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EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

Sleepy Hollow Cemetery:
Philosophy Made Substance

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Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, Massachusetts, is an enchanting place, a natural amphitheater and a sequestered glen. To visiting Emerson scholars the quiet valley, which lies "as in the palm of nature's hand,"[1] must sometimes appear like philosophy made substance. Ralph Waldo Emerson's ideas did, in fact, influence the built world through the work of Horace William Shaler Cleveland (1814-1900), a nineteenth-century landscape architect.

Sleepy Hollow Cemetery was designed in 1855 by Cleveland and Robert Morris Copeland (1830-1874). Copeland's contribution to the art of landscape design was short lived. He took time away from his career to serve the Union during the Civil War and only lived to the age of forty-three. Horace Cleveland, on the other hand, went on to become one of the founding fathers of the new profession of landscape architecture.

Emerson and Cleveland were acquainted (though they were not intimates). Emerson served on the cemetery board that enlisted Cleveland's professional services, and Cleveland had a lifelong association with Emerson's cousin, George Barrell Emerson.[2] Even more significant than personal relationships was the fact that Cleveland held the work and writing of Emerson in the highest regard. Cleveland mentioned Emerson in his own writing and in personal letters to friends.[3] He wrote to one friend about a prized Emerson silhouette which he had pasted into his new diary. In "The Aesthetic Development of the United Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis" (1888), Cleveland wrote of Emerson in connection with an aesthetic vision for those cities.

Emerson influenced Horace Cleveland's thinking about landscape design and contributed to the development of his aesthetic, which in turn influenced the built landscape from Massachusetts to Minnesota. Of landscape art Emerson wrote, "It is the fine art which is left for us now that sculpture, painting, and religious and civil architecture have become effete, and have passed into second childhood." And "a well laid garden" could make "the face of the country...a beautiful abode worthy of men."[4] In an "Address to the Inhabitants of Concord at the Consecration of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery"—an address that the designer, Cleveland, probably heard—Emerson said, "What work of man will compare with the plantation of a park? It dignifies life."[5] By the middle of the nineteenth century in the wake of advancing civilization, some of the writing of Emerson, with which Cleveland was likely familiar, read like an apologia for landscape architecture.

Emerson's ideas about art and the role of the artist were also similar to Cleveland's. Emerson used the metaphor of the lightning rod ("electric rod") to explain the artist's calling. As the lightning rod reached to the sky and delivered the force of that lightning along the ground, the artist was to tap into higher understanding—given an advanced level of sensitivity—and make revelations available to the populace at large.[6] A year after the design of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Cleveland in like manner wrote that the artist in the landscape was

> ...to interpret and render legible to the popular mind the lessons...[conveyed by nature], and this is to be done not by any finical display of artificial embellishment, but by the tasteful use of such natural additions as are required to develop and carry out the sentiment which to the truly devoutly cultivated mind is evidence at a glance, even without addition. The true artist perceives the majestic grandeur of the rude cliffs and the moss covered rocks, and the beauty of the graceful forms in which the hills and fields were molded by the hand of God; but his task is to elaborate the characteristics which excite these sentiments till they impress themselves on every mind....[7]

Both men believed that the artist, with the gift of perception, had a responsibility to communicate insights for public good.

Emerson's ideas influenced Cleveland's work over an entire career, but in the design of Sleepy Hollow those ideas were particularly germane. It was, after all, to be Emerson's final resting place. It would have been difficult if not impossible for

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Sleepy Hollow

(Continued from page 1)

Copeland and Cleveland to have worked in Concord in 1855 free of the influence of Emerson.[8] In his "Consecration Address" Emerson spoke directly of the design of the cemetery—the design recently completed by Cleveland and Copeland. He argued that the landscape itself suggested the design and that it should never be "deformed by bad Art." Art should only be used to "remove superfluities, and bring out the natural advantages" of the landscape. That is in keeping with Cleveland's approach. Throughout his career he disliked mere decoration and artificial embellishment. Always, the goal was to be true to the place. Following that method, Sleepy Hollow Cemetery was designed with a light hand. The drives and paths were carefully sited along the edge of the hollow, and plantings indigenous to the area were used.

Sleepy Hollow was also conceived as a dynamic place. It would change over time in keeping with the "vast circulations of Nature."[9] True to that vision, the pond that Cleveland and Copeland designed for the cemetery was laid out by Henry Thoreau where the landform suggested it. Aquatic vegetation slowly emerged at the edge of the pond, inspiring Thoreau to write, "in the midst of death we are in life."[10] Sleepy Hollow was also to have a utilitarian function, more akin to a school or a museum, a place where the children of Concord could come and learn about nature in the games that they played. An arboretum was planted and the names of the trees were to be recorded in a book so that every child might grow beside "the eleven oaks of Massachusetts."[11]

Emerson also predicted the future of the cemetery as an historical and literary mecca. It would have a history that would be written with the interment of each passing poet. At the consecration of the cemetery Emerson spoke of that future,

> [W]hen these acorns, that are falling at our feet, are oaks overshadowing our children in a remote century, this mute green bank will be full of history: the good, the wise and great will have left their names and virtues on the trees;…will have made the air tuneable and articulate.[12]

Emerson's prediction came true. By the 1880s one observer wrote that Sleepy Hollow "besides its sacredness as a burial place, has a sort of classic character and belongs to literature as do Sunnyside, Abbotsford, and the Lake region."[13] Sleepy Hollow was never intended only as a place for the dead. Emerson argued that the living needed it more. It was designed as a place of contemplation in which nature would allow the just "relation between the Past and the Present."[14]

That just relation exists yet today. The fact that the Sleepy Hollow landscape is storied with historic and literary associations, as Emerson envisioned, has much to do with its evocative appeal. However, that is only part of Sleepy Hollow's spell. Cleveland skillfully and artistically manipulated landscape elements so that they might "impress themselves on every mind." The "ground which rises in natural inequalities," the winding, moss-covered footpaths, and the "resinous roots of the pines which answer for steps" were designed with a purpose, as if in answer to Emerson's artistic calling.[15]

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EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

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For future issues of *Emerson Society Papers* we solicit 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 (promotions, transfers, retirements, deaths, etc.) of Emersonian scholars. We will also consider notes and short articles (about 4 to 5 double-spaced typewritten pages, or less) on subjects of interest to our membership. MLA stylesheet is preferred. Send manuscripts to the editor, Douglas Emory Wilson, 1404 Christine Ave., Anniston, AL 36201.

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An English Review of *Nature*

J. Frank Schulman
Manchester College Oxford

A previously unrecorded review of Emerson's *Nature* occurs in *The Inquirer* for 24 December 1842 (vol. 1, no. 25, p. 6). *The Inquirer* was an English Unitarian weekly publication that had begun only that year and had no earlier chance to discuss the book. The review is favorable, once the caveat is stated:

> It is by no means our intention to attempt any elaborate criticism upon his philosophical and religious opinions, or upon the language in which they are clothed. Suffice it to say, that while in both there is much to which we should object, we have found in Mr. Emerson's writings many right noble ideas—many thoughts full of truth and instructiveness, expressed with singular force and earnestness. We take him, as we take all authors, for the *good* that is in him.

Solid Emersonian doctrine there: only the good. The caution is explained by a peculiar circumstance in England among the Unitarians. Although the Trinity Act (1813) seemed to make Unitarianism legal, three different courts held, and the House of Lords had only four months earlier affirmed, that the Trinity Act had only removed the penalties for "impugning the doctrine of the Holy Trinity." The penalties were removed, but Unitarianism remained a criminal offense under the common law.

Under that decision (the Lady Hewley Charities Case) the Unitarians had been deprived of their chapel in Wolverhampton and the Lady Hewley Charity. The orthodox Dissenters filed more than 200 bills to have the Unitarian chapels returned to the orthodox. The denomination was under threat of being exterminated. The situation was desperate.

The court decisions were based on the claim by the orthodox that Unitarians were not Christian. The Unitarians tried to show that they were. They said that they accepted everything plainly taught in the Scriptures—the doctrine of the Trinity not being included therein. Thus the thinking of Emerson that so offended the American Unitarians caused a similar reaction in England.

That said, the review spoke well of the book:

> It is not one for the indolent reader, but for the thoughtful and reflective alone. It presents in rich profusion the *materials* for thought. Amidst much that is grotesque, mystic, and enigmatical, there flash forth every here and there truths of deep import, which it were worth a weary journey to gain.

But again the cautionary note:

> Doubtless the book has its many errors, too—to point them out would be no hard task. But, withal, the *thought* of it is well worthy the attention of the active and *seeking* mind.

The reviewer hits the proper theme:

> In a few words, we may state the subject of this work to be, the relations of Nature to Man. . . . There is much beauty in this description of what God's Universe is constantly doing for the meanest of us:—
>
> "The misery of man appears like childish petulance, when we explore the steady and prodigal provision that has been made for his support and delight on this green ball which floats him through the heavens. What angels invented these splendid ornaments, these rich conveniences, this ocean of air above, this ocean of water beneath, this firmament of earth between?…"

The reviewer gets caught up in the spirit of the book. He says,

> Ah! yes, the poorest man has a vast property in the all-surrounding creation—more than he dreams of.—It were well that he should know of his wealth and prize it. But, continues our author, "a nobler want of man is served by Nature, namely, the love of Beauty."

And there follows an extensive quotation from the book.

The reviewer approved of most of the book. Details of his disapproval are not written out for us. He even writes with a style reminiscent of Emerson. He concludes,

> The shows and splendours of this glorious Universe are Teachers— simply teachers. The meanest fragment has its lesson—its influence—its commission as an Educator—is God with us. When we have reached this conclusion, we have read the "open secret" of Creation, and are prepared to use it well. We cannot afford space to follow Mr. Emerson through his remaining Chapters, entitled "Idealism"—"Spirit"—"Prospects." We have endeavoured to present some of his leading ideas, and to give a fair specimen of his style and manner. For the rest, the book itself lies open to whom it pleases.

The reviewer thus began by scoffing and ended by praising. Emerson had a message that needed spreading in the UK. The circumstances were right; idealism was well known, and influential philosophers and poets had stressed it.

In a few years British Unitarianism moved toward the American position in its thinking. In 1844 Parliament enacted laws that removed any doubt about the legality of Unitarianism ("The Dissenters' Chapels Bill"), and by 1850 James Martineau, the eminent Unitarian divine, had tempered the fear of broadening the scope of Unitarianism.

Emerson's influence was negligible, though, and too bad for that. In part, the problem was a broad expanse of ocean. Communications were slow and the English remained wary of American influence. One wishes Emerson had had stronger champions here.

Emerson's Memory Loss, and the Writing of His Will

JOEL J. BRATTIN
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Advancing senility and aphasia clouded the last years of Emerson's life, as Joel Myerson emphasizes in his recent note "A Glimpse of Emerson in Old Age";[1] after the destruction of Emerson's Concord home by fire in July of 1872, his faculties began to deteriorate quite rapidly. A recently discovered letter of Emerson's from 14 February 1874, transcribed in autograph dealer Joseph M. Maddalena's *Profiles in History,*[2] sheds light on Emerson's state of mind at this point in his life, and offers details about the preparation of Emerson's will which were necessarily left implicit in volume six of Ralph L. Rusk's magisterial *Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson.*[3]

In this three-page letter, Emerson writes from Concord to his cousin Elizabeth B. Ripley, the daughter of his half-uncle Samuel and Sarah Bradford Ripley, apologizing to her for his confusion regarding an early draft of his will. Emerson erroneously believed he had given the document to Elizabeth's brother, Christopher Gore Ripley. (Emerson refers to this man as "Gore," and as "our Judge"; Gore had become chief justice of the supreme court of Minnesota in 1870 [p. 88, n. 140].) Later discovering the paper in his own possession, Emerson spoke to his son-in-law William Hathaway Forbes about the matter, and learned that Forbes's agent, James Bradley Thayer, was also helping Emerson with his will. In a letter with a singular tone of abject apology, Emerson begs Elizabeth to communicate his regret for troubling Gore about the matter, and closes by inviting her to come home, and to invite Gore and Gore's family to come home, to the Old Manse.[4] Emerson writes the following:

> Dear Elizabeth, I have sinned—but only as I do daily by loss of memory is it or perception. I have looked into my rarely opened petty trunk & really found the paper or a paper that appears to be the one I sought & was sure I had given to Gore, and afterwards having an accidental word with W.H. Forbes learned that his agent was attending to my little interest as well—So I did not tell him that I had [as I supposed I had] given mine to our Judge. But the impression had been so firm in my mind that it had been so given that the mistake appals me still. Tell Gore that I am on my knees before him, that I should have pestered him with this trifle, & he such an invalid that we watch for all good news of him. Please hasten to come home, & to bring him home, & domesticate at last him & his in the manse. So we all pray, Affectionately Yours this, R. Waldo Emerson.

Rusk notes that on 19 February 1874, Elizabeth wrote to Emerson (no doubt in answer to this very letter), telling him that "her brother Gore was glad Emerson had found his 'paper,' but that there was no need to apologize for forgetting things" (p. 256, n. 7). On 10? March 1874, Emerson writes to Thayer, mentioning Thayer's "work on our dismal paper" (pp. 255-56); Rusk notes that this letter "bears the notation 'as to his will,'" and says that the final draft of that document, "dated Apr. 14, 1876…is in Thayer's hand and bears his signature as witness" (p. 256, n. 7). So Emerson's necessary legal work was satisfactorily concluded despite his confusion and embarrassment, to which this new letter bears poignant testimony.

Notes

[1]*Emerson Society Papers,* vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 8.

[2]*Profiles in History,* catalog 19 (Spring 1993), edited by Christopher Dirks, p. 78. Mr. Maddalena's business address is 345 N. Maple Drive, Suite 202, Beverly Hills, CA 90210.

[3]Volume six was published by Columbia University Press in 1939; subsequent references to Rusk are to pages in this volume, and will be given parenthetically.

[4]Rusk notes that the Ripleys "took possession of the Old Manse some months after Hawthorne's removal" in 1845-46, and that "Elizabeth remained at the Old Manse" after the death of her parents, appearing "as Emerson's hostess there" in 1871 (p. 108, n. 46).

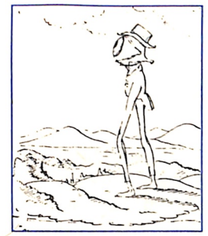
Annual Meeting

The 1994 annual meeting of The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc. will be held during the American Literature Association conference in San Diego, California. (See "PROSPECTS.") The exact time and location will be announced at both sessions presented by The Emerson Society.

FREDERICK C. EMERSON
1914-1994

The Emerson Society sadly notes the death of Founding Member Fred Emerson of Monson, Mass., and Apollo Beach, Fla. A vice president of Spartan Saw Works Inc. in Springfield and president of the American Supply and Machinery Manufacturers Association, Fred was an extraordinarily active civic leader who somehow found time to serve as trustee for several organizations and as an interpreter at Old Sturbridge Village. He followed the Society's growth with interest, and visited the Secretary's office to share his plans to publish an edition of Emerson quotations.

PROSPECTS.



American Literature Association Conference

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society will present two panels at the fifth annual conference of the American Literature Association in San Diego, California, on 2-5 June 1994 (exact dates and times will be announced later):

Emerson's Social Vision. Chair, David M. Robinson (Oregon State Univ.)

"The Social Context of Emerson's Vision," Robert D. Richardson, Jr. (Wesleyan Univ.)

"The Disruptive Anatomy of Emerson's Social Organicism," Laura Dassow Walls (Lafayette Coll.)

"Emerson, Antislavery, and the Politics of Publication," Linck C. Johnson (Colgate Univ.)

Emerson in 1844: A Sesquicentennial Perspective. Chair, Ronald A. Bosco (Univ. at Albany, SUNY)

"An Archaeology of Emerson in 1844," Nancy Craig Simmons (Virginia Tech)

"Emerson and the Anti-Slave," Albert J. von Frank (Washington State Univ.)

"*Essays: Second Series* and the Constitution of Human Consciousness," David W. Hill (Coll. at Oswego, SUNY)

The ALA conference will be held at the Bahia Resort Hotel on Mission Bay. Preregistration conference fees will be $35 (with a special rate of $10 for independent scholars, retired individuals, and students). The hotel is offering a conference rate of $77 a night (single) or $82 (double). Inquiries should be sent to the conference director, Professor Susan Belasco Smith, English Dept., California State University, Los Angeles, CA 90032-8110. Try to contact Professor Smith by E-Mail (Internet: ssmith@cakes.calstatela.edu).

Concord Session 1994: "Emerson & Women II"

The Emerson Society will present its fourth annual summer panel in Concord, Mass., on Saturday, 9 July. Because of the success of last summer's session and the extensive conversation that followed, the theme will again be "Emerson and Women." The new panel, moderated by Ronald A. Bosco (Univ. at Albany, SUNY), will include Helen R. Deese (Tennessee Technological Univ.), Daniel Shealy (Univ. of North Carolina at Charlotte), and Phyllis B. Cole (Penn State–Delaware County Campus).

This Emerson Society program will again be offered in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Thoreau Society. For information on registration, write to Bradley P. Dean, Secretary, The Thoreau Society, Route 2, Box 36, Ayden, NC 28513.

Emerson House Hours for 1994

The Ralph Waldo Emerson House reopens on 14 April and will close on 31 October, reports Director Barbara A. Mongan. Hours are Thursday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Sunday and Monday holidays from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m.

Admission is $3.50 for adults, $2 for students ages 6-17; children under 6 are admitted free of charge. Special rates are available for groups of 10 or more. The Emerson House is located at 28 Cambridge Turnpike in Concord, Mass. For more information in season, call 508-369-2236.

Walden Forever Wild Update

Walden Forever Wild, Inc. announces two initiatives. First, WFW is symbolically "selling" small parcels of land surrounding Walden Pond to anyone who yearns to "own" and help protect a piece of Henry David Thoreau's wildwood retreat area. Emersonians may be interested to know that plots are for sale (symbolically) on Emerson's Cliff. Second, a "Women for Walden" signature campaign has been launched to aid legislative efforts. WFW aims to change the Walden management policy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from that of a recreation park to that of a nature preserve or sanctuary. To learn more about either of these campaigns, write to Mary P. Sherwood, Walden Forever Wild, Inc., Box 275, Concord, MA 01742.

Familiar Quotation

Clarence A. Burley, an Emerson Society member from North Brookfield, Mass., sends notice of the opening sentence of an article on Mountain Biking in the February 1994 issue of *Outside:* "Consistency, Winston Churchill [!] said, is the hobgoblin of little minds." Perhaps the article's title ("The Importance of Being Erratic") is more appropriate than the author knew.

Emerson Bibliographies and Shirts

Limited quantities remain of Emerson Society specials announced in the last issue of *ESP*: *Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Descriptive Bibliography* (1982), by Joel Myerson, and *Emerson: An Annotated Secondary Bibliography* (1985), by Robert E. Burkholder and Joel Myerson, are available at the incredible price of $50 each (postage included). And a few plum short-sleeve T-shirts and purple long-sleeve Ts are left (all are XL, 100% cotton, preshrunk "Beefy Ts"). Because supplies are limited, interested persons should call the Secretary at 508-831-5441.

Reviews

Emerson's Rhetoric of Revelation: *Nature*, The Reader, and the Apocalypse Within.
By Alan D. Hodder. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989. xiv, 170 pp. $23.50.

Oliver Wendell Holmes called *Nature* "the Book of Revelation of our Saint Radulphus." In *Representative Man,* Joel Porte picked up this emphasis on apocalypse for his short discussion of Emerson's first book. Alan Hodder's *Emerson's Rhetoric of Revelation* is a full-length expansion of Porte's insights, arguing that "*Nature* grows out of the Bible, recapitulates its structure, and participates in its vision. Like the Bible, *Nature* consists of a series of revelations and revisions culminating in a world- and word-rending apocalypse." Hodder goes farther than Porte by arguing that, in *Nature,* "what is fashioned as a shift in values was really only a change in vocabulary," that Nature provided Emerson with "the language in which he dressed his revelations" but not a replacement for his "old theology." That is obviously an overstatement, and in his discussion Hodder doesn't "really" treat language simply as the clothing of ideas. His clearly written book provides a useful biblical perspective on Emerson's early maturity. As such it contributes to the recent renewal of interest in Emerson's Christian background, forwarded most notably by Wesley Mott's *"Strains of Eloquence"* (also published by Penn State in 1989) and the edition of the *Sermons* published by the University of Missouri Press. (It should be noted, however, that since it appeared in the same year as the first volume of *Sermons*, Hodder's book makes no use of the Missouri edition; it relies almost exclusively on *Young Emerson Speaks* [1938], and thus in an important sense was out of date as soon as it appeared.)

Hodder proceeds through three perspectives on Nature: "formal or outer properties," "interior or psychological sense," and "the role of the reader." The outer properties include religious typology and metaphors (apocalypse, divine marriage, the cluster of winter, snow, and whiteness), familiar subjects but never before applied so extensively to Nature. The second, "interior," perspective provides the most insight. Hodder connects the Christian doctrine of kenosis or self-denial to apocalypse on the Christian side and to Moral Law and Compensation on the Emersonian side. He then traces the line from God-reliance to self-reliance and comments on the relationship between "emptiness" in the Christian ascetic tradition and Emerson's reaction to the deaths of brothers, wife, and child. This chapter will be of interest to Emersonians of all theoretical predilections.

In analyzing the role of the reader, Hodder makes a now-familiar claim that the literary work "enacts the process" that is its subject, so that "the reader is left reading from the Self only as his [sic] primary text." Hodder's discussion of this rhetorical method is interesting even though not particularly original. Hodder refers to Bloom, Packer, and Ellison, but his own approach is formalist. He offers some interesting close readings—though his nine pages on the transparent eyeball paragraph struck this reader as almost a parody of the method.

A general limitation of this book is that Hodder's discussion lacks the perspective of the world in which Emerson lived. There is virtually nothing here about nineteenth-century revivalism or millennialism—one passing mention of the Millerites—and no reference to the economic and social conditions that Emerson's contemporaries increasingly described in apocalyptic terms. In part, Hodder is able to avoid this untidy world by concentrating almost exclusively on the constructive, promissory aspect of apocalypse. Emerson at the time of *Nature* certainly preferred to accentuate the positive and to anticipate utopia. Nevertheless, apocalyptic expectations in the destructive, retributive sense were increasingly a part of American public discourse during the 1830s. Lack of attention to that makes a gap in Hodder's reading. To put it another way: Emerson emerged from his study late every morning; Hodder's book stays in the study.

Glen M. Johnson
The Catholic University of America

Emerson on the Scholar.
By Merton M. Sealts, Jr. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992. xii, 326 pp. $39.95.

All students of American culture are indebted to Merton Sealts. His scrupulous research on Melville and Emerson, his indispensable co-editorship of the *JMN,* and that most useful of classroom anthologies, *Emerson's "Nature": Origin, Growth, Meaning,* remain monuments of scholarship. It is a disappointment, therefore, to report that *Emerson on the Scholar,* the latest addition to so distinguished a career, seems to me to have major weaknesses in both conception and execution.

This is not to say that it is not a truly admirable, even on its own terms, a splendid achievement. Well-written, tightly organized, Sealts's careful study of Emerson's evolving conception of the scholar—clearly the result of a lifelong knowledge of its subject—is a book I will return to, and one I will recommend to graduate students. But there are fundamental problems. A central weakness is that *Emerson on the Scholar* offers little that has not been said before, certainly little that is, as the dust jacket announces, "innovative." On the contrary, the book's real strength lies in the useful task it performs as a synthesis of much previous historical and editorial work. Sealts's formidable skills are those of the editor and historian—which make the book a valuable genetic history of the essays and lectures, and a painstaking, lucid narrative of Emerson's prolific career. But it is rarely more than that. The story Sealts tells us has been told before, and there is little actual re-interpretation of Emerson's ideas or their significance.

In fact, *Emerson on the Scholar* is the veritable embodiment of the traditional—what might now be called the "classical" approach to Emerson—and the problems it encounters are, I think, indicative of the limits of that approach itself. That approach has held, largely under Stephen Whicher's influence, that Emerson can be best appreciated by a broad, diachronic overview—one concerned primarily with identifying different phases of Emerson's evolution and charting their development. When the subject has parameters that are relatively easy to define—like abolitionism, or any discrete topic—that attempt to chronicle Emerson's evolution can work well, as it does in Len Gougeon's *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform.* But when the subject is so inclusive and abstract as Emerson's notion of "the scholar" (a term encompassing Emerson's conception of writing, education, philosophy, indeed, the act of "thinking" itself)—it becomes quickly apparent that the Whicherian approach is reaching beyond its grasp.

What results is a maximum of space devoted to chronology—to *re*-telling the story of Emerson's early crisis of vocation, his personal losses, his trips to Europe for fresh inspiration, the dilemmas he faced coming to terms with the era's reform movements—and a minimum of time left for interpretation. Emerson's best critics have always managed, whatever their approach, to get down to the still under-read complexities of the writing itself. Sealts fails to do this. His analysis comes to seem, consequently, both intensely thorough and cursory at the same time: a wealth of information is collected, large doses of Emerson are quoted, but little new is done with it all.

Instead of genuine reconsideration of Emerson's prose, Sealts offers a series of synopses—they rarely go much deeper than paraphrase—covering Emerson's entire career. ("Summing up" Emerson in this way has always seemed to me problematic in and of itself. I take Emerson's essays, as opposed to his more conventionally coherent sermons, as landmarks of nineteenth-century prose not because of their "readability," but because of their success in achieving what Thomas McFarland has called "the language of impedance"—writing that insists its "truths must be earned, not simply read." Sealts's paraphrasing has the unfortunate effect of depriving the essays of their real strangeness and difficulty, making them seem more accessible, and duller, than they are.)

A lot of ground is covered, but rarely very searchingly. Too often, the conclusions Sealts reaches (that Emerson moves "from the particular and personal to the universal, converting his private experience into general truths," that his ideal scholar represents "Universal Man" yet "epitomizes Emerson's own vocational pursuit," that the early Emerson is an "idealist," the later Emerson, a "particularist") are simply reconfirmations of the commonplaces of Emerson scholarship. Or, I should say, what were *once* its commonplaces. For part of the problem with Sealts' study is that it takes so much of the traditional line on Emerson for granted.

The axioms of that tradition do assume that Emerson is a Transcendentalist, an idealist, a holistic and "essentially religious" or "spiritualist" thinker. They posit early and late, naive and deterministic, phases in his thought, hold that his essays "aren't exactly philosophy" (as Sealts puts it), and that he can best be understood within his local, New England contexts. But these are all assumptions that have come under intense, varied scrutiny over the past two decades. One could certainly mount a case for reasserting them—but it would have to be argued in a far more self-conscious manner than Sealts has undertaken. In spite of its immense erudition, *Emerson on the Scholar* is, as a re-investigation of Emerson's thought, surprisingly indifferent to recent critical developments and, it seems to me, often unnecessarily provincial.

Is a reconsideration of Emerson on "Man Thinking" not obliged, at this date, to give some attention to recent arguments by Cavell, Porter, Poirier, Van Leer, Kateb, Gass, Cascardi, West, Goodman, and a host of others who have reopened the question of Emerson as a philosopher? (Not one of these names ever appears in Sealts's book.) Does such a study not have some obligation to address the tradition of German defenses/critiques of "the scholar class"— from Fichte's *On the Nature of the Scholar* to Nietzsche's *Schopenhauer as Educator,* with its concluding celebration of Emerson as one of the nineteenth century's true "philosophers"? (Sealts never mentions either writer.) How long will we continue offhandedly to categorize as "Transcendental" or "idealist" (terms that still carry all their usual connotations of "naivety" and "immaturity") the man who insisted, in the middle of his first book, that poverty "is needed most by those who suffer from it most"?

Michael Lopez
Michigan State University

The Life of Lidian Jackson Emerson.
By Ellen Tucker Emerson. Edited and with introduction by Delores Bird Carpenter. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1992. lvi, 270 pp. $16.95

The revised edition of *The Life of Lidian Jackson Emerson* by her daughter Ellen Tucker Emerson, edited by Delores Bird Carpenter, provides the same well-edited and readable text of the *Life* (from the manuscript in the Houghton Library), prefaced by an ample Introduction and Chronology and illuminated by copious notes and illustrations, that distinguished the first edition (Twayne, 1980). In fact, the only changes are about seven new pages in the Introduction, which discuss the relationship between Lidian Emerson and Henry Thoreau, and the new soft cover.

What *has* changed in the fourteen years since the first publication of Ellen Emerson's *Life of Lidian* is the rest of the landscape. Few of the documents by women in the Emerson circle were in print in 1980, and a family-authored biography of the wife of a great man—by a dutiful but not particularly brilliant daughter—might be plundered by a biographer looking for details, but hadn't before this time warranted publication in its own right. In "Transcendental" and "Emersonian" studies, women tended to be seen but not heard. Now we have also the letters of Ellen and Lidian Emerson—and of Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Hoar, Elizabeth Peabody, and Mary Moody Emerson. Gender-centered studies (Cheyfitz, Thurin, Leverenz) and women-authored studies (Packer, Ellison, Cayton, Barish) have also contributed to this change.

Ellen's biography of her mother remains central to this new configuration. Relying primarily on her mother's memories and stories and on her own observations and memories, Ellen constructs a biography that is truly woman-centered. Her focus is on Lidian and a company of women whose lives are filled with children, clothing, housework, gardens, pets, domestic servants, illness, suffering, sewing, reading, cooking, scrimping, shopping, providing religious and moral training, and caring for others. These women are sisters, cousins, aunts, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, nieces, and friends. When "Father" appears, it is within the domestic sphere, as a source of fun and frolic; for the most part, Ralph Waldo Emerson's public life happens off-stage. "Mother" remains the center of attention.

The text seems delightfully artless and naive. Ellen's method is to patch together the stories and memories of other women with her own; occasionally her version is challenged by her sister, Edith Forbes, whose additions and comments are printed in the notes. She scrupulously refuses to use information from her father's journals and letters which might influence her portrait.

While the underlying structure is of course chronological, beginning with Lidian's babyhood in Plymouth and ending with her funeral in Concord, the surface is more associative and digressive. One lengthy paragraph starts to tell about Lidian's brother Charles in 1828, who "years later" recalls Lidian at this time; it compares dress styles in the early 1830s with "now"; and runs on to describe Lydia Jackson's first sight of her future husband and mention the birth of her nephew Frank Brown in 1829. For two more pages, this paragraph continues to record the ups and downs of the Jacksons' Plymouth life up to the engagement of Lidian and Waldo—all with, at best, the slightest transitions between separate events. A story about Ellen's donkey in 1875 recalls another story about Lidian going horseback riding in 1858; and when telling the story of her

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own birth (as she has it from her mother) Ellen steps back and notes how strange it seems to lay a newborn baby on the floor. "These are my later reflections. Mother didn't make them," she comments. After allowing a story about her mother's patronizing every new shop in Concord to interrupt her reminiscence of the time Cousin Sarah Haskins spent with them after 1876, she states, "But this is a parenthesis," and continues with Cousin Sarah. At other times, she collects information from across the years on a common theme: Lidian's health, ways with language, relationship with "Grandma" (Ruth Haskins Emerson) and "Aunt Lizzy" (Elizabeth Hoar).

The first third of the biography draws on her mother's and aunt's memories of the "seasons" of Lidian's early life in Plymouth, from infancy through girlhood and her "Happy unmarried life" or "young ladyhood," between ages 18 and 30, and continues into the first five years of the Emersons' marriage. The tale is rich in anecdotal and material detail.

As the story progresses in time, so does its narrator. Gradually Ellen grows up and becomes a character in her mother's life. The child's-eye view dominates the biography's middle section: here we see Lidian frantically keeping house in the "Transcendental times" between 1841, when Edith was born, and 1848, when Waldo Emerson returned from England, and then settling into a prolonged invalidism, from which she begins to emerge about 1866. One feels the weight of this situation in Ellen's telling, despite the many happy moments she also reports. Her sorrowful response to Aunt Lizzy, that her mother is "fixing her rags," sums up a world of feelings in the child who has watched her mother endlessly cutting and arranging the scraps of her old finery to make new clothes—not to mention what Ellen calls the "carpet- business," Lidian's laborious rearranging and repiecing the aging carpet as it wore out.

Not only the landscape but also our way of reading women's texts has changed since 1980. Rereading Ellen's narrative in the 1990s, one cannot ignore the woman who is constructing this text and her story. When in 1866 Ellen took Aunt Susan's advice and tempted her mother to eat, she switched roles. Ellen in this scene plays the mother, "using all my wits . . . to get Mother to eat more . . . [teaching her] that food was not poison." "How proud of her beauty we became!" Ellen exclaims as she sums up the results of this experiment, restoration of her mother/child to health, and "Mother's beauty" is a strong motif to the end. Aunt Susan had taught Ellen the power in believing there is "one person in the world who cared enough to have me live to be willing to do that for me day after day"; the words "cared enough to have me live" stuck in Ellen's mind.

To trace her mother's mental and physical improvement, Ellen borrows the proverb "It's a long lane that has no turning." At the point in the text that deals most directly with her mother's depression, Ellen recalls wondering "whether my Mother would ever see a turning in her's [sic], and gradually I came to hope with some confidence that she would." About 1875, Lidian's lane turns "completely" when Cousin Charlotte [Cleveland] comes to stay and engages Lidian in spirited conversation and social life; "her spirits rose, her ill health passed away, and she became a happy person." The remainder of the biography sustains this happy outcome to her mother's journey.

Carpenter's edition of Ellen Emerson's story of Lidian Emerson's life is a biography worth reading for what it tells us about its subject and her life; and worth rereading for its reminder of how much the landscape has changed since 1980.

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Notes

[1]Emerson's words from "Address to the Inhabitants of Concord at the Consecration of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery" [1855], *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson, 12 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903-04), 11:434. This edition is cited hereafter as *W*.

[2]The Cleveland family also was closely associated with Elizabeth Palmer Peabody. Horace Cleveland's father was a Vice-Consul in Cuba at the time that many individuals whom Emerson knew visited there attempting to convalesce.

[3]References to Emerson and other literary topics are found in the personal letters of Cleveland, particularly after he moved to Chicago in 1870. He wrote to friends in New England about Emerson and he also wrote extensively about related literary issues in thirty years of correspondence (1870-1900) with William Watts Folwell, President of the University of Minnesota.

[4]From "The Young American," *Nature, Addresses and Lectures, W*, 1:367-68.

[5]Emerson, "Consecration Address," *W*, 11:432.

[6]Emerson said of the artist's responsibility, "He must work in the spirit in which we conceive a prophet to speak, or an angel of the Lord to act." *W*, 7:48.

[7]From H.W.S. Cleveland and Robert Morris Copeland, "A Few Words on the Central Park" (Boston, 1856), pp. 3-4.

[8]Copeland, for example, participated in the Concord Lyceum series early in 1855 when he delivered an address entitled "The Useful and the Beautiful."

[9]Emerson, "Consecration Address," *W*, 11:430.

[10]*The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau: Journal*, ed. Bradford Torrey (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1906), 14:109 (entry for 10 October 1860).

[11]Emerson, "Consecration Address," *W*, 11:433.

[12]Ibid., p. 435, which reads "timeable" in the last line; the MS reads "tuneable."

[13]A description of Sleepy Hollow from a biography of Hawthorne quoted by H.W.S. Cleveland, "A Few Words on the Arrangement of Rural Cemeteries" (Chicago: George K. Hazlit & Co., 1881), pp. 8-9.

[14]Emerson, "Consecration Address," *W*, 11:433.

[15]Cleveland, "Rural Cemeteries," p. 9.