

Editor's Preface

Thirty years have passed since Stanley Cavell published his first remarks on the founding of American thinking. At that time, in the context of an investigation of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, he asked: "Why has America never expressed itself philosophically? Or has it?"¹ Cavell offered an initial reply to the question with respect to Thoreau and then, several years later, pitched the same question with Ralph Waldo Emerson in mind. Since then, Cavell has produced many celebrated essays and lectures that illustrate his continuous effort to suggest how we might inherit the texts and problems born out of and borne by these American thinkers.

While a number of us who have followed Cavell's writing have managed to track these many pieces to their various sources, it has been easy for others to overlook the extent of pertinent articles, lectures, and chapters of books in this line of his work. One aim of creating this book, then, is to avert the unfortunate possibility that Cavell's substantive writings on Emerson may have failed to present themselves, to those who might welcome them, as the articulate, interwoven, and enduring works that they are. Even readers with some knowledge of the scope of the work may not recognize the degree to which his published writing adds up to a full statement on Emerson as a philosopher, or may suppose that he was, perhaps, leading up to a more balanced book that has not yet appeared. Now, with the appearance of *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes*, such postulation and ambiguity can be well lost. As Cavell attests in his Introduction to this volume, he understands this to be his book on Emerson, the only one he expects of himself.

The thirteen chapters that follow are arranged in chronological order. This serves the important purpose of allowing the reader to experience the way in which Cavell's thinking on Emerson develops over the years. Furthermore, as he does in work on Wittgenstein, Shakespeare, psychoanaly-

sis, and film, Cavell refers liberally to his own past writings. Sequencing the essays chronologically, therefore, affords the reader a chance to accumulate and absorb what will become the intricate reference materials of subsequent chapters.

The last two chapters contain material never before published, and Cavell has written an Introduction to the book. The remaining eleven chapters are reprinted from other publications: 1 and 2 from *The Senses of Walden: An Expanded Edition* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981; rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); 3, 4, and 5 from *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); 6 from *This New Yet Unapproachable America* (Albuquerque: Living Batch Press, 1989); 7 and 8 from *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); 9 from *New Literary History* 25 (1994): 951-58; 10 from *Philosophical Passages: Wittgenstein, Emerson, Austin, Derrida* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995); and 11 from *The Revival of Pragmatism: New Essays on Social Thought, Law, and Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998).

A complete index of Cavell's direct citations from Emerson's work in this volume can be found online at http://www.sup.org/cavell_index. The online index is a chronological record of Cavell's use of Emerson's writing.

During the course of editing this book, one that included the creation of the citation index, I kept assiduous notes on a number of allusions and references that seem worthy of further attention. In the near future, at Cavell's urging, it is my expectation to write something that highlights the most revealing of the many conceptual correspondences I encountered.

At the end of these remarks, placed here at the beginning of Cavell's, it is sincerely an honor to thank Stanley Cavell for entrusting to me the care of his scholarly writing on Emerson, for being implacably patient in the process of bringing this volume into its present form, and for sustaining me with the inspiration of his example.

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