Distinguished Achievement Awards

— RALPH HARRY ORTH —

In presenting the 1996 Distinguished Achievement Award to Ralph Harry Orth, the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society recognizes the extraordinary contribution to modern scholarship of Professor Orth's devotion to teaching, writing, and editing Emerson and his works throughout his professional career. Educated in New York City elementary and high schools, Professor Orth received his B.A. from Queens College, New York, in 1956, and his Ph.D. from the University of Rochester in 1960. Leaving the "Empire State" in his last year of doctoral study, Professor Orth sought out his yet-more-Yankee roots in Burlington, Vermont. Beginning his teaching career at the University of Vermont in 1959, he rose through Vermont's professorial ranks from Instructor to Full Professor, and retired in 1995 as the Frederick M. and Fannie C. P. Corse Professor of English Language and Literature. Along the way, he graced Vermont's classrooms with undergraduate and graduate courses in virtually every major field of American Literature, served as Vermont's University Scholar in 1987-88 and as Visiting Research Professor at the University of Bristol (England) in 1982 and at Stanford University in 1988, and edited or co-edited four substantial volumes of Emerson manuscripts: volume 6 of the Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson (JMN) in 1966; with the late Alfred R. Ferguson, volumes 9 and 13 of the JMN in 1971 and 1977, respectively; and with Albert J. von Frank, Linda Allardt, and David W. Hill, the Poetry Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1986. A Founding Member of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Professor Orth served as the first President of the Society in 1990-91.

Affectionately known as "the Chief" to many current Emersonians, Professor Orth continues to fill generously the valuable role of mentor and friend to the generation of Emerson editors and scholars who entered the profession of English Studies in the 1970s. Indeed, Professor Orth's

— JOSEPH SLATER —

It is impossible for me to write impersonally about someone whom I have known as a friend for almost half a century, and with whom I have worked on a joint project for the last twenty-one years. I can only say how delighted I am that the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society has given its Distinguished Achievement Award to my friend Joe Slater.

I first knew Joe Slater in 1948, when we were both junior members of the English Department at Rutgers University (New Brunswick, N.J.). Our families lived across the road from each other in the housing project that Rutgers provided for its less affluent faculty. Our wives visited back and forth; our children played together; and Joe and I rode to work together in the English Department car pool. The Slaters were wonderful neighbors; and after I left Rutgers in 1951, I continued to visit them whenever I came to New Brunswick, and later, during my summer travels, at their home in Poolville, New York, near Colgate University.

Joseph [Locke] Slater was born in Elyria, Ohio, on 17 July 1916. His wife, Vivien Harvey Slater, whom he married in 1939, is a distinguished concert pianist, recording artist, and piano teacher. They have a daughter, Lydia, and a son, John. Joe was graduated (summa cum laude) from Colgate University in 1937, and went on to earn an M.A. from Columbia University in 1939 and (after interruptions for teaching and for wartime service in the U.S. Navy) a Ph. D., also from Columbia, in 1956. His dissertation, an edition of The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle, was published by the Columbia University Press in 1964. It became at once the standard edition of these letters, supplementing (but not duplicating) the edition of Emerson's letters by Ralph L. Rusk (1939). When Eleanor Tilton issued four additional volumes of Emerson's letters (1990-95), she chose not to reprint any of those in the Slater edition, but only to print corrections based on the post-1964 discovery of a few holograph materials that Slater had not

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ABSTRACTS OF SAN DIEGO ALA PAPERS

The following panels were presented by the Emerson Society at the seventh annual conference of the American Literature Association on June 1, 1996, in San Diego, California.

SESSION 1: Emerson I.

CHAIR, DANIEL SHALY, Univ. of North Carolina—Charlotte

"The wells where the coy truth lies hid": Emerson on "Fate" and The "Rule of Life" Ronal D. Borsc University at Albany—SUNY

As he extended, unacknowledged, personal response to the dark side of the human condition which he recognized readers could draw from "Fate," Emerson's unpublished late lecture "The Rule of Life" (1867) answers "Fate" by repeating several themes from his early idealist works, particularly from "Self-Reliance" and "Circles." In "The Rule of Life," Emerson's "essential elements" provides illustrations of heroes and heroines; argues continuity between individual experience and history, and facilitates continuity; and yields inspiration—inspiration poietical, inspiration political as in national, and inspiration in the spiritual sense where "aneurisms of virtue in peace and in private... keep one's heart warm... and [happily] every day." ["[W]eaver entlled," the "moral element" contributes to the melioration of the human condition—both for individuals and national cultures. Looking to the vast American landscape over which he had traversed on the lecture circuit for many years, Emerson finds that poverty and wealth are relative terms reinforced by an artificial social order, but through labor and wisdom one can displace the apparently negative "fate" or " destiny" of social ordered poverty with a positive one—as in someone building a new life in the American wilds. Perhaps most important of all, the "moral element" defines the need for institutions such as organized religions and for the national past which Americans were ever forgetful at not having in the nineteenth century. In conclusion, he concludes positively: "The loss of personal and national past enhances the freedom of the individual who lives in a kind of eternal moral now where consolation, if not answered, to the grand thoughts of Fate reside in familial relations, noble friendships, generous citizenship, and casual encounters with fellow men. In the "moral element," then, Emerson discovered, as he wrote, the well the coy truth of freedom against fate lay hidden within the "moral element."

"Slave Revolt, Representative Men, and Emerson's 'Conversion' to Abolitionism" Amy Ehrhart Texas A&M University

In his recent book Virgil's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery and Reform (1990), Lon Gougeon suggests that during the summer of 1844 Emerson "made a radical departure from abolition to abolition" with his August Address on the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies. "Emerson's "conversion," which was more tortured and tentative than its alleged parallel, resulted from a number of contemporary historical developments, including slave insurrection in Haiti and Cuba that was receiving extensive coverage in New England periodicals as Emerson was preparing his address. These revolts were linked by many Americans, including Emerson, to the potential explosion within the United States itself as a result of Southern slavery. Events in Haiti and Cuba gave credence to conspiracy theories that abounded in the national consciousness, and they encouraged Emerson to reconsider his position with regard to the abolition movement.

When Emerson considered the insurrections in light of the abolitionist debates he was reading at that time, he commented for the emancipation address, he came to understand that emancipation was the only way to stop insurrection and ensure safety for whites. Ample evidence also suggests that his reconsideration upon his recent thought on the "representative man," that is, the individual who radiates the values and vigor of a historical period. The circularity of his thinking on this topic allowed him to imagine that a great representative man, perhaps himself, could stir the populace to find the truth—in this case, the dangers and wrongs of slavery—and the populace, in turn, would "vote" against abolitionism. Emerson thus justified preparing a moving, emotionally charged, pro-abolition speech, because it supported his well-founded belief in the power of words, and coincided with his emerging concept of the representative man.

"Pierced by the Thorns of Reform" The Woman's Suffrage Movement on Emerson

Ahmed J. Gilbert University of Illinois

Several recent commentaries have begun to analyze aspects of Emerson's reaction to the woman's suffrage movement. These critics have generally concluded that Emerson was not a feminist in the sense in which the late twentieth century would use the term, emphasizing his apparent deep ambivalence with regard to women's issues. While this conclusion may seem obvious to contemporary readers, the issue has been made more complex by consideration of the historical context, and particularly by the fact that in Emerson's own time, many women tended to regard him as a staunch friend of theirs. Indeed, and more modern, and particularly the suffragists themselves, were the most outspoken in their praise and gratitude to Emerson for what they perceived to be his tireless and heartfelt support of women's empowerment, voting rights, and equality. These tributes appeared mainly in two areas: literary journals and memoirs, where well-known women writers of the period honored Emerson's influence on women's self-esteem and self-reliance, and the suffragist organ, The Woman's Journal, in which the leaders of the suffragist movement specifically addressed Emerson's role, as they saw it, in the woman's movement.

Emersonian circles to dedicated to Joel Myerson

We are glad to announce the following announcement during the two Emerson Society sessions. A discount for the book described here is enclosed in this issue of ES.

Ellen Buckholde and I have edited a collection of new essays entitled "Emersonian Circles" that will appear this fall. I mention it now so that, if you (or a friend) are interested in purchasing a "set," you can get a dealer to sell you the "set," but remember, because you want to know who cares about you, we have to keep you known at not being a catalog from a catalog but among Emersonians.

Presseis (and a couple of readers) tell us that you simply don't prepare such a threat for a Scholar's year away from the Scholar's. If you have a place on this man's incredible accomplishments. Presseis also tells us that "fiscalsheets" don't tell anyone anything about him. But Presseis has been very virtuous of the coherence of a monograph to be accepted. We think that you might need that, at a cost. Many other Emersonians—and many other American Renaissance special prosecutors are not to be admitted in our man—wanted to contribute, and we would have been proud to include their work. I know we all share the sentiments I read from the Introduction:

"These essays represent a circle of scholars at mid-career whose work has been 'energized,' to use Emerson's term, by being drawn at various points within the orbit of one scholar—a scholar of the same generation who has opened new vistas for lasting kinds of scholarship that have weathered the passage of history. His specific contribution to literary history, textual editing, and bibliographical and biographical study are of permanent value. These extraordinary achievements are matched only by the generous opportunities he has given others to serve as graduate assistants, to publish important empirical research, to participate at professional meetings, and to win over research projects. "

"Though in paraphrasing Emerson's famous remark to Walt Whitman we reverse the roles of novice and mentor, we declare, 'We greet You at the Mid Point of a Great Career.' This volume is dedicated with admiration, gratitude, and affection to Joel Myerson.

SESSION 2: Emerson II.

Chair, WESLEY T. Myt, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

"Emerson, Friendship, and the Problem of Alcott's 'Psychic'

Larry Carlson

College of Charleston

Emerson's two-and-a-half-year involvement (1836-38) with Bronson Alcott's voluminous manuscript entitled "Psychic" dramatizes how difficult it was for Emerson in trying to be both a friend and literary critic of the person with whom he ultimately had a half-century friendship. Indeed, the frustrations that he felt in giving Alcott detailed approval of "Psychic" clearly dramatize the impossibility of the two-fold obligation that Emerson later set forth in his essay on "Friendship in Essays. First Series" (1841)—friendship and trustworthiness.

The manuscript, which Emerson repeatedly promised to publish at his own risk and which grew out of Alcott's "observa- tions" (2 vols., 1835) and "Script" (2 vols., 1836), is a record of the physical, psychological, moral, and spiritual development of his third daughter, Elizabeth (b. 1835). As Alcott's experimental Temple School (1834-38) was being fiercely attacked, and as Alcott himself ("a world builder") with "Olympian dreams," Emerson felt was being pilloried in the press and consequently plunged into debt and near-suicidal despair because of the public accusation of his conversations with Children on the Gospels (2 vols., 1836-37). Emerson proved to be an important source of public and private encouragement. He felt great compassion for Alcott, who believed that "Psychic" would convert the society of the validity of the radical ideas about children and education that underpinned Temple School.

However, despite detailed editing suggestions from Emerson, Alcott proved to be an ineffective writer. His prose was less forceful and more nominal than previously noted. The novel, however, found favor, as it was "energized," to use Emerson's new roots. He would have been proud to include their work. I know we all share the sentiments I read from the Introduction:

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