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ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance, Volume 53, Number 1, 2007
(Nos. 206 O.S.), p. ii (Article)

Published by Washington State University
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/esq.2007.0001>



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With this issue, we come to the close of Albert J. von Frank's productive two-decade tenure as editor and coeditor at *ESQ*, following his retirement in 2006 from the faculty of Washington State University. To mark the occasion and honor his rich contributions to the journal and the profession at large, colleagues and friends offer these appreciations of a scholar and mentor whose circles of influence continue to widen.

Looking back, Brigitte Bailey (University of New Hampshire) concludes that Professor von Frank has been twice-crucial to her career: first, when the challenge and invitation of his tutelage converted her, a first-year graduate student at Harvard over thirty years ago, to the study of nineteenth-century American literature; and second, when the generous rigors of his editorial support for her first publication (in *ESQ*) helped "move" her "into the profession." The recollections of Barbara Packer (UCLA) run deep in the recent history of intellectual ventures inspired, particularly, by Emerson: During one of the "fabled Snow House summers in Cambridge where the Emerson editors gathered," an advance look at what would become von Frank's first book—*The Sacred Game: Provincialism and Frontier Consciousness in American Literature, 1630–1860* (1985)—introduced her to the signal provocations of his scholarship. When his multivolume collaborative edition of Emerson's complete sermons appeared, beginning in 1989, it enlarged by many pages our accessible fund of primary materials. He followed with the "dazzling" *Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston in 1998*—"the only academic book I've ever read," Packer says, "that is impossible to put down." Another ambitious project of the 1980s, *The Poetry Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, brought von Frank into company with Ralph H. Orth (now Professor Emeritus, University of Vermont), who enlisted him for the editorial team and later recognized his extraordinary contribution in the work's preface: "Mr. von Frank . . . became the central figure of this edition. He did most of the initial research, wrote many of the analyses and reviewed all the others, and came to be regarded as the authority of last resort because of his unmatched knowledge of Emerson's published and unpublished poetry." In all he has subsequently done, Professor Orth affirms, von Frank "has shown the same high level of performance": "I am glad to have had him as an editorial comrade at the beginning of his distinguished career."

Lawrence Buell (Harvard University) credits von Frank's scholarship with a range of benefits felt by both himself and his students over the years—"one of the best papers" in a recent Harvard seminar on American transcendentalism "was inspired by a reading of *The Trials of Anthony Burns*"—and von Frank himself, in Buell's view, "exemplifies the very highest standards of professional integrity." For Teresa Toulouse (University of Colorado, Boulder), a coeditor of the Emerson sermons, von Frank's particular gift has been to quicken in her "a certain attitude toward scholarship—that it is serious, that it does involve trying to make mysterious and scrupulous contact with other minds operating in other contexts," and that it is at the same time "wonderfully pleasurable." According to David M. Robinson (Oregon State University), another collaborator on the Emerson sermons who recalls that partnership as a privilege, "every scholar working in the field of American literature owes Al von Frank a tremendous debt of gratitude" for his part in "making *ESQ* one of the profession's leading journals"—among "the best records we have of the directions this generation has taken in the study of American romanticism." And *The Trials of Anthony Burns*, in Robinson's estimation, is "a central book on transcendentalism" that will "be seen increasingly as groundbreaking and field-defining in the next several decades." Wai Chee Dimock (Yale University) offers back to von Frank a suggestive account of string theory from a book he recommended to her notice, Michio Kaku's *Parallel Worlds*: "The bewildering variety of subatomic particles are like a tiny string that 'vibrates at different frequencies and resonances': 'If we were to pluck this vibrating string, it would change mode and become another subatomic article, such as a quark. Pluck it again, and it turns into a neutrino.'" No better image comes to mind, for Dimock, of "the frequencies and resonances in Al von Frank's own work and his different modes of inspiration." For these colleagues, for me, and for *ESQ* readers past and future, this scholar is clearly a sparking presence—a mind on fire.