers of the present emphasizing the ongoing influence and relevance of earlier authors on contemporary authors. Highlights include: N. Scott Momadayã€™s celebration of Native American creation stories and Kevin Youngã€™s tribute to Phyllis Wheatley. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were two famous Transcendentalists in the mid-1800ã€™s. They hung around the New England area ã“ where Eyewire HQ is located! Emerson is sometimes considered the ãœfatherã of transcendentalism, and Thoreau was a student of his. Emerson was a prolific essayist, with his most famous essay titled ãœSelf-Reliance.ã In this essay Emerson concludes that individualism is an important goal to strive for, and that conformity with institutions such as government, religious institutions, and and other organized groups should be discouraged.Â One of his most famous works is ãœWaldenã which is a reflection on his life at Walden Pond. Like Emerson, Thoreau focuses on the importance of self-reliance.