

writings of the Transcendentalist movement. Buell provides a clear, workmanlike historical introduction, then presents generous selections based on topic or theme—Anticipations, Manifestos and Definitions, Secular Reform, and Literature and the Arts, among others—and ends with a section of Remembrances, being late-nineteenth-century essays by the likes of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James, looking back from their near perspective on the Transcendentalists.

Of necessity, Emerson dominates this book, as he did the Transcendentalist movement. His seminal essay “Nature” is included in its entirety. Emerson’s prose voice might take some getting used to these days. His high style, heavy on aphorism, can seem too sonorous, but the range and brilliance of his thought remains no less than astounding. “Nature” celebrates the near infinite power of the enlightened soul within the American landscape, and captures Emerson at his highest and his most human. In the woods, he says, “I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. Almost I fear to think how glad I am. . . . There I feel that nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair.” I’ve always loved Emerson for that one exception, “leaving me my eyes.”

Buell provides a short introduction to each of his selections, giving the context of the work within the larger movement and offering a few additional thoughts and notes: it is here, in these shorter pieces, that Buell’s own joy in the material is most evident. The selections themselves are broadly extracted from the major figures of the movement, and are of generous length. He cannot include the whole of *Walden*, which Buell rightly calls “the greatest of all Transcendentalist classics.” He offers instead a fascinating selection of Thoreau’s journal entries (many of which found their way into *Walden*) from his time at Walden Pond. These entries in turn are prefaced by a short selection from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s notebooks, describing a walk he took to Walden Pond two years before Thoreau moved there, including a description by Hawthorne of “a little hamlet of huts or shanties, inhabited by the Irish people who are at work upon the railroad.” It was one of these shanties, of

course, that Thoreau bought to dismantle and use as the base material for his small house.

—Peter Walpole

***Poe, Fuller, and the Mesmeric Arts: Transition States in the American Renaissance*, by Bruce Mills. Missouri, December 2005. \$39.95**

In somewhat obtuse language, this scholarly study traces the connection between Edgar Allan Poe’s and Margaret Fuller’s writings and theories concerning animal magnetism, somnambulism, and hypnosis as rendered in newspapers, literary and medical journals, pamphlets, and books. Through examining the works of Poe and Fuller, Mills attempts a deeper understanding of how the nineteenth-century literature responded to dynamic cultural forces. For many influential writers of the period, the call for a national literature had evolved into attention to the state of one’s own mind, to the manifestations of the highest states of mind and the effects of literary choices on readers’ psychological modes. Poe and Fuller, as Mills argues, increasingly rooted their epistemology and literary forms in psychological findings on mesmeric consciousness. While the book should evoke interest among Poe and Fuller scholars, the writing can be tedious and obscure at times, and may not prove engaging for the general public.

—Chun Ye

***Essential History: Jacques Derrida and the Development of Deconstruction*, by Joshua Kates. Northwestern, November 2005.**

\$74.95 cloth, \$29.95 paper

In this new contribution to Derrida studies, Joshua Kates sets out to make up for the lack of a truly global interpretation of Derrida’s thought. He seeks to develop a comprehensive view of Derrida, who has been lost in the rift between one camp that labels him a radical skeptic subscribing to linguistic determinism and another that sees deconstruction in greater proximity to traditional philosophy. All in all, Kates has less sympathy for the first view. The problem with the commentators in general, he maintains, is their reification of Derrida’s works as an essentially homogeneous whole. As an alternative, he proposes a genealogical or developmental approach to Derrida’s thought that would emphasize

not only continuities but also discontinuities and ruptures, notwithstanding Derrida's own denial of such a major development in his thought.

Still, Kates is able to tease out the developmental trajectory of Derrida with an eye on his pre-deconstruction works to present Husserlian phenomenology as the philosophical milieu in which deconstruction was first forged. At the boundary of this legacy, Kates thinks, Derrida discovered the motive and need for deconstruction. Even when Derrida finally moves from a Husserlian to a Heideggerian path and encounters Foucault and Levinas, he utilizes the intellectual tools he borrows from Husserl. Yet, this does not overshadow Kates's main point that there is a stark rupture between Derrida's pre-deconstruction and post-deconstruction works, despite the opposite common wisdom.

Kates mostly speaks to the other commentators rather than to the reader, such that the bulk of the work presents itself as interpretation and, largely, rebuttal of other commentators, not actual interpretation of Derrida himself. This potential drawback is to a certain extent redeemed in the last two chapters, yet the reader is expected to master the body of commentaries on Derrida in order to get the most out of this book. Just the same, the author can be said to have commendably established a developmental view of Derrida.

—Halil Ibrahim Yenigun

***Black Houses: Marital Violence in Victorian Fiction*, by Lisa Surridge. Ohio, November 2005. \$55 cloth, \$24.95 paper**

For Surridge's well-documented study of spousal abuse in Victorian Britain, she sifted through parliamentary debates, newspaper accounts, and court records from the early 1830s through the fin de siècle, and she proposes, "Narratives of marital violence permeated Victorian middle-class culture, even as these very narratives threatened to undermine its central tenets of domesticity, marriage, and protective masculinity." Surridge suggests that the 1828 Offenses Against the Person Act and the 1857 Divorce Act brought first working-class violence, and then middle- and upper-class violence, out of the private sphere of the home and into the communal realm of print

discourse. By exposing domestic violence to the public eye, wife abuse came to constitute an appalling rupture in the Victorian conceptualization of marriage. This movement toward the increasing exposure of domestic violence and shifting societal responses, Surridge argues, was actively confronted in nineteenth-century fiction. The focus of the study opens by situating the early work of Dickens within journalistic accounts of working-class domestic violence. Surridge then turns to Dickens's *Dombey and Son* and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* to scrutinize how these authors responded to the progressively more extreme debates on domestic violence in mid-nineteenth-century discourse: while Dickens ambiguously upholds female passivity as an avenue through which spousal abuse is defeated, Brontë polemically advocates for female resistance, suggesting that submissiveness exacerbates masculine aggression. As responses to the Divorce Act of 1857 and its public reception, George Eliot's "Janet's Repentance," Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, and Anthony Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right* reflect the escalating pertinence of marital violence to reconsiderations of gender roles in marriage. In abrading traditional conceptions of the marital function, both realist and sensational tales thus inaugurated fictional exploration of late-Victorian feminism and the problematic of the New Woman in the fin de siècle fiction of Mona Caird and Arthur Conan Doyle.

—Heather Miner

FICTION

***Come Together, Fall Apart*, by Cristina Henríquez. Riverhead, April 2006. \$24.95**

Henríquez, a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and one of "Fiction's New Luminaries" in the Summer 2004 issue of VQR, presents a stunning debut collection of eight stories and a novella, all of which take place in Panama. Unlike so many stories "about" an exotic locale, which tend to read like fictionalized guidebooks, these bring the country to life with fluency and verve, its sights and sounds observed from the thoughtful distance of a writer removed by a generation