THOREAU'S USE OF IMAGERY IN WALDEN

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

THE ORGANIC PRINCIPLE

IN THOREAU'S WALDEN

One of the most enjoyable elements of the writings of Henry David Thoreau is his poetic use of language. Most critics agree that his chief stylistic device is imbedding abstract thoughts in earthy, concrete images where "the checkrein of his senses keeps him from gliding away into the romantic reverie of escape" (10, p. 91). Even James Russell Lowell, in some ways Thoreau's severest critic, admits, "There are sentences of his as perfect as anything in the language, and thoughts as clearly crystallized; his metaphors and images are always fresh from the soil" (9, p. 52). Henry S. Salt declares that Thoreau uses images and metaphors which are "bold, novel, and impressive" (13, p. 174), and F. O. Matthiessen pays tribute to the concreteness and exactness of Thoreau's organic metaphors, saying that when Thoreau "could fuse his thoughts and his observations by means of a symbol, which was not just suggested but designated in sharp detail, he was able, in Coleridge's phrase, to 'elicit truth as at a flash'" (10, p. 93).
In the light of these comments, it is remarkable that so little analysis has been made of the organic nature of the patterns of imagery in *Walden*, Thoreau's best-known work. Walter Harding declares that "although John Broderick and Sherman Paul . . . have made a good start at examining more closely the images of Thoreau's writing, much more work needs to be done" (5, p. 163); Lauriat Lanes agrees that "critics have begun to explore, though they have hardly exhausted, the symbolic complexity of Thoreau's use of such recurring images and metaphors as sound, light, water, morning, the sun, the stars, and others" (7, p. 196); Broderick frankly states that "the imagery of Thoreau's *Walden* has never received detailed analysis . . ." (1, p. 80). Since Broderick's statement, several dissertations have treated this subject. Among them are Walter Lewis Shear's "Thoreau's Imagery and Symbolism," Howard R. Houston's "Metaphors in *Walden*," Richard R. Tuerk's "Circular Imagery in the Prose of Emerson and Thoreau from *Nature* to *Walden,*" and Raymond D. Gozzi's "Tropes and Figures: A Psychological Study of Henry David Thoreau."

It is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate the nature of Thoreau's use of organic imagery by tracing recurrent symbols that represent key concepts and provide unity and coherence throughout *Walden*. By charting the patterns of imagery in *Walden*, one can observe Thoreau's movement from an initially pessimistic view of man's present
state to one of transcendental optimism and hope for freedom in the future.

The remainder of Chapter One offers definitions of the terms image and organic theory as they apply to this paper. It also describes corollaries of these definitions, such as the importance of the seer in the creative process of image-recognition, the necessity of first-hand experience to the total man, and the organic interrelation of all things.

Chapter Two deals with negative images that Thoreau believes illustrate the lives of quiet desperation led by most civilized men of his time: images associated with slavery, disease, railroading, and farming. The latter two exemplify the necessity of a seer to give meaning to natural phenomena, since railroading and farming are used as pejoratives only when man himself fails to use these innovations properly, i.e., when he uses them as improved means to "an unimproved end" (18, p. 175).

Chapter Three shows Thoreau's change from critical observer to ministering physician. He uses images of water, fishing, and fire to suggest means by which man can purify himself.

Chapter Four discusses Thoreau's use of organic imagery to reflect man's growth and change, such as a plant's germination and development from seed to plant to fruit-bearing and an insect's metamorphosis from larva to pupa to butterfly. These images depict man's initial potential for
spiritual elevation and trace in parallel stages his progress toward realization of that goal. This chapter contains the first detailed analysis of similarities between Thoreau's plant and insect images.

Chapter Five reflects on the ultimate triumph of Thoreau's optimistic hope for the future in the rebirth images of awakening, morning, and spring. Discussion of the actual and psychological interrelation of these images reveals their organic nature.

The concluding Chapter Six summarizes the evidence that the images in *Walden* have an organic relationship to the beliefs they symbolize.

In defining the organic theory, sections in two books have been particularly helpful: "Organicism" in Charles Feidelson, Jr.'s *Symbolism in American Literature* (4) and "The Organic Principle" in F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (10). Feidelson, however, treats Emerson's rather than Thoreau's use of this principle, and Matthiessen applies it to Thoreau's beliefs only as expressed in his journals, not in *Walden*. Harding calls Fred W. Lorch's "Thoreau and the Organic Principle in Poetry" "the most authoritative study of Thoreau's use of the organic theory" (5, p. 173), but the subject of this article excludes the prose *Walden*. Lauriat Lane, Jr.'s work "On the Organic Structure of *Walden*" is also helpful in gaining a full understanding of the theory underlying Thoreau's organic images.
Four excellent articles actually dealing with metaphors from *Walden* are John C. Broderick's "Imagery in *Walden*," a thorough study of spring and awakening images; Sherman Paul's "The Wise Silence: Sound as Agency of Correspondence in Thoreau"; Melvin E. Lyon's "Walden Pond as a Symbol"; and Stanley Edgar Hyman's "Henry Thoreau in Our Time," which briefly highlights sun and rebirth images.

Walter Harding notes that he once examined *Walden*, looking for conventional figures of speech, such as simile, metaphor, hyperbole, and synecdoche, and found more than fifty different types represented (5, p. 163). It is, however, the recurrent implied or "lurking" metaphors, usually in the form of verbs or adjectives, which provide the chief unity of the book (12, p. 3). Another type of image found in *Walden* is the conceit or extended metaphor, a device inherited from seventeenth century metaphysical poets whom Thoreau admired. Chapter Three provides the best example: Walden Pond as a symbol for man.

Any lengthy discussion of Thoreau's use of images would be incomplete without a background understanding of the organic theory and of the beliefs which led Thoreau to adopt this principle. Samuel Taylor Coleridge had first discussed such an organic process in relation to Shakespeare's works:

The form is mechanic, when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material;--
as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form on the other hand, is innate; it shapes, as it develops itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Nature, the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms . . . (2, p. 224).

Thoreau believes that just as form should emerge spontaneously from thought content, so should images grow out of the ideas they symbolize. The basis for Thoreau's copious use of organic figures of speech lies in the Platonic belief shared by many transcendentalists that words are symbols for states of mind. Echoing Emerson's views in *Nature* (1836), Thoreau says in his journal:

> Talk about learning our letters and being literate! Why the roots of letters are things. Natural objects and phenomena are the original symbols or types which express our thoughts and feelings, and yet American scholars, having little or no root in the soil, commonly strive with all their might to confine themselves to the imported symbols alone. All the growth and true experience, the living speech, they would fain reject as "Americanisms" (17, p. 389).

To Thoreau, then, all nature consists of images which symbolize spiritual facts, and it is the duty of the poet to recognize the correspondence of object and thought and to express it in a verbal image that will awaken in the reader an awareness of the relationship first discovered by the poet (11, p. 246).

For the poet to become an interpreter between nature and the universal thoughts it represents, he must have a wealth of experience. More than any other transcendentalist,
Thoreau relied upon all his senses, not just sight, in gathering information and in expressing his ideas. He believes that the eyes merely introduce us to things and that we learn afterward by converse with them. This converse with things takes place partly through our touching them, and Thoreau acknowledges the insight gained from actual contact with things when he states, "All perception of truth is the detection of an analogy; we reason from our hands to our heads" (14, p. 463). Sound is the most significant and is the only sense to which a whole chapter in Walden is devoted. Thoreau uses sound to represent vibrations received through all sensory channels when he says, "The sounds which I hear with the consent and coincidence of all my senses, these are significant and musical . . ." (14, p. 442). Taste and scent are less important to him, although he believes earthiness can be detected by odor (10, p. 88). Thoreau's devotion to the senses is in no way sensual, however; he cultivates the senses solely as a means to discover the higher laws that govern all physical objects; his desire is for "a purely sensuous life" (19, p. 408).

Thoreau declares that his purpose in retreating to Walden was to gain empirical knowledge that would help him discover the meaning of life. In "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," he explains,
I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, ... to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion (18, p. 101. Italics mine).

Theoretically, every man contains a spark of divinity that should give him access to the universal Intelligence; in practice, however, only a few self-cultivated, reflective men become aware of the correspondence between nature and the thoughts it depicts. Reminding us that Emerson considered man to be "the point wherein matter and spirit meet and marry," Charles Feidelson, Jr., believes that, in fact, "the organic principle hinges on the conception of a total man, without whose central presence as the vehicle of all becoming the world would collapse into the opposite poles of rationalism ..." (4, p. 144).

Thoreau cautions, however, that experience and knowledge alone are not sufficient for the total man; he must also have intuition that will help him interpret what he sees. The man's insight can be gained only through "the slowest unconscious process, for 'at first blush a man is not capable of reporting truth; he must be drenched and saturated with it first. What was enthusiasm in the young man must become temperament in the mature man'" (10, p. 155).

Thoreau thinks of himself as a conscious liaison between natural objects and the spiritual qualities they
represent, and he often places himself physically between the two. Images analyzed in Chapters Two and Three of this paper show Thoreau as a conduit between earthly and spiritual realms. It is this telescoping of sensory impressions into abstract concepts that keeps Walden from being merely a catalog of observations about nature.

Thoreau believes that the poet's character should be revealed in all that he makes. Through the organic process, man assimilates diverse experiences and uses these raw materials to fashion products—poems, houses, clothes, or whatever he makes—that are part of himself.

In "Thoreau and His Imagery: The Anatomy of an Imagination," Richard C. Cook contends that in choosing images to relate dissimilar things, Thoreau discloses much about himself. In trying to communicate what he believes to be reality, any author necessarily uses material that has made a deep impression on him; "hence, examining imagery reveals the composition of the poetic imagination, and by implication this composition reveals what the man loved, ignored, was sensitive to, knew best, and thought most about" (3, p. 2). It is not surprising, then, that Thoreau's best images come from his close association with nature, for he believes that "true art is but the expression of our love of nature" (16, p. 80) and that "he is richest who has the most use for nature as raw material of tropes and symbols with which to describe his life" (15, p. 135). Because of Thoreau's desire
to transcend mere sensory impressions in an effort to
discover man's place in the universe, his images frequently
echo those used by mystical religions. Thoreau's images are
saved from being trite cliches by the deeper meaning his
sensory impressions and natural observations reveal.

The natural object most frequently used to describe the
organic process is the plant: all creation is seen as a
growing organism manifesting itself in many interlocking
ways. To represent this organic interrelation, Thoreau often
mixes the key images in Walden in a single illustration.

Although the enlightened artist may strive to produce
true art, he is generally unable to see fully or to express
completely the correspondence between nature and the thoughts
it represents; therefore, one must value nature over art,
content over form, and the artist's life over his works. On
rare occasions, however, the poet is able to see and speak
clearly, to achieve a transcendental identity with what
Emerson called the Over-Soul, and "the perceiver and the thing
perceived, the thought and the word and the object, are one
in the moment of perception and speech" (4, p. 135). It is
this identity of thought and poet and image which is the
ultimate goal of the organic process.

There are two areas in which Thoreau's style is said
sometimes to break down: (1) when he abandons "his usual
astringency for an Emersonian sweetness or [strains] too
hard for something transcendental after the fashion of the
Concord school rather than in his own special way" (6, p. 270), and (2) when he runs to formlessness because of his desire to allow his work to emerge spontaneously like the growth of a plant (10, p. 134). Both of these faults can be overcome by a judicious use of images based on the organic principle, and *Walden* is the best example of Thoreau's success in mastering this technique.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER II

IMAGES OF DESPERATION:
SLAVE, FARM, RAILROAD, DISEASE

Chapter I noted that recurrent implied or "lurking" metaphors provide one of the chief sources of unity in Walden. The theme restated in each of the principal metaphors in this book is similar to the Puritan belief that man is lost and can be saved only after he recognizes his need for salvation. Thoreau uses slave, farm, railroad, and disease-health images in the beginning chapters of Walden to define man's plight and to suggest means of redemption.

Similar to early American Puritans, Thoreau believes that although all men are potentially able to receive grace, only a few will ever become seers. He feels that "the mass of men live lives of quiet desperation" (3, p. 8. Italics mine), and it is this majority that he wishes to awaken to an awareness of its present servility and of the possibilities of liberation.

The best of Thoreau's metaphors imbue the reader with a feeling of uneasiness and urgency because they are derived from his observations of nature in which unused organs atrophy and unproductive traits disappear. This knowledge, coupled with Thoreau's transcendental belief that all men are capable
of becoming seers, lends an evangelistic fervor to his writing and colors his speech with religion-oriented images.

Even though he uses religious metaphors, Thoreau warns, "We have adopted Christianity merely as an improved method of agri-culture" (3, p. 41). Thoreau separates the word "agri-culture" to call attention to its root meaning, to till a field. His emphasis on the first part suggests that by organizing religion his fellow New Englanders have separated their spiritual lives from other fields or areas of their lives. To Thoreau an understanding of the ideal must evolve from contact with the material; segmentation of life destroys organic unity and is, therefore, unnatural. The phrase "merely as an improved method" makes the reader recall Thoreau's condemnation of improved means "to an unimproved end" (3, p. 175).

Images discussed in this chapter incorporate some of Thoreau's most successful techniques designed to cause the reader to re-evaluate his own opinions: (1) the use of familiar images to express an unorthodox point of view, (2) the use of puns and root meanings of words to lessen the "preachiness" of his message and to point out the divergence from their everyday meanings, and (3) the use of simple, concrete, commonplace examples to illustrate abstract beliefs. Because of the organic nature of Thoreau's images, it is impossible to divorce them from the thoughts they express,
and those which erupt spontaneously from a depth of feeling are his strongest and best.

Thoreau's use of the slave image does not depict his well-known aversion to Negro slavery but, instead, his repugnance to the bondage of conditioned materialism: "I sometimes wonder that we can be so frivolous . . . as to attend to the gross but somewhat foreign form of servitude called Negro Slavery, there are so many keen and subtle masters that enslave both North and South" (3, p. 8). To make certain that his readers identify themselves as his subjects and do not mistake his metaphorical slaves for actual Southern slaves, Thoreau addresses Walden directly to those New Englanders "who are said to be in moderate circumstances" (3, p. 39), not to the dismally poor.

By his retention of the personal pronoun "I," Thoreau candidly acknowledges that Walden is an account of one man's beliefs about the nature of the universe. He extends the conversational relationship with the readers by a similarly unorthodox use of the pronoun "you":

I have no doubt that some of you who read this book are unable to pay for all the dinners which you have actually eaten, or for the coats and shoes which are fast wearing or are already worn out, and have come to this page to spend borrowed or stolen time, robbing your creditors of an hour (3, p. 7).

By this direct, person-to-person address, Thoreau means to pin his audience down, to make them realize that because debts enslave, they and their neighbors, not some remote, unfamiliar people, are indeed in bondage.
In some cases, it is the laboring class that suffers; criticizing the fledgling New England textile factory system, Thoreau declares that its object is "not that mankind may be well and honestly clad, but, unquestionably, that the corporations may be enriched" (3, p. 29) while "the condition of the operatives is becoming every day more like that of the English . . ." (3, p. 29). More frequently, however, Thoreau takes the unusual view that it is the rich who are "the most terribly impoverished class of all, who have accumulated dross, but know not how to use it, or get rid of it, and thus have forged their own golden or silver fetters" (3, p. 18). This image of shackles made from precious metals reveals his belief that men unwittingly sell themselves as indentured servants to obtain material goods.

The owner Thoreau most often identifies as a slave is the farmer, who "leads the meanest of lives. He knows Nature but as a robber" (3, p. 183). To explain his reasoning, Thoreau lists several items men desire without realizing they are traps: land, animals, houses, and furniture. Usually the farmer does not really own the land he defiles but has bought it on credit or inherited it with debts against it: "the encumbrances sometimes outweigh the value of the farm, so that the farm itself becomes one great encumbrance . . ." (3, p. 35), a hindrance rather than an aid to freedom.

Thoreau asserts that a man should "as long as possible live free and uncommitted. It makes little difference
whether you are committed to a farm or the county jail" (3, p. 93). Thoreau's pun on "committed" reinforces his contention that the acquisition of material things causes a loss of freedom.

Taught by a mercenary society that an abundance of possessions is a blessing, men fail to realize that they have become "the tools of their tools" (3, p. 41). Thoreau finds it ironic that the farmer should measure his wealth by the size of his animals' house rather than his own and that a man must work harder to produce fodder for plow animals than to till his land by hand. Men are unable to see that they "are not so much the keepers of herds as herds are the keepers of men, the former are so much the freer" (3, p. 62).

In a memorable word picture, Thoreau describes the farmer as "a poor immortal soul . . . crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and wood lot!" (1, p. 5). Thoreau revitalizes the "road of life" cliche by the precise list of unrelenting restrictions placed on the farmer's freedom. His reference to the filthy stables of King Augeas emphasizes the Herculean effort required by the farmer to try to keep abreast of his unending tasks. Thoreau asserts that indeed all twelve labors of Hercules were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve, and had an end; but I could never see
that these men slew or captured any monster or finished any labor. They have no friend Iolaus to burn with a hot iron the root of the hydra's head, but as soon as one head is crushed, two spring up (3, p. 5).

Various snares beset those who are forever "buying and selling, and spending their lives like serfs" (3, p. 230) because they lack insight concerning the real meaning of life. Straying from Thoreau's basic tenet of simplification,

the farmer is endeavoring to solve the problem of a livelihood by a formula more complicated than the problem itself. To get his shoestrings he speculates in herds of cattle. With consummate skill he has set his trap with a hair spring to catch comfort and independence, and then, as he turned away, got his own leg into it (3, p. 36).

Thoreau's use of the word "shoestrings" for the trivial things most men exchange their lives for in barter shows how ridiculously intricate and involved he believes men make the process of acquiring the basic necessities. How much better it would be if they did things directly--raised their own food, built their own houses, made their own shoestrings. Through the image of a man accidentally captured by a trap he set himself, Thoreau suggests the shock and outrage felt by a man who realizes too late that his life has been wasted in pursuit of unworthy goals. Thoreau also implies that man's foolishness is born of carelessness and inattention.

Of the tenaciousness that causes man to move his furniture whenever he relocates, Thoreau says,

It is the same as if all these traps were buckled to a man's belt, and he could not move over the rough country where our lines are cast without dragging them,--dragging his trap. He was a lucky fox that
left his tail in the trap. The muskrat will gnaw his third leg off to be free (3, p. 73).

By juxtaposing views of a man stubbornly carrying his traps and of a frenzied animal sacrificing a critical limb to be free from one, Thoreau reveals his belief that man is unaware of the fact that he too has been snared. The man as well as the animal is in danger of losing his life; only the animal realizes the peril of its situation.

Because shelter is always included in any list of basic necessities of life, including Thoreau's, the author goes to great lengths to make his audience realize that their houses are so covered with superfluous gewgaws and luxuries that the houses have been transformed from protectors into enslavers: "Our houses are such unwieldy property that we are often imprisoned rather than housed in them" (3, p. 37).

Describing a three-foot by six-foot tool box left beside the railroad tracks, Thoreau sees it as the most rudimentary house: "Many a man is harassed to death to pay the rent of a larger and more luxurious box who would not have frozen to death in such a box as this" (3, p. 32). The coffin-like dimensions of the tool box reinforce Thoreau's association of death with the mental stagnation that results when a man spends his life in merely acquiring and maintaining a more elaborate box. Once a man acquires a house, "he may not be the richer but the poorer for it, and it be the house that has got him" (3, p. 37).
Throughout *Walden* Thoreau uses the images of death, the grave, and decomposition to connote a lack of mental and spiritual awareness. He frequently connects these images with farming. Seeing his young townsmen laboring in the fields, Thoreau cries, "Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born?" (3, p. 5). Instead of exemplifying the organic ideal in which a man's work absorbs meaning from his life, Thoreau insists that these creatures are destroyed by their attitude toward their work. Cognizant only of monetary rewards, their model farm is "under a high state of cultivation, being manured with the hearts and brains of men!" (3, p. 218). Thoreau laments that "the better part of a man is soon plowed into the soil for compost" (3, p. 6) and predicts, on a more literal level, that "only death will set them free" (3, p. 37).

Thoreau maintains that each individual is responsible for his own fate. Man has only himself to blame for his sorry condition; he blindly accepts society's values "through want of enterprise and faith . . ." (3, p. 230). Thoreau answers the question "Who made them serfs of the soil?" (3, p. 5) with "What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate" (3, p. 8). Lacking the courage for self-emancipation, man ceases to be immortal or divine and becomes "the slave and prisoner of his own opinion of himself . . ." (3, p. 8).
Thoreau's reverence for nature as the symbol of the spirit is the root of his vilification of the farmer who sees the land solely as a means for making money: "I respect not his labors; his farm where everything has its price, who would carry the landscape, who would carry his God, to market, if he could get anything for him; who goes to market for his god; . . . whose fields bear no crops, . . . but dollars" (3, p. 218). Angered because Mr. Flint presumed to make a pure and beautiful pond his namesake, Thoreau fumes, "Flint's Pond! . . . What right had the unclean and stupid farmer, whose farm abutted on this sky water, whose shores he had ruthlessly laid bare, to give his name to it? Some skin-flint, who loved better the reflecting surface of a dollar . . ." (3, p. 217). The smooth flow and rapid rhythm of these passages attest to Thoreau's indignation and stimulate similar feelings in the reader.

To Thoreau water generally represents purity and depth; those who ravage it for money are likened to farmers. The ice skimmers who peeled the frozen skin from Walden Pond went to work at once, plowing, harrowing, rolling, furrowing, in admirable order, as if they were bent on making this a model farm; but when I was looking sharp to see what kind of seed they dropped into the furrow, a gang of fellows by my side suddenly began to hook up the virgin mould itself . . . clear down to the sand, or rather the water, . . . haul it away on sleds, and then I guessed they must be cutting peat in a bog (3, p. 325).

Thoreau uses the word "field" with both good and bad connotations in Walden. When the field is cultivated by a
farmer merely for profit, it is a blight on the landscape; grateful that part of Walden's shore has escaped the farmer's hand, Thoreau says, "There is no rawness nor imperfection in its edge there, as where the axe has cleared a part, or a cultivated field abuts on it" (3, p. 206).

A field of thought, on the other hand, has intrinsic value. Praising solitude for the thinking or working man, Thoreau declares, "the student, though in the house, is still at work in his field, and chopping in his woods, as the farmer in his . . ." (3, p. 150). Thoreau warns, however, that one must take care not to mistake opinion for truth, "which some had trusted for a cloud that would sprinkle fertilizing rain on their fields" (3, p. 9).

According to Thoreau, the New Englander should raise crops other than potatoes, grass, and grain and should concern himself with a new generation of men. Man's principal field, however, should be himself, and his primary aim self-improvement. Emphasizing his belief that material possessions hamper self-cultivation, Thoreau says of the rich, "Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in" (3, p. 5). Thoreau alludes in this passage to Romulus and Remus, legendary founders of Rome, who were reared by a wolf after being left to die in the Tiber when they were babies. He asserts that lucky are "the portionless, who struggle with no such unnecessary inherited encumbrances, [and]
find its labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh" (3, p. 6).

A crop raised not for money but for love of the outdoors may actually bring man closer to his goal of purification. Holding the romantic view that a sympathetic union with nature makes one healthy in mind and body, Thoreau came to love his beans: "They attached me to the earth, and so I gained strength like Antaeus" (3, p. 171). The wrestler Antaeus was invincible only as long as he maintained contact with his mother the earth; Thoreau believes that contact with nature is also essential for the poet.

Thoreau's work in the bean field aided his development as an interpreter of the meaning of natural objects. Tilling his field, standing with his feet in the soil and his thoughts in the sky, Thoreau became a symbolic conduit between the earthly and the spiritual. His labor "yielded an instant and immeasurable crop. It was no longer beans that I hoed, nor I that hoed beans . . ." (3, p. 175).

His agricultural experiences provided Thoreau with images directly from the experience of his largely agrarian audience: "some must work in fields if only for the sake of tropes and expression, to serve a parable-maker one day" (3, p. 179). Acknowledging a similar debt to the farmer, Thoreau chuckles, "Why, the owner does not know it for many years when a poet has put his farm in rime, the most admirable kind of invisible fence, has fairly impounded it, milked it,
skimmed it, and got all the cream, and left the farmer only the skimmed milk" (3, p. 92). This passage reveals that Thoreau believes only a few men see the correspondence between nature and the spirit; the mere act of farming does not enlighten the farmer.

For the seer and poet, the ideal farm is one in its most primitive and natural state. Thinking of buying the Hollowell farm, Thoreau hopes to complete the transaction before the owner has a chance to make any more "improvements" on the property, "for I knew all the while that it would yield the most abundant crop of the kind I wanted, if I could only afford to let it alone" (3, p. 93). Thoreau's use of "improvements" to represent the farmer's unwitting atrocities against the land is an example of his wry tongue-in-cheek humor.

In fact, Thoreau believes that those lands untouched by man may be the most worthwhile, for "who estimates the value of the crop which nature yields in the still wider fields unimproved by man?" (3, p. 174). Adopting the transcendental long view, Thoreau observes that to the sun, "the earth is all equally cultivated like a garden. Therefore we should receive the benefit of his light and heat with a corresponding trust and magnanimity" (3, p. 183). If man would have faith in his uncultivated instincts and intuitions, he could more aptly discern the truth. Thoreau's viewing the earth from the distant perspective of the sun blurs
distinctions between weeds and cultivated plants and reveals
the unity behind their apparent diversity.

The farmer had, of course, ravaged the land for centuries;
the railroad, on the other hand, had been brought to Concord
in the early nineteenth century, just prior to Thoreau's
beginning Walden. Therefore, both the advantages and the
disadvantages of this "last improvement in civilization"
(3, p. 38) were fresh in the minds of the author and his
audience. Thoreau declares that

that devilish Iron Horse, whose ear-rending neigh is
heard throughout the town, has muddied the Boiling
Spring with his foot, and he it is that has browsed
off all the woods on Walden shore, that Trojan horse,
with a thousand men in his belly, introduced by
mercenary Greeks! (3, p. 214).

Thoreau feels that like the Trojans before them, Concordians
are embracing the horse as something good without recognizing
its drawbacks. Thoreau's reference to soldiers inside the
Trojan Horse brings to mind the rapaciousness of the railroad
which treacherously devours the laborers who service it and
the passengers who ride it as well as the natural resources
of the community. Passengers, Thoreau explains, are deceived
into believing the iron horse provides freedom even though
they often spend more time working to buy a ticket than it
would take to make the journey on foot.

Extending the Iron Horse conceit, Thoreau reveals the
organic connection between the farming and railroad metaphors.
Underlying both figures is the disparity between appearance
and reality:
when I hear the iron horse make the hills echo with his snort like thunder, shaking the earth with his feet, and breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils . . . , it seems as if the earth had got a race now worthy to inhabit it. If all were as it seems, and men made the elements their servants for noble ends! (3, p. 129).

In this passage Thoreau employs a device used three times in the space of a few pages in his discussion of the railroad--the use of an exclamatory sentence in the subjunctive mood to disclaim any good associations that appear to have accrued to the railroad through association with honorific images. In fact, Thoreau connects death imagery more explicitly to the railroad than to farming.

In a very satisfying conceit, Thoreau fuses the railroad image to the main thesis of Walden by taking advantage of the happy coincidence that railroad ties are called "sleepers." Recalling death and burial images when he equates men and railroad ties, Thoreau asks,

Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad: Each one is a man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And every few years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon (3, p. 103).

So few recognize the intellectual lifelessness of the majority of men that "when they run over a man that is walking in his sleep, a supernumerary sleeper in the wrong position, they suddenly stop the cars, and make a hue and cry about it, as if this were an exception" (3, p. 103). Thoreau includes his
favorite pejorative, "superfluous," in another form when he says that the man walking on the tracks is merely a supernumerary, or extra, sleeper.

Although Thoreau criticizes man's present blindness, he retains a transcendental optimism about the possibility of awakening latent capabilities: "I am glad to know that it takes a gang of men for every five miles to keep the sleepers down and level in their beds as it is, for this is a sign that they may sometime get up again" (3, p. 103). This passage foreshadows the "awakening" image Thoreau uses in the latter half of the book.

Thoreau exhibits organic interrelation of the iron horse and farm images when he says, "If the snow lies deep, they strap on his snowshoes, and, with the giant plow, plow a furrow from the mountains to the seaboard, in which the cars, like a following drill-barrow, sprinkle all the restless men and floating merchandise in the country for seed" (3, p. 130). The railroad is also the instrument used by the farmer to carry the fruits of his devastation to market: "All the Indian huckleberry hills are stripped, all the cranberry meadows are raked into the city. Up comes the cotton, down goes the woven cloth; up comes the silk, down goes the woolen; up come the books, but down goes the wit that writes them" (3, p. 128). In the exchanges between the country and the city, Thoreau's use of the words "stripped" and "raked" shows that he believes the rural areas lose more than they gain.
Thoreau's criticism of the railroad is not a blanket condemnation, however; he, as a seer, is able to discriminate between its good and bad traits. One can learn from the railroad too. Thoreau admonishes the railroad workers not to "get out sleepers, and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go tinkering upon our lives to improve them . . ." (3, p. 102). Using the railroad to represent the inevitability of fate and the relentlessness of destiny, Thoreau compares trains to "bolts . . . shot toward particular points of the compass . . . . The air is full of invisible bolts. Every path but your own is the path of fate" (3, p. 131). The only way to avoid doom and destruction is to "Keep on your own track, then" (3, p. 131) to improve the world by self-improvement. This work is lasting and worthwhile compared to the transient, trivial upkeep of the railroad and prompts Thoreau to proclaim, "I too would fain to be a track-repairer somewhere in the orbit of the earth" (3, p. 128).

Thoreau's use of positive track- and railroad-related images as well as negative ones demonstrates the poet's function as seer, that of interpreting the abstract meanings of natural objects. Thoreau's own success as a poet hinges on his ability to capture the essence of reality in concrete, familiar images.
Thoreau uses the railroad image to show that the seer must conceive, not merely perceive, what nature has made available to him:

The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving then . . . .

Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails (3, p. 108).

Thoreau includes what most men call work among the nutshells and mosquitoes' wings, the meaningless trivialities, that deflect people from the genuinely important pursuit of truth. Since a train off its track cannot progress toward it destination however much it spins its wheels, Thoreau is suggesting that men have the faith to follow the pre-laid track, to cultivate their innate potential for divinity, to recognize the correspondence between nature and the spirit.

Watching the passage of the morning cars, Thoreau sees an image of the relation between the earthly and the spiritual: "Their train of clouds stretching far behind and rising higher and higher, going to heaven while the cars are going to Boston, . . . [is] a celestial train beside which the petty train of cars which hugs the earth is but the barb of the spear" (3, p. 129).

An excellent example of Thoreau's ability to telescope a concrete observation into an abstract idea, this passage graphically illustrates the role of a seer. As the "petty" earthly train moves away, it actually appears smaller to a
stationary observer, while the vapor and smoke trail expands as it ascends. This "celestial train," the viewer's interpretation, is not only larger, but more lasting and more important than the transient counterpart which hugs the ground. Like poetry, this image says more than a mere flat reading of the words reveals; exploring its possibilities requires the participation of an imaginative reader.

Thoreau's use of the farmer and the railroadman to represent mankind is one example of synecdoche, and his use of Concord as a microcosm is another. The sights and odors of freight-train products from foreign parts help him to universalize his experience, to feel "more like a citizen of the world" (3, p. 132); the cattle-train sounds make it seem "as if a pastoral valley were going by" (3, p. 135).

Thoreau again uses the railroad to illustrate the disparity between appearance and reality. The engine leading the train seems to be the protector of the flocks following it: "When the old bell-wether at the head rattles his bell, the mountains do indeed skip like rams and the little hills like lambs" (3, p. 135). This bell-wether, however, is taking his charges to slaughter, rendering their former protectors, the sheepdogs, jobless: "Their fidelity and sagacity are below par now . . . . So is your pastoral life whirled past and away. But the bell rings, and I must get off the track and let the cars go by . . . ." (3, p. 135).
In a fourth set of images Thoreau employs disease and its opposite, health, to describe man's condition. The malady Thoreau cites is, of course, one of the spirit, not of the body, and he sees all men as victims of the affliction to some degree. Disease and health images are common to many religions and are linked by Thoreau to the realm of spiritual language.

In a traditional image, Thoreau associates disease with the animal worldly side of man and health with his pure, spiritual, "other-worldly" side:

We are conscious of an animal in us, which awakens in proportion as our higher nature slumbers. It is reptile and sensual, and perhaps cannot be wholly expelled; like the worms which, even in life and health, occupy our bodies . . . . I fear that it may enjoy a certain health of its own; that we may be well, yet not pure. The other day I picked up the lower jaw of a hog, with white and sound teeth and tusks, which suggested that there was an animal health and vigor distinct from the spiritual (3, p. 242).

In this image Thoreau pictures the animal (sensual) part of man occupying the same host organism as the spiritual. The animal part is parasitic and saps life from the spiritual part; therefore, as the animal flourishes, the spirit is diminished. The proximity of the words "reptile" and "worms" brings to mind the snake, a worm-shaped reptile whose treachery caused Eve to lose her purity. The hog, whose animal health implies spiritual disease, is colloquially considered to be filthy and gluttonous, traits Thoreau associates with mental stultification.
Thoreau had noted earlier in his journal that in the struggle between the animal and spiritual parts of himself, man recognizes disease in proportion to the ascension of the spirit:

It is a remarkable and significant fact that, though no man is quite well and healthy, yet every one believes that health is the rule and disease the exception, and each individual is wont to think himself in a minority... Disease is, in fact, the rule of our terrestrial life and the prophecy of a celestial life... It is, nevertheless, a cheering fact that men affirm health unanimously and esteem themselves miserable failures (2, p. 450).

That Thoreau connects disease with the earthbound body and spirit and health with the heavenly in separate works written years apart indicates that the association of these images is a lasting part of the poet and flows from his beliefs.

To this point Thoreau's disease and health images have expressed traditional, conventional, majority opinions; but now he commits heresy in nineteenth-century America by linking disease with thrift and work. Thoreau observes that most men spend their lives grubbing for money, "making yourselves sick that you may lay up something against a sick day" (3, p. 7). Anxious to obtain material wealth, they lack the simplicity that Thoreau associates with health: "Some things are really necessaries of life in some circles, the most helpless and diseased, which in others are luxuries merely, and in others still are entirely unknown" (3, p. 10). Constantly working to achieve base goals acquired from society, they labor under incessant anxiety and strain, which
Thoreau calls "a well-nigh incurable form of disease" (3, p. 12). Contrary to the Protestant Ethic, Thoreau feels that "as for work, we haven't any consequence. We have the Saint Vitus' dance, and cannot possibly keep our heads still" (3, p. 103). Similar to a train off the track, Thoreau's diseased workers exhibit much movement but no progress.

Because "warmth" generally connotes well-being and coziness, Thoreau distinguishes the workers' feverish agitation from life-giving warmth: "The animal heat is the result of a slow combustion, and disease and death take place when this is too rapid . . ." (3, p. 14). Most men are desperate because they believe that there is no other way to live, "but alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear" (3, p. 9).

In another unusual image, Thoreau interprets natural sounds as symbols of his beliefs. Contrary to the folklore association of the owl with wisdom, Thoreau describes the hooting of owls as "the dying moans of a human being . . . expressive of a mind which has reached the gelatinous, mildewy stage in the mortification of all healthy and courageous thought" (3, p. 139).

In many of the disease and health images, Thoreau uses root meanings and puns to provide continuity and to make the reader participate in the development of an idea. Thoreau
chides those who criticize him for not following the beaten track as

the old and infirm, and the timid, of whatever age or sex, [who] thought most of sickness, and sudden accident and death; . . . they thought that a prudent man would carefully select the safest position, where Dr. B. might be on hand at a moment's warning. To them the village was literally a community, a league for mutual defence . . . (3, p. 170).

By separating the word "community," Thoreau calls attention to the fact that those who are afraid herd together hoping to receive immunity from responsibility for oneself.

Thoreau characterizes some of the visitors to his Walden hut as the world's poor "who appeal, not to your hospitality, but to your hospitalality; who earnestly wish to be helped, and preface their appeal with the information that they are resolved, for one thing, never to help themselves" (3, p. 168). In addition to the obvious pun, Thoreau makes a subtle allusion to the original meaning of "hospital," a place for caring for the aged and infirm. Used so close to the above passage, this allusion is surely meant to unite the two.

Thoreau advocates a conventionally romantic prescription to cure man's ills, a return to simplicity and a realignment with nature. In the first volume of his journals, Thoreau asserts that "disease and sorrow are but a rupture with Nature" (1, p. 234); "if, then," he says in Walden, "we would indeed restore mankind by truly Indian, botanic, magnetic, or natural means, let us first be as simple and well as Nature ourselves . . ." (3, p. 87). He describes the morning air as "a panacea"
(3, p. 153) and states that "we need the tonic of wilderness" (3, p. 350).

In a passage which foreshadows the theme of the following chapter, Thoreau stresses the internal nature of reform. Satirizing philanthropy as it is practiced, Thoreau says, "The philanthropist too often surrounds mankind with the remembrance of his own cast-off griefs as an atmosphere, and calls it sympathy. We should impart our courage, and not our despair, our health and ease, and not our disease, and take care that this does not spread by contagion" (3, p. 85). Reviving the root meaning of "disease," Thoreau says that in their effort to "do good," philanthropists are merely projecting their own "absence of ease" on to others.

Expanding this conceit, Thoreau continues:

If anything ail a man, so that he does not perform his functions, if he have a pain in his bowel even,—for that is the seat of sympathy,—he forthwith sets about reforming—the world . . . He discovers . . . that the world has been eating green apples; . . . and straightway his drastic philanthropy seeks out the Esquimaux and the Patagonian, and embraces the populous Indian and Chinese villages; and thus, by a few years of philanthropic activity, . . . he cures himself of his dyspepsia, . . . and life loses its crudity and is once more sweet and wholesome to live (3, p. 86).

In this passage Thoreau characterizes the disease of philanthropy as nothing more lasting than cramps caused by eating unripe fruit. Because the philanthropist loses his altruistic zeal as soon as he himself feels better and "will forsake his generous companions without apology" (3, p. 86),
Thoreau implies that all true and enduring reform must come from within the person being reformed.

Thoreau's judicious use of pointed puns and original meanings encourages reader involvement in discovering the meanings of the author's observations and makes the quest fun. Coupled with his ability to use familiar observations and associations to express ethereal beliefs, this trait makes Thoreau a provoking combination of tease and crusader.


CHAPTER III

WATER, FISHING, FIRE

Chapter III discusses Thoreau's use of traditional media of purification and contemplation--water, fishing, and fire--to suggest means by which man may discover his proper relationship to nature and to God. Thoreau reiterates the vitality he sees expressed in natural objects and implies that an analogous spiritual vitality dormant in man can be reawakened.

Thoreau addresses Walden to the majority of men, but he speaks to each one as an individual. Holding what Walter Harding calls the basic belief of Transcendentalism, that reform must come from within a person and can be "achieved only when each individual convinces himself of its desirability" (1, p. 143), Thoreau tries to activate in each reader an awareness of the correspondence between nature and the spirit and to arouse an enthusiasm for the search for the meaning of life. The electric sense of immediacy that pervades Thoreau's works is derived from the disparity he sees between life as it is and life as it might be. He is trying quite literally to save the spiritual lives of his fellow men.

Thoreau's withdrawal to Walden Pond was in part a playing out of his belief that through a combination of nature study and introspection one can discover what life
is all about. Thoreau uses water imagery to express his belief that although self-examination is possible at any time or any place, solitude is an aid in separating the essential from the superfluous. While living alone at Walden, he had few visitors on trivial business: "I had withdrawn so far within the great ocean of solitude, into which the rivers of society empty, that for the most part, so far as my needs were concerned, only the finest sediment was deposited around me" (3, p. 159). In this excellent sustained metaphor, Thoreau indicates that his guest list was refined by his distance from town. As the tributary rivers of society empty into the ocean of solitude, the gross and heavy clods settle out long before they reach Thoreau's remote abode; the momentum of the river's current carries only the finest visitors to his distant and isolated home.

Thoreau frequently equates that which is good and vital in life with water and contrasts it to the "dead dry life of society" (3, p. 367). He warns that awareness of what is truly important in life has all but dried up in most men, but he retains hope that man may rediscover what Matthiessen calls his "submerged potentialities" (2, p. 84):

The life in us is like water in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it, and flood the parched uplands; even this may be the eventful year, which will drown out all our muskrats. It was not always dry land where we dwell (3, p. 366).

The above passage is an excellent example of Thoreau's ability to make a natural phenomenon significant by pointing
out its relationship to man's spirit. In this passage the naturalist Thoreau alludes to the scientific fact that spring causes some rivers, like the Nile, to overflow their banks and to deposit enriched and fertilized sediment in the highlands. His reference to "parched uplands" suggests that it is man's higher or spiritual life that has dried up and needs to be revitalized; the seasonal quality of the flooding implies that man's opportunity for spiritual renewal is perpetual. In the last sentence the transcendentalist Thoreau holds out the hope that man may once again receive life from the waters.

In another passage which uses the rising and falling of water to represent the influx and efflux of man's spirit, Thoreau tries to make the reader aware of the magnitude and force of man's infinite capabilities. Far from being a cynical critic of mankind, Thoreau believes that man underrates himself and needs to be reminded of his divine potentialities: "A tide rises and falls behind every man which can float the British Empire like a chip, if he should ever harbor it in his mind" (3, p. 366). Thoreau's comparison of the massive British Empire to a chip emphasizes the power he feels is latent in man.

Thoreau often uses the vastness and mysteriousness of the sea to illustrate his belief that every man is a reservoir of undiscovered capabilities. In the following
passage he combines the sea image with that of unexplored land to exhort each man to
be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought. . . . There are continents and seas in the moral world to which every man is an isthmus or an inlet, yet unexplored by him but . . . it is easier to sail many thousands of miles through cold and storm and cannibals, in a government ship with five hundred men and boys to assist one than to explore the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific of one's being alone (3, p. 354).

By equating man with an isthmus or an inlet, Thoreau illustrates his belief that man is the essential link that makes an understanding of the unknown possible. In the first case man is a land bridge; in the second, a water channel; in both cases he affords a closer relationship between life-giving water and dry land. The faith that at least some men are able interpreters who can span the gap between natural objects and spiritual truths is fundamental to Thoreau, whose writings are laden with figures of speech taken directly from nature.

Thoreau combines word-play and water images in an effort to change the reader's perspective about man's place on earth. Standing beside a small pond, he concludes,

It is well to have some water in your neighborhood, to give buoyancy to and float the earth. One value of the smallest well is, that when you look into it you see that earth is not continent but insular. . . . All the earth beyond the pond appeared like a thin crust insulated and floated even by this small sheet of intervening water, and I was reminded that this on which I dwelt was but dry land (3, p. 97).
Since water in Walden represents man's spirit, Thoreau suggests in this image that the spiritual lies behind or supports the material. One definition of "buoyancy" derived from its root meaning, "the ability or tendency to float," is a "lightness or resilience of spirit." Looking into the well, then, implies self-contemplation and awareness of the spiritual self.

Thoreau's use of the adjective "well" in connection with water in the first sentence leads the reader to expect a water well even before he gets to the actual one in the second sentence. Then Thoreau surprises the reader with an unexpected assertion, that the familiar well proves all men are islanders! Taking the transcendental long view, Thoreau sees that each continent is surrounded by water; the island is not even rooted to the ocean floor but seems a mere "thin crust" floating on the water. The purpose of these images is to make the reader aware of the fragile and transient nature of earthly things. Remembering that Thoreau associates dryness with mental stagnation, spiritual aridity, and death, one should read "nothing but" for "but" in the last sentence.

One way that man may be revitalized by water is through baptism, and Thoreau sees his daily bath as a purification rite: "I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I
did" (3, p. 98). The bath takes place in the morning, a time that Thoreau associates with beginning anew and being alive.

The most sustained metaphor in *Walden* is Thoreau's identification of Walden Pond with the ideal part of man. Even though the pond is by far the natural object most praised by Thoreau, the poet never allows the reader to forget that without an intuitive and perceptive man to recognize corresponding qualities in himself, the pond's symbolic value is nil. Thoreau is "thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol" (3, p. 316), but he emphasizes,

> Walden is a perfect forest mirror . . . . Nothing so fair, so pure, and at the same time so large, as a lake, perchance, lies on the surface of the earth. Sky water. It needs no fence . . . . It is a mirror which no stone can crack, whose quicksilver will never wear off, whose gilding Nature continually repairs . . . a mirror in which all impurity presented to it sinks, swept and dusted by the sun's hazy brush . . . (3, p. 209).

Thoreau selects the mirror image to suggest his belief that man is the indispensable half of the man-pond analogy. Because the mirror is perfect and clean, it gives a true and undistorted picture, but it can do no more than merely reflect what is presented to it. Looking into the pond to discover his own nature, a sincere and faithful man recognizes his good and bad points. Then he may capitalize on the former and work to remove the latter, just as impurities are removed from the pond-mirror.

Thoreau combines water and mill images to reiterate the conviction of the poet that man is the central point around
which natural symbols and their meanings coalesce. Listing
four of the ponds in the Concord area, he says, "These, with
Concord River, are my water privileges; and night and day,
year in and year out, they grind such grist as I carry to
them" (3, p. 219. Italics mine).

Thoreau does not always speak of the pond as an inani-
mate object that merely reflects man's thoughts or as a
machine that merely chews them over. He speculates that it
had "obtained a patent of Heaven to be the only Walden Pond
in the world and distiller of celestial dews" (3, p. 199).
As an active distiller of heavenly condensation, the pond
joins the earthly and the spiritual.

In another passage in which Walden acts as purifier,
Thoreau combines pond and railroad images to demonstrate the
organic interrelation of all things:

The cars never pause to look at it; yet I fancy that
the engineers and firemen and brakemen, and those
passengers who have a season ticket and see it often,
are better men for the sight. The engineer does not
forget at night, or his nature does not, that he
has beheld this vision of serenity and purity once at
least during the day. Though seen but once, it helps
to wash out State Street and the engine's soot. One
proposes that it be called "God's Drop" (3, p. 215).

Thoreau usually associates purification by water with a rather
prolonged or substantial contact, as when he fishes or bathes
in the pond. Here, however, he sees "God's Drop" as so
strikingly pure that a mere fleeting glimpse of Walden Pond
is enough to produce a salutary effect on the natures, the
instinctive beings, of the train's workmen and passengers.
Thoreau also demonstrates in this passage his poetic ability to concentrate abstract concepts in specific concrete objects when he uses the particular grime of Boston's State Street and an engine's soot to represent the more significant soiling of money-grubbing materialism associated with business and industry.

In their constant grouping and regrouping of Thoreau's recurring images, critics have sorely neglected one class of organic images central to Thoreau's beliefs as poet and as philosopher. In this group Thoreau makes it clear that heaven is up, physical nature is down, and man is midway between the two, joining the earthly and the spiritual. Passages reflecting this point of view are pervasive in Thoreau's writings and include examples of farm, railroad, fishing, pond, plant, and insect images. Chapter II of this paper discusses Thoreau's use of farm and railroad images to illustrate his position as a link between the earth and the sky on two occasions: (1) when he works in his bean field and (2) when he interprets the view of a retreating train. The present chapter concerns Thoreau's use of his alter-ego the pond as an image to reveal correspondence between earth and heaven. Finally, Chapter IV shows Thoreau symbolizing man's spiritual elevation by the upward growth of a plant and by the metamorphosis of an insect from earthbound grub to flying insect.
Although Walden Pond is Thoreau's principal symbol for the depth and purity of the self, he also admires other clear and pure lakes around Concord. Observing a small lake south of the city just prior to a summer storm, Thoreau says, "A lake like this is never smoother than at such a time; and the clear portion of the air above it being shallow and darkened by clouds, the water, full of light and reflections, becomes a lower heaven itself so much the more important" (3, p. 96). Thoreau's use of the words "never smoother" and "reflections" recalls his image of Walden Pond as a perfect mirror. Thoreau feels that the lake gains significance when it reflects the higher truths symbolized by heaven. The frequency and facility with which Thoreau speaks of ponds as reflectors of clouds attests to the intimate, personal nature of this image.

Following his assertion that Walden Pond "sends its own [breath] to float as clouds high above its surface, and be reflected in its bosom still" (3, p. 209), Thoreau details the interrelationship between water and sky: "a field of water betrays the spirit that is in the air. It is continually receiving new life and motion from above. It is intermediate in its nature between land and sky" (3, p. 209). Since the giving of breath is associated with the giving of life, the relationship that Thoreau pictures between the pond and the heavens is a symbiotic one.
Throughout *Walden*, Thoreau uses pond images to reveal his conception of the structure of the universe. Dry land represents mere material objects which, lacking an interpreter, are relatively insignificant and meaningless. The pond and the seer are contact points between matter and spirit; they are "intermediate between land and sky." Although itself a natural phenomenon, the pond represents what is deep and pure, the spiritual part, in man. The seer links matter and spirit through his ability to see the correspondence between the two. The sky or heaven represents the ideal, God, or pure spirit. Upon rowing a boat across Walden Pond, Thoreau observes,

> In such transparent and seemingly bottomless water, reflecting the clouds, I seemed to be floating through the air as in a balloon, and the [fishes'] swimming impressed me as a kind of flight or hovering, as if they were a compact flock of birds passing just beneath my level on the right or left, their fins, like sails, set all around them (3, p. 211).

In this passage describing schools of fish in autumn, Thoreau again makes man the link between earth and heaven. Mentally transforming his boat into a balloon and fish into birds, Thoreau elevates the scene of his reverie. With its numerous associations and references the selection is characteristic of Thoreau's writing style and demonstrates his belief in the interrelation of natural images, for Thoreau uses recurring ideas and images as one means of providing unity in *Walden*. As he does throughout the book, here Thoreau uses the bottomlessness of Walden Pond to represent the infinity
of man's capabilities; he ties the pond to the sky with the familiar pond-mirror reflecting the clouds and with the impression of his boat as a balloon and fishes as birds. Finally, he recalls myriad nautical images when he compares the fins of fish to the sails of boats. It is this constant web-like interplay of words and ideas that makes it so difficult to separate Thoreau's recurring images into distinct, clear-cut groups.

Using a similar image, at another time Thoreau explains why he believes the weaving together of various images is a valid technique. Watching nighthawks in flight, he says they are graceful and slender like ripples caught up from the pond, as leaves are raised by the wind to float in the heavens; such kindredship is in nature. The hawk is aerial brother of the wave which he sails over and surveys, those his perfect air-inflated wings answering to the elemental unfledged pinions of the sea (3, p. 176. Italics mine).

Color is also a characteristic that links the earthly and the spiritual natures of the pond: "Walden is blue at one time and green at another, even from the same point of view. Lying between the earth and the heavens, it partakes of the color of both" (3, p. 196).

Observing a similar phenomenon in winter, Thoreau says, Like the water, the Walden ice, seen near at hand, has a green tint, but at a distance is beautifully blue . . . . Perhaps the blue color of water and ice is due to the light and air they contain, and the most transparent is the bluest. Ice is an interesting subject for contemplation" (3, p. 327).
It is the heavenly blue ice, Thoreau says, that is full of light and air, just as traditional religious imagery calls men who are full of God "enlightened." The bluest is the most transparent, the most easily seen through. The man closest to heaven, the seer, is also a medium through which ordinary man can learn about the higher truths symbolized in nature. Thoreau's choice of words with myriad associations is no accident. He wants the reader to participate actively in discovering the full meaning of each image; therefore, he uses precise language that rewards the inquiring reader with carefully integrated patterns of images and ideas.

Much is disclosed about Thoreau the man through his use of these images. Thoreau is sometimes mistaken for a misanthrope because people forget that he withdrew to Walden not to get away from people per se, but to free himself from the social trivialities that rob men of time to live. While living in solitude at the pond, Thoreau conceived much of Walden, a book that glorifies man's divine nature. His innate love of mankind is revealed by his caring enough to try to regenerate the spiritual life of his fellow men.

Thoreau's concept of the living, vital nature of all things in the universe is expressed by his personification of Walden Pond. Thoreau describes the pond in human terms as a sensitive, eternally young, serene companion. A year or two of high water kills the trees and shrubs along the bank so that "by this fluctuation the pond asserts its title to
a shore, and thus the shore is shorn, and the trees cannot hold it by right of possession. These are the lips of the lake, on which no beard grows. It licks its chaps from time to time" (3, p. 202). In this passage, Thoreau holds up the assertive pond, protecting itself against the advancing trees, as an indirect model for man, whose vital spirit is encircled and encumbered by "the dead dry life of society" (3, p. 367). He implies a renewal, a periodic return to youth by the temporarily beardless face and reinforces the agelessness of the pond when he says, "It has not acquired one permanent wrinkle after all its ripples. It is perennially young . . ." (3, p. 214). The lake is old in years, but young in spirit because it is pure and clean: "Of all the characters I have known, perhaps Walden wears best and best preserves its purity" (3, p. 214).

Having earlier described the alternate periods of arrested and active spiritual life as the ebb and the flow of man's spiritual tide, Thoreau now compares these periods to the winter freeze and the spring thaw. The life represented by the frozen pond is merely dormant: "I also heard the whooping of the ice in the pond, my great bed-fellow in that part of Concord, as if it were restless in its bed and would fain turn over . . ." (3, p. 301). Thoreau sees the same natural phenomenon as evidence of the pond's response to the life-giving warmth of the sun. It began
to boom about an hour after sunrise, when it felt the influence of the sun's rays slanted upon it from
over the hills; it stretched itself and yawned like a waking man with a gradually increasing tumult, which was kept up three or four hours. It took a short siesta at noon, and boomed once more toward night, as the sun was withdrawing his influence. In the right stage of the weather a pond fires its evening gun with great regularity (3, p. 333).

The eye is generally considered to be the window to the soul, and Thoreau sees Walden as "the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. The fluvial trees next the shore are the slender eyelashes which fringe it, and the wooded hills and cliffs around it are its overhanging brows" (3, p. 207). Thoreau again suggests the mirror image in this passage, since the person peering into the earth's eye discovers himself reflected there. The alert and receptive man, however, sees more than a mere reflection; he discovers the essence of his spirit as well. Describing the earthly green and heavenly blue of the pond, Thoreau declares, "Such is the color of its iris" (3, p. 196).

Thoreau extends the man-pond analogy to express his belief in the transcendental doctrine of correspondence:

What I have observed of the pond is no less true in ethics. It is the law of average . . . . Perhaps we need only to know how [a man's] shores trend and his adjacent country or circumstances, to infer his depth and concealed bottom. If his is surrounded by mountainous circumstances, an Achillean shore, whose peaks overshadow and are reflected in his bosom, they suggest a corresponding depth in him. But a low and smooth shore proves him shallow on that side. In our bodies, a bold projecting brow falls off to and indicates a corresponding depth of thought (3, p. 321).
Thoreau incorporates in this passage two frequent associations: (1) height with depth and (2) the pond with a mirror. To these associations he adds dimension by locating the reflector in the breast of man, site of the heart, the traditional organ of feeling and emotion. Thoreau has once again made his natural observations important by relating them to man's spiritual life.

In one passage using water imagery, Thoreau acknowledges that the remoteness that is a corollary of the transcendental long view may sometimes make men who adopt it poor neighbors and friends: "All things good and bad go by us like a torrent. We are not wholly involved in Nature. I may be either the driftwood in the stream, or Indra in the sky looking down on it" (3, p. 149). Particular experiences "go by us like a torrent," a swift stream; because events move on so fast, they are of slight significance. It is, therefore, immaterial according to Thoreau whether one be wood carried aimlessly down the stream or a rain god observing the events from a distant perspective.

He views time as a slower, but still insignificant, stream:

Time is but a stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars (3, p. 109).

Although Thoreau fishes in this stream and drinks at it, he realizes that time holds only particular objects and events,
surface phenomena that are mere second- and third-hand symbols of the truth that is buried beneath them. By the movement of the water, Thoreau makes the reader feel the transitory nature of particular events as the stream of time "slides away." In the final sentence of the passage, Thoreau once again proposes to ascend by descending to a bottom that is beautifully "pebbly with stars."

Time and particular events are shallow currents that slip quickly away, but the truth they represent is eternal:

Men esteem truth remote, in the outskirts of the system, behind the farthest star, before Adam and after the last man. In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places are now and here. God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that surrounds us (3, p. 108).

Thoreau's reference to water in this passage is through the gerunds "instilling," putting in drop by drop, and "drenching," drinking or soaking. Thoreau says that to complete the organic process, reality must actually become part of man, not merely wash over him. Since water has come to represent the spirit or soul of man, Thoreau implies that to know truth and to know God, man must first know himself.

Thoreau feels that men are too often the flotsam and jetsam carried away by the stream of time. He uses a favorite device, the rhetorical question, to make man at least ask, "Why should we knock under and go with the stream? Let us
not be upset and overwhelmed in that terrible rapid and whirlpool called a dinner, situated in the meridian shallows" (3, p. 108).

Place as well as time is irrelevant to those who attain a meeting of the minds. To illustrate his close association with other students of Eastern religions, Thoreau expands an actual connection, the delivery of Walden ice to distant parts, into a philosophical union:

Thus it appears that the sweltering inhabitants of Charleston and New Orleans, of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta, drink at my well. In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagvat-Geeta . . . . I lay down my book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of the Bramin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the root of a tree with his crust and water jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges (3, p. 329).

As the ice from Walden Pond melts in water drawn from the Ganges, Thoreau and the Bramin priest do indeed share a drink from Thoreau's well. This actual water source corresponds to the spiritual well of Oriental scriptures, the Bhagvat-Geeta and the Vedas, from which both had been "drinking" earlier.

Again demonstrating the interrelation of images used to describe the universe, Thoreau equates Walden Pond with the fish that inhabit it. Pickerel, he says, are fabulous fishes "as if they were the pearls, the animated nuclei or crystals of the Walden water. They, of course, are Walden all over and all through; are themselves small Waldens in
the animal kingdom, Waldenses" (3, p. 315). In spring the thawing Walden glints and moves "as [if] it were all one active fish" (3, p. 344). In the first passage Thoreau associates fish with the center of life in the pond; in the second, with a return of life or rebirth. The second association is strengthened by its allusion to the early Christian representation of the church as a fish.

Thoreau uses fishing images to illustrate an intellectual intimacy between himself and a Connecticut philosopher: "We waded so gently and reverently, or we pulled together so smoothly, that the fishes of thought were not scared from the stream, nor feared any angler on the bank, but came and went grandly, like the clouds which float through the western sky . . ." (3, p. 297). The scene Thoreau paints with the words "waded," "pulled . . . smoothly," and "float" is tranquil, serene, and unhurried. He implies that in their search for eternal truth haste is not only unnecessary but unproductive, since it merely scares the quarry away. Thoreau pairs fishes of thought with cumulus clouds, traditional objects of contemplation, and thereby repeats his frequent union of the earth and the sky. He affects this elevation to remind the reader of the connection between the earthly and the spiritual.

Feeling that he owes to the "solitary amusements of hunting, fishing, and the like" (3, p. 233) his "closest acquaintance with Nature" (3, p. 232), Thoreau advises parents
to "make [their sons] hunters, though sportsmen only at first, if possible, mighty hunters at last, so that they shall not find game large enough for them in this or any vegetable wilderness,—hunters as well as fishers of men" (3, p. 234). Thoreau's allusion to Jesus' words, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. IV, 19) suggests his belief that such are the potential saviors of mankind. Fishing in the pond, boys "might go there a thousand times before the sediment of fishing would sink to the bottom and leave their purpose pure; but no doubt such a clarifying process would be going on all the while" (3, p. 236).

Merely going to the woods does not guarantee that one will be purified, however, for many villagers come to fish for pouts, yet

they plainly fished much more in the Walden Pond of their own natures, and baited their hooks with darkness,—but they soon retreated, usually with light baskets, and left "the world to darkness and to me," and the black kernel of the night was never profaned by any human neighborhood (3, p. 145).

The villagers leave Walden with few fishes of thought because they explore only their own infertile natures or ponds. Playing with antonyms and puns, Thoreau asserts that the fishermen's light baskets result from using the wrong bait—darkness. Thoreau implies that those who do not feel at home in the wilderness leave like formal visitors as darkness approaches; they do not know their host well enough to spend the night. Thoreau associates the villagers with darkness
because they are not spiritually enlightened men. The passage from Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," however, tells his readers that he is different, for he remains. When, in fact, Thoreau makes a similar expedition in search of pouts, he dares to do so at midnight and finds himself "communicating by a long flaxen line with mysterious nocturnal fishes" (3, p. 194). Situated in a boat, Thoreau is once again the physical and symbolic link between nature and the heavens:

It was very queer, especially in dark nights, when your thoughts had wandered to vast and cosmogonical themes in other spheres, to feel this faint jerk, which came to interrupt your dreams and link you to Nature again. It seemed as if I might next cast my line upward into the air, as well as downward into this element, which scarcely was more dense. Thus I caught two fishes as it were with one hook (3, p. 195).

Thoreau's picture of a fishing line jerking him back to specific, worldly things reminds one of the "checkrein of his senses" that Matthiessen says kept Thoreau's expressions from becoming too abstract, too "vast and cosmogonical."

Thoreau's primitivism is apparent in his admiration for the unschooled natural man who adheres to the organic ideal of following instinct and intuition: "Such a man has a right to fish, and I love to see nature carried out in him. The perch swallows the grub-worm, the pickerel swallows the perch, and the fisherman swallows the pickerel; and so all the chinks in the scale of being are filled" (3, p. 314). This image and pun emphasize the animal nature of man, since
there is no apparent differentiation or elevation as one moves to the right on this chain of being. Thoreau's use of the word "swallows" links man on a horizontal plane to the grub and the fish through its figurative implication that the prey is swallowed whole.

So much a part of nature is this man that Thoreau says, "His life passes deeper in nature than the studies of the naturalist penetrate; himself a subject of the naturalist" (3, p. 314). Thoreau recognizes that the true fisherman is effortlessly a part of the natural order of the universe; the scientist merely studies that order from without.

Thoreau charges that man removed from nature concerns himself only with the superficial and never searches for deeper reality: "If the legislature regards [the pond], it is chiefly to regulate the number of hooks to be used there; but they know nothing of the hook of hooks with which to angle for the pond itself, impaling the legislature itself for a bait" (3, p. 236).

Turning from one major image of spiritual vitality, water, to another, Thoreau discloses his admiration for individualism through a fire image: "The chimney is to some extent an independent structure, standing on the ground, and rising through the house to the heavens; even after the house is burned it still stands sometimes, and its importance and independence are apparent" (3, p. 267). The chimney, location of the vital heat in a house, is another of the group of
images Thoreau uses to join earth and sky. As a link between the concrete and the spiritual, the chimney is analogous to a seer.

Throughout Walden fire is associated with life and rebirth or renewal. In the chapter called "House Warming," Thoreau says, "I lingered most about the fireplace, as the most vital part of the house" (3,p. 267). Although he warns that "vital heat is not to be confounded with fire . . ." (3, p. 14), he subordinates the traditional necessities of Food, Shelter, and Clothing to the status of mere means of maintaining "the grand necessity" (3, p. 14) which is "the fire within us" (3, p. 14). To combat the apparent lifelessness that the cold and snow of winter bring, Thoreau says, "I withdrew yet farther into my shell and endeavored to keep a bright fire both within my house and within my breast" (3, p. 275). Finally, he interrelates fire and railroad images when he says that fire puts the vital heat in the iron horse (3, p. 129).

In optimum amounts, then, fire is life-giving, but the absence of fire, or fire in superfluous quantities results in death. Speaking of death, Thoreau refers to man as a fireplace in which "for want of fuel, or from some defect in the draught, the fire goes out" (3, p. 14). Turning his satiric wit on the wealthy once again, he asserts that living means keeping warm, but "the luxuriously rich are not simply kept comfortably warm, but unnaturally hot; as I implied
before, they are cooked, of course a la mode" (3, p. 15). To be cooked, however, even stylishly, is to be dead.

Thoreau also uses fire imagery to suggest purification and rebirth. He admires the Musclease Indians who annually burn their old possessions, extinguish the fire, and on the fourth morning kindle a "new and pure flame" (3, p. 76) to start the new year. He also believes that "the laborer looking into [the fire] at evening, purifies his thoughts of the dross and earthiness which they have accumulated during the day" (3, p. 28). In the latter pages of Walden, Thoreau unites fire, spring, and plant images when he says, "The grass flames up on the hillside like a spring fire, ... not yellow but green is the color of its flame" (3, p. 343). Thoreau uses fire to indicate that he, too, is alive: "I too gave notice to the various wild inhabitants of Walden vale, by a smoky streamer from my chimney, that I was awake" (3, p. 279. Italics mine).

Using traditional purification images that could so easily be banal and trite, Thoreau revitalizes water, fishing, and fire metaphors by making them at the same time personal and universal. The vitality that Thoreau believes underlies all natural phenomena, including those usually considered to be inanimate, is indeed manifested through his organic metaphors.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER IV

PLANT AND INSECT IMAGES

Chapter I of this paper states that the ideal end of the organic process is for the poet to recognize the meaning behind natural phenomena and to express his insights through images born of the correspondence he perceives. An organic image must arise instinctively from the author's vast storehouse of experiences; it cannot be contrived. Therefore, the genuine organic image is truly a part of the poet and his thought. Thoreau's best images arise from his detailed studies as a naturalist and include plant and insect images. The present chapter illustrates Thoreau's union of the perception and interpretation of truths underlying natural objects with the aim of spiritual mysticism--the recognition of identity behind the diversity of all natural phenomena.

Thoreau's main purpose in *Walden* is to arouse men to become more conscious of their potential, more attuned to and faithful to their intuitions, and more aware of the correspondence between natural objects and spiritual facts than they are. He hopes, that is, to awaken in men the desire to become seers, those capable of perceiving natural phenomena as symbols of spiritual truths. Thoreau as poet, therefore,
is the seer who tries to communicate his interpretations of nature to others through the use of metaphorical imagery.

Although any image that is formed by the thought it depicts is truly organic, that of the development of a plant is the example most often cited by critics. In "Coleridge's Mechanical Fancy and Organic Imagination," M. H. Abrams describes the natural organic process in five stages:

1.) The plant originates in a seed . . . .
2.) The plant grows . . . .
3.) Growing, the plant assimilates to its own substance the alien and diverse elements of earth, air, light, and water . . . .
4.) The plant evolves spontaneously from an internal source of energy . . . . and organizes itself into its proper form . . . .
5.) The achieved structure of a plant is an organic unity (1, pp. 171-174).

One of the most ubiquitous images in Walden is that of the natural germination and growth of a plant, probably because this image concisely describes what Thoreau believes to be stages in the awakening growth of the seer. Every man is a seed in that he contains the potential for development into a seer. Thoreau observes that in the embryo stage of his maturation a young man's first introduction to nature may well be as a hunter or a fisherman, "until at last, if he has the seeds of a better life in him, he distinguishes his proper objects, as a poet or naturalist it may be, and leaves the gun and fish-pole behind" (7, p. 235). Early in his journals, Thoreau records his view of intellectual growth in the image of the plant: "So the mind develops from
the first in two opposite directions: upward to expand in
the light and air; and downward avoiding the light to form
the root. One half is aërial, the other subterranean" (6, p. 203). Although Thoreau frequently equates a downward
direction and earthboundness with the gross and physical side
of man, he recognizes the necessity of a foundation in indi-
vidual experience: "The mere logician, the mere reasoner, who
weaves his arguments as a tree its branches in the sky,--
nothing equally developed in the roots,--is overthrown by the
first wind" (6, p. 203). Again, in Walden Thoreau reiterates
the need for empirical knowledge when he asks, "Why has man
rooted himself thus firmly in the earth, but that he may rise
in the same proportion into the heavens above?" (7, p. 17.
Italics mine). This pairing of the directions upward and
downward to represent the spiritual and the earthly, the
abstract and the concrete, recalls Thoreau's belief that the
height of the mountains around Walden Pond equals the depth
of the pond. In related images his thoughts soar skyward as
his hoe cultivates his bean field, and he casts a line of
speculation toward the heavens as well as an actual one into
the water while fishing in Walden Pond.

Comparing ordinary men to vegetables whose upper growth
is cut off so that the edible roots will enlarge, Thoreau
asserts that

*nobler* plants are valued for the fruit they bear at
last in the air and light, far from the ground, and
are not treated like the humbler esculents, which,
though they may be biennials, are cultivated only till they have perfected their root, and often cut down at top for this purpose, so that most would not know them in their flowering season (7, p. 17. Italics mine).

This image is particularly effective in that it expresses well Thoreau's belief that the development of most men is truncated at the root level of merely absorbing experiences. To become nobler or loftier, they need to transcend mere sensory perception to the more elevated level of abstract conception. The "higher" level of spiritual thought is suggested by the physical height of fruit-bearing plants. Unfortunately, "most men . . . are so preoccupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them" (7, p. 6).

Thoreau demonstrates his own prowess as a seer by drawing a moral lesson from his actual experience raising beans. He concludes a primer of practical suggestions for cultivating the common white bush bean with: "This further experience also I gained: I said to myself, I will not plant beans and corn with so much industry another summer, but such seeds, if the seed is not lost, as sincerity, truth, simplicity, faith, innocence, and the like . . ." (7, p. 181). This latter experience is "further" not only in the sense of "in addition to" but also in the sense of "going beyond" because it is related to the enrichment of mankind.

Thoreau uses a plant's growth from roots to fruit to parallel the growth of a man's mind from merely perceiving
experiences to forming abstract concepts about them. The fruition of man's growth is reached when he discovers the reality of the fundamental doctrine of mysticism, unity or identity in diversity. Defining the ultimate goals of the seer, Thoreau says, "Chastity is the flowering of man; and what are called Genius, Heroism, Holiness, and the like, are but various fruits which succeed it. Man flows at once to God when the channel of purity is open" (7, p. 243). Thoreau's interrelation of the images of flowers and water is organic since he sees these two natural objects as representatives of purity. Purity is the conduit through which man reaches God, Thoreau's ultimate symbol of the unity which lies beneath the diversity of nature.

Thoreau's search for meaning behind natural objects separates him from many other nature writers and makes him a seer instead of a mere cataloger of facts about nature. Thoreau shares with Eastern and Western mystics the desire to go beyond what can be known through the senses and to discover by intuition and faith the truth symbolized in nature. Thoreau's use of concrete details of plant growth to represent man's development as a seer exemplifies his best technique, refining sensory impressions into abstract ideas.

Both Thoreau's God and Emerson's Over-Soul represent the Universal Intelligence which transcendentalists believed inherent in all men. Because transcendentalists believed a divine spark to be in every man, they felt him to be capable
of spontaneously remembering innate truths. To illustrate these views, Emerson employs an image later frequently used by Thoreau, the metamorphosis of an insect:

The soul's advances are not made by gradation, such as can be represented by a straight line, but rather by ascension of state, such as can be represented by metamorphosis—from the egg to the worm, from the worm to the fly. The growths of genius are of a certain total character . . . (3, p. 265).

In Walden Thoreau's expanded versions of this image incorporate stages almost identical to those in plant development:

(1.) The egg represents potential growth.
(2.) The larva is the unreflective gathering stage.
(3.) The pupa, the seemingly most tranquil period, is actually the time of greatest turmoil and change, when materials gathered by the larva are digested and miraculous transformation occurs.
(4.) The butterfly is the liberation of the potential stored in the lowly grub.
(5.) Flying between the earth and the sky, the winged insect symbolically joins the two.

The insect image differs from that of the plant, however, in that its primary stages represent negative rather than positive potential. For example, deriding the frivolity of fashionable dress, Thoreau despairs of being able to end man's preoccupation with such trivialities, for "there would be some one in the company with a maggot in his head, hatched
from an egg deposited there nobody knows when, for not even fire kills these things, and you would have lost your labor" (7, p. 28). Again, Thoreau believes that unlike the voracious caterpillar and the gluttonous maggot, "every man who has ever been earnest to preserve his higher or poetic faculties in the best condition has been particularly inclined to abstain from . . . much food of any kind" (7, p. 237).

Asserting that the immature man and the immature insect are betrayed by their appetites, Thoreau declares: "The abdomen under the wings of the butterfly still represents the larva. This is the tidbit which tempts his insectivorous fate. The gross feeder is a man in the larva state; and there are whole nations in that condition, nations without fancy or imagination, whose vast abdomens betray them" (7, p. 238). Even "patriotism is a maggot in [the] heads" (7, p. 353) of those who love the soil only and neglect "the spirit which may still animate their clay" (7, p. 353). Thoreau's use of the word "maggot" intensifies the distasteful connotations of the larva stage, since such grubs are usually found in filth and decaying matter. Thoreau, then, pictures a gradual but continuous evolution of virtues latent in the seed. The insect, on the other hand, must undergo a complete trans- mutation from "lumpish grub" to "airy and fluttering butterfly" (7, p. 338).

Thoreau's ability to draw inferences about the meaning of life from apparently insignificant natural occurrences
is one of his chief assets as a poet. A comparison of Emerson's description of a transcendental or mystical experience with Thoreau's description of a similar experience demonstrates the differences in style of Thoreau and his mentor. Emerson says:

Standing on the bare ground my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space—all mean egotism vanishes, I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part and parcel of God (2, p. 6).

Thoreau reveals his own realization of personal insignificance and the need to trust in God through a much more commonplace, less imposing—and, therefore, more organic—metaphor:

As I stand over the insect crawling amid the pine needles on the forest floor, and endeavoring to conceal itself from my sight, and ask myself why it will cherish those humble thoughts, and hide its head from me who might, perhaps, be its benefactor, and impart to its race some cheering information, I am reminded of the greater Benefactor and Intelligence that stands over me the human insect (7, p. 365).

Emerson's disembodied eyeball is a grotesque, cold example of synecdoche; Thoreau's insect, on the other hand, is appealing and alive, inviting the reader's empathy. Thoreau is more immediate, closer to the reader's actual experience, says Walter Harding, "because he expresses himself sensuously rather than abstractly . . . . [This quality] is what separates Thoreau most from Emerson and what makes him more readable today. Emerson gives us abstract ideas; Thoreau makes us experience" (5, p. 134).
Thoreau sees the growth, dormancy, and rebirth of plants and the larva, pupa, and butterfly stages of metamorphosis as representative of the stages which mystics deem essential to human redemption: the purgative life, the illuminative life, and the unitive life. In the following passage, for example, Thoreau demonstrates the unity underlying various natural processes and suggests further characteristics of the illuminative stage: "Our moulting season, like that of the fowls, must be a crisis in our lives. The loon retires to solitary ponds to spend it. Thus also the snake casts its slough, and the caterpillar its wormy coat, by an internal industry and expansion . . ." (7, p. 26). This passage is a particularly good example of Thoreau's skill in choosing precise words to express his beliefs. The word "moulting" indicates that new growth will follow when this stage is completed. The critical nature of the turning point is revealed in the word "crisis," even though there is no apparent activity; the climax is instead "solitary" and "internal." Although Thoreau in these lines reveals insights into the illuminative stage, he is actually describing the beginning of the unitive phase, the rebirth of the organism that occurs after the hidden, spontaneous transformation is finished.

Thoreau uses plant and insect images often because they embody the resurrection theme of life, death, and rebirth that pervades the pages of Walden. Both plants and insects
have a purgative period of initial growth or progress, followed by an illuminative period of apparent lifelessness that culminates in renewed and enriched life. The dormancy of plants and the larva stage of insects simulate death, but they are actually periods of preparation for renewed vitality. It is noteworthy that Thoreau emphasizes the shallowness of the purgative stage and the fulfillment of the unitive stage while rarely mentioning the illuminative stage, even though the illuminative period is the time of climax. His reticence testifies to the ineffability of the miraculous and to the internal nature of the change. He does, however, acknowledge the importance of these periods of solitude and stillness when he relates plant growth to his own enrichment, saying, "I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands would have been" (7, p. 124).

More explicitly spiritual is the story about the bug which emerged from a sixty-year old apple-tree table after the egg was hatched by the heat of an urn. Thoreau asks,

Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, whose egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodenness in the dead dry life of society, . . . may unexpectedly come forth from amidst society's most handselled furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer life at last! (7, p. 367).

Interrelating plant and insect images, Thoreau sees a correspondence between the potential "beautiful bug" buried in
the growth rings of a once-living tree and the potential "beautiful winged" seer buried in layers of "the dead dry life of society." His transcendental optimism is revealed in his hope that some warming influence will one day revitalize the spiritual life in man just as the bug was resurrected by the heat of the urn. By the phrase "perfect summer life," Thoreau connects the winged stage of insect life with man's union with God, both of which represent the culmination of renewed vitality begun in the spring.

Thoreau also uses plant rebirth in spring as evidence of immortality:

The grass flames up on the hillsides like a spring fire, . . . as if the earth sent forth an inward heat to greet the returning sun . . . --the symbol of perpetual youth, the grass blade . . . streams from the sod in the summer, . . . lifting its spear of last year's hay with the fresh life below . . . . So our human life but dies down to its root, and still puts forth its green blade to eternity (7, p. 343).

Thoreau's deft combination of five major images--plant, fire, spring, morning, and water--to express his fundamental belief in the renewal of life is characteristic of organic imagery in which, says Feidelson, "one dealt in a web of meaning where the symbol--thought, word, or thing; the knower or the known--was a momentary point round which a whole took shape and which, in turn, received the efficacy of the whole . . . ." (4, p. 146). Thoreau's unifying principle in the above passage is the vitality, the life force, that is so evident to Thoreau in the spring.
Although Thoreau as an individualistic transcendentalist fought against a merger with the Unknown because it required a submergence of self, he becomes so caught up with the idea of spiritual rebirth and its multiple and redundant expressions in nature that he is carried far beyond the area of "controllable insight," as Sherman Paul says, into a state of ecstatic identity (8, p. 526). His failure to remain "controlled" is demonstrated by his euphoria when he explicates his view of the entire world as an extension of the leaf. Interrelating plant and insect images, Thoreau begins:

No wonder that the earth expresses itself outwardly in leaves, it so labors with the idea inwardly. The atoms have already learned this law and are pregnant by it. The overhanging leaf sees here its prototype . . . . The feathers and wings of birds are still drier and thinner leaves. Thus, also, you pass from the lumpish grub in the earth to the airy and fluttering butterfly. The very globe continually transcends and translates itself, and becomes winged in its orbit. Even ice begins with delicate crystal leaves, as if it had flowed into moulds which the fronds of water-plants have impressed on the watery mirror. The whole tree itself is but one leaf, and rivers are still vaster leaves whose pulp is intervening earth, and towns and cities are the ova of insects in their axils (7, p. 338).

An excellent example of organic imagery, this passage expresses in a few words the theme of *Walden*, that every man may awaken to a new apprehension of life and to the need for a continual search for the meaning that lies behind his sensual perceptions. He must not merely accept things as they are presented to his senses, but must rely on his intuitions to help him divine the truth symbolized in nature. The words "transcends" and "translates" in particular lend a
spiritual or mystical quality to the passage since transcend means to become superior to, or literally "to climb over" (9, p. 1546), and translate means not only to change from one language or medium to another, as the primal leaf is changed into various natural phenomena, but also "to convey to heaven, originally without death" (9, p. 1547). The ascension inherent in these words links the spiritual elevation of the world to the natural phenomenon of insect flight.

Because Thoreau the seer is more acutely aware of the abundant life so evident in spring, his sense of buoyancy and renewal is exaggerated beyond that of ordinary men. He feels that the whole world down to the smallest atom is pregnant with life and labors to bring forth or make apparent the vitality in all natural objects. His picture of rivers as veins in giant leaves of land dotted with towns laid in the angles formed by converging rivers unites apparently diverse forms of nature in one organic image. Thoreau's usual association of water and life is reinforced by the rivers' actually becoming a part of a living plant in this image.

Seeing leaf-like patterns in the thawing sand, Thoreau says, "Thus it seemed that this one hillside illustrated the principle of all the operations of Nature. The Maker of the earth but patterned a leaf" (7, p. 340). In this passage, Thoreau uses the leaf image to express the principle of identity that underlies natural images and mysticism.
Using the leaf as an archetype, Thoreau finds similarities in apparently disparate things. The lobed organs of animals are moist, thick leaves; the feathers and wings of birds and butterflies are drier, thinner leaves; the human hand, a spreading palm leaf.

At one point Thoreau falls into formlessness, the organic trap of spontaneous growth, when he appears to include thoughts as they come to mind:

Internally, whether in the globe or animal body, it is a moist thick lobe, a word especially applicable to the liver and lungs and the leaves of fat (lobe, labor, lapsus, to flow or slip downward, a lapsing; lobos, globus, lobe, globe; also lap, flap, and many other words); externally, a dry thin leaf, even as the f and v are a pressed and dried b. The radicals of lobe are lb, the soft mass of the b (single-lobed, or B, double-lobed), with the liquid I behind it pressing it forward. In globe, glb, the guttural g adds to the meaning and capacity of the throat (7, p. 338).

He includes word associations, sound similarities, etymology, and a description of the visual appearance of key words in a few overburdened sentences. The result is an excessive use of parenthetical asides and italics in an effort to impose order on these meandering sentences.

Combining the leaf image with those of life-giving water and warmth, he asks, "What is man but a mass of thawing clay?" (7, p. 339). He sees man's fingers, toes, nose, chin, and ear lobes as congealed drops just as "each rounded lobe of the vegetable leaf, too, is a thick and now loitering drop . . ." (7, p. 340). Human bloodvessels correspond to the veins of a leaf.
In a rapturous climax Thoreau admits,

This phenomenon [correspondence] is more exhilarating to me than the luxuriance and fertility of vineyards . . . . There is nothing inorganic. These foliaceous heaps lie along the bank like the slag of a furnace, showing that Nature is "in full blast" within. The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, . . . but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, . . . --not a fossil earth, but a living earth; compared with whose great central life all animal and vegetable life is merely parasitic (7, p. 341. Italics mine).

Thoreau reveals here the key to what he believes is the unifying principle that underlies the diverse forms of nature when he says, "There is nothing inorganic." The leaf that is the archetype for the other forms in nature is itself a symbol of the abstract concept of life. The earth is "living poetry" because all natural forms are metaphors for spiritual truths. Thoreau's reference to the animal and vegetable life as parasites feeding off the central life of the earth recalls his image, discussed in Chapter III, of the animal part of man sapping life from the spiritual part.

The genuine exuberance and optimism evidenced in this passage sets the proper mood for the discussion of rebirth images in Chapter V.
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In the inscription of *Walden* Thoreau says, "I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up" (2). Because Thoreau's avowed purpose in writing *Walden* is to wake his fellowmen, this chapter is devoted to determining exactly what the author means by that verb and why he associates it with the images of morning and spring. Because Thoreau often illuminates an image by describing its opposite, this chapter also examines references to sleep, night, and winter.

In the chapter titled "What I Lived For," Thoreau eulogizes morning and being awake:

> I have been as sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the Greeks . . . . Morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me. Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep . . . . The millions are awake enough for physical labor; but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred millions to a poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive (2, p. 100. Italics mine).

Thoreau makes it clear in this passage that he uses the word "awake" to mean more than merely being physically alert, more even than being mentally perceptive. On the highest and most exclusive level, being awake means being aware of the correspondence between natural objects and spiritual facts.
The traditional association of sleep with death is suggested in the line "To be awake is to be alive." One is not truly alive until he discerns the meaning that lies behind the mundane. Thoreau pays homage to, even deifies, the morning because "Morning is when I am awake . . . ." He beautifully reiterates his belief that spiritual awareness can only come from within when he concludes, "there was a dawn in me" (Italics mine). Since dawn is associated with the coming of light, Thoreau refers to the enlightenment of his soul. The morning is qualitatively different from the remainder of the day, for "then there is least somnolence in us; and for an hour, at least, some part of us awakes which slumbers all the rest of the day and night" (2, p. 99).

Restating his belief in the internal nature of spiritual awakening, Thoreau asserts,

Little is to be expected of that day, if it can be called a day, to which we are not awakened by our Genius, but by the mechanical nudgings of some servitor, are not awakened by our own newly acquired force and aspirations from within, accompanied by the undulations of celestial music, instead of factory bells . . . ." (2, p. 99).

External alarms wake only the body, not the soul. Thoreau repeats his frequent association of the purity and vitality represented by water with the spiritual purity represented by heaven in the image of waves of ethereal music. The word "aspirations" continues the tone of the major images in this chapter by stressing hopes and desires that may or may not be fulfilled in the future. Thoreau leads his readers
just to the threshold of new experience by the images of awakening, morning, and spring; continuing the quest is the reader's responsibility.

Thoreau explains his perpetual optimism by his faith in the future:

Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself . . . . That man who does not believe that each day contains an earlier, more sacred, and auroral hour than he has yet profaned, has despised of life, and is pursuing a descending and darkening way . . . . The soul of man, or its organs rather, are reinvigorated each day, and his Genius tries again what noble life it can make (2, p. 99. Italics mine).

Although in this passage Thoreau couples darkness with descent and contrasts it to the enlightened pursuit of a loftier, more sublime life, he does not always use darkness to represent something bad. Thoreau does, in fact, recognize the darkness of night as an aid to sleep, which reinvigorates man so that he can awaken "to a higher life than we fell asleep from; and thus the darkness bear its fruit, and prove itself to be good, no less than the light" (2, p. 99). This passage illustrates Thoreau's organic interrelation of sleeping-waking images with the image of the development of a plant, since a man's sleep corresponds to the dormancy of a plant, and both rest periods are prerequisites of renewed and more elevated growth.

By his use of the word "make" in the final sentence of the first passage quoted above, Thoreau implies a conscious effort on the part of man's higher faculties to shape, to
uplift the quality of the individual's life. Restating this belief more explicitly, he says,

"I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour (2, p. 100).

In these sentences Thoreau stresses his optimistic belief that by willful exertion man can create a morning environment. Thoreau uses action verbs to show that man embodies the force and the capability to elevate, to paint, to carve, to affect the basic nature of his life. If he is equal to the task, presumably assigned by a higher authority, he can make the day "a perpetual morning. It matters not what the clocks say or the attitudes and labors of men" (2, p. 100).

Using various morning images, Thoreau restates the belief that man's opportunities for fulfilling his divine potential are unlimited by time or place. At twilight "a more dismal and fitting day dawns, and a different race of creatures awakes to express the meaning of Nature there" (2, p. 139). Thoreau likens the beginning of night to dawn because man can become enlightened even then if he learns to understand the "meaning of Nature." It is obvious that Thoreau uses "morning" to denote any time man becomes aware of the correspondence between
nature and spirit. Indeed, "the morning wind blows forever, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it. Olympus is but the outside of the world everywhere" (2, p. 94). Morning is whenever man discerns the meaning that lies behind metaphorical nature; an Olympus is wherever a seer exists. Stating the theme once again, Thoreau combines awakening with resurrection: "Any prospect of awakening or coming to life of a dead man makes indifferent all times and places. The place where that may occur is always the same, and indescribably pleasant to all our senses" (2, p. 148).

Thoreau regrets that "by closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by shows, men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit everywhere, which still is built on purely illusory foundations" (2, p. 106). By the words "consenting" and "deceived" Thoreau implies that man is willfully agreeing to be deluded by someone or something that willfully misrepresents facts. One authority that Thoreau dislikes because it rigidly structures men's lives is social custom or habit; another is organized religion. Describing the Canadian woodchopper, Thoreau observes that

the intellectual and what is called spiritual man in him were slumbering as in an infant. He had been instructed in that innocent and ineffectual way in which Catholic priests teach the aborigines, by which the pupil is never educated to the degree of consciousness, but only to the degree of trust and reverence . . . (2, p. 163).
Thoreau finds it ironic that the servants of God act as a soporific on the divinity in man.

Thoreau's achievement of an ironic balance in his comprehensive use of morning images is significant. For example, Thoreau's pun on the "sleepers" that underlie the railroad gains significance from his earlier definition of morning as the "awakening hour" (2, p. 99). In another passage interrelating morning and railroad images, Thoreau watches the "morning cars," lamenting, "If the enterprise were as innocent as it is early!" (2, p. 130). Again, by his statement that morning is the time when men's minds are most "elastic and vigorous" (2, p. 99), Thoreau implies a criticism of the rigidity imposed on men by the train, which rivals the sun in regularity.

The ironic balance which Thoreau achieves satisfies his desire for synthesis, which John Broderick believes is significant in Thoreau's literary theory and practice (1, p. 84). Similar to that unity of sensibility in seventeenth-century writers whom Thoreau admired, this synthesis is consistent with Thoreau's belief that a central unity underlies the diversity of natural phenomena. Thoreau uses punning as a primary device for balancing opposites, as his successful criticism of the railroad shows, noting its morning enterprise or pointing out its dependence on "sleepers" (1, p. 84).
Although all men are infinitely capable, most men remain unaware of their abilities:

Why is it that men give so poor an account of their day if they have not been slumbering? They are not such poor calculators. If they had not been overcome with drowsiness, they would have performed something . . . . I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face? (2, p. 100).

So rare is the man who has fulfilled his divine capabilities that Thoreau has never seen one. Thoreau suggests, however, that a completely awake man is due the deference paid kings and gods, that of lowering one's eyes to avoid viewing their full majesty. He implies that the sight of a wholly enlightened man might blind ordinary men as Saul was struck blind by the intense light of Jesus on the road to Damascus. A student of the great written works of Eastern and Western religions as well as Greek and Roman mythology, Thoreau often uses allusions to these works to add depth and meaning to otherwise simple statements.

The closest approximation of a divine man is the poet who writes in the morning: "Poetry and art, and the fairest and most memorable of the actions of men, date from such an hour. All poets and heroes, like Memnon, are the children of Aurora, and emit their music at sunrise" (2, p. 99). Thoreau chooses in Memnon an extremely appropriate image to unite the divine man with morning. In Greek mythology, he is the son of the mortal Tithonus and the goddess Eos (Dawn). Eos is equivalent to the Roman goddess Aurora. After her son was
slain by Achilles, Eos wept for him each morning until Zeus, moved by her tears, bestowed immortality upon him. Memnon, therefore, evokes the theme of resurrection that Thoreau symbolizes by awakening, morning, and spring. Memnon is also associated with the gigantic statue of an Egyptian king at Thebes which gave forth musical sounds at sunrise. This sound was supposed to be the voice of Memnon responding to the greeting of his mother Eos.

A devotee of the classics, especially Homer, Thoreau associates reading these collections of distilled truth with morning: "The student may read Homer and Aeschylus in the Greek without danger of dissipation or luxuriousness, for it implies that he in some measure emulate their heroes, and consecrate morning hours to their pages" (2, p. 111). Because one learns about the meaning of life through reading great books, this activity is neither frivolous nor superfluous; it is part of man's most meaningful work. The word "consecrate" reveals Thoreau's belief that this kind of reading is, like his morning bath, a religious exercise.

True reading is a morning endeavor, for it is "a noble intellectual exercise . . . yet this only is reading, in a high sense, not that which lulls us as a luxury and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tip-toe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to" (2, p. 116). Thoreau views reading as an active process in which the reader shares with the writer
the responsibility for communication. The image of a reader standing on tip-toe, straining to "see" the author's meaning is fresh and memorable. Tip-toeing is similar to reading in another sense, since it requires alertness and attention if it is to be sustained.

Believing truth to be eternal, Thoreau asserts that the classics are as immediate as this morning and have universal significance: "There are probably words addressed to our condition exactly, which, if we could really hear and understand, would be more salutary than the morning or the spring to our lives, and possibly put a new aspect on the face of things for us" (2, p. 120). Thoreau combines the images of morning and spring to reinforce the positive effects derived from these natural panaceas. He emphasizes the wholesome aspects of authentic reading by asserting that it is more healthful even than two of his most positive natural images--morning and spring.

Because Thoreau regards the written word as "the work of art nearest to life itself" (2, p. 114), it is natural for him to use two of man's essential life functions, sleeping and waking, to describe his literary aim, that of awakening man to the meaning of life. Objecting to the demand that literature appeal to common sense, which is really the dullest perception, Thoreau says, "The commonest sense is the sense of men asleep, which they express by snoring" (2, p. 357). As an author Thoreau desires instead "to speak somewhere without bounds;
like a man in a waking moment, to men in their waking moments . . ." (2, p. 357).

Even though the common idea of rebirth is inherent in morning and spring images, Thoreau explicitly states the correspondence between the day and the year: "the day is an epitome of the year. The night is the winter, the morning and evening are the spring and fall, and the noon is the summer" (2, p. 332). This conclusion culminates Thoreau's discussion of a particular natural phenomenon, the fact that the shallow water in the pond is warmed every morning and cooled every evening regardless of the season. Thoreau frequently uses the technique of universalizing, or making an image out of, what would otherwise be merely a description of a natural occurrence.

Thoreau also makes nature happenings significant by relating them to man's life. Seeing a striped snake run into the water and remain there for more than a quarter of an hour, Thoreau speculates that it was because he had not yet fairly come out of the torpid state. It appeared to me that for a like reason men remain in their present low and primitive condition; but if they should feel the influence of the spring of springs arousing them, they would of necessity rise to a higher and more ethereal life (2, p. 46).

As the snake is revitalized by the warmth of spring so man is aroused or awakened by the spiritual warmth of the "spring of springs." Thoreau again utilizes the reinforcement effect of joining spring and awakening images.
Thoreau classifies his first days at Walden as "pleasant spring days, in which the winter of man's discontent was thawing as well as the earth, and the life that had lain torpid began to stretch itself" (2, p. 45). Here Thoreau combines spring and awakening images to describe the rebirth of man's spirit.

In another passage in which Thoreau elevates an apparently unimportant natural occurrence by implying its relationship to man, he makes a more subtle connection between morning and spring. Hearing a mosquito buzz at earliest dawn, Thoreau declares,

I was as much affected . . . as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame . . . . There was something cosmical about it; a standing advertisement . . . of the everlasting vigor and fertility of the world. The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour (2, p. 99).

Thoreau again associates morning and awakening images with beginning and sustaining life.

In another instance, Thoreau elevates a simple factual statement to the level of social criticism, saying, "We know not where we are. Besides, we are sound asleep nearly half our time. Yet we esteem ourselves wise, and have an established order on the surface" (2, p. 365). The full meaning of this statement depends upon the metaphorical meaning of "asleep." He goes on to reveal that awakening to the correspondence between natural phenomena and spiritual facts will
help man gain contentment that comes with understanding the meaning of life:

After a still winter night I woke with the impression that some question had been put to me, which I had been endeavoring in vain to answer in my sleep . . . . But there was dawning Nature . . . looking in at my broad windows with serene and satisfied face, and no question on her lips. I awoke to an answered question, to Nature and daylight (2, p. 312).

Even in his sleep man is nagged by an intuitive feeling that there must be something more to life than that which is perceived by his senses. Only when he makes a leap of faith to infer the meaning behind natural phenomena does man gain the placid serenity exemplified by nature.

Having established in the extended section in "Where I Lived" that morning images represent the time of spiritual awakening in man, Thoreau uses this figurative meaning to give added significance to later passages. Early in Walden, Thoreau poses the question, "Morning work! By the blushes of Aurora and the music of Memnon, what should be man's morning work in this world?" (2, p. 40). Much later in "The Pond in Winter" he answers, "Then to my morning work. First I take an axe and pail and go in search of water, if that be not a dream" (2, p. 312). A simple factual statement on the surface, this sentence gains much from the metaphorical context in which the morning image is reinforced by the water image, another of Thoreau's symbols of spiritual vitality. By another piece of morning work Thoreau "gave notice to the
various wild inhabitants of Walden vale, by a smoky streamer from my chimney, that I was awake" (2, p. 279). By merely lighting a fire in the morning, Thoreau advertises that he is spiritually alive.

In spring the same revival is apparent on a more comprehensive scale. Thoreau sees the leaf-like patterns in the thawing sand, the renewed growth of grass and pines, and the thawing of Walden Pond as proof that renewed vitality is possible in man also. It is not necessary that man "loiter in winter while it is already spring. In a pleasant spring morning all men's sins are forgiven" (2, p. 346). Thoreau's description of the thawing pond is enhanced by the figurative context. He concludes, "Such is the contrast between winter and spring. Walden was dead and is alive again" (2, p. 344). Since Walden has come to represent the depth and purity of man's spirit, Thoreau reveals in this statement his faith that man's spiritual vitality can be reinvigorated. Night, sleep, and winter have become symbols of life as it is; morning, awakening, and spring represent life as it can be.

In summary, Thoreau has used morning, awakening, and spring images to disclose some aspects of his literary beliefs, to prescribe a study of nature as a means to understanding spiritual facts, to criticize the shallowness of contemporary life, to universalize and make significant what would otherwise be simple factual statements, and to reveal his Transcendental optimism about man's infinite capabilities and
opportunities for enlightenment. Although he couples his hopeful philosophy with a cautionary note that "Only that day dawns to which we are awake" (2, p. 367), Thoreau's last words to the reader of Walden are the encouraging: "There is one more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star" (2, p. 367). Through his enthusiastic celebration of morning, awakening, and spring, Thoreau fulfills the pledge he made in the inscription not "to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up."
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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to examine groups of recurring metaphors that illustrate Thoreau's skillful use of organic imagery in *Walden*. Because organic images flow from the poet's thought, the frequency with which various images occur gives some indication of Thoreau's movement from an initially pessimistic view of contemporary life to an optimistic view of life as it might be. In the first two chapters, "Economy" and "Where I Lived," slave and disease images abound as Thoreau tries to awaken his fellow New Englanders to the oppression produced by the materialistic values of their society. These pejorative images taper off as positive images of purification and rebirth increase in the latter half of the book. Therefore, Thoreau's copious use of the extremely positive morning image is seemingly out of place in "Where I Lived" until one notes its purpose as a contrast to emphasize the darkness that enshrouds the lives of most men. The order of images discussed in this paper, then, is roughly the order in which they appear in *Walden*, with positive images culminating in "Spring," the penultimate chapter of the book. One function of Thoreau's recurring metaphors is to supply unity by restating key
concepts and by providing signposts that aid the reader in understanding Thoreau's explanation of the route toward a more enlightened life.

Although Thoreau uses images that stimulate all the senses--and not primarily those that appeal only to the eye, as Emerson does--his real desire is to transcend the senses, to go beyond what can be known empirically. Believing all natural objects to be metaphors for spiritual truths, Thoreau encourages men to have faith enough in their own divine natures to dare to interpret the world around them, to find out what purpose lies behind the diversity in nature.

Thoreau's own attempts to speculate about the meanings that underlie his particular experiences and observations result in his chief asset as a poet, his ability to tie down abstract thoughts in specific, concrete images. Conversely, he makes the specific instance significant by implying its relationship to spiritual fact. Thoreau's function as a link between the earthly and the spiritual makes him a seer, an interpreter of the correspondence between heaven and earth, rather than a mere nature writer.

Thoreau's ability to make topical events--slavery, the coming of the railroad, farming--universal and eternal is proof of his ability as a poet to extract the truth from particulars. The strength of feeling about slavery just prior to the Civil War and about the railroad just after it was brought to Concord by the Industrial Revolution in the
early 1800's made these images especially important when *Walden* was first conceived. Farming at that time was the means by which most men earned a living. Thoreau, however, universalized these images by expanding slavery to include man's bondage to material things, the railroad to represent any innovation that entraps man by falsely promising freedom and farming to represent self-cultivation.

Once the reader recognizes spiritual vitality as the unifying principle that Thoreau believes underlies all things in nature, it is easy to understand his personification of *Walden Pond* and of fire, symbols of the spiritual life in man. Thoreau also breathe life into the inanimate train, represented in several conceits as an iron horse. The sense of urgency that one feels in Thoreau's images stems from his belief that the loss of any particular life, the spiritual life of even one man, diminishes the central life that lies behind all of nature.

In addition to a penchant for conceits, Thoreau inherited a demand for synthesis, a bringing together of parts to form a whole, from the seventeenth-century writers whom he admired. His desire to balance opposites is evident in his interplaying of images of night and morning, sleeping and waking, and winter and spring. His chief means for achieving this balance is punning, particularly satisfying in his successful criticism of the railroad when he notes that the "morning cars" run on "sleepers." Although the phrases mentioned in the last
sentence occur in different passages, Thoreau intends that the association be made. The cumulative value of recurring metaphors is that each succeeding passage retains some of the meaning of previous passages and reinforces or perhaps enlarges on it.

Scanning a page of Thoreau's prose, one is struck by the surprising frequency with which he mixes metaphors not only within a paragraph, but usually within a single sentence. This apparent literary fault stems from Thoreau's use of metaphors taken directly from nature. The result is not a fragmentation of the reader's attention but a harmonious interplay of up to four, five, or more major images that work together, each supporting the other, to depict life as it actually is. This web-like combination of images is particularly evident in the chapter called "Spring" since this is the time when nature begins to actively display the life force that Thoreau believes to be the unifying principle that lies behind the diversity of natural objects.

Thoreau's genuine enthusiasm in reporting the correspondence he sees between rebirth in nature and the rebirth of man's spirit leads him into an occasional lapse into formlessness, the primary danger of allowing one's thoughts to emerge spontaneously according to the organic principle of poetry. Thoreau is, however, a meticulous technician who guards against formlessness by revising and rewriting extensively to make his sentences precise and exact. Even particular words are chosen
with an eye not only to their familiar definitions but to their connotations and etymologies as well. Indeed, Thoreau often emphasizes the difference between the old and new meanings of words by italicizing them and by separating them into syllables to draw the reader's attention down to this elemental level of communication.

A literate scholar well-read in the great written works of Eastern and Western religions and philosophies as well as in Greek and Roman mythology, Thoreau uses frequent allusions to these works to give added depth and meaning to his natural observations. However, the emphasis in discussions of Thoreau's literary style remains on his use of concrete, earthy natural images to explain his beliefs about man's place in the universe and the meaning of life, for it is in this area that Thoreau excels. It is through these images that Thoreau leaves the reader of Walden, not burdened with regrets for the past, but filled with a sense of joy at discovering the new and exciting life that can be had in the future.
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