

MAILER AND EMERSON:
LIPTON'S JOURNAL AND THE
DISSIDENT SOUL

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The great day in the man is the birth of perception, which instantly throws him on the party of the Eternal.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals*, May, 1859

MAILER OPENS *OF A FIRE ON THE MOON* (1969) recalling his reaction of “horror” and “dread” at the news of Hemingway’s suicide. “Hemingway constituted the walls of the fort: Hemingway had given the power to believe you could still shout down the corridor of the hospital, live next to the breath of the beast, accept your portion of dread each day. Now the greatest living romantic was dead” (3–4). The Romantic mantle Hemingway dropped at the moment of his suicide is something Mailer coveted at least as early as 1954–55 when he began his self-analysis through *Lipton’s Journal*, his effort to regenerate and transform himself after the failure of his work subsequent to *The Naked and the Dead* and the dissolution of his first marriage. Might not he, Mailer, after Hemingway’s death in 1961 become the greatest living Romantic?

“I have always been the romantic masquerading as the realist,” Mailer writes in *Lipton’s*, as if in preparation for his future role seven years before Hemingway’s suicide. “That is what has given the peculiar tension . . . to my work. Now as I become aware that I am really an enormous romantic my work may suffer tremendously for some time” (entry #200).¹ Later, Mailer adds: “I was the romantic sent out to discover realism—which is *Naked*. But

once a realist, I had to become the realist going out to understand the romantic, which is my present state" (#300). Mailer might well have donned Hemingway's mantle of Romantic rebellion to face the modern world and to face, near the end of the century, the post-modern pall descending like some dark night of the soul. Mailer's prose, however, takes an alternative tack from his literary hero's, reflecting instead (with a nod to Thomas Wolfe) the elaboration and orotundity of Melville, Coleridge, De Quincey, Ruskin, and Carlyle. These authors also believed in "God's Broadsword" of "Almighty prose," as Mailer put it in his introduction to the second edition of *Death for the Ladies (and Other Disasters)*. Mailer's romanticism, moreover, echoes the British Romantic tradition not only in prose style but in theme as well. Like Emerson, Mailer sips from that font of British Romanticism William Blake. We only have to think, for example, of Mailer's Blakean view of orthodoxy and fundamentalism as repression of creative libidinal energy; of Mailer's development, like Blake's, of an antinomian, personal cosmology in his investigations into good and evil (energy and entropy); of Mailer's "rage" and "anger of the soul at being forced to travel the tortured contradictory roads of the social world," as Mailer put it in *Lipton's*; of Mailer's view that the nineteenth century ushered in the revolution against overweening Reason that led to his "hope that the future lies with monsters and mystics" whose "seemingly irrational" rebellion "only can fuck up the progress of the state"; of Mailer's metaphysics that, like Blake's, does not dismiss the world as illusion but as shot through with eternity, with infinity in the present; and of Mailer's vocation for creating art as an alternative for religious duty (# 43, 73, 287). In fact, the German and British Romantic movements deeply informed the American. Nonetheless, it is "in the American grain" that I want to focus my discussion of Mailer's Emersonian Romanticism, as developed, largely, through the formative process of writing his self-analytical journal.²

THE DISSIDENT SOUL

Both Mailer and Emerson used their journals to think through the concepts that would inform their future work; the journals of both authors, in short, demonstrate the mind in action, the creative energy of thinking, as Stephen Whicher described Emerson's. I would like to recommend the old Riverside edition of *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1960) whose editor, Stephen Whicher, placed Emerson's relevant journal entries (and some excerpts from

relevant correspondence) before and after the famous essays and lectures Emerson eventually delivered to the public. My focus here will be on the published product of Emerson's journals, rather than the journals themselves, as those well-known published artifacts are what entered the American literary consciousness, including Mailer's.

Emerson's journals do, of course, reveal a dialogue with oneself, as does Mailer's *Lipton's*. It is as if both authors have a neo-Socratic faith that the seeds of truth are within us and are best elicited by interrogation (in this case *self*-interrogation) and free association. Socratic self-knowledge then becomes the inner truth that is the source of a philosophy—an approach to life and literary work—in opposition to the society within which one lives. The rebellious path to such a journal is through solitude, as Emerson argued in "Experience": "[I]n the solitude to which every man is always returning, he has a sanity and revelation which in his passage into new worlds he will carry with him. Never mind the ridicule, never mind the defeat; up again, old heart!" (273). In "Self-Reliance," Emerson announces this theme of inner, rebellious self-reliance and revelation with greatest clarity.

Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue most in request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs . . . Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind (149).

That quotation might well serve as the epigraph to a published version of *Lipton's Journal*. Here is the beating heart (and the heart's renunciations) of Emersonian Romanticism, as it would be for Thoreau, Whitman, and Dickinson. And for Mailer.

The central theme running through *Lipton's* is the conflict between the energies of the creative psyche or soul and repressive "caution . . . the high priest of society" (#48). For people "to live with their soul . . . means to war against society" (# 137). Mailer returns again and again to his developing theories in *Lipton's* about the conflict between what he terms "Homeostasis"—or later in entry #214, "Homeodynamism" ("the personal healthy re-

bellious and soul-ful expression of man,” or individual creative energy) and “Sociostasis” (the repressions of society, the “element in man placed there by society”). Mailer adds, “The tendency of society is to make all of mankind neurotic-conformist—the tendency of man, as viz. his modern heroes and celebrities, is to liberate the saint-psychopath present to some degree in everyone” (#194, #369). Other Emersonian themes surface in *Lipton’s* (such as the hermaphroditic potential of the human psyche, the necessity of exaggerated expression to break through to one’s audience, and the law of life that one must grow and change, to suggest three examples). But what gives this rambling—often frustrating—document a degree of coherence is Mailer’s quest for the means to liberate the socially repressed psyche, above all his own.

Among his earliest journal entries Mailer sets the stage for his liberation theme: “So far as we act to fulfill the needs of society, we are actually no more than a part of the net with which society keeps men from developing. We have the illusion of action, of motion; in truth we are merely lines of cord in the net.” When “society wins,” he continues, “the saint is ignored, the psychopath is shunned, and the purity of the human soul is concealed. We are returned to a world where we must be practical, mature, pluralistic, and confirmed in abysmal and false humilities—in return for agreeing to admit that we know nothing, we are offered the comforts, the securities, and the prestige of society.” Society is “opposed to the soul . . . attempts to destroy the soul in order to maintain its stability”; society is “the concretion of the collective surrender of man’s will.” But “the soul fights back.” Unfortunately, the revolution of the soul “never took place . . . those who had souls retreated, or gave themselves up to being the machines of society,” and “the polarity” of this soul-revolution is “totalitarianism” (# 23, 43, 57). That totalitarian polarity of the soul is the force, the dark angel, Mailer would wrestle with for the rest of his life.

Mailer entitled his journal “Lipton’s” (tea, marijuana) because cannabis, “which destroys the sense of time also destroys the sense of society and opens the soul,” was his aid to deeper self-explorations and growth. He is speaking here not of intimate personal relations, which cannabis can of course enhance, but of the oppressive Collective Society and its “war upon each individual.” He then gives the example of modern advertising as one means by which society “reaches deep into each man’s soul and converts a piece of it to society.” Advertising coopts the soul’s longing for “love and power, the

two things the soul seeks for in life, legitimately, finely," by attaching that longing to commodities, which tempt the soul to "enter its contract with society" (#61–62). Modern advertising becomes, for Mailer, but one soul-trapping tool of Emerson's 19th-century joint-stock company.

For a novelist who, by 1954, is wondering whether he might be a failed artist, who is fighting depression and felt suicidal (#139), Mailer's evolving theories of homeostasis/dynamism in conflict with sociostasis become of central importance to his whole project of psychic and artistic renewal. He now finds himself disappointed with the derivative *Naked and the Dead* ("an imposter"), the abortive *Barbary Shore*, and the "enormous lie" and "failure" of *The Deer Park* (# 123, 141, 221). By "imposter" Mailer is referring to his recognition that he was imitating his literary heroes in his most successful novel so far, a literary procedure Emerson often warned against. Emerson's broader argument throughout *Nature* is for the individual to create an original relation to the universe; in "Self-Reliance" he proclaimed that "imitation is suicide" and "insist on yourself; never imitate"; in "The American Scholar" Emerson warns, "in a degenerate state, when the victim of society, he [the scholar] tends to become a mere thinker, or still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking" (Whicher 65, 148, 165). Imitation, for Emerson as for Mailer by the 1950s, becomes a type of literary failure.

By questioning his previous work, Mailer is also questioning the success or failure of his rebellious soul. "A novel is the record of a sociostatic retreat if it is a great or good novel. A bad novel is the record of a sociostatic advance" (#214). This is an attitude toward the novel since 1954 that Mailer would carry for the rest of his life, variously rephrasing the journal entry he made a half-century earlier. In *The Big Empty* (2006), for example, he would say: "The good novel, the serious novel, is antipathetic to corporate capitalism. The best seller is one of the props of corporate capitalism precisely because it's an entertainment. . . . Well, every time there's a page turner to read for too little, someone's mind is being dulled. Even page-turners can get into interesting questions, but dependably, they will always veer away from moral exploration" (129). The essence of genius, for a novelist, is "to make a voyage which is opposed to society. . . . He is always attacking society because he is always carrying further our knowledge of the Self." And courage is the virtue most in demand for such self-knowledge and self-reliance: "What makes a genius" Mailer continues, "is his incredible courage, for he is a man who lives always in fear, and yet he continues" (# 292). Such Emersonian

courage, based on self-trust, is what inspires Mailer's hope for rebellious transformation—his twentieth-century heroic adventure.

Emerson specified the soul as our inner resource of rebellion, a theme best expressed in his "Divinity School Address." "In the soul then let the redemption be sought. Whenever a man comes, there comes revolution." Those who "love to be blind in public . . . think society wiser than their soul, and know not that one soul, and their soul, is wiser than the whole world" (112). Emerson then exhorts his Harvard audience of graduating seniors and their faculty mentors: "Oh my friends, there are resources in us on which we have not drawn. . . . All attempts to contrive a system are as cold as the new worship introduced by the French to the goddess of Reason. . . . Rather let the breath of new life be breathed by you through the forms already existing. For once you are alive, you shall find they all become plastic and new. The remedy to their deformity is first, soul, and second, soul, and evermore, soul" (114–115). For his efforts, Emerson then had to deal with reviews and reactions to his words as negative as those Mailer had faced in the wake of *Barbary Shore* and *The Deer Park*, including the well-known troubles Mailer had in getting *The Deer Park* published. Emerson withstood the onslaught better than Mailer, by the testimony of his journals, as in Emerson's August 31, 1838, journal entry: "Steady, steady. . . . Who are these murmurers, these haters, these revilers? Men of no knowledge and therefore no stability" (Whicher 116). Still, the critical onslaught against Mailer sparked his "soul rage" and became the very catalyst for his self-reliant transformation through the analytical processes of *Lipton's*.

"THE DOORS OF DISCOVERY":

THE POWER OF INSTINCT AND INTUITION

Reflecting in his journal on a visit to his parents, Mailer notes with empathy that his sister Barbara feels betrayed because his advice and example had "made her a rationalist over the years—I took her sensitive delicate nature and hammered my harsh mind into hers. No wonder she's furious at me now that I say Reason is bad, Instinct is good" (# 346). Mailer then associates thinking with fucking as a species of intuitive leap, where "thought like fucking is dialectic but directed. The ultimate end of the fuck like the ultimate end of thought is to comprehend the universe as a whole" (# 420). Mind and body collaborate in the processes of comprehension. "Indeed, no human can enrich himself without returning and dipping into the lore of

mind-body. It is the source of all creativity available to us, outside of what we intuit from nature when we personify it. For indeed man is a part of nature and so can comprehend nature by understanding himself" (#495). Emerson phrased the point this way in his late essay "Fate": "Let us build altars to the Blessed Unity which holds nature and souls in perfect solution" (351). Mailer had prefaced the above journal entry seeking wholeness and unity by a speculation that "the closer man approaches to the infinity of God the more he will live in passivity." That is, the war of soul against society begins to resolve itself as we more fully approach infinity, comprehend intuitively the divine in the particulars of the natural world and in ourselves.

We begin now to understand better Mailer's earlier (Blakean/Thoreauvian) comment that "in the tiny is the profound. Those things which are too insignificant to notice are always *the doors of discovery*" (# 306, my emphasis). Or, as Emerson put it in *Nature*: "1. Words are signs of natural facts. 2. Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts. 3. Nature is the symbol of the spirit" (Whicher 40). The reason so many academicians are dull, Mailer argues, is that there is no pursuit of such intuitive unity (or psychic integration) in their professional lives: "they have given themselves over to a subject they are not close to spiritually—usually to hide some other deeper drive of their nature. They conceal the rampant murderer, lover, adventurer, etc. within themselves from themselves. . . . There is a war mounting between the academicians and the ones with true vocation" (#186). Mailer then provides a litany of specialists who understand nothing deeper (spiritual, loving, intuitive, hence truly "vocational") about the subject of their life-work—from psychoanalysts, to editors, to sociologists, to anthropologists, to historians. Here we might be tempted to launch a Swiftian riff on certain ideological literary theorists as "Projectors" obsessed with their clever reductive grids, or a George Eliot riff on the Edward Casaubons of academic criticism, striving to hold "the Key to all Mythologies" or literatures, without any loving or spiritual attachment to literature. But to honor our reader's patience so far, we will resist the temptation.

The preeminence of intuition and instinct over rationalist materialism that Mailer approaches in his journal is also fundamental to American transcendentalism. As early as "The American Scholar," Emerson says: "I believe man has been wronged; he has wronged himself. He has almost lost the light that can lead him back to his prerogatives. . . . If a single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts and there abide, the huge world will come

around to him" (75, 79). In "Self-Reliance," Emerson asks, "What is the aboriginal Self, on which a universal reliance may be grounded?" Then he answers, "The inquiry leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions. In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis can go, all things find their common origin" (156). In "The Transcendentalist," Emerson clarifies the point further: "Transcendental from the use of that term by Immanuel Kant . . . who replied to the skeptical philosophy of Locke, which insisted that there was nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the experience of the senses, by showing that there was a very important class of ideas or imperative forms, which did not come by experience, but through which experience was acquired; that these were intuitions of the mind itself" (197). For Emerson, an ordained American divine who had despaired of organized religion, doctrine, and orthodoxy, who resigned his ministry in 1832, and who outraged many in his "Divinity School Address," Jesus was an example of the highest "moral sentiment," the "indwelling Supreme Spirit" that should "not be attributed to one or two persons, and denied to all the rest" because "the doctrine of inspiration is lost." Rather:

It [inspiration] is an intuition. It cannot be received second hand. . . . Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul. Alone in history he estimated the greatness of man. One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his World. . . . He felt respect for Moses and the prophets, but no unfit tenderness at postponing their initial revelations to the hour and the man that now is; to the eternal revelation in the heart (104–105).

For Mailer, Jesus (both man and symbol of the liberating power within) is similarly "the rebel, the anarchist, the saint, the compassionate, the life-giver . . . [who] was put on the cross and all his teachings were reversed. Christ became Christianity just as Reason became Rationalization" (# 324). This early insight would inform Mailer's later work on Jesus a half century later in *The Gospel According to the Son* (1997) and *On God* (2007).

Although *Gospel* flummoxed some critics by the audacity of Mailer writ-

ing the novel in the first person, the first-person Jesus story goes back in the English tradition at least as far as “The Sacrifice” by George Herbert (one of Emerson’s favored poets), likely composed about the time the Pilgrims were settling in America. Other reviewers were more concerned with the execution of Mailer’s novel, a more legitimate concern. Be that as it may, Mailer’s Jesus is an Emersonian prophet, “Even mightier than the prophet Ezekiel” (*Gospel* 36). Not unlike what Mailer recognized in himself during the 1950s, Jesus is filled with both Apollonian and Dionysian impulses: “If his [Satan’s] odor could leave me uneasy it also offered sympathy to desires I had not yet allowed myself to feel.” Jesus embodies the kind of “double life” Emerson thought open to us all: a man living the human, sensuous life but with divine energies (a dissident, transcendent soul) within. Jesus, Mailer asserts, is of the Gnostic Jewish Essene sect. Like Emerson’s Jesus in the “Divinity School Address,” Mailer’s Jesus is the foe of orthodoxy, law, and nominal piety as exemplified by the Pharisees and the Synagogues, and as opposed to the interior experience and love of God (see *Gospel*, 48, 72, 80, all of chapter 35, and 239), and as opposed to the wealthy and powerful coopting for their own purposes desires in the human soul (152–53).

In *On God*, Mailer puts it this way: The “two elements now on the horizon that can destroy the world as we know it . . . [are] technology and . . . organized religion. The second drives people to stupidity” (119), not to mention violence. It is not far off the mark to speak of Emerson’s and Mailer’s Jesus as a Gnostic—one who seeks enlightenment *within* the deepest self, but *outside* institutions and doctrines. For both Emerson and Mailer, the process of journaling is one road in. “I have proceeded to ponder these questions without being qualified,” Mailer says in dialogue with Michael Lennon in the chapter on Gnosticism in *On God*. “Yet my basic argument is that of course I am qualified all the same. We all are. That is why I can say yes, if you want to get down to it, I probably am a Gnostic in the sense that the inner feeling I have about these matters is so clear and so acute to me” (195). Indeed, while working on *The Gospel*, Mailer read Elaine Pagels’ *The Gnostic Gospels* and *The Origin of Satan* (see Lennon’s biography, 696). In *Why Religion?* Pagels, Professor of Religion at Princeton, underscores that the Gnostic Gospels, those uncanonized gadflies of Christianity, and particularly the Gospel of Thomas, emphasize the Kingdom of God within you, not above or beyond you. It is also the Essenes who turned Satan, as Mailer did, into God’s cosmic Antagonist. It is Gnosis, or “knowledge of the heart” and

Epinoia (creative intelligence), that turns the deeper psyche or soul into the source of wisdom within us, a source we must find a way to awaken (see *Why Religion?*, 44, 56–57, 146–149, 156–157, 176–178).

It is worth emphasizing here that for Emerson and Mailer, writing their journals does more than generate ideas. Writing a journal is an approach, an awakening, to the deeper psychic territory of the soul, to whatever revelation may be found within; it is a private act of self-examination, an act of devotion to one's vocation, the completion of one's being or identity. It is not so much a "religious" act because it is outside any practice, doctrine, or sect; it is not an interlocutory psychoanalytical act so much as a private spiritual act, a return to that inner vitality that participates in the transcendent soul, an alternative for traditional prayer. Like Emily Dickinson's poems, a journal can be a solitary practice of self-reliance against the vagaries and expectations of the social world. As British psychotherapist Anthony Storr describes it in *Solitude: A Return to the Self*:

The creative person is constantly seeking to discover himself, to remodel his own identity, and to find meaning in the universe through what he creates. He finds this a valuable integrating process which, like meditation or prayer, has little to do with other people, but which has its own separate validity. His most significant moments are those in which he attains some new insight, or makes some new discovery; and those moments are chiefly, if not invariably, those in which he is alone (xiv, my emphasis).

The inner truths revealed in solitude, however, may result in social action—a distinction George Kateb makes in *Emerson and Self-Reliance* between Emerson's "mental self-reliance" and his "active self-reliance" (or "democratic individuality"). Active self-reliance is *based* on the prior intellectual independence of mental self-reliance (Kateb 134–136). Emerson was wary of being drawn into politics and social movements, but he did protest (in public to President Martin van Buren) the displacement of the Cherokees in 1838, was a vociferous abolitionist in the 1850s, and supported women's rights as they were defined in his time, defined not least by his friend and editorial colleague Margaret Fuller.

Neither Emerson's nor Mailer's journals were intended for publication,

yet once published we come to see how they aid our understanding of the origins of both authors' published work and the processes through which inner revelation and disciplined self-examination eventually become literary artifact.

A PHILOSOPHICAL NOVELIST

For all his "soul searching" for psychic integration in *Lipton's*, Mailer is not a nineteenth-century Transcendentalist. He is a twentieth-century philosophical novelist whose nonfiction often acts as exegesis to his fiction. The philosophical concepts he developed in *Lipton's* inform much of his later work.³ We have seen that he was coming to understand more fully his motivations as a writer in 1954 and 55 in the process of composing his journal. *Lipton's* became his philosopher's stone, with for him that stone's reputed transformative, invincible power.

What Mailer saw in Hemingway—and sought for himself—is an exemplary self-reliance and self-definition ("the sacred integrity" of his own mind) against the soul crushing realities of the twentieth century: mechanized global warfare, economic depression, totalitarianism, genocide, gulags, and the ever-expanding commercialization or commodification of everything. The costs of developing from within a strength of ego to resist such forces and define oneself can, of course, be crippling. Only integration of ego and the deeper psyche can provide a basis for survival, but whether human beings can live up to such a challenge is an open question. Here and there, perhaps, an individual manages to live up to the challenge, but he or she is not likely to emerge unscathed.

A further distinction seems necessary here. Seeking freedom from society's domination of the individual, including the oppressions of society's political and economic engines, is not merely an expression of egotism or selfishness. The "Emersonian" individualist—the intellectually and spiritually free person with a strong identity—seeks to redress an imbalance or, to use one of Mailer's favored words, a disproportion. Mailer, like Emerson, is on a quest for the psychic balance and strength sufficient to resist the burdens of social and psychological conformity. Just as reason may become rationalization for the status quo, for the inflexibilities of society and for those who exercise power over, and benefit from, the status quo, so too might instinct and intuition (the counterpoise to rationalization) become so disproportionate that the benefits of

reason are lost. But for Emerson, as for Mailer (trained at Harvard as an engineer) we are not in danger of disproportionate intuition or instinct; on the contrary, we suffer from disproportionate reason or rationalization at the expense of our intuitive powers and at the cost of our souls.

We have no evidence that Mailer ever read Emerson's journals, and that seems unlikely. On November 16, 1954, a month before he launched into his self-analysis, Mailer in a letter to one "Mr. Cole," refers to F.O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* and the influence of that book's themes regarding Melville on *Naked and the Dead*, but Mailer also gives one mention of Emerson as among Matthiessen's important Romantics (see *Selected Letters* 181). We do not know how much Emerson Mailer read before *Lipton's*, but Michael Lennon tells me that Mailer read a few of Emerson's essays at Harvard. Much later when Mailer read a collection of Emerson's works, Lennon reports that Mailer was "startled by how much Emerson's ideas seemed to mirror his own. I remember this vividly" (personal correspondence, December 2, 2019). We also know, as Lennon points out in *Norman Mailer: A Double Life*, that Mailer was influenced by F.O. Matthiessen. Mailer was impressed by Matthiessen's public lectures at Harvard; Mailer's writing mentor, Robert Gorham Davis, was a member of Matthiessen's Harvard faculty group; Mailer read Matthiessen's seminal book; Mailer campaigned with Matthiessen for Henry Wallace in 1948; and Mailer in Paris in 1948 reconnected with Stanley Geist, a Harvard acquaintance and author of *Herman Melville: The Tragic Vision and the Heroic Ideal* (1939, Harvard thesis, 1966 Octagon Books) who worked as research assistant to F. O. Matthiessen on *American Renaissance* and commented on *The Naked and the Dead* in manuscript. Like Geist, Lieutenant Hearn in *Naked* is also a Harvard grad with a thesis on Melville. Obviously, the two friends would have discussed the making of *The American Renaissance* and its interpretations of American Romanticism (see Lennon biography, 35, 90, 99, 116). What we do know, then, is that some degree of intellectual stimulation from American Romanticism was psychically embedded, so to speak, well before Mailer began *Lipton's*. Nonetheless, that journal is a true journey into self, not—for all its echoes of Emerson's own truths arrived from his own inward-turning journals—a mere parroting of Emersonian pensées. I would go so far as to say that Mailer's lack of substantial reading of Emerson prior to *Lipton's* freed him from concern that he would be merely imitating Emerson. Still, it is

reasonable to argue that when the American Academy of Arts and Sciences gave Mailer the Emerson-Thoreau Medal in 1989, the Academy was acknowledging Mailer's "Emersonian" role in American literature a century after Emerson's.

Although Mailer's journal and books are darker than Emerson's works, we might do well to remember that Emerson's own darker vision in the late essays and lectures ameliorates our temptation to view Emerson as a naïve idealist. Think, for example, of Emerson's "Life," "Fate," "Skepticism," and "Experience." Think of Emerson's own later journal entries:

- Conservatism has in the present society every advantage. All are on its side . . . the voice of the intelligent and the honest, of the unconnected and independent, the voice of truth and equity, is suppressed (April, 1845).
- The name of Washington City in the newspapers is every day of blacker shade. All news from that quarter being of a sadder type, more malignant (May, 1847).
- The badness of the times is making death attractive (April, 1850).
- The world is babyish, and the use of wealth is: it is made a toy (June, 1851).
- A man [fugitive slave] who has taken the risk of being shot, or burned alive, or cast into the sea, or starved to death, or suffocated in a wooden box, to get away from his driver: and this man who has run the gauntlet of a thousand miles for his freedom, the statute says you men of Massachusetts shall hunt, and catch, and send back again to the dog-hutch he fled from . . . I will not obey it, by God (1851).
- It will always be so. Every principle is a war-note. Whoever attempts to carry out the rule of right and love and freedom must take his life in his hand (October, 1859).

Moreover, Emerson was as fully aware as Mailer of the dualities (the double life, the psychic dialectic) within each of us: "Man is not order of nature . . . but a stupendous antagonism, a dragging together of the poles of the Universe. . . . here they are, side by side, god and devil, mind and matter, king and conspirator, belt and spasm, riding peacefully together in the eye

and brain of every man" ("Fate" 340). Still, Emerson's oeuvre accentuates the salutary, self-creative powers of Transcendentalism. "The American Scholar" is our rousing Declaration of Intellectual Independence.

Mailer more often accentuates the violence of revolutionary consciousness and regenerative, libidinal force in his characters and protagonists. The powers discovered deep within can both destroy and create. Nonetheless, what Mailer discovers in *Lipton's* and the work that follows is fundamentally part of an American literary tradition. Mailer's opposition to the values of a dominant American culture during his lifetime places him in the company of a long lineage of writers who have sought to awaken (or revolutionize) the consciousness of their people, who have sought to attach words, through image and symbol, as Emerson said, to visible things, who have depicted the journey of the individual soul as connected to the journey of America. In the works of the Puritans, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and Vonnegut the pilgrim soul confronts extremes of good and evil, at times divided as God and Devil. The pilgrim, like some Old Testament hero ("a stranger and pilgrim on the earth," as Hebrews 11:13 has it), often undergoes an apocalyptic voyage in which the expansion of self and soul, and the integration of nature and God and self, are all part of the same process of growth and the same possibilities of defeat. It bespeaks a quest to define America's most liberated, most creative self. Such heroes partake, as well, of mythic odysseys—violent, libidinal, liberating, archetypal, shocking, beneficial for the hero's compatriots and culture—of the ancient heroes of Western literature. "The adventurer," Mailer wrote early in *Lipton's*, is "he or she [who] always has a very strong urge from the soul" (#82). The "Emersonian" and mythic soul-lore Mailer worked out for himself in *Lipton's* was an important stop along Mailer's own way, his personal quest to fashion a self and a body of work that would reflect that self truly. *Lipton's* is the seed ground for Mailer's protagonists in his fiction and nonfiction after the 1950s and for their often rebarbative, unseemly, disturbing-yet-creative journeys.

NOTES

1. At the time of writing, I am using the edited manuscript version of *Lipton's Journal* that J. Michael Lennon and Susan Mailer created, before a printed or electronic version was generally available.

All parenthetical references beginning with the symbol # are from the numbering system Mailer used and that the editors revised in the edited manuscript version.

2. Other scholars have noted Emersonian attributes in Mailer's works. But earlier scholars didn't have access to *Lipton's Journal* at the time of their writing. To take a few examples: Thomas Werge in "An Apocalyptic Voyage: God, Satan, and the American Tradition in Norman Mailer's *Of a Fire on the Moon*," compares Mailer in *Fire* to an American tradition of pilgrimage and quest, including Winthrop, Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Whitman; Mark Edmondson in "Romantic Self-Creations: Mailer and Gilmore in *The Executioner's Song*," looks at Mailer in that novel as exemplifying Romantic, Emersonian self-invention through ruin and regeneration (a version, after all, of the old Christian theme of disintegration and redemption); Jonathan Middlebrook in *Mailer and the Times of His Time*, calls Mailer a "fully serious romantic" who has heeded Emerson's admonition to avoid "the suicide" of imitation, and who embraced Emerson's "ethic of courage and extreme expression," or "heroic expression." And Michael Cowen in "The Quest for Empowering Roots: Mailer and the American Literary Tradition," connects Mailer to the American Renaissance, largely Herman Melville. But Cowen also points out that like Emerson and Whitman, Mailer in *Armies of the Night* argues that "the key to democratic dreams is a religious dream—the citizenry's often unconscious vision of its individual and collective bonds with transcendent powers—and that it takes an artist to turn that key. . . ." Moreover, in Cowen's view Mailer's explorations of karma and reincarnation "ride comfortably with Emerson's celebration in 'The Poet' of the 'cunning Proteus' [who is] the essence of nature and art . . . '[A]n American genius . . . with tyrannous eye . . . [who] saw in the barbarism and materialism of the times, another carnival of the same gods . . . in Homer.' Even Gary Gilmore knows some Emerson" (see esp. 157–159).
3. To see more examples of how *Lipton's* influenced Mailer's works after the 1950s, my essay in volume 12 of *The Mailer Review*, "Lipton's Journal: Mailer's Quest for Wholeness and Renewal," especially pages 61–71, offers a number of examples I won't repeat here. That essay also traces in more detail Mailer's evolving theories of the soul as discovered in the deepest reaches of the psyche, a Jungian evolution, so to speak, that led Mailer toward ever greater interest in Carl Jung from the late 1970s through the 1990s. See also J. Michael Lennon, "A Conversation with Norman Mailer," *New England Review*, vol. 20, 3 (Summer 1999), 143–44, [138–148] where Mailer admits to spending a lot of time reading Jung in the last year of the decade.

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