Acknowledgments

The development of this book is traced through a series of personal encounters over many years. As a Japanese person drawn to American philosophy, I am accustomed to being positioned as “a foreigner”—hence, to maintaining a distance from the familiar, to being a stranger. In the course of my research, a number of people have acknowledged and responded to my experience of strangeness, and this has had a profound impact on the formation of my thought. The book is, in a sense, my attempt to acknowledge this in return.

The idea for the book, which attempts to play out a triangular conversation among John Dewey, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Stanley Cavell, originated and developed through my sequential encounter with three philosophers at Harvard: Israel Scheffler, Hilary Putnam, and Cavell himself. I was introduced to pragmatism and the philosophy of education by Israel Scheffler in 1990, and since then he has continued to encourage and inspire my research. It was especially the example of Scheffler as a teacher that led me to understand what it means to be original in philosophy—that, in his words, we become original after going through “an imitation phase.” If I had not been impressed by the power of his account of education’s need for philosophy, and of philosophy’s need for education, this book would not have come into being. In 1995 and 1996 I had the good fortune to take Hilary Putnam’s course on pragmatism, during which I was especially struck by his lectures on Dewey and William James. In powerful words that conveyed the spirit of pragmatism, the meaning of “reconstruction in philosophy,” and the idea of democracy as a way of
living, his teaching motivated me to write a doctoral thesis on Dewey. I was particularly grateful to him for reading my thesis when it was nearing completion. His first visit to Japan, in the winter of 2003, when I accompanied him and Ruth Anna Putnam during their visit to Tokyo and Kyoto, was an occasion for me to recall and renew the extent of the influence that I had originally gained from him at Harvard; it gave a final boost toward the completion of the book manuscript.

My encounter with Cavell in the winter of 1996 was fateful: it determined the general path that I was to pursue thereafter, one that has led to the publication of this book. I spoke to Cavell of the way that I was struggling at the time, so it seemed, with the different voices of Emerson and Dewey within me, a relationship that, in the course of my research, emerged as pivotal for pursuing the idea—as The Claim of Reason puts this—of philosophy as the education of grown-ups. It was Cavell who responded to this thought and encouraged me to explore it in my work. In my continuing dialogue with him over the following years, I have pondered Emerson’s idea of the “gleam of light,” an idea that, I believe, is critical for any assessment of the relationship between Dewey and Emerson as philosophers of democracy.

The path of this inquiry led me to continue my doctoral work at Teachers College at Columbia University from 1997 until 2000. It was in New York that I met two teachers who were of immense importance in helping me complete this work. René Arcilla, who was my adviser, shared my passion for Emerson and Cavell, and sympathetically guided my research throughout. Nel Noddings had just arrived at Teachers College when I moved there, and her courses on the ethic of care, as well as on Dewey, were of great benefit to me as I worked on my thesis.

There are also other teachers and friends whom I would like especially to thank. Jim Garrison, who is an expert on Dewey and whom I met at the conference of the Philosophy of Education Society in Texas in 1996, has since then continued to support my research and advise on my inquiries into Dewey and Emerson. A mutual passion
for Cavell’s philosophy and the question of its relation to pragmatism has made me feel that I have known Vincent Colapietro for more than the three years of our acquaintance. I also met Andrew Feenberg in Japan in 2002. He brought his expertise in critical theory and philosophy of technology to a reading of some of my early drafts of chapters and raised challenging questions, especially concerning the feasibility of connecting Dewey’s pragmatism and Emerson’s transcendentalism. I have benefited from a number of conversations on pragmatism with Larry Hickman, both in the United States and during his visits to Japan, and I am grateful to him for introducing me to the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy. At a late stage, in 2004, I met Steve Odin in Japan, and his careful comments on the manuscript gave me some crucial suggestions regarding the idea of the gleam of light. Tatsuhito Izuka and Richard Spear, who have been my Emersonian friends for many years, have helped me clarify my ideas in dialogue.

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son and Cavell has brought me to this juncture in the path that I have been pursuing. Without his patient help and critical comments at various stages in the production of this manuscript, this book would not have been completed.

The gleam of light, the theme of this book, has been intensified for me in the trajectory of these relationships.