



Emerson's Nonlinear Nature

Christopher J. Windolph

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In this provocative study, Christopher Windolph analyzes Emersonian naturalism from the standpoint of nonlinearity, offering new ways of reading and thinking about Emerson's stance toward naturalism and the influence of science on his thought. Drawing on ideas in perspective theory, architecture, and nonlinear dynamics to argue that Emerson's natural philosophy follows from his analysis of the development of organic forms, Windolph breaks new ground in Emerson studies by exploring how considerations of shape and the act of seeing underpin all of Emerson's theories about nature.

Bringing to his study a focused attention to the history of Western science and philosophy, Windolph reexamines Emerson's understanding of how the act of seeing occurs and of the eye's ability to see through appearances to organizing principles, showing how Emerson's naturalism extends beyond the narrow confines of traditional linear science. Through extensive readings of Emerson's journals, essays, and lectures, Windolph shows that Emerson was an empirical idealist who integrated a scientific approach to nature with an exploration of nonlinear principles, revealing him to be more prescient in his writings about certain recent developments in scientific thought than has been realized.

This work makes a major contribution to the ongoing study of Emerson and science, expanding Emerson's role as a major American philosopher while rebutting those who see him primarily as a rhetorician or poetic propagandist. *Emerson's Nonlinear Nature* opens new ways of thinking about Emerson's work in its nineteenth-century contexts, reassesses his reception in twentieth-century criticism, and makes a strong case for his continuing relevance in the century ahead.

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