The long period from the October revolution of 1917 till the beginning of Khrushchev’s era seemed to be the Dark Ages for philosophy and aesthetics in the USSR. Dictatorship of the communist ideology in all spheres of intellectual life made extremely difficult or even impossible profound and unbiased appreciation of the Western philosophies, which for a long time had been treated as bourgeois and idealistic. However, the name of Emerson didn’t fall into oblivion forever. Right after World War II a review of Emerson’s role in the development of American culture was made by A. Startzev in his History of American Literature released in 1947. Several years later, the USSR Academy of Science undertook publication of History of Philosophy in four volumes, representing a Marxist account of the heritage of human thought. In volume two a special chapter written by M. Baskin was devoted to Emerson and his transcendentalist circle. Emerson’s teaching was described as an eclectic mixture of idealistic and materialist approaches to the principal problems of philosophy. The author of the article drew the following conclusion: “Thanks to its contradictory nature, Emerson’s philosophy appeared to be a source of both reactionary and progressive currents in American schools of philosophy and sociology” (p. 547).

The more positive approach to the writings of Emerson expressed in the above-mentioned books was in sharp contrast with their negative attitude towards such American thinkers as Josiah Royce, William James, George Santayana, and John Dewey. (For example, in Essays on Modern Anglo-American Philosophy by D. Kwitko, issued in 1936, it was maintained that the key objective of these scholars had been “to stop the triumphant march of the evolutionary theory” and “to lay the ground for the growing Nazi movement”, p. ix.) The reason why Emerson was more acceptable to Soviet ideology was linked perhaps with the fact that the former criticized in his works some extremes of capitalism and rendered support for abolitionists, i.e., took a “progressive” stand in the class struggle.

The “thaw” of the late 1950s-1960s, despite all its shortcomings, gave fresh impulses to the humanities in this country. Old dogmas began to weaken bit by bit and scholars enjoyed comparatively more freedom in their researches. It was a time when Western scientific literature gained access to the Soviet public.

At this time translations of several American scholars dealing with Emerson’s heritage were published. Probably the first of this kind was “The Living Emerson”—an article by Samuel Sillen included in the book Progressive People of the USA in the Struggle for Leading Ideology (1955). American Thought by M. Cohen was published in 1958, and four years later Main Currents in American Thought by V. L. Parrington was at hand in the USSR.

In 1965 a considerable part of Emerson’s “Nature” appeared in the third volume of History of Aesthetics, while more important in this relation was a collection of works called Aesthetics of American Romanticism (1977), permitting an ample outlook on the American artistic taste of the era of the transcendentalists. Together with translations of key writings by Philip Freneau, C. B. Brown, W. C. Bryant, E. A. Poe, and Margaret Fuller, a reader could find such pieces by Emerson as “Nature,” “The American Scholar,” “Literary Ethics,” “Art,” “The Young American,” and “The Poet.” The texts were preceded by a foreword written by A. Nikoljukin.

We ought to mention also The Writer in America by V. W. Brooks, released in two volumes in 1967-1971, which had considerable influence on the Soviet researches. Among titles dealing with Emerson should be noted Literary History of the United States under the editorship of R. E. Spiller, Willard Thorp, and others, released in Russian in 1977. Being the child of Brezhnev’s détente, it represented for Soviet scholars a valuable source by demonstrating the role of Emerson in moulding American thought and letters. Another two items should be added to the numbered translations. In 1986 the

(continued on page 2)
Soviet public could acquaint itself with the 1st and 2nd series of the works of America and Europe after World War II. By studying the theory and practice of Western functionalists, especially in the field of architecture, Soviet art historians came inevitably to their roots and to the ideas of such fathers of the functionalist movement as F. L. Wright, L. H. Sullivan, H. Greenough, and at last R. W. Emerson. Among studies of Emerson we should note an article by V. Poserksy, “A Study of Russian Romanticism in England, the USA and France” included in the book Lectures on the History of Aesthetics (1974), in which the author drew Emerson's philosophy from the English version of romantic ideas, stating that “transcendentalism was born by interpretation of the aesthetics of Coleridge and Schelling as well as several of Goethe's ideas” (p. 126). A profound review of Emerson's understanding of nature and the meaning of history was developed by V. Skrypnik in his work “Philosophy of History of R. W. Emerson” contributed to the book History of Philosophy Today (1977). The same scholar arranged a more detailed analysis in the article “Philosophical and Historical Heritage of R. W. Emerson” in the collection Critics of Modern Bourgeois Philosophy (1979). The aesthetic aspect of Emerson’s teaching and its conjunction with the general development of the functionalist theory was a subject of the article “Functionism in Aesthetics” by V. Samokhin in The Modern Bourgeois Aesthetics of 1978.


Among the latest books worth mentioning is a study by I. Sidorov called "American Philosophies of Action: From R. W. Emerson to J. Dewey" (1989), in which the specified features of American thinking have been traced from the early works of Emerson to the epistemology developed by American pragmatists.

**Reviews**


It is encouraging that so much scholarly attention is being devoted to Emerson. His career as a preacher, so long neglected, is being researched. Until recently only McNeill's Young Emerson Speaks and one other sermon, “The Lord's Supper.” Then came the first of four volumes of the complete sermons, edited by Albert J. von Frank, and Wesley Mott's "The Strains of Eloquence."

“We have discovered," writes Mott, "that Emerson was not simply a rebel or a sage, but that he had been a brooding, searching young man whose self-conscious gropings toward eloquence are an intriguing prelude to the great Transcendentalist essays.” His sermons are "a brilliant young mind's dramatic encounter with personal doubt and ambition and with unanswerable questions for which there can be no expression." Emerson's ministry was not "a stifling sidetrack from his real literary ambitions." It was a vital part of his career that needs to be recognized and understood.

Mott takes us on paths seldom traveled. He develops Emerson's Christology. Though not orthodox, it is derived from the gospels and carefully worked out. We knew this was so with "his "poet" and we now learn that his sermons was not an aberration. Emerson as a preacher was a careful thinker. He struggled with traditional Christian doctrine. His views on Christ, the ministry, and immortality were well thought out and well developed.

Mott traces in the sermons the development of his ideas on compensation, self-reliance, history, and aesthetics, as well as his theology. He follows Emerson's intellectual development through this important period: his ideas on preaching and the Church, his theories concerning the minister's responsibility to his congregation; his growing confidence in himself and the indwelling God; then his progress from conventional religious thinking to Transcendentalism. We see Emerson's insecurity as a preacher and thinker, and his ambivalence toward the ministry. Mott shows how Transcendentalism crept into the sermons; the theme of Emmanuella, "God with us," became "God within us."

Considerable attention is given to the intellectual background and environment in which Emerson grew, preached, and flourished. There is excellent historical setting. For example, Mott shows that Emerson was not the originator of the reenactment of miracles. That controversy had been brewing at least 15 years. He gives the economic, intellectual, political, and social context.

Here we gain a better insight into Emerson's ministry. Our understanding of his whole career is broadened. It is likely to be the definitive book on that important aspect, so necessary to understanding the later Emerson. A scholarly, thoughtful book. (continued on page 4)
Transition from “antislavery to abolition.” Gougeon is very much, as well as the Liberator, the Anti-slavery Standard, and most interesting to consider—the years leading up to “Emancipation: 1844-1849,” and “Counterattack: 1850-1852.”

But Virtue’s Hero is, in fact, the most thorough and completely documented portrait of Emerson and abolitionism that we are likely ever to get. Gougeon divides his study into ten chapters that range from “Early Concerns: 1821-1837” to “Reconstruction and Other Struggles: 1865 and After.” Included is an opening chapter on “Abolition and the Biographers,” which provides the opportunity to trace the “disagreement and controversy” on Emerson’s relationship “to the abolition movement and the degree of his commitment to the cause of abolition.”

It is the early period, though, that in many respects is the most interesting to consider—the years leading up to “Emancipation in the British West Indies” in August 1844, an address that Gougeon describes as “alive with the emotions of sympathy, outrage, and hope,” and one which marked Emerson’s transition from “antislavery to abolition.” Gougeon is very good at contextualizing the local and national forces, people, and events (and there were many) that were at work on Emerson between 1826—the year of his first sermon as a Unitarian minister, which included his first public reference to the institution of slavery—and the Emancipation address of 1844. He is equally effective exploring later events.

What soon emerges is the always refreshing portrait of Emerson amidst the hustling and shoving of life. Yes, many instances are noted in the journals and elsewhere in which his dislike of abolitionists, such as George Thompson, is registered, or he occasionally wrestles with the question of Negro equality, or he reiterates the necessity of individual moral reform to ameliorate social problems, or he expresses passing reservation about the appropriateness of his antislavery activities. But the most vivid images in Virtue’s Hero are of an Emerson moving steadily—always thoughtfully, at times reluctantly, never indifferently—from faith in an individualistic response to the evil of slavery into the “rancorous realm of public polemics and party politics.”

The images are plentiful throughout. Just a few that stand out are of Emerson refusing to speak at the New Bedford Lyceum in 1845 because of its decision to exclude blacks from regular membership; or of Emerson delivering an emotionally charged “Fugitive Slave Law” speech in 1851 to an audience of Harvard undergraduates who boo and hiss him; or of Emerson refusing to condemn John Brown and publicly defending him on three separate occasions in a few months in 1859-60; or of Emerson speaking at the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-slavery Society in 1860 over calls of “put him out” and “dry up.”

Considering the extent of Emerson’s commitment and contribution to the abolition movement over a period of many years, we can only thank Len Gougeon for providing these and numerous similar images in his impressive study. We can thank him too for finally providing the richly detailed, thoroughly documented, and long overdue study that—as Philip Gura observes on the book’s dustjacket—places “Emerson in the forefront of abolitionist papers, newspapers, and annual reports, scrapbooks, giftbooks, newspaper and journal accounts of abolition meetings, and reports of abolition activities that appeared in Concord’s local newspapers . . . [and] the larger Boston papers . . . as well as the Liberator, the Anti-slavery Standard, and Horace Greeley’s New York Tribune.”

Gougeon notes too that his work has also benefitted from the now complete Harvard edition of the Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks.

An Emerson Bibliography, 1989


Bosco, Ronald A. “‘Poetry for the World of Readers’ and ‘Poetry for Burds Proper’: Theory and Textual Integrity in Emerson’s Parnassus.” SAR 1989: 257-312. [Describes the evolution of Parnassus, stressing its close connection with “Poetry and Imagination.”]


Kouidis, Virginia M. "Prison into Prisma: Emerson's 'Many-Colored Lenses' and the Woman Wearing of Early Modernism." The Green American Tradition, pp. 115-34. [Emerson's influence on Kate Chopin, Dorothy Richardson, Marianne Moore, and Mina Loy.]


Nagarajan, S. "Emerson and Advaita: Some Comparisons and Contrasts." ATQ n.s. (1988): 235-36. [Notes some general similarities between Emerson and Advaita, but stresses the more significant differences.]


American Literature Association Conference

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society will present two panels on "Emerson and Biography" at the second annual conference of the American Literature Association in Washington, D.C. on 24-26 May 1991.

Session 1. Chair, Ronald A. Bosco (SUNY-Albany)

"Inventing a Life: The Example of the Sermons," Sarah Wider (Colgate Univ.)

"Build Therefore Your Own World: Emerson's Construction of the 'Intimate Sphere'," Albert J. von Frank (Washington State Univ.)

"The Politics of Biography and History in Emerson," Frank Shuffleton (Univ. of Rochester)

Session 2. Chair, Irene Williams (Univ. of San Diego)

"Young Emerson and the Mantle of Biography," Susan L. Robinson (Auburn Univ.)

"The Minutiae of Great Men: Emerson, Anti-Slavery, and Biography," Len Gougeon (Univ. of Scranton)

Respondent: "Emerson and Biography, I and II," Joel Myerson (Univ. of Scranton)

The 1991 annual meeting of The Emerson Society will take place at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, 24 May following the second Emerson session.

TheALA conference will be held at the Mayflower Hotel. Registration fees for this special session will be $30 (with a special rate of $10 for independent scholars, retired individuals, and students). The hotel is offering a conference rate of $60 a night (single or double). To register or obtain housing information, write to Professor Alfred Bendixen, English Dept., California State University, Los Angeles, CA 90046.

Barthms Wins Christian Gauss Prize


Emerson Texts Available

The Emerson Society has available a number of copies of standard Emerson texts, some of which are hard to come by. The price of each is $8.00. Proceeds will go into a Society scholarship fund. Please contact Ralph H. Orth, President, Emerson Society, Department of English, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405.

JMN 1 (3 copies); JMN 2 (2); JMN 5 (1); JMN 6 (4); JMN 7 (6); JMN 8 (1); JMN 9 (2); JMN 10 (1); JMN 13 (2); Rusk, Life (2); Early Lectures 3 (2).

Brook Farm Exhibit

An exhibit to commemorate the sesquicentennial anniversary of the founding of Brook Farm—the celebrated nineteenth-century utopian community—will be held in the Falvey Memorial Library of Villanova University from 19 April to 11 October 1991. For further information about "Brook Farm: A Retrospective and Celebration," contact the exhibit coordinator, Sterling F. Delano, Department of English, Villanova University, Villanova, PA 19085.

Special Concord Session on "Emerson and Thoreau"

In conjunction with The Thoreau Society's annual meeting and gala 50th anniversary celebration, The Emerson Society will present a special session on "Emerson and Thoreau" in Concord, Massachusetts, on Sunday, 14 July 1991.

One of the most significant friendships in American literature will be explored in a series of five-minute presentations.

This format will allow for discussion of a wide range of views and will encourage audience participation.

The panel, moderated by Wesley T. Mott (WPI), features "Emerson and Thoreau in Concord," Marcia E. Moss (Concord Public Library), "Running amuck against the world: Emerson, Thoreau, and the Problem of Reform," Len Gougeon (Univ. of Scranton); "Emerson, Thoreau, and the Crisis of the 1850s," Linck C. Johnson (Colgate Univ.); "Concord, 1851-1852: Three Perspectives," Nancy Craig Simmons (Virginia Tech); "Thoreau and Emerson: The Lidian Connection," Robert Sattelmeyer (Georgia State Univ.); and "Emerson's Prosody and the Severity of Thoreau's 'Ideal,'" Bradley P. Dene (East Carolina Univ.).

Joel Myerson (Univ. of South Carolina) will serve as respondent.

The program will be held in the French Gallery of The Concord Museum, across from the Emerson House, from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. Immediately following will be a tour of the Emerson Study and the Thoreau Gallery hosted by Jayne Gordon, Director of Education at The Concord Museum.

For details on other events in the two-week Thoreau Society Jubilee, write the Thoreau Society Fifteenth Anniversary Celebration, 60 Thoreau Street #320, Concord, MA 01742.

Fruitlands Museums Call for Papers

In conjunction with the 150th anniversary of Bronson Alcott's Utopian community at Fruitlands in Harvard, Massachusetts, Fruitlands Museums is planning a two-day symposium to be held in the summer of 1993.

The Museum invites proposals for papers, slide presentations, and reports on work in progress which relate to Fruitlands and the mid-nineteenth-century reform movements which its members embraced. Topics may include other communal or religious communities, such as Brook Farm, the Shakers, or the Millerites, which influenced and interacted with the Con- 

Society Business

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc., was granted tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service on 19 November 1990. The Society is now able to accept tax-exempt contributions under the terms of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

The Society had 129 Founding Members in 1990, including four in India, four in Japan, two in Canada, and one each in England and the USSR. Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports (for 1989) which were distributed at the annual meeting) may be obtained by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to
secretary/treasurer Wesley Mott, Dept. of Humanities, WPI, Worcester, MA 01609.

The Society acknowledges the following Founding Members who joined after the Fall issue of ESP went to press: Yoshitaka Aoyama (Japan), Evelyn Barish, John C. Byrd, Robert D. Habich, and M.R. Joshi (India). We also welcome the following new members in 1991: John E. Abraham (India), Larry R. Bowden, Gary L. Collison, Mark R. Dunphy, the Emerson Study Club of Sioux City, Iowa, Jane E. Rosecrans, Nancy S. Shackford, Susheel K. Sharma (India), Susan Sutton Smith, Shunichi Ueno (Japan), and Marilyn Urion.—WTM

Book-of-the-Month Club Selection, 1927
[Our President, Ralph H. Orth, sends the following miscellany.]

Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who was a member of the editorial board of the Book-of-the-Month Club for many years, recalled an unhappy experience in the early days of the Club which will be of interest to Emersonians. In an interview some years later she said:

“... one of the first book choices we offered our members was The Heart of Emerson’s Journals, edited by Bliss Perry, and with that we came to our first big cropper, in refusal from the readers. In those days, we made a point of telling the subscriber that if he didn’t like a book, he could send it back. It turned out, I believe, not to be practical from the business point of view, because it was impossible to arrange, without too great loss ... [In] the case of The Heart of Emerson’s Journals, every one of the judges had been extremely enthusiastic about it. We thought it gave an intimate view of the inner life of one of our greatest American writers ... And we still don’t know, I think, why it was a complete failure with the readers. We haven’t had many such instances of first-rate books like that which did not win acceptance. This came back, as the saying went at the Book-of-the-Month office, ‘in carload lots.’ It was a very great disappointment to us, and as it was only the second year of the whole venture, it rather shook our confidence in the American reader. Perhaps they didn’t like books of such good quality as we had assumed the first year.”

The transcript of Fisher’s interview was uncovered by Mark Madigan, a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts who is engaged in editing the letters of Dorothy Canfield Fisher. It is from “An Interview with Dorothy Canfield Fisher” by Louis Starr, 1956, in the Columbia University Oral History Collection.

[Transcript reprinted here courtesy of the Columbia University Oral History Research Office.]

IN MEMORIAM

Bette Morgan Sheatsley
1920-1990

When visitors came to Mr. Emerson’s door, it was Bette Sheatsley who welcomed them and invited them in. This was but one of her many roles as Director of the Ralph Waldo Emerson House. A woman of quick wit and easy conversation, she was the informed expert-in-residence patiently answering visitors’ queries whether simple or complex. Bette was the common-sensical instructress who insisted that her “ladies” relate the details of Mr. Emerson’s family life with accuracy, enthusiasm, and good taste. She was the kind mentor of many an awkward, shy novice whom she tutored and encouraged, and she beamed with pleasure whenever she overheard her pupils’ presentations complemented by departing guests.

A Memorial Service for Bette was held on a brilliantly sunny day in early October. The church, pristinely white inside and out, its interior furnished with restraint, imparted a sense of loftiness and light. Before the lectern rested a single bouquet of richly hued autumnal flowers, freshly cut from Lidian’s garden. Arranged in a modest woven basket, the bouquet symbolized, as aptly as any one thing could, Bette and her life. An enthusiastic gardener, a collector of fine hand-crafted antiques, a hostess dedicated to gracious entertainment in both her own and Mr. Emerson’s homes, Bette was a woman who admired the inherent elegance of classic simplicity and lived her life accordingly.

—Nancy S. Shackford

Annual Meeting

The 1991 annual meeting of The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc. will be held during the American Literature Association conference in Washington, D.C. (24-26 May). The meeting will convene at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, 24 May immediately following the second session presented by The Emerson Society. The location, in the Mayflower Hotel, will be published in the convention program.