A discussion of the sermon on the Lord’s Supper provides an insightful finale to this narrative of gradual emancipation and self-assertion.

Confronted by the risk of duplicating comments by earlier critics, Roberson demonstrates that her command of the material can result in fresh and original readings. She is especially good in her treatment of the complicated traumatic effects of Ellen Tucker’s illness and death on her young husband. Not only does she throw light through a minute perusal of the texts on the vicissitudes that affected Emerson’s troubled mind for months (manuscript emendations are frequently built into the argument), but she convincingly shows how the tragic event precipitated a complete reorganization of his thought, disposed of whatever was left in him of an inherited sense of masculine superiority, helped him come to terms with the punishing constraints of his own body to the extent that he had experienced a genuine, if vicarious, process of sublimation, and finally changed the nature of his christology, altering his representation of Jesus from a remote figure to that of a lovable, humane hero.

The reader may feel less than happy, however, when measuring the gap between the commitment inscribed in the title of the opening chapter, “Emerson’s Homiletic Narrative,” and the completed argument. All in all, Roberson pays little attention to the way Emerson accepts or transgresses the rules of a convention-bound genre that his Unitarian affiliation made mandatory for him. Nor does she really substantiate her claim that through the narratives that constitute his sermons Emerson circumvented the dryness inherent in theological statements and made room for a sustained fictional voice. (A sign of the indistinct quality of that fictional voice in Roberson’s book is her propensity to borrow indifferently from the Journal or from the sermons for important points in her argument.)

It may be that Roberson’s study, perceptive as it is, suffers from inadequate theoretical grounding—a fault that has its source, it seems, in a questionable selection of its basic critical references. There is an embarrassing vagueness about such key concepts as “autobiography” and “hermeneutics,” although an intensive discussion of their formal contents has been going on for years. The titles listed in the bibliography confirm this impression; they seem to reflect an idiosyncratic reading experience rather than a considered choice made in full awareness of the scholarly tools available on both sides of the Atlantic.

Maurice Gonnaud, University of Lyon


In _Feminist Conversations_, Christina Zwarg offers an important reassessment of the relationship between Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Fuller
and Emerson maintained an intense correspondence from 1836 until her death in 1850. Zwarg shows how Emerson's letters to Fuller demonstrate the extent of his intellectual indebtedness to her. Emerson increasingly came to rely on Fuller's feminist readings of his own writings, and their involvement with Charles Fourier's theories proved to be mutually stimulating. Fuller's "double advocacy" of Goethe's idealism and Fourier's utopian materialism provoked conflicts between social and human agency in Emerson's thinking that surfaced in Essays: Second Series. In Representative Men, a response, Zwarg suggests, to double advocacy in Woman in the Nineteenth Century, Fuller becomes the model for human agency and for Emerson's representative men. "Fate," Zwarg persuasively argues, is Emerson's allegorization of Fuller's death and an endorsement of her feminist strategy of working from the provisional space provided by her culture. Through Zwarg's reading, Fuller emerges as a central figure in Emerson's consciousness.

In addition to reconfiguring the Fuller-Emerson relationship, Zwarg's book brings under critical scrutiny the full breadth of Fuller's intellectual achievements. None of the recent scholarly books related to Fuller—Catherine C. Mitchell's on Fuller's journalism, Elizabeth Ann Bartlett's on nineteenth-century feminism, or Joan von Mehren's biography—pursues Fuller's thinking with Zwarg's intellectual rigor or breadth. Zwarg examines Fuller's virtually ignored translations of Goethe's Tasso and Bettina von Arnim's Die Gunderode and shows how they demonstrate theories of translation that anticipate the concerns of poststructuralists; Fuller's journalistic writings on prison reform, prostitutes, and care for the insane, Zwarg suggests, develop theories of hegemony similar to those of Gramsci; and her troubled, if ambivalent, meditations on the ethnocentric components of feminism with regard to Native Americans in Summer on the Lakes reflect gender/race debates today. Indeed, Zwarg's recontextualization of contemporary theory through Fuller is one of the strongest elements of the book. Feminist Conversations succeeds admirably in drawing together different intellectual currents in the nineteenth century, in showing Fuller's remarkable influence on Emerson, and in demonstrating the interest of both thinkers in ideas about agency and the subject that are at the center of contemporary poststructuralist and feminist thought.

Some readers, however, may be dismayed by the methodology of this otherwise exemplary work of scholarship. In a book so concerned with agency, it is surprising to find Fuller's agency curiously elided. Almost throughout the book, Fuller is shown to have been influenced by the male thinkers around her, while Fourier and Goethe are presented as originators of ideas. The "Conversations" in the title of the book, echoing the discussion groups that Fuller organized, are relatively one-sided. There is a whole chapter devoted to Emerson's letters to Fuller, but none to Fuller's letters to him. Despite this drawback, Feminist Conversations is a valuable contribution to the scholarship on Emerson and Fuller, and to feminist analyses of nineteenth-century
culture. It will be of interest to scholars of Transcendentalism and to theorists interested in translation, poststructuralism, and feminism.

Malini Johar Schueller, University of Florida

**Emily Dickinson's Open Folios: Scenes of Reading, Surfaces of Writing. By Marta L. Werner. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press. 1995. xvi, 308 pp. $49.50.**

Werner's book is a scholarly edition of forty of Dickinson's late manuscripts. It comprises facsimile reproductions and "typed transcriptions that reproduce as fully as possible the shock of script and startling array of visual details inscribed on the surfaces of the manuscripts." The manuscripts range from fair copies of letters Dickinson drafted, to partial rough drafts of letters and poems, to bits of writing on scraps—an envelope, the margin of a magazine illustration or legal form, the back of a pharmacy wrapper. The main point of presenting these facsimiles and transcriptions in this volume is to open up this grouping and set it "adrift" from its previous moorings in Millicent Todd Bingham's *Emily Dickinson: A Revelation* (1954) and Thomas Johnson's *Letters* (1958). Where Bingham's editing choices create "an overdetermined narrative structure" of Dickinson's supposed "Master Passion" for Judge Otis Lord and Johnson's splices and arrangements similarly foreclose ambiguity, Werner "offe[r]s only a crude case history of a writer-at-work, a set of unassembled drafts and fragments—sans instructions for reassembly" (48).

Werner's alternative to the closures imposed by Bingham and Johnson is "an aesthetics of open-endedness [that] initiates a break with the analytical methods and claims to comprehensiveness generally associated with scholarly narratives ... a poetics (of reading, of editing) [that] precedes theory" (2). I found the sixty pages of commentary that aim to sketch such a poetics frustrating. The supposed precedence of "poetics" over "theory" in practice means that Werner compacts her theory into footnotes that authorize her *bricolage* rather than actually theorizing Dickinson's late writings. (It would be better to go to Werner's inspiration here, Susan Howe's insightful writing on Dickinson.) Werner's project is one of revelation, and like Bingham's book of that name, what is revealed is Dickinson's desire; here, though, it is desire for something almost the exact opposite of Judge Lord: "the trajectory of [Dickinson's] desire to inscribe herself outside all institutional accounts of order" (4). Werner wants to purify Dickinson of the taint of institutional constraint, to leave us a Dickinson idealized and a writing that transcends time and place ("Our pursuit of 'Emily Dickinson' ... only confirms her place outside the discursive economy" (19-20).

I wanted to see acknowledged some of the questions that these manuscripts, like the fascicles, raise about Dickinson's institutional relations (which is not to say that these relations exhaust all aspects of the writing).