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EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

"An Etching of Emerson" (1853) and the Problem of Attribution

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"An Etching of Emerson," a chapter in the anonymous *Transatlantic Tracings and Popular Pictures from American Subjects* (London: W.Tweedie, 1853 [pp. 123-33]), is a clever and witty English account of Ralph Waldo Emerson at the height of his fame as lecturer. The sketch, reprinted below, describes Emerson as "a double man"—illogical and mystifying yet appealingly honest, an ineffective speaker but an engaging man.

The authorship of the "Etching" has been a matter of much confusion. The piece has been attributed to George Searle Phillips, who under the pseudonym "January Searle" wrote what is considered the first biography of Emerson (*Emerson, His Life and Writings* [London: Holyoake, 1855]). The *National Union Catalog* (456:97-98), however, attributes *Transatlantic Tracings* to John Ross Dix, a designation followed by the American Antiquarian Society. Adding to the confusion is that Dix's obituary in the *New York Times* (10 November 1865) identifies his real name as George Spencer Phillips—amazingly close to the real name of "January Searle."

The biographical record, scant and sometimes ambiguous, does point to two distinct writers, albeit with astoundingly parallel lives and careers. (The *Dictionary of National Biography* has separate—but not wholly reliable—entries on John Ross Dix and George Searle Phillips. For the sake of convenient distinction, the two will be referred to as "Dix" and "Searle.") Both were born in England, Dix in Bristol in 1800, Searle in Peterborough in 1815 (or 1816). Both came to the United States in the early 1840s; Dix appears to have stayed on, while Searle returned to England to pursue a career as a newspaper editor and lecturer before returning to the States around 1860 as a journalist. Both were prolific writers. Dix wrote a controversial Life of Chatterton, books on travel and temperance, and sketches of English and American personalities including *Pulpit Portraits, or Pen-Pictures of Distinguished American Divines* (1854); besides the little book on Emerson, Searle wrote sketches of rural life and such notable works as *The Life, Character, and Genius of Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-Law Rhymer* (1850) and *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* (1852). Listings of works on title pages do not overlap, supporting the notion that Dix and Searle were distinct persons.

January Searle is best known in Emersonian circles for his ironic sketch, in his 1855 book, of a dinner Emerson gave for some English admirers at his quarters in Manchester in the winter of 1848, an affair to which Searle walked some twenty-five miles in inclement weather. Searle had arranged lectures by Emerson at Huddersfield the previous December. The "Etching" suggests at several points a social acquaintance with Emerson. Yet the author claims to have heard him in Pennsylvania—there is no mention of the Manchester event, and the lectures referred to ("Fate," "Culture," and "Worship") were not given at Huddersfield (indeed, as Douglas Emory Wilson points out, they had not even been written at that time); according to Albert J. von Frank's *An Emerson Chronology*, Emerson's topics there were "Napoleon" and "Domestic Life." Clues from the lecture circuit are inconclusive but hint at Dix as author of the "Etching." William Charvat's *Emerson's American Lecture Engagements* (1961) notes that Emerson gave a series on "New England" in Philadelphia in January 1843 (Dix, in the 1854 *Pulpit Portraits* [p. 21], states that he had briefly lived in that city "some ten years since"); in the spring of 1851 Emerson lectured on "Culture" and "Worship" in Pittsburgh; according to von Frank, he seems not to have given "Fate," "Culture," and "Worship" as a series until January 1853 in St. Louis—perhaps the author of "Etching" is conflating times and places.

Further internal evidence points to Dix as the author of the "Etching." The "Preface. To the Reader" of *Transatlantic Tracings* is signed "D." The author notes that he was residing in Brooklyn in 1852 (p. 88) and refers to a trip to the Great Lakes the previous October (p. 134), a period during which Searle seems to have been active in England. A tantalizing piece of counterevidence is that the author boasts

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(p. 307) of having been given a letter of introduction to Longfellow by Lewis Gaylord Clark, editor of the *New York Knickerbocker*—it was Searle who dedicated his 1864 *The Gypsies of the Danes' Dike* to Longfellow; but no reference to either Dix or Searle is found in the published letters of either Longfellow or Clark.

Both Dix and Searle died under piteous circumstances. The *New York Times* notice reprints a letter from a Mrs. Crawford of Brooklyn to the Brooklyn *Union* in which she states that J. Ross Dix (real name George Spencer Phillips) died on 7 November 1865 "in very destitute circumstances, and has left no clue to his relatives or friends" (Charles Rogers alleges that Dix had abandoned his family in England when he came to America [*Notes and Queries* 4th series, 10 (July 1872): 55]); moreover, his body has been left with his landlady, "a poor widow" who needs relief from this circumstance. Accused of falsifying and inventing details in his life of Chatterton and in many other biographical sketches (Walter Thornbury, "John Dix, The Biographer of Chatterton," *Notes and Queries* 4th series, 9 [April 1872]: 294-96), Dix may well have assumed the name George Spencer Phillips for any number of reasons.

The *Boston Evening Transcript* for 17 January 1889 notes the death of "Mr. George S. Phillips, better known as 'January Searles' [sic]." Searle had been committed to the Trenton Insane Asylum in 1873, and three years later was transferred to the asylum in Morristown, New Jersey, where he died. Confusion is added by another key guest at the 1848 Manchester banquet, Alexander Ireland, who characterizes Searle as "a man of erratic genius, and of very straitened means (but nevertheless an inveterate smoker), who not many years ago died in a lunatic asylum in New York" (*Ralph Waldo Emerson: His Life, Genius, and Writings,* 2d ed. [1882], p. 163). Since Searle would not die until seven years after publication of this account, it is possible that Ireland is confusing Dix and Searle. More likely he has heard of Searle's confinement some nine years earlier and assumed his demise.

Not dismissing the possibility of literary chicanery, it seems prudent tentatively to attribute the 1853 "Etching" to John Ross Dix. But the issue remains murky. Readers having further clues to the elusive George Spencer Phillips/John Ross Dix and/or George Searle Phillips/January Searle are invited to write to *ESP*.

AN ETCHING OF EMERSON.

"Few men," says somebody—I forget the name of the writer, "are ever correct in their conception of a man, formed when reading his books." This is true enough. A strong predilection for a man may be changed to utter alienation by his manners, while a strong prejudice imbibed from the pages of his book is corrected by the genial character of the man in the unaffected hours of social converse. The grave, sombre, gloomy looking countenance peering out upon you from every leaf, is not the one you see at the dinner table—and he who seems so etherial and spiritualized in his Essay can tell you the precise difference between a chop at "The Rainbow," and one at its opposite rival, "The Cock," and seizes a Turkey drumstick with mortal fingers, eating it with a most sensual relish like other men, who were lost amid the clouds of his transcendentalism. A short man becomes tall, one with lean and hungry look is fat and rubicund as the monk of Copmanhurst. But the most remarkable transformations are sometimes witnessed in literary men, whose books create high expectations of entertaining powers of converse, but who are most sterile in the social circle, or from whom one hardly expects anything but monosyllables, no common sympathies, no interest in anything but their own strange or isolated world out of which they speak to us, but finds them overflowing like a spring stream, at home in common and uncommon paths, and putting at his ease in their society the man of books and the man of leather.

Now let us take one instance of the frequent dissimilarity between a man and his books. There is a certain author whose name is familiar as a great advocate for the rights of the people. He denounces Priestcraft; and declares that universal brotherhood should prevail. How he soaps the poor "People."—How he talks of the law of kindness—how he advocates all the virtues! To hear some of his pages read you would think him one of the kindest hearted of human beings. He commends the law of kindness to every body, and urges with much unction the propriety of living in peace with all men; and yet a more unamiable person does not exist. He never yet had to do with a publisher with whom he did not pick a quarrel, and as to his talk about "brotherly love," why his everyday practice has always given evidence that strife is his element. I will not mention this man's name, but if he does not win more gold dust in the place to which he has gone, than "golden opinions" from those he has left behind, he will not have to congratulate himself on his success.

These observations are but a continuation of previous ones made by Mr. Emerson, and one suggested by some observations of his own descriptive of the great disappointment he experienced in meeting with many literary men in England. The *writers* were well enough. But the *men*—the same striking peculiarities of humour, grace, deep or fiery thought—poetry—exquisite taste, ideality—with one or two exceptions, he did not find these and the man together. Is it not often so? The man who has held me, grasped my soul, entranced me by his marvellous periods, I should love to see. But the hazard is too great—the charm may be broken, and I should never open his books again. The ideal character with which we clothe men may be false. But it is better so, than to have all the reverence, all the romance dashed in a moment, by the sight of a very disagreeable lump of humanity.

So much had been said about Emerson by his countrymen, who consider him far and away superior to Carlyle, that I was glad, whilst sojourning in a town in the State of Pennsylvania, to have an opportunity of seeing and hearing him, and so of judging for myself.

I was rather curious respecting his personal appearance, and as the hour of mounting the rostrum had long passed, I joined in the impatient thumpings of the rather small audience—

"Audience fit, though few,"

perhaps. Presently the lecturer came in, attended by some of his admiring satellites, and in a nervous hesitating manner glanced round the hall.

He appeared of the middle height. Although he had on the whole an intellectual look, he had not that amplitude of forehead which distinguishes our own Carlyle. His hair, too, had not the wild, dark sweep of that of the author of "Sartor Resartas [sic]," but it was then of a brownish hue, and lay tamely on the cranium. The eyes were of a blue colour, and dreamy in their expression, and the face was pale and of a thoughtful cast. His age appeared to be between forty-five and fifty. A figure, spare, and seemingly frail, attired in plain costume, completed the picture of the outer man of the American Transcendentalist.

I attended the whole of his course of lectures, but the one to which I shall refer was one on Fate. In the efforts prior to this he had not, to my thinking, "come out" as Emerson. But on the present occasion he exhibited himself as Emerson the Epigrammatic writer—Emerson the mystic—Emerson the fatalist—Emerson the spiritual chemist, whose analysis disclosed the identity of the elements of good and evil. Now I saw him in all his phases. I cannot describe this lecture—I cannot report it. I presume no one present could now retrace the path along which that errant man led him.

The lecture was a transcript of an hour of thought, without rigid method,—logical consecutiveness, or naturalness to any other mind, but his own. It was to my mind destitute of unity, and the attempted reconciliation of fate with liberty was an undeniable piece of Emersonian mystification. He was queer, witty, vigorous, startled by some fierce expression; was grand when he touched upon the power of mind over fate, of thought over necessity; and presented the audience with an exciting medley of brilliant light, filmy, nebulous, hazy islands, illuminated fog, and black clouds. These nebulae, which Mr. Emerson flings out upon the sky of his discourse, one gazes on with the hope that they will resolve into stars. They seem about to do so at some moments, but they remain floating in the sphere. We believe they *are* stars, and when we get the telescope of sufficient space-penetrating power, may be we shall find they are. Mr. Emerson is evidently no believer in sin or guilt. "Evil is only good in the making," as he told us—just as Ephraim was "a cake not turned'[']—and the rascalities of the race are the lower rounds of the ladder of loftiest virtue. That Mr. Emerson includes this in the articles of his creed he leaves no room to doubt, since he has repeated it in amplified form in his published writings.

Mr. Emerson is generally well received, and I hear that he gets large sums for his lectures.

Well, I'm glad of it. The circle of American scholars would be incomplete without him. He is a bold man—independent and free in all his thoughts, and unembarrassed by the judgment of other men, of him or his sayings. Some call him a dangerous man. He is too frank, undisguised and naked for that. He sugars none of his pills, throws no silver veil over his most repulsive sentiments. Such men are no proselytes. The only regret they occasion in my own mind is, that they throw themselves away—live for no purpose—leave nothing behind them that is real—inspire no soul, and are soon forgotten, save by the limited social circle where they lived as common men, and were loved for virtues of which the public never dreamed they were possessed. That Mr. Emerson possesses these virtues, that he is an amiable, genial spirited, kindhearted man, of manly feeling, is what all know who know him personally. I have seen no literary man for years who has so commended himself to the respect and friendly regard of those fortunate enough to meet him socially, as Mr. Emerson. He has everywhere inspired a feeling which a further acquaintance would deepen into love. And the secret of it all is, that out of the disc of the lecture he is a man like other men, in sympathy with them, finds food in what he sees around him, notices the children, has the pleasantest of smiles, is never dogmatical or eccentric, obtrudes none of his incomprehensible, spiritual exotics, and never suffers the conversation to flag. He is a double man. One man lives in the closet and the dark—the other recognizes

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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 36207-3924.

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and feels the bond uniting him to the common herd.

In his Lecture on Culture, I think it was, he spoke of this relation to man. He was commenting on egotism, as the vice of certain scholars, those men who spin round and round on one centre of opinions, having a word or sphere of their own, regardless of their relation to humanity and individual man—without geniality, &c. And in this connection he remarked, that he who having a work to accomplish, "sacrificed geniality to performance," paid too dear. On this principle he acts in society. His Lecture on Culture I heard, also his concluding Lecture on Worship. The former I think gave greater satisfaction than any other of the course. Designed to follow after Fate, it developed the idea that Culture, training, education, triumphed over human limitations, and that the world was one great school of Culture, where a man soon found out what was *real.* Some thought the Lecture conflicted with the previous one, though perhaps Mr. E. would say he was but presenting two sides of the same truth. He often presents this appearance of contradiction, and leaves his hearers or reader to reconcile matters if they can. It will not be difficult for any one to find what ordinary minds would pronounce irreconcilable contradictions in his writings. I should think he wrote always, what he thought in some hours of reverie, regardless of what he had thought or written before. Logical connection he evidently does not affect.

His lecture on Fate gave less satisfaction than any. It was spiritless, without variety, and disappointed high expectations. Starting out with remarks on scepticism, and his fearlessness of the imputation of it, he "lumped in" all religions, from Oloff and Hengist, down as common superstitions. He then branched off upon an elaborate discussion of the point that what was in a man—what a man is, will come out. Coming back upon religion again, to deprecate the religious training of youth—advocating the national development of the religious idea—asserting that religion cannot be grafted, but must be of the "crab" stock—making some admirable observations upon the value of the moral affections and principles above all things else—he closed. The impression produced was bad. The lecture was indefinite, shadowy and dull, and what was remembered were such points as I have indicated.

I have said the audiences were such—but it must be remembered that the community to which Mr. Emerson lectured was a mercantile one, more concerned about the "objective" than the "subjective," and a more mystified set, as a whole, than *most* of the audience were by some of the lectures, you never saw. Some of his thoughts remain—they stick. But most of his sentences are forgotten, remembered as a sound, and will bring forth no fruit here. On this account I say, that Mr. Emerson seems to do nothing *real.* He and his friends may smile at this. He, indeed, without doubt, is indifferent to such comments as these. I never saw a man who in the desk appears less regardful of common opinion—less ambitious for the fame that rewards those who please a popular audience. Yet he cannot escape the responsibility of a public lecturer. And that, I take it, imposes the obligation to say something more than his "own set" will applaud or can understand. Common rights there are; and among them is the right of a popular audience to be addressed in their own vernacular, and with ideas somewhere within the range of their own. If this obligation is violated, a lecturer might as well speak in an unknown tongue. He throws his words away. I am well aware of the ready answer to this—that the man who seems to speak in an unknown tongue to one generation will be understood in a future age; that a deeper spiritual insight, a more profound acquaintance with the philosophy of life will furnish the key to all the utterances of him who now speaks in advance of his age. But people seem to be departing more and more widely from those oracular instructions, whose interpretation shall be taught by a deeper and more philosophical experience. They are going off in an orbit that shall never return on itself to where those nebulous lights shine. I have had some doubts, and so have others here, about the sincerity of Mr. Emerson in any special aim. He has no system—or if he has, its parts we here cannot ascertain. His thoughts in any one lecture, or in all together, do not cohere. And he does not falter in the utterance, without explanation, of the thought that flatly contradicts others. He has no *ruling* ideas—none that control him. He is without *polarity,* circles rounds [sic] no centre, and is apparently utterly indifferent where he wanders. He is *passionless* about truth, rallies around his thoughts no affections, no devotion, no love—and would prove a hero or a martyr.

Mr. Emerson's delivery is dull and monotonous—he "sermonizes" too much, and occasionally stammers, halts, and blunders. An extemporaneous speech he cannot make—his action is by no means graceful, and sometimes it is positively awkward.

An American author says of him, (and with this extract I will conclude this chapter):—

> "Mr. Emerson is a terse, vivid and graphic writer. Sometimes there is a glow of poetry behind a veil of mist in his essays. It is difficult to tell at what he is driving. He is often like the sun in a fog; we know there is light and heat, but the vapour hangs like a thin curtain between us and the luminary, as though the monarch of the skies was trying to hide his spots. He now and then deals in unintelligible inversions, inexplicable mysticisms, and seems to shake up his disjointed and unsorted ideas in ollopodiana style, as though he designed to give us the 'clippings, parings, and shreds of his thoughts.' If Swedenborg be the Shakspeare of theology, Emerson is the Swedenborg of philosophy. Even his incongruous agglomerations are brilliant as they are incomprehensible. Read the following as a specimen of that style:—'The Gothic cathedral is a blossoming in stone, subdued by the insatiable demand of harmony in man. The mountain of granite blooms into an eternal flower, with the lightness and delicate finish as well as the aerial proportions and perspective of vegetable beauty. In like manner all public facts are to be individualized, all private facts are to be generalized. Then at once history becomes fluid and true, and biography deep and sublime.'
>
> "Mr. Emerson is a poetical as well as a prose writer, but there is more poetry in his prose than in his poems. In Europe he is regarded as *the* essayist of America. During his tour through Great Britain, he met with a cordial reception, and his lectures were numerously attended. He is by some entitled the 'Carlyle of America,' but he is evidently a better and a greater man than Carlyle. The pupil is wiser than the teacher. The chip is larger than the block. He has a more opulent intellect, much better taste, and higher and holier aims, than the snarling, cynical philosopher of the Old World."

PROSPECTS.

American Literature Association Conference

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society will present two panels at the sixth annual conference of the American Literature Association in Baltimore, Maryland, on Friday, 26 May 1995:

Emerson's Later Work. Chair, David M. Robinson (Oregon State Univ.)

"*The Conduct of Life:* The Seductions of Necessity," Barbara Packer (Univ. of California, Los Angeles)

"Emerson's Tears," Julie Ellison (Univ. of Michigan)

"'Fate, Freedom, and Foreknowledge': Assent, Stoical Belief and Reformed Theology in Emerson's *The Conduct of Life*," Robin Grey (Univ. of Illinois–Chicago)

Emerson in Recent Criticism. Chair, Gary L. Collison (Penn State–York Campus)

"Emerson's Centrality to American Literary Studies: Will It Endure?," Lawrence Buell (Harvard Univ.)

"Radical Humanism?!: Stanley Cavell's Emerson," Cary Wolfe (Indiana Univ.)

"Art, Language, and Mind: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Transcendentalism," Gayle Smith (Penn State–Worthington-Scranton Campus)

The panels, at 2:30 and 4:00 p.m., will be preceded by the Society's annual business meeting at noon.

The ALA conference will be held at the Stouffer Harborplace Hotel. Preregistration conference fees will be $40 (with a special rate of $10 for independent scholars, retired individuals, and students). The hotel is offering a conference rate of $79 a night (single) or $89 (double). A welcoming party will be held on Thursday evening, 25 May. Inquiries should be sent to the conference director, Professor Gloria Cronin, English Dept., Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; FAX: 801-373-4661; Internet: croning@jkhbhrc.byu.edu.

New Books

Emerson's Antislavery Writings, edited by Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson, has been published in January 1995 by the Yale University Press. It contains 18 items (14 public speeches, 4 published letters), one never published before; six are printed from manuscripts, and four from contemporary newspaper accounts.

Emerson: The Mind on Fire, an intellectual biography by Robert D. Richardson, Jr., has recently been published by the University of California Press. A 20% discount order form—a benefit to members of the Emerson Society—may be found in this newsletter.

Status Report on Emerson Editions

The editorial work on *Society and Solitude* (Volume 7 of the *Collected Works*) that was to have been done by the late Susan Sutton Smith has been assumed by Ronald A. Bosco. The text is being established by Douglas Emory Wilson.

Helen Deese Wins Research Award

Helen R. Deese, Professor of English at Tennessee Technological University and a member of the Advisory Board of the Emerson Society, has been named recipient of the Caplenor Faculty Research Award at Tennessee Tech. Professor Deese, a familiar panelist at sessions sponsored by the Emerson Society, was cited for her wide-ranging studies of American Transcendentalism, particularly her edition of *Jones Very: The Complete Poems* (Univ. of Georgia Press, 1994) and her work at the Massachusetts Historical Society toward a three-volume edition of the journals and correspondence of Caroline Healey Dall.

Ralph H. Orth Swells Research Collection

Nearly 100 books and recordings by and about Emerson and other Transcendentalists have been given to the Emerson Society's Research Collection by Professor Ralph H. Orth of the University of Vermont. Chief Editor of *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson* as well as Emerson's *Poetry Notebooks* and *Topical Notebooks,* Harry Orth served as first President of the Emerson Society and initiated our Scholarship Fund.

News from Kobe, Japan

With enormous relief we report that Emerson Society member Yoshitaka Aoyama, of Kobe, Japan, has written to *ESP* following the devastating 17 January earthquake that centered on Kobe. Professor Aoyama writes, "I sincerely thank you for your kind inquiry after our safety. We escaped without harm and now are managing to cope with this dreadful calamity."

Emerson House Hours for 1995

The Ralph Waldo Emerson House reopens on 20 April and will close on 29 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.

Tax-Exempt Status Reaffirmed

In a mandatory fifth-year review in January 1995, the Internal Revenue Service reaffirmed the exempt status of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc. under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501(c)(3). This means that charitable contributions, including scholarly materials, may continue to be made to the Society. Individuals interested in so doing should contact the Secretary.

Reviews

Emerson's Modernity and the Example of Goethe.
By Gustaaf Van Cromphout. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990. 142 pp. $22.50

The first thing that needs to be said about this book is that it is wonderfully readable, no mean accomplishment for a work that examines Goethe's influence on Emerson as Emerson confronted the major intellectual issues of the nineteenth century. In his Preface, Van Cromphout identifies his method as "frankly historical," dealing with what "modern" meant to Goethe and Emerson rather than what it may mean to us today (ix). He makes it clear too that he will not trace out in detail the various changes Goethe's ideas may have gone through in the evolution of Emerson's philosophy. Modestly enough, he declares his aim is "to identify Goethe's contributions before their complete integration into Emerson's thought, that is, before Emerson's creativity made them completely Emersonian" (10). This he does most convincingly, showing Emerson quoting, paraphrasing, and echoing Goethe in his essays, lectures, and, most abundantly, his journals. It is perhaps ironic but very merciful that in treating two writers who were deliberately unsystematic, Van Cromphout goes about his analysis very systematically indeed. Having treated the basic questions of Emerson's familiarity with Goethe and of Goethe as the representative modern, he devotes a chapter apiece to the concepts of nature, idealism, visual arts, literature, history and biography, and the modern individual.

A careful examination of the influence of one prolific writer on another would have obvious value to the historian of ideas or to anyone interested in picking up where he leaves off, charting the mutations Goethean inspirations would undergo throughout Emerson's career. *Emerson's Modernity* does something more, however, by affording the reader a remarkably clear overview of the dilemmas, convictions, and tensions central to nineteenth-century Romantic thought. The chosen sequence of chapters allows the author to describe complex ideas rather fully and then treat the connections between them quite economically as the book progresses. Thus it becomes clear how concepts of polarity, the symbol, and metamorphosis inform the Romantic understanding of relations between spirit and nature, thought and action, the One and the Many, and so on. The final chapter on "The Modern Individual" is as lucid as it is because it follows, among other things, discussion of the modern focus on the self and self-consciousness, and the attendant concern with excessive introspection. Because of the way the chapters complement and expand upon each other, the book is more than the sum of its individual parts.

Throughout his study, Van Cromphout makes it clear that Goethe was one of many influences on Emerson, that Goethean ideas and their variants were in fact part and parcel of the emerging Romantic world view. He points out, however, that in an age "emphatic about its own modernity," Emerson, Schlegel, Carlyle, and others saw Goethe as the quintessentially modern individual, having experienced, described, and at least attempted to resolve the opportunities and problems of the modern situation (17). Goethe spoke directly to their needs as he explored the self and subjectivity, the relationship of the individual to the given culture, and the concept of development by metamorphosis in nature and spirit.

Goethe's "sensitive empiricism" and "pantheistic naturalism" answered Emerson's need for a view of nature that was different from that obtainable through either materialism or Platonic idealism (37;38). This vision of nature and spirit in a bipolar unity helped Emerson to view nature more objectively, even scientifically, to affirm the actual, phenomenal nature, to "save" nature. As Van Cromphout puts it, "Goethe's critique of idealism showed Emerson that it was possible to validate nature without denying spirit" (43). He explores the implications of this perspective for Emerson's ideas on action, the eternal moment, and micro/macrocosm. "The Critique of Idealism" is the pivotal chapter in the sense that Van Cromphout shows repeatedly how Goethe's influence tended to strengthen Emerson's appreciation of concrete, objective reality.

In the chapter on the visual arts, he cautions that while Goethe's aesthetic theories changed considerably over time, Emerson adopted and adapted whichever ideas suited his needs, with familiar disregard for any particular system. For both Goethe and Emerson, of course, the crucial question was the appropriate relation of art to nature, and Van Cromphout finds Emerson's commitments to nature and to fluidity of form finally obliging him to see works of art as inherently inferior to works of nature; it is not so clear exactly what Goethe concluded. He points out that while Goethe was interested in responding to, and even creating, individual works of art, Emerson's interest was more strictly theoretical.

"Literature" is a more wide-ranging chapter. The author maintains that the various Romantic conceptions of the symbol all owe something to Goethe's theories. He distinguishes helpfully between Goethe's symbols, which tend to be "opaque," and Emerson's, which tend to be "transparent" and "transferable" (69-70). He associates this difference with Emerson's desire to merge the poet and the thinker, a move that made clarity of idea more important than sensuous immediacy of the literary symbol. In an all too brief discussion of literary subjectivity and objectivity, Van Cromphout again credits Goethe's example with increasing Emerson's "respect for objectivity, for the actual, for the fact" (77). Moving to questions of style, he sees Emerson admiring and generally practicing a concise, concrete, even common style, although he sometimes found Goethe's style too common, too realistic. Defending Emerson's poetic practice from the criticism of David Porter, he stresses, with Carl Strauch, Emerson's "poetry of ideas." Specifically, he suggests that Goethe's later, rather dialectical and epigrammatic method of development may have provided an appropriate model for what Emerson was attempting to do in poems such as "The Problem" and "The Sphinx."

In "History and Biography," considerations of method, theory, and style come together especially forcefully. Both thinkers, focused as they were on the present, tended to see the past as "burden" and insisted on the need for each individual to symbolically "reexperience" history. Of all the sources Emerson likely had for the concept of "representativeness," Goethe, he asserts, was the most essential. He describes how Goethe's own biographical sketches, "informed by the concept of representativeness and exemplifying new biographical methods," served as models for Emerson's *Representative Men* (107). In a departure from the Plutarchan emphasis on character of the individual, Goethe's and Emerson's subjects are treated as representative of both their own historical time and place and also of transcendent human concerns. Of course it is as "the Writer," "the soul of his century," and "the type of culture" that Emerson treats Goethe in *Representative Men* (*CW* 4:157; 163). Finally, along with Napoleon, Goethe is "representative of the impatience and reaction of nature against the *morgue* of conventions . . . ." (*CW* 4:166).

In the final chapter on "The Modern Individual," he equates the concept of individualism as we know it today with the age of Goethe, if not with Goethe himself. He shows how Goethe's ideas were compatible with Emerson's self-reliance and self-culture, although considerably more could be done with the latter, as developed by David Robinson in *Apostle of Culture: Emerson as Preacher and Lecturer* (1982). Most significantly, he argues that Goethe's theories of individual development through the natural process of metamorphosis enabled Emerson to affirm man's connections with nature, retain individual identity, and yet allow for continuous development.

One could come away from this book with the impression that the complex ideas that inform Romantic thought always fit together as harmoniously as they do in Van Cromphout's survey. He does in fact minimize some of the contradictions Emerson expressed, but had he pursued them, the original purpose of his study would have been lost. *Emerson's Modernity* is a well-organized, thoroughly enjoyable immersion in the history of powerful ideas. Like everything in the book, the bibliography and appendix are very helpful.

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Authorship and Audience: Literary Performance in the American Renaissance.
By Stephen Railton. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. 241 pp. $35.00; $12.95 paperback.

The thesis of Stephen Railton's book is that the raw American cultural frontier left American Renaissance authors particularly vulnerable to—and anxious about—their audiences. But Railton is not really interested in the actual relations of writers with their audiences or in the cultural politics of the literary marketplace. Instead, in successive chapters devoted primarily to major figures, he attempts to describe how anxieties about audience resulted in the rhetorical scaffolding beneath selected (primarily canonical) works. Much about this enterprise seems familiar, but the results, though not the over-arching interpretation promised by the title, usefully focus on rhetorical dimensions and at times make for lively and provocative reading.

Emerson is Railton's first, and easiest, subject, for the idea that Emerson shaped his compositions for performance is hardly news. Railton begins by reviewing Emerson's career and the trans-Atlantic context of Emerson's quasi-religious idea of oratory. This serves as background for Railton's case study of the Divinity School Address, which he takes to be both representative of Emerson's rhetoric and illustrative of a pivotal moment in Emerson's rhetorical evolution. Believing that the controversy following the Address continues to muddy critical understanding by emphasizing Emerson's opposition to his audience, Railton argues that the Address "is most characteristically Emersonian [in its] attempt to co-opt instead of confront the Unitarians' convictions" (41). In support of this point, he reviews and selectively analyzes Emerson's rhetorical play-book—the strategic deployment of first-person plural, Biblical and colloquial language, humor, and abstract terminology for traditional religious language, among other devices. The analysis is at times incisive, especially the dissection of Emerson's step-by-step game plan to win over his audience. However, Railton's few pages scarcely begin to cover the full range of Emerson's linguistic and rhetorical richness. (For an instructive contrast, see the ingenious 19 pages on the *opening paragraph* of Emerson's Address in Joel Porte's *Representative Man.*)

Some readers will note Railton's lack of attention to the rhetorical traditions of public oratory and the sermon. Others will fault his reliance on older accounts of Emerson's development and cultural milieu. Many scholarly works from the 1980s that might have enriched Railton's analysis are missing from his endnotes, including important articles and books by Gertrude Reif Hughes, David Leverenz, and Leonard Neufeldt. Still, although neither thorough nor wholly original, Railton's well-focussed, smartly argued study will show most readers more than a thing or two about Emerson's "intricate subtlety" (28).

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Annual Meeting

The 1995 annual meeting of The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc. will be held at noon on Friday, 26 May at the American Literature Association conference in Baltimore, Maryland. The exact location will be announced later. For details on the conference, see "PROSPECTS."

Concord Program

Anniversary Celebration

July Fourth marks the 150th anniversary of Henry Thoreau's move to Walden. In deference to the special programs planned to commemorate this event, the Emerson Society—for the first time in five years—will not present a panel in Concord in July. For details on the Thoreau Society's annual meeting and other sesquicentennial activities, contact Bradley P. Dean, Secretary, at the English Department, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina 27858-4353; e-mail endean@ecuvm.cis.ecu.edu.

"Emerson and Women II"

More than 40 Emersonians enjoyed the Emerson Society's panel discussion "Emerson and Women" at the Concord Academy on 9 July 1994. New speakers revisited the theme that generated such interest at the 1993 session. Both programs were offered in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Thoreau Society. Pictured are Ron Bosco (moderator), Dan Shealy, Helen Deese, and Phyllis Cole.

In Memoriam
Susan Sutton Smith

1943-1994

Susan Sutton Smith, who died on 17 November 1994 at the age of 51, was a remarkable individual who evoked the respect and affection of everyone who knew her. Familiar to Emersonians as co-editor (with Harrison Hayford) of volume 14 of *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* and as editor of volume 1 of *The Topical Notebooks,* she was also an expert on the poet Adelaide Crapsey and author of seventeen critical biographies for the encyclopedia *American Woman Writers.* At her death she was working on the correspondence of Harriet Jane Hanson Robinson, a self-educated Lowell mill girl, and her journalist husband.

A graduate of Vassar College, she received her master's degree from the University of California at Berkeley and her Ph.D. from the University of Rochester. She spent her academic career at the State University of New York at Oneonta, where she rose to the rank of Professor of English. In an episode unique among Emerson scholars, in 1972 she was an undefeated champion on the information quiz show *Jeopardy.*

Afflicted by a debilitating disease while still young, she spent many years as a dialysis patient, a circumstance which evoked in her not self-pity but a sturdy determination to persevere in her work and live her life as fully as she could. She spent many summers doing research at the Houghton Library at Harvard, having arranged for dialysis treatment at nearby hospitals, and, when portable dialysis machines became common, traveled to such distant places as the Grand Canyon and Hawaii. Her indomitable spirit defined the term "grace under pressure." Susan, we will miss you.

—Ralph H. Orth