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The Architectonics of Emerson's *Nature*

IN HIS OTHERWISE SENSITIVE AND SYMPATHETIC READING OF EMERSON'S essays, Stephen Whicher once observed of *Nature* that "the style is stiff and naif, the organization is overelaborate, the thought gowned in unbecoming borrowed terminology," and yet it remained for him, "one of the most extraordinary pieces of writing yet to come from an American." This ambivalent response is familiar to readers of Emerson's essays in general and of *Nature* in particular. Our efforts to come to terms with Emerson's essays in an analytic way tend to flounder in a morass of "linear logic" that Emerson was at such pains to have us avoid. We frequently seek in his essays the very qualities they do not contain, and we evaluate them in stylistic terms that are not always illuminating. This mis-perception is especially injurious in regard to Emerson's first major written essay; for *Nature* is a work that partakes of both the oral and the written stylistic traditions and is influenced in its structure and development by other modes of expression besides those of the conventionally rhetorical and oratorical. To comprehend *Nature* we need to consider its architectonics, the artful system of construction by which Emerson put together this principal statement of his transcendental vision.

The basic element of Emerson's style we usually assume is an outgrowth of his pulpit experience, and we further assume that it resembles a sermonic style that stresses what Cotton Mather once described as "easy conveyance of ideas." But Emerson, in abandoning the pulpit, gave up not only the conventional expression of the Unitarian creed but the "easy conveyance" as well. In search of a new creed, he was also of necessity in search of a new style. Yet, for all his rebellious assertions, Emerson was essentially conservative by nature; and, whether by design or not, he returned to an older style whose principal character had been stated a century earlier by Cotton Mather in *Manuductio ad Ministerium* (1726). As Howard Mumford Jones has reminded us, Mather was not en-

tirely happy with the new rhetorical style and wished to preserve something of the older, more elaborate manner. He observed in his manual for preachers:

There is a way of writing, wherein the author endeavors, that the reader may have something to the purpose in every paragraph. There is not only a vigor sensible in every sentence, but the paragraph is embellished with profitable references, even to something beyond what is directly spoken. Formal and painful quotations are not studied; yet all that could be learnt from them is insinuated. The writer pretends not unto reading, yet he could not have writ as he does if he had not read very much in his time; and his composures are not only a cloth of gold, but also stuck with as many jewels, as the gown of a Russian ambassador. (*M. ad M.*, p. 44)

This double function of style, of substantial matter enriched with highly conscious ornamentation, is characteristic of an artistic style that Emerson had visually absorbed on his European tour in 1833—the baroque. If we may appropriate the term from the visual arts and music, we might say that the style of *Nature* is “baroque.” And while this appropriation from other art-forms runs that risk of mis-application which any term of analogy invites, there is some precedent for it in Emerson’s own thinking at the time.

To examine Emerson’s journals for the years 1833-36 is to encounter his frequent preoccupation with architectural images and with the relation of these to his germinating theories of the soul.* For example, in the *Q Journal* kept during his European trip, he notes Mme. de Stael’s famous remark (later cited in *Nature*): “Architecture is frozen music” (J, IV, 40). And while staying in Milan on June 10, 1833, Emerson recorded in the same journal that “it is in the soul that architecture exists and Santa Croce and this Duomo are far-behind imitations,” and continued, “I would rather know the metaphysics of architecture as of shells and flowers than anything else in the matter” (J, IV, 75). Further on in this same entry he adds a paraphrase of Mme. de Stael (“Architecture, said the lady, is frozen music”). More than a year later, back home in Concord, he ruminated in the *A Journal*:

If one should seek to trace the genealogy of thoughts, he would find . . . Mme. de Stael’s “Architecture is frozen music,” borrowed from Goethe’s “Architecture is dumb music,” borrowed from Vitruvius, who said, “The Architect must not only understand drawing but also music. . . .” (J, IV, 337)

* References throughout to *Journals* IV and V are to the Belknap Press edition (1964-65); other journal references are to the Riverside Press edition (1910).

This preoccupation with the fine arts did not end with his journal entries for 1833, for even in the *B Journal* of 1835, kept during the year of composition and refinement of *Nature*, Emerson frequently invoked the visual arts as metaphor. "May I say with presumption," he noted in an early entry for that year, "that like Michael Angelo I only block my statues" (J, V, 14). On November seventh, he remarked most revealingly: "Give me one single man and uncover for me his pleasures and pains, let me minutely and in the timbers and ground plan study his architecture and you may travel all around the world" (J, V, 107).

Even the public lectures that Emerson gave in 1836 reveal this preoccupation with art and as such reflect something of the cast of Emerson's mind as he completed *Nature* and was beginning to expand and develop what it enunciates both in terms of statement and style. These orations were examples of what Emerson called "eloquence" in a lecture on "Art" that he delivered in December 1836, three months after the publication of *Nature*. In placing eloquence among the "fine arts" of music, poetry, painting, sculpture and architecture, Emerson observed:

Eloquence, as far as it is a fine art, is modified how much by the material organization of the orator, the tone of the voice, the physical strength, the play of the eye and countenance! All this is so much deduction from the merit of Art, and is the attribute of Nature. (EL, II, 46)

Eloquence is a kind of acting, a performance, in which auditory and visual effects are just as much a part of the endeavor as are the thoughts expressed. Eloquence is an art-form with a double function, as Emerson noted earlier in the same lecture when he observed that "architecture and eloquence are mixed arts, whose end is sometimes beauty and sometimes use" (EL, II, 45). While this epigrammatic assertion might at first appear to be a variation on Horace's classic dictum of *utile dulce*, it is not simply so; for in discussing beauty, Emerson was pervasively concerned with the order and harmony that we perceive in the correspondence between the human and the divine and with the particular use to which we put that perception. Though he appears merely to enumerate the "uses" of nature in his essay, Emerson was ultimately concerned with the cumulative effect of such uses, which created for him a beautiful harmony. Eloquence, then, is no casual entertainment; it endeavors, like all art, to make the actual meaningful by giving it an ideal order. Perhaps Emerson put this matter most lucidly in a journal entry for October 1836: "It is the constant endeavor of the mind to idealize the actual, to accommodate the show of things to the desires of the mind. Hence architecture and all art" (J, V, 221). The concept of duality, and particularly

of an interpenetrating duality, is essential to Emerson's views here and is reflected in the chapters of *Nature* which he had just completed. *Nature* is, then, Emerson's first exuberant attempt after the tentative testing of the initial lectures to delineate the complexities of the actual by seeing the inherent order in the structure of the whole. To that extent he emulates the baroque; for as some art critics have suggested, the baroque was an effort to approximate nature by bringing it under the discipline of reason, to reconcile the picturesquely romantic with classical order. What Emerson envisioned from the beginning (as he later expressed it while preparing the essay for republication in 1849) was a rebirth of Nature freed from the excesses both of pagan and Christian assumptions. In his journal at that time, Emerson noted a very Renaissance-oriented attitude. He observed that there have been three stages in history: the Greek, when men deified Nature; the Christian, when they craved a heaven out of Nature and above it; and the Modern, when "the Tendency is to marry mind to Nature, and to put Nature under the mind, convert[ing] the world into the instrument of Right Reason" (J, VIII, 78). Though a late observation such an evolutionary concept in *Nature* is implicitly enforced by the motto chosen for the 1849 edition which ends: "And striving to be man, the worm/ Mounts through all the spires of form." The *recovery* of nature was to be accomplished by the *discovery* of mind. Thus the metaphor of "renaissance," so vigorously appropriated by Matthiessen, is even more precise than he perhaps intended. A closer examination of *Nature*, its structure, strategies and progression, will suggest more fully the architectonics of Emerson's baroque resascent style.

At first glance few essays could look so transparent. *Nature* begins with an "Introduction" and has a final chapter called, "Prospects." Between the beginning and end, there are seven chapters, respectively entitled: "Nature," "Commodity," "Beauty," "Language," "Discipline," "Idealism" and "Spirit." Yet on closer examination we discover that the chapters are of radically unequal length and that in terms of conventional logic we find it difficult to discover the transition from one chapter to the next. Beyond these problems we observe that one chapter, "Language," seems to command more attention than the others, undoubtedly because its organization and development seem more transparent and conventional than in the other chapters. Its very centrality in the essay and the nature of its definitions have led some critics to argue that the platonic aspect of the essay, underscored by the original motto of 1836, creates a division at this point between the first five chapters and the last four, that with this chapter we cross over the famous divided line of Plato from the world of impressions to the world of ideas. But there is a particular aspect of the chapter, "Language," which provides us with a clue to

Emerson's strategy in the essay. For while the entire essay is an elaborate exercise in definition of the sort that the chapter, "Language," enumerates—that is, a movement from phenomenal experience to symbolic comprehension of noumenal experience in the phenomenal world—the specific gesture toward syllogistic formulation that is so conspicuously part of the chapter hints at a "scientific" approach. Part of the author's strategy in defining the "uses" of nature is to present himself not merely as spiritual philosopher but also as scientific naturalist. Once more we find precedent for this assumption in Emerson's early lectures. In 1833, in a lecture on "The Uses of Natural History," Emerson gave initial expression to the central concept of "Language."

The strongest distinction of which we have an idea is that between thought and matter. The very existence of thought and speech supposes and is a new nature totally distinct from the material world; yet we find it impossible to speak of it and its laws in any other language than that borrowed from our experience in the material world. We not only speak in continual metaphors of the morn, the noon and the evening of life, of dark and bright thoughts, of sweet and bitter moments, of the healthy mind and the fading memory; but all our most literal and direct modes of speech—as right and wrong, form and substance, honest and dishonest . . . are, when hunted up to their original signification, found to be metaphors also. And this, because the whole of Nature is a metaphor or image of the human Mind. (EL, I, 24)

The scientific naturalist begins by classifying and defining data, but he is ultimately engaged in ordering the human mind's conception of its own existence. To that end the naturalist becomes philosophic; he becomes poetic as well as systematic. This mode of defining is highly fluid, partaking of the interaction of matter and thought, of natural facts and spiritual facts. It creates in Emerson's style a quality that M. W. Croll has defined in his classic essay on "The Baroque Style in Prose" (1929):

There is a constant swift adaptation of form to the emergencies that arise in an energetic and unpremeditated forward movement; . . . these signs of spontaneity and improvisation occur in passages loaded with as heavy a content as rhetoric ever has to carry. That is to say, they combine the effect of great mass with the effect of rapid motion; and there is no better formula than this to describe the ideal of the baroque design in all the arts. (*Studies in English Philology*, pp. 442-43)

If we examine the first two sections of the essay, we confront a series of definitions characterized by great fluidity. The "Introduction" contains four paragraphs. The first two constitute a general approach to the

large topic of the essay. The first is interrogative and evocative; the second is declarative and imperative. The first begins with an assertion about the past and concludes with an injunction for the future. The second paragraph begins with a sweeping generalization and concludes with the crucial question of the essay. The third and fourth paragraphs are quite concrete. The third approaches the topic from the perspective of science; the fourth from the perspective of philosophy. The third poses a series of value judgments concerning the scientific approach to nature; the fourth undertakes a series of definitions of the central term and its subcategories. Thus the "Introduction" moves from a series of oratorical flourishes to some rhetorical distinctions and definitions. In contrast to this introduction, the first chapter of the essay makes a highly personal statement about how we perceive what has just been defined. The approach here is in contrast to the striving for objectivity at the end of the introduction. We sense a strong personal voice which is not that of a mere impersonal scientific naturalist or quite that of the universal Orphic Poet, for it expresses itself in a series of highly metaphoric statements about the phenomenal world that culminates in that metaphor of vital spatial vision—the transparent eyeball (still maligned, even by Jonathan Bishop in his otherwise sensitive reading of Emerson on the Soul). The voice moves from the familiar and concrete (the speaker is scuddling through the winter puddles of a common) to a bizarrely vivid attempt at a universal symbol appropriate both to natural anatomy and spiritual insight which is the climax of the fourth paragraph. Then the "occult relation" between man and his world is treated subjectively in the fifth paragraph; and finally in the sixth paragraph that relationship is objectively crystallized in the epigram: "Nature always wears the color of the spirit." Thus in the first two sections of the essay, we encounter two kinds of definition. In the "Introduction" nature is defined as "essence unchanged by man" and art as "the mixture of man's will with those essences." These are essentially substantive definitions that operate near the "ground line of familiar facts." In contrast to these the final large observation of the first chapter, "Nature," does not operate as a substantive definition; it appears to be a highly poetic assertion that is epigrammatic but illusive. Yet, as Chapter VII, "Spirit," will reveal, such a mode of defining is as essential to Emerson as the more conventional way. Between these two modes of definition the remaining chapters of the essay modulate.

The next six chapters, as Emerson makes clear in the opening paragraph of Chapter II, partake of this essentially dialectical mode of development. Chapter II, "Commodity," deals with "those advantages which our senses owe to nature," in which Emerson sees nature not only

as material substance but as process and result as well: "The wind sows the seed; the sun evaporates the sea; the wind blows the vapor to the field; the ice, the other side of the planet, condenses rain on this; the rain feeds the plant; the plant feeds the animal; and thus the endless circulations of the divine charity nourish man." The catalogue of such commodity and utility is, as Emerson notes, "endless." Chapter III, "Beauty," bears the same analogous relation to Chapter II that Chapter I bore to the "Introduction." Its opening line makes clear the more theoretical dimension of this section: "A nobler want of man is served by nature, namely the want of Beauty." A similar relationship is established between the chapter on "Language" and the chapter on "Discipline." The former is basically specific, like the section of definitions in the "Introduction" and like the concern with natural phenomena in "Commodity." On the other hand, "Discipline" defines a more theoretical concept and to that extent is more like "Beauty." This relationship of the specific to the theoretical also exists between the chapters on "Idealism" and "Spirit"; for idealism as an *ism* lends itself to specific definition and classification, whereas spirit must be intuitively and poetically apprehended.

In terms of its structure *Nature* moves through a series of chapters in which not only a relationship between the specific and the theoretical is established but each pair of chapters leads to an increasingly more complex set of concepts. For example, though "Language" might be said to be more complex in its definitional structure than the stipulative terms in the "Introduction," and while "Idealism" might be said to be even more complex than "Language" in the nature and scope of its definitions; yet each, in retrospective relation to what follows, seems relatively simple. What we experience is a definitional escalation. In this fashion Emerson is able to move from the minutiae which are principally the concern of the scientific naturalist to the metaphoric speculations which are the primary concern of the artist as Orphic Poet. From what we glean in Emerson's letters and journal entries, we can recognize his structural intentions in these terms. We know, for example, that when he decided to add to his "little book" the essay, "Spirit," on which he was working separately, he was troubled by the transition from "Discipline" to "Spirit." The chapter on "Idealism" which he then wrote, serves as a specific concrete bridge and completes the pattern of complementary chapters. In such a structural scheme, the final chapter, "Prospects," stands as a summation of the whole work. This sense of mounting dialectic definition is also supported by the motto of 1849, with its clear emphasis on the evolving, upward aspiration of the worm to be man. Indeed this later motto suggests that the chapters are not merely a series of ladder rungs but constitute demarcations on a helixical spire of form which the

1849 motto vividly describes. Accordingly we are invited both to pair the chapters and to see them in some sort of helixical evolutionary scheme, moving from very finite data to the larger realms of spirit and to the prospects beyond about which the Orphic Poet, the final voice of the author, sings so prophetically.

This principle of double reading—of “double vision” as Whicher called it—is analogically related to those multi-dimensional art-forms that Emerson discusses in “Art”: music, sculpture and architecture. Indeed he may well have unconsciously absorbed the principle from observing the constructional technique of Michelangelo, whose work he admired on his trip abroad in 1833, and on whom he lectured in 1835. For Emerson’s style partakes of the same technique that Henry Moore described in Michelangelo’s “Moses” when he observed that Michelangelo built up a mass of detail yet kept the same vision throughout. To walk around a Michelangelo statue or to see photographs of one taken from various sides but in the same light is to encounter what appear to be different statues. So with Emerson’s essay: the individual chapters may be said to constitute different perspectives, though the subject—and particularly the vision that defines the subject—remains the same. What we stylistically encounter is what Emerson cites in “Discipline” when he speaks of architecture as “frozen music.” That is, we recognize not only the parts, the notes, the members, but the manner in which the parts flow into the whole that is the church or the cantata or the composition.

This “double vision” is most evident in the more theoretical chapters of *Nature*: “Beauty,” “Discipline” and “Spirit.” In the chapter “Beauty,” for example, Emerson first tried to suggest the complex possibilities of beauty in a single paragraph; but he wisely recognized that such an approach was too abstract, too illusive. What the first paragraph tries to convey is the eye’s response to several aspects of beauty simultaneously. But Emerson must intuitively have sensed that the reader might need to recognize the parts first before he could see the whole, and so he began the next paragraph: “For better consideration, we may distribute the aspects of Beauty in a threefold manner.” As we analyze the three separate aspects, we see that they are delight, virtue and intellect. Returning then to the observation of the first paragraph, we see how the eye should see these three aspects of beauty simultaneously in cosmic harmony. Each represents a single dimension of the whole; but they are ordered in relation to their increasing complexity. That is, delight is essentially simple sensuous response; virtue is sensuous response combined with human will; and intellect is sensuous response related to thought that is itself related to human will. Consequently for Emerson “Beauty, in the largest and profoundest sense, is one expression for the universe. . . . Truth,

goodness, and beauty are but different faces of the same All." In the final paragraph Emerson returns to where he began, weaving the three strands back together and leaving the reader with a more articulated sense of that first formulation, beyond which the chapter has not really gone. Again, M. W. Croll has described quite clearly this particular mode of baroque progression:

The first member is likely to be a self contained statement of the whole idea. . . . It is so because writers in this style like to avoid prearrangements and preparations; they begin, as Montaigne puts it, at *le dernier point* [sic], the point aimed at. The first member therefore exhausts the mere fact of an idea; logically there is nothing more to say. But it does not exhaust its imaginative truth or the energy of its conception. It is followed, therefore, by other members, each with a new tone or emphasis, each expressing a new apprehension of the truth expressed in the first. We may describe the progress . . . therefore, as a series of imaginative moments occurring in a logical pause or suspension. (p. 433)

The chapter "Discipline" reflects a similar mode of progression. Here the division of the initial assertion ("The use of the world [as discipline] includes the preceding uses, as parts of itself") is two-fold rather than three. The assertion of the first section is: "Nature is a discipline of the understanding in intellectual truths." And the assertion of the second section is: "Sensible objects conform to the premonitions of Reason and reflect the conscience." The principle of discipline is singular; but it affects the human organism in two different ways that Emerson can best illustrate by adopting the Neoplatonic, Coleridgean distinction between the Understanding and Reason. To delineate the two assertions and the concepts they embody is again to sort out the parts for the sake of the inexperienced eye. In actuality both the assertion and the concepts are interlocked and indeed take their definitions from this fact. In terms of the geometric metaphor that Emerson employs in this chapter, it would not be possible to define center without circumference or to comprehend circumference without some comprehension of center. As so often in Emerson, the geometric metaphor becomes the only way in which the author can convey some sense of the divisions within the whole. What is Unity?

It is like a great circle on a sphere, comprising all possible circles; which, however, may be drawn and comprise it in like manner. Every such truth is the absolute Ens [Being] seen from one side. But it has innumerable sides.

The geometric metaphor is adroitly chosen, for it enables Emerson to

distinguish in the subsequent two chapters between the limitations of idealism and the infinitude of spirit. In the final paragraph of the chapter on "Idealism" we are told that it "beholds the whole circle of persons and things, of actions and events, of country and religion." Idealism is inclusive of phenomena; but it answers, as the next chapter reminds us, only the question, "What is matter?" To that extent it is like that "great circle on a sphere." It may have scope, but it does not encompass the whole. Or, as Emerson expresses it in "Spirit," such views "do not include the whole circumference of man." Without spirit we may see a circularity to our existence, but we do not see the sphericity that constitutes its symmetry. Without spirit we may ascertain the *line* of existence, but we do not comprehend its *volume*. Without spirit our geometry is plane, not solid. That is the ultimate implication of the seemingly bizarre symbol of the transparent eyeball with which Emerson began in the first chapter. Indeed that crucial fourth paragraph of the first chapter, on which Jonathan Bishop rightly has dwelled, presents in brief the structural components of these later chapters. For to "return to reason and faith" in nature is a circular journey, while to be "glad to the brink of fear" is a spherel insight. The former undertaking is logically clear; the latter is paradoxical. And it is a resolution of this paradox which the chapter "Spirit" proposes. Idealism attempts to resolve the paradox of existence by seeing "the world in God," but that solution is for Emerson to "leave God out of me." The paradox can only be resolved by seeing—in a phrase Emerson almost uses but shies away from for reasons of obvious Christian theological import—"God with us." In such a phrase we would grammatically recognize two separate entities; but in effect the connective says that the distinction is of no real significance because the connective implies unity. Through spirit there is no separateness between the infinite and the finite. Emerson makes this point quite clear in his natural metaphor near the end of the chapter: "The Supreme Being does not build up nature around us, but puts forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old." The chapter "Spirit" dissolves the fluidity by which so much of the essay has moved and presents us with the mass of unity that is to be seen in the prospects before us. It achieves the condition of "frozen music."

Before that great coda is sounded we might note another distinction that exists in the pairing of the chapters. We need to consider again the question of voice, not so much as strategy but as mode. We observe a notable distinction between the kinds of voices heard in the individual chapters. If we turn to the musical metaphor for a moment we might liken the various chapters of the essay to the parts of a baroque cantata.

The theoretical chapters we have examined are like chorales, intricately contrapuntal but moving toward a great harmonic final unity (which in this case is the final chapter). Intermingled with these chorales are the recitatives, which as the term itself denotes, are linear statements essentially singular in voice. Such an analogy is not alien to Emerson's thought, as an entry in the *B Journal* for March 11, 1836 suggests, when Emerson juxtaposes de Stael and Goethe with Haydn's *Creation*, immediately preceding a passage he later incorporated into *Nature*. An examination of "Language" and "Idealism" will illuminate this sort of analogy. In "Language" each section of the syllogistic formulation at the beginning of the chapter is taken up individually and separately; each one grows out of the previous one. The same might be said of "Idealism," which though more abstract than "Language" is also linear in progression. The five-fold effects of culture are carefully and sequentially listed. Thus we encounter a series of chapters that modulate between rather singular, linear statements and extremely complex contrapuntal ones. Just as the baroque chorales are more exciting and memorable than the recitatives, so too the chapters devoted to mind are more intricate, more challenging and revealing, than those recitative passages devoted to aspects of matter. The weight of our interest is thrown stylistically toward those chapters whose ideas Emerson, for all his meticulous dialectical construction, more fully valued.

This fact should not surprise us. Acknowledging that matter and mind are essential to one another, Emerson always makes clear where his commitment lies. Indeed his analysis is intended as a corrective to the existing situation, as he makes quite clear in his final chapter, "Prospects": "At present man applies to nature but half his force. He works on the world with his understanding alone." For Emerson the task confronting man was not merely scientific but poetic—to apply his Reason imaginatively to the world. This is the task of the Poet-Naturalist, who must restore unity to nature by first restoring unity to himself: "The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is because man is disunited with himself. He cannot be a naturalist until he satisfies all the demands of the spirit." To this extent the task of the Poet-Naturalist is the task of the artisan learning the intangible dimension of his craft that will aid him intuitively in shaping the phenomena before him into a meaningful whole. Emerson anticipated something of this conclusion in his lecture on "The Naturalist," in 1834, when he observed:

It is fit that man should look upon Nature with the eye of the Artist, to learn from the great Artist whose blood beats in our veins, whose taste is upspringing in our own perception of beauty, the laws by which our hands should work that we may build St. Peter's or paint

Transfigurations or sing Iliads in worthy continuation of the architecture of the Andes, [of] the colors of the sky and the poem of life. (EL, I, 73)

What is truly significant about *Nature* is what Emerson did with this rather conventional Romantic notion. For what, as we now see in "Prospects," the Poet-Naturalist creates is not merely churches or paintings or poems but no less than Man himself. The Poet-Naturalist becomes the architect of Man. We should have guessed this fact from the beginning; for quite early, in "Commodity," Emerson quoted two lines from George Herbert's poem, "Man." Here, in "Prospects," he quotes five stanzas. The first line is prophetic of the whole Emersonian perspective: "Man is all symmetry." The ending to the essay, which is no conclusion in the conventional rhetorical sense, is simply but grandly the recognition of symmetry, the shaping of the capstone to the broken arch. *Nature* is, then, a blueprint, an architectonic, for the construction of the self out of the world's body, of the *me* out of the *not me*. This imaginative act of creation is an affirmation of the transcendent truth of man's divine nature. Hence the injunction of the coda to the essay:

Know then that the world exists for you. For you is the phenomenon perfect. What we are, that only can we see. All that Adam had, all that Caesar could, you have and can do. Adam called his house heaven and earth; Caesar called his house, Rome; you perhaps call yours, a cobbler's trade; a hundred acres of ploughed land; or a scholar's garret. Yet line for line, and point for point your dominion is as great as theirs, though without fine names. Build therefore your own world. As far as you conform your life to the pure idea in your own mind, that will unfold its great proportions.

The entire coda is more intricate stylistically, more eloquent verbally, but not really very different in kind from the ending to one of the lectures on natural history two years earlier. Emerson concluded "On the Relation of Man to the Globe" by observing of man,

. . . That not only a perfect symmetry is discoverable in his limbs and senses between the head and the foot, between the hand and the eye, the heart and the lungs,—but an equal symmetry and proportion is discoverable between him and the air, the mountains, the tides, the moon, and the sun. I am not impressed by solitary marks of designing wisdom; I am thrilled with delight by the choral harmony of the whole. Design! It is all design. It is all beauty. It is all astonishment. (EL, I, 49)

It may well be that Emerson is merely astonished here at his own oratory;

but since he was later to use these very members of the human body as metaphoric titles of his lectures on "Human Culture," it is more probable that he here expresses that profounder astonishment that is implicit in the historical experience of western man. It is the astonishment that the Greeks knew when Sophocles' Theban chorus exclaims: "Wonders are many on the earth and the greatest of these is man"; it is the astonishment that was rediscovered by the Italians in the Renaissance as reflected in Leonardo's famous circular emblem of Man the Measure. It is this same astonishment that Emerson faced rather ingenuously for the first time in 1834, but then was to express two years later with the self assurance and skill that is the intricate baroque style of *Nature*.

If Emerson's terminology happens to be borrowed, that should not distract us. For what should interest us is not so much from whom it was borrowed, but rather what Emerson did with it. In the baroque tradition there is ample precedent for such borrowings. Some of the best of Bach's work is based on motifs that he borrowed from other composers and from common musical sources; and the architecture of the Renaissance, as Geoffrey Scott has persuasively argued, is not poorer but richer for its tasteful borrowings. What is important in all these borrowings is the manner in which they have been reshaped and given the personal signature of the artist who did the borrowing. To that extent it is difficult to see how we can view the Emersonian style in *Nature* as either stiff or naive. It may be that we do not care for an architecture of "frozen music"; but that is a matter of personal taste and should not enter into our efforts to determine Emerson's style. As Emerson's most sustained single effort, *Nature* stands as his most baroque endeavor because it has about it those qualities which were the concern of baroque renaissance artists—mass and largeness of scale. It remained until the end of his career Emerson's most ambitious undertaking. It was in the words of Galen that Emerson noted in his *Q Journal* of 1832, "a solemn hymn to the great architect of our bodily frame . . ." (J, IV, 11).

To that extent, *Nature* works toward that important end of baroque art—the active sense of exultation. In an interesting canceled passage from the original notes for his lecture on "Art," Emerson commented in those terms:

As thus in architecture the mass, so in music the qualities of the atmosphere & the vibration of sonorous bodies; in painting, colour; in sculpture, the marble or bronze; in poetry the language; in oratory the voice & person of the orator & the accidents of time, place, topic, & other circumstances, are all adventitious fountains of pleasure independent of the spiritual arrangement in which alone the art resides. Art is thus ever impure & secondary. Nature paints the best part of the

picture, carves the best part of the statue, builds the best part of the house, & speaks the best part of the oration. (EL, II, 386)

Nature is the divine order; art is man's effort to make that order spiritually comprehensible. Not only then in terms of its subject matter but by means of its artfully structured style, *Nature* is a sophisticated anticipation of the world that Emerson was to build for himself in the lectures and the essays that followed, a spherical world of transparent symmetry.

