Walk." Finally, his book fills in some biographical detail that any admirer of Thoreau will welcome. Still, one can't help but ask what, ultimately, the point of all this is. Does Fink's rather untraditional portrait reveal anything new about the substance of Thoreau's thought that would call for a reappraisal of it? Has his historicist account shed new light on what Thoreau actually says in his published work? A postmodernist who denies that a text can be appreciated unless its context and background is dissected would perhaps answer in the affirmative. Readers (like myself) less sympathetic with postmodernism's penchant for contextual reductionism will have to disagree. One can applaud Fink's efforts to strip away some of the hagiographical filigree that has encrusted Thoreau over the years without following him in his strategy of focusing on context at the expense of content. Such an exercise is interesting, but philosophically rather irrelevant.

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If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer.

Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.

These are words written by Thoreau himself which I have often thought serve to provide an accurate summary of his own life and action. They also provide in the present case quite an accurate description of the biographer and original author of this book, Henry S. Salt. He too was very much of an individualist who surrendered his mastership at Eton in the 1880s to devote himself to the many causes that attracted him. Among others, these included conservationism, vegetarianism, socialism, animals' rights, and prison reform. He continued to publish widely in these fields well into the 1930s.

The book is unique in that its editors have produced an edition of the third version of Salt's life of Thoreau. This particular text has never before been published. It offers Salt's final reading of Thoreau based on important works published up to 1908, including Thoreau's complete Journal. As such it enhances and improves the 1896 version. How this came to fruition is described in considerable detail by the editors. It is really quite remarkable how this biography stands up in and to a contemporary setting. The book helps as well to highlight the importance of Salt himself in contributing to the appreciation of Thoreau's ideas and to the uniqueness of his person. It also helps to clarify the relationship between Thoreau and Emerson, and especially to illustrate that Thoreau was no mere follower of
Emerson. Further, it helps to emphasize a central theme of Thoreau's writing, namely that of an optimistic belief in human freedom, a belief that, in turn, affected his attitudes toward organized religion, government, business, and social institutions.

Throughout the book there emerges a variety of images and traces that delineate not only Thoreau's ideas and attitudes, but also his basic spirit. He possessed a profound respect for the entwined relatedness of the practical and experiential with the theoretical dimension of human understanding, even while sometimes showing a certain impatience with the latter. His life celebrated a certain impatience with the latter. His life celebrated a certain simplicity and he often scoffed at what were sometimes esteemed as more "worldly" virtues. He suggested such attitudes when he wrote that "joy and sorrow, success and failure, grandeur and meanness, and indeed most words in the English language, do not mean for me what they do for my neighbors." And throughout the whole of that life courses his deep and intense respect and reverence for nature. This is a part why Salt himself sees *Walden* (1854) as Thoreau's crowning achievement both for its content and its style. One might quibble with this, but certainly its points deserves consideration. Salt maintains that *Walden* contains the essence of his ideal philosophy and "is written in his most powerful and incisive style, and by the freshness and naivete of its narrative it excites the sympathy and imagination of the reader." (p. 74) Salt also shows particular esteem for Thoreau's "Slavery in Massachusetts" (1854), and especially "The Plea for Captain John Brown" (1859), a man whom he greatly admired. The deliverance of this intensely felt text was the last public act of Thoreau's life. Also, it should be noted that he carried a sustained respect for the Native American Indian and shared their sympathy for wild nature, as well as their stoical reserve, self-command, and acquiescence in what destiny had in store for one's life. If there is one piece of writing that I would have preferred to receive more attention it is "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience." Salt does, however, note Gandhi's debt to it.

What contributes to the charm of this book is its generous use of anecdotes, first-hand reminisces, and the exploration of certain relationships among the Transcendentalists as well as with others. There is, for example, the story of Emerson coming to visit Thoreau when he was in jail for refusing to pay the poll-tax. Emerson asks, "Henry, why are you here?" Thoreau cogently retorts, "Why are you not here?" Another story shows the bewilderment he sometimes caused to others. Here is a sample of a conversation: "Mr. Thoreau, you say in one of your books that you once lost a horse and a hound and a dove. Now I should like to know what you mean by that."" "Why everyone has met with losses, has he not!" "A pretty answer to give a fellow!" Certainly many instances illustrate ways in which Thoreau was eccentric; many others point to ways in which he was capable of delivering a sharp sting to the human conscience.
The contents of this book and their chapter divisions offer a well rounded though not fully developed picture of Thoreau's life, personality, convictions, and writings. Much of this is centered, and justifiable so, around his life in his beloved Concord. There is brief, but sympathetic, attention to his ideas and doctrines. There is a real effort to reach toward objectivity. Basically, Salt sees two sides to Thoreau's character and philosophy (loose as this term may be used here, noting Thoreau's abhorrence for philosophical "systems"), the one mystical and transcendental, the other practical and terrestrial. The former faced the boundless possibilities of the future, the latter the realities of the past and present. (p. 102). Salt recognizes a successful combination of common sense with transcendental sense. (Frankly, I think that more attention needs to be paid to the term "transcendental," to the extent that such precision can be reached.) There is a brief but unfinished attempt to deal with the structure of Thoreau's Ethics, which in the end are seen to rest on the solid foundation of purified love.

Thoreau treasured his own individuality as well as that of others. He insisted that each should find and pursue his or her own way. This is why he considered that the best hope for society lay in the progress and gradual perfecting of the individual person by his or her own personal effort. (p. 105). It is in light of such contentions and convictions that Salt asserts that "Never has there lived a more determined and unalterable individualist." (p. 105).

How does one ultimately characterize Thoreau? That is not an easy task. But this miniature elegant portrait eases the effort. In the end, Thoreau is a poet-naturalist, in contrast to being a scientist-naturalist, who maintains intense moral and political positions. There is to be sure a certain eccentricity about him, but this in no way detracts from his authenticity and sincerity. This is as true of his style of writing as of his style of living. To be authentic means to be true to oneself. As Thoreau had the first word, let him have the last. It addresses a primary concern of this authentic individual. "The one great rule of composition -- and if I were a professor of rhetoric I should insist on this -- is to speak the truth. This first, this second, this third." (p. 115).

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Towards the end of World War II, after Rome had been liberated, Santayana told some journalists that he knew nothing of war, since he lived in the eternal. Of course, he was not entirely serious; had he not, as he said ironically, seen the devastation of Rome three times by armies calling themselves