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A STUDY OF AESTHETIC DISTANCE IN THOREAU'S WALDEN

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A STUDY OF AESTHETIC DISTANCE IN THOREAU'S WALDEN

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A STUDY OF AESTHETIC DISTANCE IN THOREAU'S WALDEN

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Numerous commentaries have been written on Walden concerned either with the major themes and ideas or with the technical aspects of the book, most of which are a variety of appreciative criticism which prove to be valuable analyses for serious readers. Generally, the criticism has been channeled into three approaches to the work: comments on the meaning by offering something in the way of an explanation of the imagery or symbol interpretation; comments on the meaning by finding the significance of the work as it is related to Thoreau himself, thus dealing with its special revelation of the psychological forces, biographical incidents, and particular motivations that determine the character of the book; and comments on the meaning by giving interpretations in the light of the work's relation to the social and intellectual milieu which lies in its background, the main currents and characteristics of which it registers. To see how valuable and significant in understanding and appreciating Walden the insights offered

by these approaches are, one need only read such commentaries, to mention only a few, as F. O. Matthiessen's American Renaissance, R. W. B. Lewis' The American Adam, J. L. Shanley's The Making of Walden, Sherman Paul's The Shores of America, and C. R. Anderson's The Magic Circle of Walden.

F. O. Matthiessen thought of Walden, at least in one of its meanings, as being social criticism. "His contribution to our social thought," he wrote, "lies in his thoroughgoing criticism of the narrow materialism of his day. It is important to remember that when he objected to the division of labor, he was writing from an agrarian and craft economy where the forces of industrialism were still an encroaching minority."¹ Such a view of Walden is supported by the first half of the book and valuable to the understanding of its meaning, but the second must remain a puzzle in the light of it. In The American Adam, R. W. B. Lewis examines Walden from the point of view of image patterns and symbolic reference, discovering it to deal with a kind of "organic renewal," a ritual burning of the past so that the new self could emerge. "Probably nobody of his generation had a richer sense of the potentiality for a fresh, free, and uncluttered existence," he wrote, "certainly no one projected the need for the ritual burning of the past in more varied and captivating metaphors. This is what Walden is about; it is the most searching con-

temporary account of the desire for a new kind of life."²

J. L. Shanley traces the development of Walden through the successive versions the manuscript underwent before publication, pointing out as he speaks of the author and the manuscript that, "it was not only the story of the experience which settled his life for him but also a statement of his beliefs which had flourished under the test of time."³

In The Shores of America, Paul approaches Walden biographically, concluding that it is concerned with self-discovery. Thoreau "went to the pond to recover the reality he had lost," he wrote, "to find it again by reducing the problem of perception to its simplest terms--man and nature. Simplification, in this sense, was his ascetic, the severe discipline by which he hoped to concentrate his forces and purify the channels of perception; and because of this he often substituted 'poverty' for 'simplicity,' thereby hallowing the process with religious associations of renunciation and higher dedication."⁴ Paul was also interested in Walden from the point of view of the currents of the intellectual milieu it registered. Of Thoreau's description of the spring thaw in the sandy banks of Deep Cut, a passage he thought to be particularly indicative of the philosophical temper that informs the book, he wrote, "Indeed, his description of the thaw, one of the most brilliant and best sustained analogies in transcendental writing, was a myth of creation as expression, an elaborate metaphor of the organic process of

art and nature and self-reform, of the creative and shaping power of Idea, and the renewal that proceeds from the inside out. And it was more than that: a metaphor of birth, and a metaphor of purification."⁵ As transcendental doctrine, Paul thought Walden passed beyond autobiography and dealt with the possibilities for a new, creative life. C. R. Anderson's The Magic Circle of Walden offers a conclusion about the meaning of Walden much like that of Sherman Paul; that is, it sees Walden as being concerned with self-discovery. But Anderson approaches his study of Walden in a different way from Paul. Paul bases most of his conclusions upon investigation of the psychological forces and particular motivations that determine the character of the book and produce its meaning. Anderson looks into the language, the structure of images, and the meaning of the symbols in order to arrive at his conclusions. He proposes that Walden be read as a poem, and concludes that, "Viewed . . . as a poem, Walden reveals itself as an experience recreated in words for the purpose of routing the world altogether and discovering the Self. Its real theme is the search for perfection, for a life of holiness, though it is certainly not rendered in Christian terms."⁶

Walden doubtless is biographical, social, and symbolic, and any approach based upon one of these assumptions is of value. Biographically, Walden spanned the years of Thoreau's spiritual struggle between 1845 and 1854 (though some mate-

rial was taken from the journals as early as 1837), chronicling his search for an organic life in nature and his strong resistance to the drudgery necessary to succeed in the material world, a resistance which was linked to his belief that man should pursue his higher nature and discover his inner self through meditation in a time of leisure. Intellectually considered, it is a description of an experiment in Transcendentalism which explores the nature of reality, based on the search for reality through some kind of spiritual intuition. From this point of view, it is a social and philosophical commentary which opposes a kind of ideal life informed by a doctrine of simplicity to the life most people of the nineteenth century were living in a materialistically geared social order which encouraged apathy, complacency, passivity, and moral cowardice.

All these approaches to Walden are significant to the serious reader and form a body of very valuable commentary on the work. But almost to the exclusion of other matters they have been centered around the possibilities of interpreting the meaning of the work focusing mainly upon the work of art itself as it is related to the artist and the times in which it was written, with the consequence that little has been said about such things as the reader's relationship to the work or the technical task of the artist's manipulation of the reader's responses, directing him to his point of view. The value

of an essay which takes as its subject aesthetic distance in Walden may be perceived when one realizes that the aesthetic dimension of a work of art depends upon the observer's orientation to it. According to most aestheticians who have probed the problems associated with aesthetic distance, an orientation which eliminates as much of the disparity as possible between a work of art and the observer is desirable for maximum aesthetic enjoyment. But the degree of distance which a work of art must maintain in order to be cast in the proper perspective for aesthetic orientation has been a point of controversy from the beginning of the history of aesthetics that has left the subject in shambles. Every artist has doubtless had his own opinion of the matter, and any very thorough study of aesthetic distance in a work of art will involve not only a study of the work itself in terms of the artist's control of perceiver response by creating controlled occasions which provide possibilities for reader response, but also a study of the technical devices by which the artist's rhetoric is shaped.

Walden is a superb example of what an artist can do with his medium when he is aware of the implications of point of view, genre, structure, and style, and can make all of these aspects of technique work toward not only defining, but also exploring and evaluating his subject matter. The central object of this essay will be to interpret technique

in Walden as a method of offering an approach to meaning.

Footnotes

¹American Renaissance (New York, 1941), pp. 77-8.

²Chicago, 1955, p. 20.

³The Making of Walden (Chicago, 1957). p. 7.

⁴Urbana, 1958, pp. 304-5.

⁵Paul, p. 346.

⁶The Magic Circle of Walden (New York, 1968), p. 17.

THE NARRATOR AND PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER II

"Aesthetic distance" is a term used to describe the general relationship between a reader and a text in literature, but the relationship it describes, though general, is concerned with three categories of distance. There may be distance between a reader and the narrator, distance between the reader and the events of a work, or distance between the narrator and the events of a work. So far, criticism has not formulated adequate terms with which to describe these categories of distance. For lack of existing terminology, in this essay the distance between a reader and the narrator will be referred to as "sympathetic distance," the distance between the reader and the events of the work will be called "evaluative distance," and the distance between the narrator and the events of the work will be described as "proportional distance." So far as sympathetic distance is concerned, the more concord of belief and opinions there is between the reader and the narrator, the less the distance between them will be. Evaluative distance is involved with the way in which a reader responds to the events of a work of art psychologically, that is,

emotionally and intellectually. The more strongly a reader feels the events of a work or art to be a personal emotional and intellectual affair, the more likely his reaction to the work will be a meaningful experience, and, if the events of the work do not offend but satisfy his sensibilities, evaluative distance will be minimal. But if the nature of the events is not compatible with the emotional and intellectual norms of the reader, evaluative distance will be maximal. Proportional distance is concerned with the narrator's orientation in regard to the point of view from which he sees the events of the work of art. He may stand outside the events, viewing them from a detached, critical position. Or he may stand inside the events, participating in them. In the former case, proportional distance is maximal in varying degrees; in the latter case proportional distance is minimal in varying degrees. Both evaluative distance and proportional distance are concerned with point of view, and sympathetic distance with manipulation of point of view.

Though these three categories of distance are distinct in the sense that they describe three different sets of relationships in matters of aesthetic distance, they are also interrelated. If the narrator can induce the reader to his point of view, thus minimizing sympathetic distance, then reduce or increase proportional distance while maintaining the reader's sympathy with his point of view,

evaluative distance will be reduced or increased accordingly. But this is putting it much too simply. The very nature of literature often prevents control of distance from functioning so smoothly as an artist might wish it. When such abstract concepts as love, patriotism, religion, etc., are dealt with, they are either so general as to have little immediate meaning to a reader, or, if they are brought into a perspective where they are conceived personally, they are so personal as to become a part of a reader's own mode of being and subject to bias. Thus, distance nearly always becomes involved with a reader's personal emotional and intellectual sensibilities, and point of view is only one aspect of narrative technique with which an artist must deal. Genre, structure, and style are also important aspects of his rhetoric.

But to a greater or lesser degree, according to a reader's susceptibility to a work of art in general, an artist may control the sensibilities of a reader with such artistic factors as point of view of the narrator, structure, genre, and style. Any very thorough study of aesthetic distance in a work of art as complicated as Walden must at last concern itself with each of these artistic factors. It is through them that the skilful artist creates the kind of reader, metaphorically speaking, it takes to appreciate his work and the kind of work a reader can appreciate.

When a reader becomes conscious of the meaning of

aesthetic distance and the various artistic factors by which it is achieved in Walden, he will discover the important fact that Thoreau does not try to convince his reader by mere expository means to accept his position on the matters with which the work is concerned, but to induce him aesthetically to accept his premises. This is an important discovery so far as reading and appreciating Walden is concerned, for it is to discover that Walden is a work of art the principal object of which is to offer a system of values that is aesthetically appreciable and not merely by means of expository persuasion. What determines whether a piece of writing is art or mere exposition, if expository writing can indeed be excluded from the realm of art, is finally a matter of whether the materials from which it is made are presented according to some aesthetic schema capable of inducing an aesthetic response or presented without regard to various artistic factors. Walden is not merely exposition, giving information about a subject, explaining things; it is art, appealing to the imagination, giving a sense of something happening concretely before the reader's eyes. It gives a sense of life in motion, and portrays life in transformation from one moment to another.

Since the role of the narrator, in regard to his determining point of view in Walden, is possibly the most important artistic factor involved in a study of aesthetic distance, an interesting place to begin such a study is with

a rather informative paragraph which occurs in the middle of chapter five in which the narrator discusses the relationship between perceiver and object, and, in doing so, says something about proportional distance by suggesting possible orientations a perceiver can assume in the face of an object of contemplation. In the paragraph the narrator says,

With thinking we may be beside ourselves in a sane sense. By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and 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. I may be affected by a theatrical exhibition; on the other hand, I may not be affected by an actual event which appears to concern me much more. I only know myself as a human entity; the scene, so to speak, of thoughts and affections; and am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote from myself as from another. However intense my experience, I am conscious of the presence and criticism of a part of me, which, as it were, is not a part of me, but spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it; and that is no more I than it is you. When the play, it may be the tragedy, of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, so far as he was concerned. This doubleness may easily make us poor neighbors and friends sometimes.¹

In the sentence, "I may be either driftwood in the stream, or Indra in the sky looking down on it," the narrator suggests the two possible orientations a perceiver may assume in terms of proportional distance if the perceiver is the narrator and evaluative distance if the perceiver is the reader. He may assume the detached position of a spectator in which case his view of things would tend toward critical analysis, or he may be involved in the events of the work,

participating, emotionally perhaps, in the action of the events. Indra was a Hindu god who had the power to interchange perceiver and perceived, and it may be possible that Thoreau hints at claiming a similar power as an artist. The "doubleness" of which he speaks in this paragraph, though probably an autobiographical pun referring to what Thoreau must have believed the people of Concord thought of him living at Walden Pond, may be understood as an indirect reference to the two possible orientations from which Walden is to be viewed, an inside view of which the driftwood is indicative and an outside view of which Indra is a symbol. Further, the paragraph is possibly a subtle comment on the creation of Walden which is itself "a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only." If Walden is a work of the imagination and thus fictional, Thoreau's comments on himself as a spectator of himself suggests that the "I" of the work may be a modified version of the real Thoreau which includes some fictional as well as autobiographical elements.

What the careful reader who is aware of point of view and the role it plays in regard to aesthetic distance in Walden will notice is that at the beginning of the book, the reader is aligned, because of his association through familiarity, with the events of the work (the subject is the social order of which the reader is a member) and evaluative distance is minimal. But the narrator stands

outside the events of the work, distanced from both the reader and the events and proportional distance is rather great. Since evaluative distance is minimal and proportional distance is maximal, sympathetic distance is great. In the first chapter, the narrator launches his major attack upon the social order with which the reader is aligned, condemning its materialistic values and unthinking work habits. Proportional distance informs the point of view as the narrator stands aloof in the orientation of a spectator, full of wit, sophisticated, clever, dealing in satire, castigating the hypocritical, materialistic-minded citizens of Concord. From his detached position, he looks down like Indra from the sky, observing of the masses who live desperately, "It is very evident what mean and sneaking lives many of you live, for my sight has been whetted by experience . . . lying, flattering, voting, contracting yourselves into a nutshell of civility, or dilating into an atmosphere of thin and vaporous generosity, that you may persuade your neighbor to let you make his shoes, or his hat, or his coat, or his carriage, or import his groceries for him . . ." (II, 7).

This attack upon materialism launched from his outside view prepares the ground for the narrator's own stripping down of materialistic values through defining what the actual necessities of life are. He goes on to explain how the pursuit of luxuries gets in the way of man's finding his

own higher nature. Of the matter he says, "Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind. With respect to luxuries and comforts, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meagre life than the poor" (II, 15). Throughout the first chapter of Walden, the narrator assumes a rather hostile social order. This order will have opposed to it the ideal order of the awakened man told of in the last chapter of the work. As it is evident in the opening paragraph of the first chapter, the narrator has made the journey from the diseased social order of which he speaks to the ideal order first, and in the work itself the narrator will lead the reader on the journey the narrator has already made. But before the narrator can lead the reader along familiar pathways the narrator has already trod, he must persuade the reader to accept his point of view. Technically, this means that sympathetic distance must be reduced to nearly zero if the author's enterprise is to succeed.

As sympathy develops between the narrator and the reader, a gradual process that is carried out through chapters one, two, and three in which renunciation and withdrawal are worked out, the reader is drawn outside the social order to the narrator's outside, critical view. This view, as it is opposed to the reader's previous view inside the social order is emblemized by the image of

Walden Pond, in particular, as a retreat outside the social order, and of the narrator at that retreat in a kind of spiritual withdrawal. In the first three chapters of Walden, the reader who is the postulated common man is carefully drawn out of his position within society by the narrator's manipulation of sympathetic distance, a part of which includes the narrator's own attractive personality, but also a part of which includes the appeal of the retreat focused upon in chapter two, with its promises of new chances for a new life. Once outside the social order, the reader is led by means of various rhetorical devices to observe his own institutions, beliefs, etc., at a "distance," critically, as he becomes aware. Sympathy with the narrator places the reader in nearly the same position of the narrator who in the beginning chapters and periodically throughout the book is a social critic. The reader, once he has aligned his own view with the outside view of the narrator, comes to see from his detached position what the narrator has already seen, and he comes to reject what the narrator has already rejected.

The process of renunciation and withdrawal that marked Thoreau's building his hut on Emerson's woodlot near Walden Pond and going to live there on the fourth of July, 1845, in the actual experiment, is carefully worked out in the first three chapters of Walden in such a way that the reader may,

through a kind of sympathy, fuse with the events and experience the same process. In chapter one the social world from which Thoreau withdrew is described with such terms as to make the reader who is a part of it wish to renounce his place in it and turn toward something better. What Thoreau describes is a kind of wasteland where the inhabitants appear "to be doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways" and laboring under a mistake, plowing the better part of themselves "into the soil for compost." The reader, realizing the truth of what Thoreau says, is not difficult to convince that it is a "mean and sneaking" life he lives. The psychology of the first chapter is to describe the social order in such a way as to point out its worst aspects and make the reader dissatisfied with his place in it. This prepares the ground for the second chapter in which is unfolded a plan for a better life through a kind of simplified existence. The reader's desire for something better than he has is whetted and gratified by Thoreau's plan for a better life told of in chapter two.

Thoreau begins unfolding his plan for a better life through simplified existence by saying, ". . . a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone." He proceeds to tell in the most inviting terms how, in his retreat at Walden Pond, living the simplified life, "Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence,

with Nature herself." Each day he awakens to a higher life than he fell asleep from. Living deliberately in the woods, fronting only the essential facts of life and sucking out all the marrow appeals to the reader's yearning for primal experience. When Thoreau, near the end of the second chapter, calls directly upon the reader to "Simplify, simplify," the attractiveness of Thoreau's plan for life is so strong, when his plan is contrasted to the life described in the social order in chapter one, that the reader is ready to do whatever is necessary to have the better way.

The transition of the reader from involvement in the social order to a position outside the order is worked out in chapters one and two as he metaphorically follows the narrator who gives up his place in the social order and goes to live in the woods. Chapter three adds the finishing touches to the transition. The reader realizes all along that he has been participating in a kind of artistic illusion made possible by his own "willing suspension of disbelief." But his illusion is given some concrete validity as the narrator convinces him that, "A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself" (II, 114). Accepting the narrator's hypothesis (for by this time the reader has drawn near the narrator because of his desire to escape the world of chapter one and the appeal of the retreat in

chapter two), the reader is willing to believe that, as the narrator puts it in chapter three, "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" (II, 119-20). He speaks of Walden, of course.

Though the major attack on the social order is launched in the first chapter, the second continues to lament how "inhabitants of New England live this mean life," and the third points out such things as how more money is spent on "almost any article of bodily aliment or ailment than on . . . mental ailment." Beginning with the fourth chapter of Walden the subject, generally speaking, shifts from concrete comments upon the social order to philosophical speculation about an ideal order the narrator has formulated in his mind. Withdrawal and renunciation have been by this time nearly completed and a period of meditation begins and continues through the middle chapters of the work. Chapter four begins with the narrator telling how sometimes on a summer morning he sat in the doorway of his hut "rapt in a revery . . . in undisturbed solitude and stillness." Of such times, he goes on to say, "I grew in those seasons like corn in the night." This all suggests that an awareness of nature meditated upon is a pathway to the spiritual world which is linked with nature. At this point, the place

of retreat at Walden Pond becomes a sanctuary outside space and time, much like that of which the fable of the artist of Kouroo tells in the last chapter. Commenting upon the matter of solitude and stillness the narrator says,

My days were not the days of the week, bearing the stamp of any heathen deity, nor were they minced into hours and fretted by the ticking of a clock; for I lived like the Puri Indians, of whom it is said that 'for yesterday, today and tomorrow they have only one word, and they express the variety of meaning by pointing backward for yesterday, forward for to-morrow, and overhead for the passing day.' This was sheer idleness to my fellow-townsmen, no doubt; but if the birds and flowers had tried me by their standard, I should not have been found wanting (II, 124).

But the retreat is subject at all times to intrusions from the world outside. "The whistle of the locomotive penetrates my woods summer and winter, sounding like the scream of a hawk . . ." (II, 128), the narrator says. The train is a metaphor of the world the narrator has rejected, and the only way to deal with it is to get off its track. Of this the reader has already been convinced, but this reminder has the effect of encouraging his critical angle of vision once he has assumed an outside, critical view of the social order of which he has at the beginning of the work a part.

Chapter five continues the idea of communion with nature. "I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself" (II, 143), the narrator says, emphasizing

his feeling of kinship with elemental things. Nature is portrayed as a beneficent mother in whose bosom the dualities of the human psyche may be resolved. Often when the narrator felt it was unpleasant to be alone, he explains, ". . . I was at the same time conscious of a slight insanity in my mood, and seemed to foresee my recovery. In the midst of a gentle rain while these thoughts prevailed, I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me, as made the fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since" (II, 146). There is a strong sense of affirmation in this passage that will culminate in chapter eight where the narrator's becoming lost in the woods is a metaphor of losing the self to the social world in withdrawal to the woods in order to find the spiritual self. This metaphorical action recalls the reader's attention to the process of withdrawal and renunciation worked out in the first three chapters of the work and emphasizes the meaning of that earlier action. The passage just quoted, speaking of the "gentle rain," probably suggests that nature is a link between deity and man, if the reader can assume that Thoreau knew and hints at the medieval concept which held that Christ was imaged in the spring rain which brought with it opportunity

for new life.

A kind of philosophical speculation continues in the following five chapters. In chapter six the society of visitors is contrasted to the solitude of nature in the previous, and one visitor, a Canadian woodchopper, is presented as a kind of archetypal man in nature. He was "a true Homeric or Paphlagonian man" who knew that "Homer was a great writer, though what his writing was about he did not know." The model for the woodchopper was Alek Therien, and in his simplicity and naturalness he suggests, as he is presented in Walden, a portrait of the primitive and natural qualities the narrator appreciated in mankind. The effect on the reader of the seven page portrait of the woodchopper is to work toward a better understanding of the narrator, thus reducing sympathetic distance. The woodchopper possessed most of the qualities that are generally appreciated in persons; he was humble, he was "a well of good humor," he was natural and simple, he was honest, and he was original. Except for his lack of education and undeveloped spiritual side, a reader may feel these qualities all add up to a man much like the narrator.

In chapter seven the narrator's work in the beanfield when farming becomes metamorphized through mythology into a sacred art, is a ritual suggesting a religious exercise, which, in turn, makes the narrator's relationship with his

beanfield a kind of communion with nature as a method of spiritual discovery. Chapter eight emphasizes the necessity of giving up the social world of chapter one in order to have the spiritual world of the final chapter. "Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world," the narrator says, "do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations" (II, 190). In chapter nine the narrator describes the scenery of Walden and other ponds in the vicinity of Concord. Typical of natural phenomena becoming associated with aspects of inner being under the influence of the forces of the artist's shaping mind, the seasons of Walden Pond become a metaphor of the seasons of the narrator's own spiritual mode of being, and the pond becomes, as is commonly known among readers of Walden, a symbol of the narrator's inner self. Chapter ten places the theory of the simplified life of meditation and communion developed in chapters two through nine (the life of which the narrator is the chief representative) in contrast to the complex, anxious life of the social world told of in chapter one (the life of which the poor Irish bog-trotter, John Field, is the victim and representative). The effect of the contrast is to produce a satire in which John Field's miserable life is a travesty of the narrator's beautiful life. Though chapter nine is generally considered the middle chapter, this chapter which is, in effect, a summary as well as a contrast of the two

ways of life spoken of to this point sums up the first half of Walden (or at least assists chapter nine in doing so) and clears the way for the second half which begins with spiritual man, in complete contrast to the first chapter beginning with physical man. C. R. Anderson notes, "In terms of the quest for perfection, the entire first half of Walden is devoted to renunciation of the world Having completed the period of novitiate, he proceeds in 'Higher Laws' to take his vows renouncing the flesh--only symbolically because as a humanist he is still mindful of the classical ideal; a sound mind in a sound body."²

As the events shift from the social order to philosophical speculation during all this commentary on solitude, meditation, ritual, and communion in chapters four through nine, following close upon the renunciation and withdrawal of chapters one through three, the narrator steadily moves to a central position inside the events. But the common reader, to whom the mystical business of meditation, ritual, communion, etc., is unusual, unable to very readily identify with the unfamiliar philosophical speculation, is left outside the event and both evaluative and sympathetic distance are eminent, as there is a recognizable vista lying between the reader and both the narrator and the events of the work. The narrator's task once again, if he is to persuade the reader to accept his system of values, is to reduce sympathetic distance so that the reader will see things

from the narrator's point of view. Through various methods of rhetorical persuasion the narrator is able once again, especially in the last three chapters of the work, to draw the reader into alignment with his own view by establishing a sympathetic bond between himself and the reader. Once the reader assumes the narrator's point of view, sympathetic and evaluative distance are reduced and the reader is inside the events himself.

But the process of drawing the reader back into the events of the work once the nature of the events has shifted from the social order with which the reader was aligned at the beginning of Walden to the new, simplified order of the awakened man most clearly defined in the last chapter is really no easy task. It was, perhaps, easy enough for the narrator to assume a position outside the social order of chapter one and draw the reader to his point of view, for about all he had to do was to articulate the ways the social order had failed human beings, and the reader, recognizing the truth of the matter, does not hesitate much in renouncing it and withdrawing as the narrator points out the way by retelling his own experience of renunciation and withdrawal. But the new, unfamiliar order, the foundation of which is laid in "Higher Laws," is not so easy with its severe austerity program for the common man to accept. It is only after a long process of redefining and educating that the reader can be convinced of its validity and come

to accept the narrator's point of view which, of course, brings with it the author's system of values.

Both definition and education begin in chapter eleven. There is a kind of definition by contrast as the reader comes to realize that just as chapter one dealt with laws for economic man, chapter eleven deals with laws for spiritual man. Through definition the educational program is given a footing. It is clear from the beginning of the chapter that the simplified life of the aware man is not altogether transcendental. The narrator, exemplifying the simplified life in his own being, begins by saying that he finds himself drawn toward a higher, spiritual life on the one hand, while on the other he is drawn toward a rank, primitive life. He says, in the opening paragraph of "Higher Laws," "I found in myself, and still find, an instinct toward a higher, or, as it is named, spiritual life, as do most men, and another toward a primitive rank and savage one, and I reverence them both" (IJ, 232). Though the narrator says he reveres both instincts, he makes it clear in what follows that the lower, sensual part of life must be controlled so that the higher, spiritual may flourish. In a kind of admonition he says, "We are conscious of an animal in us, which awakens in proportion as our higher nature slumbers" (II, 242). When the animal is referred to in the next sentence with the word "reptile," the narrator's attitude toward it is unmistakable. "Higher Laws" closes its

educational lesson with a vignette in which a man named John Farmer sits at his door in autumn "to recreate his intellectual man." A flutist plays in the distance, and though John Farmer does not listen, he hears. "Certain faculties which slumbered in him" are awakened. The music of the flute gently does away with the phenomena of the world, the toil, the village, the state. A voice speaks to the meditating man saying, "why do you stay here and live this mean and moiling life, when a glorious existence is possible for you? Those same stars twinkle over fields other than these" (II, 246). John Farmer's problem was how to get away from his actual condition and "migrate thither." All that he could think of to do was to practice some new austerity, "to let his mind descend into his body and redeem it." Here is a little parable, much like the parable of the artist of Kouroo told of in the final chapter, of Thoreau and his effort in Walden. The reader is John Farmer. The flutist is Thoreau. The flute music is Walden. The question the voice asks is Thoreau's question to the reader. The promise given is the promise of Walden. The message of the parable is the message of Walden: though the human body can never escape the limitations of finitude, the mind can redeem it in its finitude.

Once this parable is understood by the reader, the way is opened for the reader to begin taking his place beside the narrator inside the events of the work. It is a very

convincing lesson and sympathetic distance once again begins to become minimal. This, of course, is the psychology of the episode, from the technical point of view.

The parable of the flutist also provides a transition into the following chapter which works further toward minimizing sympathetic distance as it draws the reader toward accepting the narrator's point of view. Evaluative distance is also affected by being minimized since to accept the narrator's point of view and sympathize with his position within the events he accepts is to accept the events of the work. Chapter twelve begins with a dialogue between a hermit and a poet. The theme of the dialogue and, perhaps, the whole book is how one might accommodate both the higher instincts of the spirit and the lower instincts of the animal. The poet, representing the sensuous, animal instincts, has customarily been identified as Channing; the hermit, representing the higher, spiritual instincts has been identified as Thoreau. But, as C. R. Anderson points out, ". . . both roles fit Thoreau, who was poet as well as hermit."³ Once the reader sees that the awakened man of the simplified life possesses a sensual nature as well as a spiritual, he can more easily identify with him and his order, for the reader shares a common humanity with him. The chapter has the effect of acting as a descent from the spiritual abstractions of "Higher Laws" (in which Thoreau's doctrine of chastity becomes, perhaps, a little too austere

for the average man) back down to the things of earth again. The quest for a life that will offer complete fulfillment, as it takes place in the natural world among brute neighbors, when contrasted to the quest as it took place among human beings in chapters six ('Visitors'), eight ('The Village'), and ten ('Baker Farm'), suggests that it must begin in nature not in society. This helps to explain the renunciation and withdrawal of the first chapters. Chapter twelve ends with the fable of the loon which suggests man's kinship with nature and the idea of nature as a source of meaning for human life.

Chapters thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen round out the chapters of solitude and contemplation begun in chapter four. In chapter thirteen the narrator begins preparation for winter. The narrator stores food, builds his chimney, and plasters his cabin. These activities carry with them symbolic overtones which suggest the narrator's moving deeply into his own inner life in contemplation. Chapter fourteen is filled with solitude and memory, recalling former inhabitants and a few winter visitors. The narrator waits for the visitor who never comes. Chapter fifteen is another chapter of solitude and contemplation disturbed only by the sounds of winter animals and occasional hunters.

These chapters of solitude and meditation are preparation for the three concluding chapters of Walden which are marked by discovery. Chapter sixteen begins with the narrator

saying, "After a still winter night I awoke with the impression that some question had been put to me, which I had been endeavoring in vain to answer in my sleep, as what--how--when--where?" (II, 312). The question is answered by nature and dawn. The narrator then relates his surveying of the ponds in the Concord vicinity, discovering not only their depth, width, length, etc., but also that their measurements react upon the minds of men. Of this discovery he comments, speaking of Walden Pond, "I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless" (II, 316). What all the surveying amounts to, the reader will find when he looks back over the events of the chapter, is a metaphor of the narrator's search for faith and the revelations he found in nature (the question to which he awakened at the beginning of the chapter is answered by nature). This chapter is marked by a sense of discovery. What is to be discovered is the way to the simplified life that John Field had not "arithmetic enough to carry through" and John Farmer meditated upon. The discovery in this chapter brings about awareness for the narrator of a life in nature that prepares the ground for rebirth in the forthcoming chapter. Under the image of the Walden water in the closing paragraph is gathered the affirmation of the sensuous instincts; the sacred water of the Ganges gathers in its image the affirmation of the spiritual

instincts. When the narrator says, "The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges," he makes a metaphor of the two ways of life flowing together in a kind of harmonious relationship. This is the principal discovery of the chapter.

In chapter seventeen, the coming of spring is described. The ice on the ponds breaks up, and the frost comes out of the ground. Watching the coming of spring the narrator says, ". . . I am affected as if in a peculiar sense I stood in the laboratory of the Artist who made the world and me . . ." (II, 337-8). It is commonly known among the readers of Walden that in his description of the spring thaw the narrator makes a metaphor of his own inner purification and rebirth. The episode of the chapter is an acting out of the old myth of creation to his mind. When he says, "Walden was dead and is alive again," what he means is that his own being, dead in the social order of the first chapter, is alive again, this time in the world of the awakened man living the simplified life. All this discovery and rebirth in the last three chapters is attractive and convincing to the reader who, because of this attraction and conviction, slowly comes to take the point of view of the narrator, thus moving to a position inside the events where the narrator is and accepting them as nearly as one can accept events in art.

The final chapter of Walden directly addressed to the

reader is an effort trying to get him to accept the new life of the awakened man. The narrator opens the chapter telling the reader to, ". . . explore your own higher latitudes . . . be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you . . ." (II, 353). He justifies his own exploration of which Walden is presented as a record by saying,

I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them (II, 356).

This affirmation is followed by the fable of the artist of Kouroo which is a parable of a man (perhaps the narrator of Walden himself, for the artist, like the narrator, goes to the woods for material) who transcends time in his art and creates a new way of life. "He had made a new system in making a staff," the narrator says, "a world with full and fair proportions; in which the old cities and dynasties had passed away, fairer and more glorious ones had taken their places" (II, 360). When the reader parallels this fable to Thoreau's own work, it is clear that the new life of the awakened man of which the chapter speaks

is "a new system . . . a world with full and fair proportions."

Walden closes with the fable of the beautiful bug in the appletree table which is commonly held to be a metaphor of organic renewal and transcendental hope. What the experience at Walden Pond has meant to the narrator is summed up in this fable. It is what the artist has symbolized in Walden Pond, made deep and pure for a symbol of the inner self, in the cycle of the seasons signifying the cycle of life, in the thaw, itself a symbol of awakening, and in the coming spring, a symbol of rebirth.

It can be seen that the last three chapters of Walden form a unity marked by discovery, following the long process of meditation and solitude of the middle chapters which serves as preparation for what happens in the last three. Psychologically, the effect of the concluding chapters is to draw the reader, with the attractiveness of their discovery and promise, into the events. The subject matter functions to support point of view as the narrator draws the reader into alignment with his own point of view.

Generally, in this second process of Walden, the reader is drawn by sympathy out of his position outside the events of the work and made to share and participate in philosophical speculation focused on an ideal order transcending the earthly social order rejected in the

beginning process. This new order is envisioned by the narrator, made believable through his rhetoric, and symbolized in nature. In the two processes the reader is, through the manipulation of aesthetic distance, taken from being an unaware participant in a diseased social order where worldly pursuit is the chief end of life to being an aware critical observer, critically observing worldly pursuit, to being an observer of philosophical speculation on a better way of life, to, finally, being an interested participant in speculation upon spiritual realities. In this way, the reader is made to accept the narrator's system of values. But the process of leading the reader along highly selected pathways toward acceptance is not merely a matter of expository persuasion; it is an artistic process, the central feature of which is control and manipulation of aesthetic distance.

If Walden is "a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only" as most commentators believe it to be, while, of course, it remains, in a sense, autobiography, real, the question is raised regarding the extent to which the narrator of the work is the real Thoreau and to what extent the informing "I" is a fictionalization. Though the question might be answered by supposing that it really does not matter to what extent the narrator is the real Thoreau or a fictionalized creation since the narrator holds the same opinions and is an exponent of

the same values as Thoreau himself, the question is legitimate, for Walden is one of those works in which complete identification with the narrator is a precondition for its success; and it is necessary to know something about the reliability of the narrator's point of view in order to make judgments upon identification. But unless a reader feels it easier to identify with a real flesh and blood person than a fictional creation, the answer to the question would not be of much importance, for if a reader has any susceptibility to the illusion of art, the ideal self that Thoreau presents in Walden is as readily identified with as the real Thoreau would be. If a reader is susceptible to the illusion of art as it is formulated in Walden, sympathetic distance is not affected by the fictionalization of the narrator.

The idealized version of himself Thoreau creates for Walden is a highly refined, intelligent, sensitive and perceptive being much like the real Thoreau must have been. But it is a contemplated, highly selected, modified version of himself with which the reader becomes acquainted in Walden that, in truth, is no doubt more easy to identify with than the real Thoreau would have been. When the narrator identifies himself near the beginning of the work, modified, and no doubt idealized, as a kind of symbolic keeper of nature, he becomes endeared to the reader. In a paragraph in which he speaks of his own past in order to

inform the reader about himself, the narrator says,

I have looked after the wild stock of the town, which give a faithful herdsman a good deal of trouble by leaping fences; and I have had an eye to the unfrequented nooks and corners of the farm; though I did not always know whether Jonas or Solomon worked in a particular field to-day; that was none of my business. I have watered the red huckleberry, the sand cherry and the nettle-tree, the red pine and the black ash, the white grape and the yellow violet, which might have withered else in dry seasons (II, 20).

Such a person as the narrator in this passage presents himself to be is easy to identify with, and such portraiture as this goes a long way toward the reduction of sympathetic distance in the opening pages of the work.

Since all the events of Walden pass through the consciousness of the narrator alone, the only view the reader ever gets of the events and of the narrator is the view he obtains from self-portraiture and from the narrator's relation to what he presents. But the view is a very impressive one. Thoreau, very conscious of himself as narrator, as the opening paragraphs of the work suggest, dramatizes himself with great fullness and gives the impression that he is quite capable of providing an adequate and reliable point of view for understanding the events of which he will speak. Because of the narrator's apparent adequacy as a point of view character for his own work, the reader is generally willing to align himself with him and be an observer of action where the narrator observes or participate in the action where the narrator participates.

Sympathetic distance, because of the narrator's apparent trustworthiness, is adequately controlled by the narrator.

From the very beginning of Walden, it is evident that Thoreau was acutely conscious of himself as narrator. On the first page of the work he explains his use of first person narration rather apologetically saying, "I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well. Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience" (II, 4). Thoreau's remarks about the use of first person narration are clearly exaggerated, for he knew the value of the "I" in developing an atmosphere of authenticity and directness. But he was intent upon introducing the mildly ironic tone near the beginning that would be sustained throughout the work. When he speaks of the "narrowness" of his experience, the reader recognizes the irony latent, for Thoreau apparently believed the experience about which he was writing in Walden to be the broadest experience of his whole life. Thoreau no doubt also knew that as soon as the reader encountered the "I" in a work of art he would be conscious of an experiencing mind that would be at work shaping and unifying the events.

Thoreau's use of first person narration is a time-honored and effective unifying device which Thoreau must have known would hold materials together that might otherwise be a little incoherent. Portions of chapter three in

which Thoreau discusses reading and chapter fifteen in which he discusses winter animals he observed at Walden Pond fit into the narrative of Walden at places only because of Thoreau's presence as narrator.

First person narration also does more than any other single thing in Walden to assure aesthetic participation and acceptance. The controlled view of things first person narration provides, as it manifests itself in Walden where the knowledge of the narrator is unlimited so far as the world of the work of art is concerned, gives an inside track for the reader in regard to the author's mind and purpose. The open consciousness into which the reader is invited has the effect of gaining the reader's confidence for the narrator. When, in the second chapter of the work, the narrator states his purpose for going to live in the woods, the reader is interested. The narrator explains,

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, 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 (II, 100-1).

When the reader encounters such forceful and deliberate

personal statements as this, and they are to be found throughout the work, he feels that it is thoughtful of the narrator to take him willingly and unabashedly into his confidence. The effect of this thoughtfulness is to make the reader conceive the narrator as a helpful and elemental man who is basically right in going to live in the woods or doing whatever it is he has explained as having done.

A reader has only to think of what Thoreau's story would have been from a point of view besides his own, the point of view of the villagers, for instance, to see the artistic effects of the controlled inside view first person narration makes possible. Thoreau himself acknowledges in the second paragraph of Walden for reasons well known to him that some would have called his mode of life "impertinent." In the spectator paragraph of chapter five quoted above, the references to being "beside ourselves" and "doubleness" are probably carefully integrated puns upon Thoreau's own life as others saw it. He explains in the last sentence of that paragraph, "This doubleness may easily make us poor neighbors and friends sometimes." The villagers, with no access to Thoreau's inner mind as the reader of Walden has, probably thought of Thoreau as a crank who withdrew to live alone at Walden Pond and as a loafer who went there to get out of working at some vocation appropriate for a Harvard graduate. But the view of himself Thoreau creates in Walden, which is a kind of idealized inside view, allows the reader to become

more intimately acquainted with him than perhaps the average villager ever could have, and to know Thoreau intimately is to love him and to trust him. The confidential view the reader gets in Walden acquaints him with a man who has been inspector of snow-storms and rain-storms and who has watered the sand cherry and the yellow violet that would have withered otherwise. It also acquaints him with a man who is deeply and sincerely interested in human life.

The narrator is rich and provocative in Walden not only because he is informed and because he is interested in the best of possible worlds for the reader, but also because he is sincere and reliable. When Thoreau, speaking more as author than idealized narrator in the opening paragraphs of Walden says, "Moreover, I on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men's lives . . ." (II, 4), he suggests a whole theory of art that he continues to comment upon in chapter three in which he discusses reading which supports the claim to reliability. "The writer," the narrator says, "speaks to the intellect and the heart of mankind, to all in any age who can understand him." Literature, he continues, is the "art nearest to life itself." It may not only be read, but "actually breathed from all human lips;--not be represented on canvas or in marble only, but be carved out of the breath of life itself" (II, 114).

When Thoreau said he required of every writer "a simple and sincere account of his own life," he suggested a theory that led rather inevitably to writing autobiography. Art for him demanded not a sublime performance according to the prevailing fashion or to preconceived rules, but a sublime human life. "The true poem is not that which the public read," he wrote in the book he worked on while living at Walden Pond. "There is always a poem not printed on paper, coincident with the production of this, stereotyped in the poet's life. It is what he has become through his work. Not how is the idea expressed in stone, or on canvas or paper, is the question, but how far it has obtained form and expression in the life of the artist" (I, 365). If the artist's life is his subject, art will reflect life and be valuable. "He is the true artist whose life is his material," Thoreau concluded; "every stroke of the chisel must enter his own flesh and bone and not grate dully on marble" (VII, 149). Thoreau worked toward what G. F. Whicher called a "technique of sincerity," adding, "what Thoreau aimed at from first to last in all his writing was the expression of ultimate truth."⁴

Thoreau's theory of art is relevant to a study of the role of the narrator in Walden, for the narrator of Walden is the artist who time and again said in his journal that writing was his business and who had written a number of essays and one whole book before his appearance in Walden. If a

reader knows that Thoreau in his attitude toward art was very much concerned with salvation for mankind and that he rejected all theories of art that led away from life in art, clinging only to those that were instrumental, then the reader will realize that Thoreau, presenting himself a little modified and idealized as narrator in Walden, is infinitely reliable.

The place where Thoreau's artistic productions started was actual experience occurring within the range of his own practical being. Gradually, as he pondered his experiences, they condensed themselves in his own mind into situations that were partly objective and partly imaginative. In the process of imagination, the actual man who had the experiences boating on the Concord and Merrimack, living by Walden Pond, walking on Cape Cod, and journeying in the Maine Woods, became subordinated and the artist who told of them took over, with the result of a kind imaginative autobiography being produced with definite aesthetical possibilities.

For Thoreau, the art of living was the most important of the fine arts, and he thought it vital that a person recognize and accept the interdependence of aesthetic and moral values. In his thinking one should never be divorced from the other. This hypothesizing led to an instrumental theory of art which considered art as a social role, and he would have agreed with Archie J. Bahm when Bahm wrote, "If enjoyment, i.e. intuition of intrinsic

value, is the end of life, then the practical or the moral is properly defined in terms of its service to the aesthetic; to isolate one from the other, except momentarily, is, in effect, to destroy them."⁵ According to Thoreau's theory, art is intimately involved with instrumental values. Ethics, as he saw it, was concerned with what is good and what should be done to achieve the good; the good ethics seeks is an intrinsic human value which is to be appreciated and to be experienced aesthetically and to be dealt with in art. Hence, Thoreau's belief that the greatest art is that which leads to the greatest good.

Art that was thoroughly engaged with life was the kind that interested him. For Thoreau, art was a serious business. In chapter three of Walden, at the beginning of a polemic against novels, of which "The result is dulness of sight, a stagnation of the vital circulations, and a general deliquium and sloughing off of all the intellectual faculties," Thoreau wrote, "A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself" (II, 114). In order to be good, Thoreau suggests, art had to be instrumental in the development of human life. In a passage already quoted in this essay, he closed the attack on novels by saying, "There are probably words addressed to our condition exactly, which, if we could really hear and under-

stand, 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. How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book" (II, 119-20).

Sincerity, elemental truthfulness, and forcefulness were the qualities Thoreau most admired in writing. His declamation against the weak, artificial novels of his time is much like Plato's censuring of drama. Of the readers of the novels, the novelists, and the heroes, he wrote,

They read the nine thousandth tale about Zebulon and Sephronia, and how they loved as none had ever loved before, and neither did the course of their true love run smooth,--at any rate, how it did run and stumble, and get up again and go on! how some poor unfortunate got up on to a steeple, who had better never have gone up as far as the belfry; and then, having needlessly got him up there, the happy novelist rings the bell for all the world to come together and hear, O dear! how he did get down again! For my part, I think that they had better metamorphose all such aspiring heroes of universal noveldom into man weather-cocks, as they used to put heroes among constellations, and let them swing round there till they are rusty, and not come down at all to bother honest men with their pranks (II, 116-7).

This is a cutting little satire against art that did not, in Thoreau's opinion, fulfill some of the needs for sincerity and truth that life creates but, perhaps, cannot supply. Not that novels were fiction, but that they were generally insincere and untruthful to life is what Thoreau had against them. The fact that the book Thoreau is writing when he comments on novels is partly fictional indicates this. The love he had for Chaucer's tales, as he expresses

it in the last digression in A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, also indicates that he was not merely opposed to fiction. Art that rose from actual living, art that was most integrated with life was, he felt, the highest art.

With its emphasis upon sincerity and elemental truthfulness, Thoreau's theory for art supports the narrator's claim to reliability in Walden. It is essential that the reader be convinced of the narrator's reliability in order that the narrator's point of view will be accepted and control of sympathetic distance be exercised by the author in Walden where the kind of values that must interest the reader is intellectual and cognitive. The narrator in Walden must make the reader have strong intellectual curiosity about "the facts," about the true interpretation, origins, and motives of life itself. If the narrator is successful in controlling sympathetic distance, the quest for truth about how a person should live is of interest. Since there is no plot in the sense that plot is found in the novel and drama, it is necessary that the reader rely on a desire for intellectual completion out of which will rise some kind of fulfillment in his encounter with Walden. The more strongly a reader feels the affairs of the book to be his own, the greater his feeling for it will be. But only if control of sympathetic distance is in the hands of the narrator can the author guide the

reader to his system of values.

In the first paragraph of Walden, Thoreau creates an atmosphere of credibility by beginning with autobiographical facts which go a long way in suggesting to the reader that the narrator is reliable. "When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them," he begins, speaking in his own person, "I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only. I lived there two years and two months. At present I am a sojourner in civilized life again" (II, 3). Feeling from the beginning that the narrator is reliable and that the view of things he will offer can be trusted means a great deal to the reader.

The chief aberrations the narrator makes from what is to be considered fact are found in such incidents as in chapter six where the narrator speaks of visitors who came to his hut among which were included a Canadian woodchopper and, a half-witted pauper. It is believed by C. R. Anderson in The Magic Circle of Walden⁶ that these visitors are fictional types through whom the narrator could make satiric comments upon society. There are also frequent excursions away from the facts in such trivial matters as the location of events in time. For example, the battle of the ants told of in chapter twelve, described as having taken

place in Thoreau's woodlot by his hut at Walden Pond in the summer of 1845, actually did not take place as a journal entry shows until in the summer of 1852, long after Thoreau had left Walden Pond. Also, there are probably a few unintentional deviations from the truth in some of Thoreau's ironic comments which the reader may not readily understand, thus taking the narrator to say one thing when he means quite another. But this is the reader's fault. No one could read very deeply into Walden without discovering the mildly ironic tone Thoreau establishes at the beginning when he, speaking of writing about himself, says, "Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience." But it is entirely possible to suppose, as many readers have, that the statistics Thoreau gives on the cost of living the first year at Walden Pond are the facts instead of the witty satire they are on the high cost of living about which every generation eternally complains. "Yes, I did eat \$8.74, all told . . ." he says in irony.

But even when the actual facts are somewhat different from what is said, as in the instances spoken of above, the poetic truth of the vision the book offers is not altered. Nor are the incidents confusing for the reader. It really does not matter that some of the biographical events are transformed and elaborated upon and some things fictional. Richard Rutland explained the matter well when, in the introduction to a collection of essays on Walden he

edited, he said,

As he labored over his notes and the successive versions of Walden, the book steadily became less limited to the specific time and place of his adventure in the woods. The concrete details of his experience, lifted from the journal pages and carefully set into the flow of his prose, lost the close tie they had had with an experiment in living conducted several years before. Thoreau the naturalist and Thoreau the transcendental scout reporting from the bush all but disappeared before an artist exercising the most precise tonal and structural control. As a result, we cannot take the simplest word in Walden for granted. The "I" we meet on the first page is Henry Thoreau the woodsman, the student of society and of his own soul, but it is also Henry Thoreau the artist, manipulating and coloring the experience of the woodsman in ways the earlier Henry could hardly have anticipated.

After all, in the face of Walden considered as a work of art, it is useless to argue about how well the work follows the actual biographical event upon which it is based.

Though the argument becomes somewhat tedious in its development, what might be considered as being more detrimental to the sympathetic relationship between the narrator and the reader than the little departures from fact is the frequent direct address to the reader throughout the work. Though it was a rather standard convention of the age, addressing the reader as reader at various intervals in the narrative of the work has the effect of isolating the position of the reader and making him aware of himself as a reader. Though no reader ever supposes he is anything else in his relationship with the text of

a work, if he is not frequently reminded of his position, through a kind of "willing suspension of disbelief" he forms a remarkable illusion of companionship with the narrator of a work where the narrator is so impressive as the "I" of Walden is. But he becomes acutely aware of himself as reader whenever he is directly addressed, especially when he is addressed with the word "reader." There are several such instances of direct address in Walden. Thoreau opens the second paragraph of the first chapter by saying, "I should not obtrude my affairs so much on the notice of my readers if very particular inquiries had not been made by my townsmen concerning my mode of life . . ." (II, 3). This indirect address of the reader at the beginning of the work, coming before much sympathetic feeling could possibly be established between the reader and the narrator is not so noticeable so far as much alteration of sympathetic distance is concerned. But, later in the same chapter, after a great deal of sympathy has been established between the narrator and the reader, when the narrator, speaking of the superfluous luxuries of food people generally think necessary, says, "The reader will perceive that I am treating the subject rather from an economic than a dietetic point of view . . ." (II, 68) the reader is abruptly made aware of his position and the sympathetic union between the reader and the narrator is somewhat altered by becoming more distant. Such instances of direct address of the reader

could be multiplied as in chapter seven where the narrator, lamenting that he has not lived up to his ideals, having previously decided to plant seeds of virtue, innocence, truth, sincerity, faith, and the like, says, "Alas! I said this to myself; but now another summer is gone, and another, and another, and I am obliged to say to you, Reader, that the seeds which I planted, if indeed they were seeds of those virtues, were wormeaten or had lost their vitality, and so did not come up" (II, 181).

Since it is apparent what addressing the reader directly does in regard to sympathetic distance, the question to be asked is for what purpose does Thoreau address the reader? The logical answer, if it were possible to find evidence to substantiate it, would be to say that Thoreau wanted to separate the narrator and the reader with enough distance so that the reader would be forced to formulate his own point of view for whatever is to follow the direct address. One might even turn to the third paragraph of the sixth chapter of Walden where Thoreau speaks of the size of his hut and the visitors who came to see him and find a metaphor of Thoreau's feeling it a necessity to push the reader away from time to time when something important was about to be said. Of this matter, Thoreau wrote, in the paragraph mentioned above,

One inconvenience I sometimes experience in so small a house, the difficulty of getting to a sufficient distance from my guest when we began

to utter the big thoughts in big words. You want room for your thoughts to get into sailing trim and run a course or two before they make their port. The bullet of your thought must have overcome its lateral and ricochet motion and fallen into its last and steady course before it reaches the ear of the hearer, else it may plow out again through the side of his head (II, 156).

If the book Thoreau is in the process of writing can be thought of as the "small house" of which he speaks in this brief paragraph (at the beginning of the book Thoreau said he would talk about his own "narrow" experience), then what he says here about physical distance can be taken as a comment upon sympathetic distance and a reader may easily draw the conclusion that Thoreau pushes the reader back from the narrator occasionally for the sake of uttering "big thoughts." When one examines what follows the direct addresses of the reader where the reader is referred to as "reader," this hypothesis is verified in all but the first instance. There are four places in the text of Walden where the narrator addresses the reader with the word "reader." Following the first address (p. 3) is an explanation of the use of first person narration in the work. This is not exactly an earth-shaking "big thought" in the light of what Thoreau wants to do in his book. Following the second address (p. 68) is a passage explaining the matter of making bread and eating it at Walden Pond. Some case could be made for this incident to be called a "big thought" in the sense that Thoreau's rather ritualistic making and eating unleavened bread in

the sanctity of his retreat suggests a kind of private version of the celebration of the holy eucharist. Considering that Walden is deeply involved throughout with a kind of religious exercise, this passage is integral to its meaning. If Thoreau thought that distance was necessary between the speaker and the spoken to in order for the "big thoughts" to get into "sailing trim" before they made their "port," his address to the reader immediately before the passage which suggests holy communion can be explained as an intentional distancing device.

The pattern of uttering big thoughts is sufficiently worked out after the two following instances where the reader is made acutely aware of himself as reader to support the idea that Thoreau used the device of addressing the reader by calling him "reader" to intentionally increase sympathetic distance since he thought there needed to be a distance between the speaker and the person spoken to when big thoughts were uttered.

The third address of the reader comes near the beginning of an irony-filled disquisition on philanthropy with which Thoreau closes the first chapter of his work. Thoreau begins the disquisition speaking of his own mode of life, living alone with a great deal of leisure time, by saying, "But all this is very selfish, I have heard some of my townsmen say. I confess that I have hitherto indulged very little in philanthropic enterprises" (II, 80). Setting up

the laughter for the satire that is to follow, he continues, "However, when I have thought to indulge myself in this respect, and lay their Heaven under an obligation by maintaining certain poor persons in all respects as comfortably as I maintain myself, and have even ventured so far as to make them the offer, they have one and all unhesitatingly preferred to remain poor." Then, shifting from humor to satire, he says, "As for Doing-good, that is one of the professions which are full. Moreover, I have tried it fairly, and, strange as it may seem, am satisfied that it does not agree with my constitution." The irony of the disquisition becomes clear at this point. Thoreau spent nearly a decade working on Walden which may, indeed, be taken as one of the greatest of philanthropic enterprises. Thoreau addresses the reader at this point in the disquisition, calling the reader's attention to himself and increasing sympathetic distance. Immediately following is the narrator's serious commentary on philanthropy, in which is pointed out just what is wrong with most philanthropic enterprises. They do not go far enough in their philanthropy. "If you give money," Thoreau writes, "spend yourself with it, and do not merely abandon it to them" (II, 83).

The importance of this disquisition on philanthropy can be seen when it is understood as being a transition from the first to the second chapter in Walden. To the material-

istic grounded life of economic man in the first chapter, Thoreau opposes his own life of beauty and simplicity told of in the second. His doctrine of simplicity is what he offers as a solution for the problems of men that keep them poor spiritually. The way of life told of in "Where I Lived, and What I Lived for" is given as a kind of illustration of the doctrine of simplicity. In this sense, Walden is a kind of spiritual philanthropic enterprise. The disquisition on philanthropy is, in a way, "big thoughts" that need room to get in "sailing trim," for Thoreau did not want them as they reached the reader to "plow out again through the side of his head."

The final address of the reader as such comes near the end of chapter seven in which Thoreau's beanfield is discussed. Immediately following the address of the reader in this particular section of Walden, farming is discussed as a sacred art, and the narrator concludes, "This broad field which I have looked at so long looks not to me as the principal cultivator, but away from me to influences more genial to it, which water and make it green. These beans have results which are not harvested by me" (II, 183-4). The beans are a link between man and nature, a symbol of a connection with an order of experience that will allow man to transcend his own finitude. What Thoreau suggests in the language of the closing paragraphs of this chapter is indeed "big thoughts" and needs some room to get into "sailing

trim."

Thus, it can be noticed that a pattern is formed in which sympathetic distance is increased by calling the reader's attention to himself after which something Thoreau felt important follows.⁸ Possibly, Thoreau's only purpose in this manipulation of distance, which in each case has the effect of forcing the reader to see certain things from a point of view the reader feels is his own, is to assure acceptance of certain ideas. The psychology of this process is probably based upon the belief that whatever a person chooses for himself to accept is more seriously and completely accepted than it would be if he were persuaded by another to accept the thing. The fact is, though, in each of the cases mentioned where the reader is forced to formulate his own point of view, he is thoroughly conditioned beforehand by the narrator so that it would be unlikely that he would assume any point of view other than the one the author would have him assume anyway. Previous to the episode dealing with the ritualistic making and eating of unleavened bread, statistics are given on the cost of living at Walden Pond that suggest the religious exercise of fasting. The suggestion is made in such a way that the reader approves of what is suggested. Allowed his own vision of things, the reader, in the following passage dealing with unleavened bread, would likely understand it in its religious connection because he has been conditioned

to do so by the preceding passage. The reader's understanding the passage in its religious connection would lead him with a little reflection to see it as an integral part of a book that in a large measure deals with a kind of religious ritual leading toward the best of possible lives. The reader's coming to see this for himself, insomuch as he does, being distanced from the narrator and forming his own point of view, is aesthetically satisfying.

Preceding the passage dealing with philanthropy, the narrator reflects upon his own life, stressing the advantages of living a simple life. Of his own experience with matters of getting his living he says, "I found that, by working about six weeks a year, I could meet all the expenses of living" (II, 76). When a reader examines these figures, he will discover that the time Thoreau spent earning his living is about equal to the average person's time spent in vacation and Thoreau's time of vacation "free and clear for study" is about equal to the average person's time spent earning a living. Thoreau's doctrine of simplicity as it is suggested here provides for a way of life that makes philanthropic enterprises which consist of giving material gifts to the poor almost unnecessary. But this does not imply that philanthropy is unnecessary. It suggests that another kind of philanthropy is needed. The kind needed is suggested when the narrator says, in a passage quoted above, "If you give money, spend yourself with it, and

do not merely abandon it to them." Walden was Thoreau's gift to the spiritually poor. The doctrine of simplicity immediately preceding the disquisition on philanthropy establishes the framework for a point of view. When the sympathetic distance is widened (at the beginning of the discourse) between the reader and the narrator by the narrator's direct address of him and the reader is, in a sense, placed upon his own to formulate a point of view, the reader has been thoroughly conditioned for the point of view he will almost inevitably assume.

Immediately before the narrator in chapter seven says, addressing the reader, ". . . I am obliged to say to you, Reader, that the seeds which I planted, if indeed they were the seeds of those virtues, were wormeaten or had lost their vitality, and so did not come up," and concludes the chapter by suggesting that nature, as it is symbolized by the beanfield, is a link between man and a higher order of experience, a subject of ultimate importance to Thoreau in Walden, immediately before all this, Thoreau speaks of his labor in the beanfield which he is sure will become ". . . tropes and expression, to serve a parable-maker one day." Thoreau's labor in the beanfield is a kind of ritual "to know beans"; and his comments leading up to the address of the reader are such as to assure that what will follow will be seen in the light of the ritualistic labor. Thus, once again, before he is put upon his own to formulate a point

of view, the reader is conditioned.

If these addresses of the reader occurred in a work of art that depended upon a sustained artistic illusion for its effect, they would no doubt be considered as faults in narration because of their tendency to break the illusion the work offers. But such intrusions (if indeed they can be called "intrusions") are acceptable in Walden.

The intrusions in Walden tend only to show how deeply the narrator cares about what he is doing and how sincere he is about his business. In this sense, the narrator's intrusions are appropriate and useful.

Closely related to direct address of the reader is the frequent use of a kind of pronoun address in which the reader and the narrator share. The effect of shifting from the customary "I" in Walden to "we," "us," "our," etc., is, if the subject matter corresponds to the emotional and intellectual sensibilities of the reader, to reduce sympathetic distance toward minimal. A kinship between the narrator and the reader is established by the pronoun usage, the result of which is, generally speaking, to align the reader more completely with the point of view of the narrator. The reader, in a sense, feels that he is taken into the confidence of the narrator and allowed to share a special view of the events of the work of art when he finds himself included in a pronoun that also includes the narrator.

The use of personal pronouns tends to personalize matter. Scattered throughout Walden, they make it a very personal work. Generally, the personal pronouns are used in passages where the narrator wants sympathetic distance to be minimal so that whatever is to be dealt with will be seen from his own point of view. A few examples will illustrate. In the second chapter of Walden where the narrator tells where he lived and what he lived for in his withdrawal, he turns from his own life to the condition of men in general and says, in a paragraph the first part of which illustrates the foregoing thesis,

Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand and one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify (II, 101-2).

This is an important passage in Walden, for it exemplifies Thoreau's doctrine of simplicity which is the foundation for the way of life about which the whole book is concerned.

In another passage, speaking of the "shame and delu-

sions" men commonly mistake for reality, the narrator says, "I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things" (II, 107). Immediately following, the author offers what he thinks may be a solution to the mean life most men live. It is involved with becoming aware. Employing personal pronouns that take the reader in, the narrator says,

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
. . . . Let us settle ourselves, and work and
wedge our feet downward through the mud and
slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition,
and delusion, and appearance, and alluvion
which covers the globe, through Paris and Lon-
don, through New York and Boston and Concord,
through Church and State, through poetry and
philosophy and religion, till we come to a
hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can
call reality, and say, This is, and no mistake;
and then begin, having a point d'appui, below
fresnet and frost and fire, a place where you
might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-
post safely, or perhaps a gauge, not a Nilometer,
but a Realometer, that future ages might know
how deep a fresnet of shams and appearances had
gathered from time to time. If you stand right
fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see
the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if it
were a cimeter, and feel its sweet edge dividing
you through the heart and marrow, and so you
will happily conclude your mortal career. Be
it life or death, we crave only reality. If
we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in
our throats and feel cold in the extremities;
if we are alive, let us go about our business
(II, 108-9).

If Walden was to mean as deeply and as completely as Thoreau wanted it to, in such passages as this the author must communicate as completely as possible with the reader. Thoreau

must have known that use of personal pronouns, among other things, that assured a sympathetic bond between the reader and the narrator went a long way towards complete communication.

The pattern of minimizing sympathetic distance in important passages where it is imperative that the narrator and the reader share nearly the same point of view on certain important matters could be traced through numerous other passages. One example occurs in the closing paragraph of chapter eight in a passage already quoted in this essay where, at the center of the work, the narrator points out that ". . . not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations" (II, 190). But perhaps we have amply illustrated the point. The use of personal pronouns in important passages as a means of minimizing sympathetic distance so that the reader's point of view will be aligned with the narrator's may appear to be contradictory to addressing the reader directly in other important passages so that the reader will be forced to formulate his own point of view. However, whether the matter is actually so contradictory as appearance suggests is questionable. It is noticeable in the illustrations given above that the subject differs somewhat in passages in which the reader is directly addressed from passages in which personal pronouns are used

which include the reader. Passages in which the reader is addressed seem to deal generally with the possibilities for a way of life that can be filled with meaning and beauty. In the first of these passages, the making and eating of unleavened bread suggests the ritual of religion, hinting at the good life in religious terms. In the second, the disquisition on philanthropy suggests something about the good life in secular terms. In the third, in which the beanfield becomes a symbol of nature, the link between man and a spiritual order of being, the secular and the religious come together.

Passages in which personal pronouns are used deal generally with problems in life and their solutions. The first passage illustrated above tells how men live "meanly, like ants," though they have been created for better things, and laments that "Our life is frittered away by detail." The answer to the problem is "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity." The second passage illustrated speaks of a starting point for a meaningful life. What men need to do about the "shams and delusions" that "are esteemed for soundest truths" is to "work and wedge . . . downward . . . till we come to a hard bottom . . . which we can call reality" The final passage deals with finding the self. ". . . not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves . . ." the narrator says.

The fact that subject matter does differ in the

passages in which the reader is directly addressed from the passages in which he is included in personal pronouns may possibly explain Thoreau's manipulation of sympathetic distance so that in the former case it is relatively maximal while in the latter it is relatively minimal. When Thoreau dealt with possible ways of life, he wanted the reader to have general directions, but he wanted him to choose his own way. "I would not have any one adopt my mode of living on any account," he wrote, ". . . but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue his own way" Thus, when ways of life are dealt with in Walden, the reader is forced through manipulation of sympathetic distance to formulate his own point of view. But when problems of life and their solutions are dealt with, Thoreau apparently preferred that his own point of view be accepted, and he manipulated sympathetic distance in such a way that it would be accepted (after all, he had spent two years and two months at Walden Pond finding out what the problems were and working out solutions; this qualified him for a point of view that was perhaps a little better than the average reader's).

Direct address of the reader by referring to him as "reader" and using personal pronouns in which the reader and the narrator are named together might be considered by some as a fault in the narrative of a work in which the author tries to sustain an artistic illusion and in which

the aesthetic elements of art are at a maximum. But in Walden, a work that is partly a one-sided dialogue with the reader anyway, in which the human element is meant to dominate, such address seems appropriate and it is useful. It goes a long way toward creating the proper orientation of the reader in regard to the point of view character on the one hand and the events of the work of art on the other.

But the question that must be answered is how is all this manipulation of distance in various episodes through point of view relevant to the general pattern of distance described earlier? The general pattern of distance in Walden involves drawing the reader out of the events of the work at the beginning so that he can get an outside, critical view of things. Then he must be drawn back into the events of the work, which, in the process of the book, shifts from the diseased social order to speculation about an ideal order, so that he will come to participate in the system of values that is offered by the author. The personal pronoun usage is easily explained as being relevant to the larger design of distance manipulation. If the narrator's task is to first draw the reader out of the events into alignment with his own outside view and then, after shifting his position to within the events, draw the reader back into the events, again into alignment with his own view, it can readily be seen that the use of personal pronouns that work toward a reduction of

sympathetic distance is important, for the almost constant effort of the narrator is to get the reader to see things from his point of view, outside or inside, as the case calls for, throughout the whole work.

The matter of addressing the reader in such a way as to increase sympathetic distance is more difficult to explain in the light of the whole pattern of distance which involves an almost constant effort toward reducing sympathetic distance. It is noticeable that instances of addressing the reader directly are rare, occurring only four times in the entire text of Walden, three of which occur in the first chapter and the fourth in the seventh. Perhaps Thoreau felt that the subject matter of the first chapter, much of which is a polemic against the diseased social order, would be sufficient to insure the reader's moving outside the events to a distanced, critical position without necessarily needing some functional artistic kinship with the narrator who is also outside the events. Thus, through presentation of subject matter and control of evaluative distance, making it function in such a way as to properly orient the reader, Thoreau could manipulate distance in terms of point of view without the necessity of manipulation of sympathetic distance in such a way as to be somewhat more aesthetically pleasing. In this way, address of the reader does not much alter the overall pattern of distance as it has been described above.

Though point of view is, perhaps, the chief factor in casting the events of Walden into a perspective the relativity of which is most aesthetically promising to the reader, control of sympathy through point of view is not enough alone to accomplish this nor to explain the achievement of the work. Genre, structure, and style must somehow support point of view. The following chapter will discuss matters of genre in this light.

Footnotes

¹Henry Thoreau, The Writings of Thoreau (Boston, 1906), II, p. 149-50. All quotations from Thoreau's writing from this point onward in this essay will be taken from the standard edition edited by Bradford Torrey and published in twenty volumes in 1906 by Houghton Mifflin and Company. For the sake of expediency all quotations from Thoreau will be identified by volume and page number enclosed in parentheses immediately following each quotation.

²The Magic Circle of Walden (New York, 1968), p. 273.

³p. 179.

⁴Walden Revisited (Chicago, 1945), p. 82.

⁵"The Aesthetics of Organicism," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism (Summer, 1968), XXVI, p. 454.

⁶p. 69

⁷Twentieth Century Interpretations of Walden (Englewood Cliffs, 1968), pp. 4-5.

⁸This whole hypothesis regarding the direct address of the reader might be questioned on the grounds that the

thoughts following the various direct addresses are no "bigger" than many others where no such address precedes them. But the fact that direct address of the reader does call the reader's attention to himself and this increases sympathetic distance cannot be easily challenged. To say that Thoreau was not aware of what happened when he addressed the reader directly is itself questionable, especially when it is remembered what he said in chapter six about "the difficulty of getting to a sufficient distance from my guest when we began to utter the big thoughts in big words" (II, 156). When they are collected, the facts seem to suggest that he felt the thoughts following the direct addresses of the reader to be rather "big thoughts." This matter will be explained in the following pages.

THE FUNCTION OF GENRE

CHAPTER III

When Thoreau wrote Walden, with such matter as he wanted to present in his book, about the only thing he could do was to gather up his experience, work out a vision of it as it was formulated in his mind, and offer that vision to the reader as experience reflected upon. In the book, the narrator recalls, contemplates, and summarizes the experience, all for the benefit of the reader's understanding it. Almost all of the story rests upon the narrator's experience; only his voice is heard as his consciousness lies open before the reader and the book becomes a searching exploration of the author's own consciousness, told in his own words. Though Walden is a report of an experience in life, Thoreau must have known that merely "reporting" would not do, that he must manage the affairs of the book in such a way that the action of the narrative would pass in review before the reader's eyes as if he were on the spot watching all the events of the story unfold. He must have known, as Percy Lubbock put it, speaking of the author's presentation of material

in fiction, that "Far better it would be to see him while his mind is actually at work in the agitation"1 That Thoreau was interested in casting his work into a perspective which would be aesthetically satisfying as well as informative is shown not only by his long labor over the text which went through seven toilsome revisions is nearly a decade, but also by the meticulous care he spent upon genre, structure, and style. When he finished his work, aesthetics and exposition worked together to form Walden, and the actual autobiographical event was the basis for the art form, the pastoral.

In the study of aesthetic distance in Walden, genre becomes an important factor. As René Welleck and Austin Warren point out, "The literary kind is not a mere name, for the aesthetic convention in which a work participates shapes its character."² Genre is an attempt at classification of literature which is based upon grouping and naming according to the kind of organizational patterns evident or latent in particular works. In the classical genres such as pastoral, there are two aspects implied: the outward organizational schema around which the events are structured and the inward informing attitude which defines the tone. The value of genre, when it can be recognized by the reader (and the writer can insure that it will be if he uses an existing, familiar genre), is that it calls attention to both the external pattern of

development in the course of a work of art while, at the same time, it establishes an attitude. As quickly, for instance, as the reader recognizes that the genre to which Walden belongs is the pastoral, he can begin to understand the three-part structure of the work and the basic significance of the events as they occur within that frame informed by the typical attitude characteristic of the genre.

But the question to be asked and answered in this study is how genre works toward the establishment of the overall pattern of artistic distance. An answer may be briefly suggested, and then plotted out more fully. To begin, in the first part of Walden, where the subject is the time-bound materialistic social order, just enough of the ideal world of the pastoral is charted to set up a contrast between the two worlds. Establishing an attitude favorable for such a contrast, the narrator says, in a passage that, as C. R. Anderson points out in The Magic Circle of Walden, combines mythical fable (what is not believed, unreal) with biblical allusion (what is believed, real), "I see young men, my townsmen whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. 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" (II, 5). The better "open pasture" suggests that pastoral is latent, while the fields where it is later said that "men labor under a mistake" suggest the social order that is indicated in the first chapter.

The greater part of the initial chapter of Walden is centered around a description of the actual world where men ". . . are employed, as it says in an old book, laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal." But almost from the beginning the narrator reminds the reader that "It would be some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization, if only to learn what are the gross necessities of life and what methods have been taken to obtain them . . ." (II, 12). It is suggested that if men would live primitive and frontier lives in the midst of outward civilization (which ironically enough describes the pastoral life, partially primitive, partially civilized) and learn what is necessary in life and what is not, then they would not have to spend the better part of their lives acquiring ". . . the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life" which are "not only not indispensable, but positive hinderances to the elevation of mankind" (II, 15).

Apparently, Thoreau believed that men could discover the meaning of life if they could reduce living to the essentials, and, having simplified the problem of making

a living, come to consciously understand their relation to these essentials. This was the task he set for himself at Walden Pond. The economy that he practiced in his experiment at Walden Pond set him free from the stifling conditions of the diseased social order, and the natural environment provided him with the opportunity to participate in the regenerative processes of life (Thoreau's connecting his name with "thaw" is suggestive of participating in the regenerative process since spring is suggested by the thaw and, in turn, suggests regeneration). Alienated by the economics of the social order (as the title of the first chapter of Walden suggests), Thoreau felt it necessary to search for a new identification with a new order; hence, the experiment at Walden Pond was directed toward discovering whether or not a person could find a way of life where men did not have to become, as he said, "tools of their tools." But life in nature, as every reader knows, was not Thoreau's goal; it was the means by which another goal might be accomplished. By going to nature and living the simplified life he hoped to discover the foundations of a higher, organic society shaped by the principles he recommends in Walden. "You think that I am impoverishing myself by withdrawing from men," Thoreau wrote a few years after the Walden experiment, "but in my solitude I have woven for myself a silken web or chrysalis, and, nymph-like, shall ere long burst forth a more perfect creature,

fitted for a higher life" (XV, 246).

Thoreau's use of pastoral in Walden which emphasizes man's link with nature probably resulted from his belief that man in his highest state of existence is organically related to his environment, and man's own nature is purest and most comprehensive when it is most closely related to the natural phenomena around him. "In the wildest of nature," he concluded in the book he wrote while living at Walden Pond, "there is not only the material of the most cultivated life, and a sort of anticipation of the last result, but a greater refinement already than is ever attained by man" (I, 337). The organic life Thoreau recommended in Walden and strove for in his own life called for more than civilized life. As Sherman Paul points out in The Shores of America, it asked that man live by his highest consciousness, that he work toward transforming a physical relationship with the natural world into a spiritual one. Thus, Thoreau's study of nature was self-reflexive, a study of the self, based upon the belief that any meaningful reform in society must begin with the individual. When Thoreau came to tell of his study of nature made in his two year residence at Walden Pond, the pastoral fitted his needs as an artist perfectly.

Throughout the first chapter of Walden, there is a running contrast between the actual and the ideal with the

actual being represented by civilization and the ideal by the primitive which always offers some advantage.

"The very simplicity and nakedness of man's life in the primitive ages imply this advantage, at least," the narrator says at one point, "that they left him still but a sojourner in nature. When he was refreshed with food and sleep, he contemplated his journey again But lo! men have become the tools of their tools" (II, 41). It is typical of the pastoral to present the attitude that society has somehow failed the individual, bringing him only complexity and anxiety, that "In civilization . . . a man degenerates at length" (I, 56). Thoreau closes his chapter on "economy" by saying, "If, then, we would indeed restore mankind by truly Indian, botanic, magnetic, or natural means, let us first be as simple and well as Nature ourselves, dispel the clouds which hang over our own brows, and take up a little life into our pores" (II, 87).

The second chapter of Walden is filled with renunciation and withdrawal which, in effect, works toward a definition of the pastoral ideal which is characterized in Walden by a kind of philosophical speculation concerned with the order of the awakened man. As the reader comes to understand the pastoral world through the definition worked out in the middle chapters, he begins more and more to accept it and to participate in it. Evaluative

distance (that had become great when, in the beginning, the diseased social order spoken of as "civilization" was the principal subject of the text and the reader tended toward rejecting it in favor of the pastoral ideal which had been offered by contrast) becomes minimal as the subject becomes the pastoral ideal. As evaluative distance diminishes because of the concord developed between the reader and the subject, point of view is supported by genre in the process of the reader's aligning his own view with that of the narrator who stands inside the events of the work once the subject has shifted from the rejected social order to speculation about the ideal order of the awakened man.

In these two processes, genre works toward supporting and defining the overall pattern of aesthetic distance. Genre is related to aesthetic distance, as can be seen when one realizes that the genre an author chooses is determined by his methods of aesthetic perceiving and that genre largely determines a reader's method of aesthetic perceiving. The pastoral superimposed upon autobiography allowed Thoreau to do something he could not have done with autobiography alone. It allowed him to present an idyllic view of experience in Walden outside that experience (the first paragraph indicates that the actual act of living alone in the woods where the experience took place is over), the chief mood of which is a contemplative with-

drawal that itself is a sequel to the action of the narrative. If this was Thoreau's artistic goal in Walden, generically, autobiography was insufficient to accomplish it.

Because of the necessity of achieving the proper perspective, the real facts of autobiography used as an informing method of presentation would be a difficult matter to handle effectively aesthetically. If an artist is merely factual in creating autobiography, his readers are likely to react to his art much as they might react to history. If the autobiographer deals with fantasies, especially fantasies like the primal fantasies of regression Thoreau deals with in Walden, readers may call forth their own defenses against them and respond negatively because of either anxiety or boredom. Dangerous fantasies (that is, fantasies which tend for some reason to throw a work of art out of the intended perspective) and provocative concepts presented in fictional literature are usually easily tolerated because a reader, regardless of how involved he may be with the events, always realizes that it is not reality with which he is involved.

But when dangerous fantasies or provocative concepts are embodied in non-fictional writing like autobiography, they may distort the intended perspective. What the autobiographer must do, as Norman Holland points out,³ is this: he must present his fantasies and his concepts in

order to create his art, but along with them he must provide defensive structuring and transformation so that the primal unconscious fantasies can be transformed into conscious, objective meaning that is acceptable. When the fantasy is balanced with defense, pleasure results from the work. In order to transform the unconscious fantasies with adequate defensive structuring, Thoreau took the pastoral and superimposed it upon autobiography, producing a rather unique generic hybrid for Walden, the novelty of which is aesthetically satisfying once it is understood. Many of the fantasies in Walden are related to a kind of regression as the basic theme of renunciation and withdrawal with which the book begins indicates. The defense for the fantasies is the artist's invocation of pastoral as a fictional mode which throws the fantasies out of gear with the real facts of autobiography psychologically, putting them at a distance, so to speak, but still recognizing and articulating them. Thus, the superimposition of pastoral upon autobiography creates a proper perspective for Walden whereby on the one hand a reader may feel the events of the work in a real sense, autobiographically, while on the other, he may perceive them at a distance, fictionally, in terms of the pastoral.

The pastoral is one of the oldest and most frequently used genres known to art. It was in existence when Theocritus wrote his poetry in ancient Greece and has been

used from time to time down through the ages by various artists to the present. The myth of the pastoral itself invites the reader to participate in the events of the work in such a way as to put him into contact with an order of experience much more compatible with his psychological needs for order and simplified existence than any he might know in real life. The way Thoreau uses it in Walden is especially provocative. He takes the pastoral pattern and myth and superimposes them upon the real facts of autobiography, giving them a kind of validity and vitality they never had before. Much of the success of Walden springs from this innovation, for it allows a kind of interplay between two possible orientations, one in the fictional world of myth, the other in the real world of autobiographical fact. This gives the reader the opportunity to experience the events of the work from the point of view of a spectator at times and from the point of view of a participant at others. This process adds up to a rich and valuable aesthetic experience as the pattern of the book unfolds itself. When the subject of the book at the beginning is the diseased social order, the reader may escape it by aligning himself with the pastoral order that is offered in contrast and view the events of the work from the point of view of spectator. When the subject of the book is the pastoral order, the reader may align himself with the events of the work,

become a participant in them, and enjoy the working out of some of his deepest wishes to return to some kind of primal experience. It is a wonderful experience to participate in the escape told of in chapter eight when the narrator, among " . . . the houses . . . so arranged as to make the most of mankind, in lanes and fronting one another, so that every traveller had to run the gauntlet, and every man, woman, and child might get a lick at him . . . " bolts suddenly without standing "much about grace" and not hesitating "at a gap in a fence," being "let out through the rear avenues," so escapes "to the woods again."

The success of the genre at this point with its emphasis upon escape is remarkable, allowing the reader to take on a new kind of life, the life the work of art suggests after the annulment of the spontaneous life of reality. As Jose Ortega y Gasset once observed, "This new life, a life invented after the annulment of spontaneous life, is precisely what we may call artistic understanding and pleasure. This life does not lack sentiment and passion but evidently these passions and sentiments belong to a psychic flora very different from that which covers the landscapes of our primary and human life. They are secondary emotions which those ultra-objects provoke in the artist that is within us. They are sentiments specifically aesthetic."⁴

If the fantasy that lies deep within the escape into the woods were presented as autobiographical fact, it would suggest that the predictable world was so grotesque and terrifying that one must flee its horrors, and negative responses might be ascribed to the fantasy because of the anxiety and frustration that would be associated with it. But the world of the pastoral (that is, the fictional mode of the pastoral) provides a protected situation characterized by barriers of psychic distance which render the reader safe from the disorienting phenomena of the events of the work at this point, thus allowing him to be aware of the disparity between the real world and the one in the art. The pastoral makes it possible for the reader to view and experience with safety a world of disorientation where patterns of behavior must often be remodeled or new patterns formulated.

When a responsive reader is confronted with the text of Walden, the self, psychologically speaking, is split into two distinct parts, the part that remains associated with the real events of autobiography and the part that becomes linked with the pastoral. The miracle of the work is that the reader can participate through the pastoral in events and adventures that are either wholly impossible, or at least impractical, in real life, while, at the same time, he can proceed with the normal and acceptable order of the experience of autobiography. The dual self is

possible because the work of art is itself dual. Norman Holland says, "In effect, a literary text has implicit in it two dimensions: one reaches 'up,' toward the world of social, intellectual, moral, and religious concerns; the other reaches 'down,' to the dark, chthonic, primitive, bodily parts of our mental life."⁵ In Walden, Thoreau creates the dual dimension through the use of two genres, pastoral and autobiography. But one cannot very well say that when Thoreau deals with social, intellectual, moral, or religious matters, his work turns largely upon autobiography, and when he deals with the primitive, bodily part of mental life, the work turns upon the pastoral, for the pastoral and the autobiographical are so thoroughly integrated (the autobiographical experience takes as its informing pattern the pastoral) that they are inseparable. Nevertheless, the reader realizes that when Thoreau deals with social, intellectual, moral, and religious matters, he deals with the facts of real life, while when he deals with fantasies and defenses, the pastoral comes into its full right. It is through autobiography that the reader is actively engaged in seeing the text and in translating what he discovers into intellectual meaning. It is through the pastoral that he explores the field of responses more closely linked with pleasure, beauty, interest, etc., wherein lies the major source of aesthetic experience.

The perspective provided by Thoreau's innovation achieved by the combination of the fictional mode of the pastoral with the non-fictional mode of autobiography not only supports point of view through genre as has been explained, but it also allows Thoreau to transform deep, primitive fantasies that might arouse anxiety into meanings that can be accepted on the conscious level. In this way, Walden achieves much of its special meaning.

When skilled analysts sometimes make fools of themselves by trying to diagnose works of art psychologically, it is needless to say that psychologizing by laymen is dangerous business. Nevertheless, it is necessary to risk being wrong or even foolish in order to investigate very thoroughly a genre like the pastoral that works toward expressing some of the deepest and most persistent wishes of human life. Untransformed fantasies, psychologists point out, are infantile, primitive, bodily, and usually charged with fear and desire. For example, Thoreau's movement toward the primitive and child-like in nature could, on the untransformed level, possibly be understood as a wish to regress to the warm security of the womb. Such fantasies involve the deepest wishes and moments of life. But if they are charged with fear and desire, in their untransformed state they may bring anxiety and thus be frustrating to the psyche. For this reason if a work like Walden is to be successful, it must transform the

fantasies with which it deals into something that can be known with pleasure. Norman Holland points out that, ". . . the writer expresses and disguises childhood fantasies. The reader unconsciously elaborates the fantasy content of the literary work with his own versions of these fantasies And it is the management of these fantasies, both his own and the work's, that permits their own partial gratification and given literary pleasure."⁶

In the psychological sense, Walden transforms a childhood, primitive desire to get back to what Holland called the "oral stage" in development. Here, in the infant who has not recognized his being as distinct from other things, the ego has established between it and all else in the world an intimate bond. Thoreau provides an environment in Walden where it is somewhat difficult to distinguish between inner and outer being. With such an environment present, it is easy to regress to childhood fantasies when the self was not so distinctive from all else as in adult life. The boundaries between the self and all else in the artistic illusion of Walden tend to be broken down in a fusion of the self with the environment. Such is often the case in Walden as is illustrated at the beginning of chapter five, a chapter dealing with solitude and meditation, where Thoreau says, in a passage part of which has been quoted earlier, "This is a delicious evening, when

the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself" (II, 143). Lapsing into a nurturing, maternal environment has the effect of coming to participate in a larger order of experience than the self in its social surroundings could ever provide. In the midst of a gentle rain, the narrator continues, "I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sight and sound around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me, as made the fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since" (II, 146). Thoreau's transcendental desire to achieve a kind of oneness with nature in symbolic withdrawal reminiscent of regression can possibly be explained as the fantasy of an infant gilded with intellectual meaning. Going to the primitive ("It would be to some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life," Thoreau wrote near the beginning of Walden) in the Walden experiment may be equivalent to going back toward the childlike. The fantasy of losing the boundaries of the self in a benevolent merger with nature is Thoreau's way of articulating the fantasy on an intellectual and acceptable level in his work. Apparently, in Thoreau's thinking, the natural environment was a source of spiritual therapy ready to be utilized by

anyone perceptive enough to recognize its value. "The voice of nature is always encouraging" (XVI, 304), he once said.

Psychologically considered, Walden is a variant of the death-rebirth ritual. Thoreau withdraws to the womb of nature, achieves rebirth, then re-emerges into the real world at the end ready to make a new start. Hinting at the matter, near the end of chapter eight, after renunciation and withdrawal have been completed, he says, in a passage already quoted in this essay, ". . . not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations" (II, 190). Thoreau's withdrawal is a preparation for rebirth. It begins with rejection of the materialistic social order told of in the first chapter and ends with the achievement of the new life told of in the last chapter. Nature is a kind mother that he can trust at the moment he is regaining his grip on life and finding his own identity. In the womb-like environment of nature he is neighbor to the birds ". . . not by having imprisoned one, but having caged myself near them . . ." and his hut site ". . . so low in the woods that the opposite shore, half a mile off, like the rest, covered with wood, was my most distant horizon . . ." suggests the warmth and security of the mother's womb.

Many elements in Walden are concerned with the primal unit of nurturing mother and suckling child. Thoreau

described his hut site as a "rare and delectable" place, "far from noise and disturbance" in a "forever new and unprofaned part of the universe," remote from the life he had left behind. It was a place where "Every morning was a cheerful invitation" to make life of equal simplicity and innocence with nature. Thoreau goes on to say that "Children, who play life, discern its true law and relations more clearly than men, who fail to live it worthily, but who think they are wiser by experience, that is, by failure" (II, 106). All this leads up to a significant passage which occurs in chapter five that suggests the role Thoreau conceived himself to be playing as a child of nature. The passage explains,

I have occasional visits in the long winter evenings, when the snow falls fast and the wind howls in the wood, from an old settler and original proprietor, who is reported to have dug Walden Pond, and stoned it, and fringed it with pine woods; who tells me stories of old time and of new eternity; and between us we pass a cheerful evening with social mirth and pleasant views of things, even without apples or cider, --a most wise and humorous friend, whom I love much, who keeps himself more secret than ever did Goffe or Whalley; and though he is thought to be dead, none can show where he is buried. An elderly dame, too, dwells in my neighborhood, invisible to most persons, in whose odorous herb garden I love to stroll sometimes, gathering simples and listening to her fables; for she has a genius of unequalled fertility, and her memory runs back farther than mythology, and she can tell me the original of every fable, and on what fact every one is founded, for the incidents occurred when she was young. A ruddy and lusty old dame, who delights in all weathers and seasons, and is likely to outlive all her children yet (II, 152-3).

This passage suggests that Thoreau, the child, is not only provided for by the beneficence of nature where he strolls "gathering simples," but also is taught by nature who instructs her child with fables, much as a mother would instruct a child, in the ways of life.

When a work of art makes the reader feel that he is lapsing into a protective, nurturing, maternal environment which is pleasurable or necessary, myth of some kind is at work deepening and enriching experience. Through the pastoral myth, the reader can merge with the text of Walden, and conscious awareness of the myth provides a way for the reader to gratify an unconscious wish to return to an old timeless union with something more enduring and more elemental than the evanescent experience he knows in real life. Thus, the reader can relax and find release in the security of the nurturing and sustaining role that is told of in Walden when he fuses with the pastoral illusion of the work.

Psychologically, the pastoral myth in Walden allows the reader to participate in a merger with a realm of experience that is described in the last chapter as the order of the awakened man. With its emphasis upon rebirth and a second chance to begin life anew, the book is the physical embodiment of a dream almost every sensitive and intelligent reader will have had. It dreams the reader's dream and confirms the dream with its optimism. At one

point in the text, Thoreau explicitly urges, in a passage referred to earlier, "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them" (II, 356).

Since Walden is autobiographical, psychologically considered, the fantasies of Thoreau's life are worked out in the art. But this does not mean that the book is limited to Thoreau's personal mode of being. His use of the pastoral provides a way for an interaction to occur between the psychic traits in the reader and the psychic process embodied in the work by setting off the autobiographical fantasy through the fictional mode at a distance where it can be participated in safely and seen as the reader's own. Walden, considered in this sense, becomes a kind of dress rehearsal for life, and the model for interpreting the work is to be found in life itself. The search of the pastoral in Walden is the search of the libido for some kind of fulfillment that will set it free from the frustrations and anxieties of reality, but which will still retain reality through the autobiographical attachment. Through psychology as well as pattern Walden has its link with pastoral, and the pastoral provides a perspective for the work. Thus, Thoreau's pastoralism in Walden is dual: on the one hand it defines a method while on the other it offers an attitude.

When the organizational schema around which the

events of the work are structured is considered, it is noticeable that there are patterns of pastoral in Walden that suggest its link with the traditional genre in addition to the psychological connection. Not much has ever been written about the patterns of pastoral in Walden except for Leo Marx's brief commentary upon Walden in The Machine in the Garden. Marx mentions that Walden is a "transcendental eclogue," but he is not so much interested in patterns of pastoral in Walden as he is in commenting upon the effects of the machine (represented by the train) upon the green landscape.

It is commonly known that at the basis of the pastoral ideal is the motive to withdraw from the chaos of the complex world of civilization and begin life anew in a fresh, green landscape. Apparently, Thoreau thought of Walden Pond as being such a place and his mind was intoxicated with the prospect of a new experiment in life. "I went to the woods," he says in the second chapter of Walden, in a passage quoted earlier in another connection, "because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary" (II, 100-1). Unwilling to allow his life to be "frittered

away by detail," Thoreau went to Walden Pond, a place he felt to be unsullied by ties of the past where a man eager to stand in the moment where two eternities intersect might actually put into practice in life what had been only an aspect of art. In this way, Thoreau dislodged the fantasy of the pastoral from its traditional literary context and embodied it in actual life. The record of that experiment provided Thoreau with the framework for Walden. The radical withdrawal associated with the pastoral in Walden suggests, in one sense, rejection. However, it can be seen, when one understands that the natural imagery of the pastoral is indicative of a kind of transformation through spiritual growth, that the withdrawal is only a symbolic equivalent of the purification process that is necessary when life in society becomes so fixed that spiritual growth is impossible.

But the redemptive journey away from the complex social order does have about it a sense of renunciation as the hero renounces his place in the social order and withdraws. One remembers that Thoreau had signed off from the church when he became of age, and his going to live by Walden Pond, July 4, 1845, suggests that he signed off from the social order renouncing his place in it. Though Thoreau says, "when I first took up my abode in the woods, that is, began to spend my nights as well as my days there, which by accident, was on Independence Day . . ."

it is noticeable that he emphasizes that he was "more independent than any farmer in Concord" and could freely "follow the bent of my genius . . . every moment." This suggests a symbolic renunciation in the withdrawal toward nature.

The traditional landscape of the conventional pastoral is a place free from the struggle and deprivation of both the primitive wilderness and the civilized world. It is a "middle ground," to use the words of Leo Marx, lying somewhere between the opposing forces of the complex social world and the natural environment of nature, yet transcending both. Thoreau's beanfield may easily be seen as a symbol of the pastoral middle ground. It was a field "not in Mr. Coleman's report" (indeed pastoral fields in the traditional sense never exist except in the mind of the pastoralist--though it is to be noted that Thoreau had a real beanfield), and of it Thoreau said, "Mine was, as it were, the connecting link between wild and cultivated fields; as some states are civilized, and others half-civilized, and other savage or barbarous, so my field was, though not in a bad sense, a half-cultivated field" (II, 174). This comment suggests that the beanfield was to be a symbol of the pastoral middle ground, the retreat that is somehow connected with purification of the mind so that it can be brought closer to ultimate truth. The beans he raised attached him to the earth, he said, and

gave him "strength like Antaeus." The beanfield in his description becomes a "fabulous landscape" which finally reaches beyond civilization and nature. In closing the chapter concerned with the beanfield, Thoreau says, in a passage already referred to earlier, "This broad field which I have looked at so long looks not to me as the principal cultivator, but away from me to influences more genial to it, which water and make it green. These beans have results which are not harvested by me" (II, 183-4). As a symbol of the pastoral landscape the beanfield is a repository of values. One of the most anxious moments in Walden occurs in chapter four when the smoke from the train, a symbol of the antagonistic forces of civilization, casts the beanfield into the shade.

The place of withdrawal in the conventional pastoral is generally not an ideal place (it is usually buffeted on the one hand by raw nature and on the other by civilization--the angry gods of a rainstorm send Thoreau hurrying from his fishing to Baker Farm for shelter, the bitter winter drives him inside his hut and the woodchucks eat the young bean sprouts; he is jailed in Concord for not paying a poll tax), but it is a place that is in some ways uncontaminated by civilization and thus offers some hope. Thoreau's retreat, typically pastoral, was a place where "the very dew seemed to hang upon the trees later into the day than usual, as on the sides of mountains" (II, 96).

The conventional retreat is a place where one may be absolved of his sins (Thoreau bathes in Walden Pond, a symbol of baptism in the Christian sense, and he eats unleavened bread, symbolic of celebrating the Eucharist). It is also a place where most of the psychological and economical superfluities are stripped off and a direct relationship with elemental essentials can be made. Thoreau's voluntary poverty at Walden Pond may be seen as a stripping off process. Speaking from his own experiences at Walden Pond, Thoreau says, "The necessities of life for man in this climate may, accurately enough, be distributed under the several heads of Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel; for not till we have secured these are we prepared to entertain the true problems of life with freedom and a prospect of success" (II, 13). This may be seen as suggesting that with the necessities only, a direct relationship with the elemental essentials of life can be made and anything more gets in the way of finding a higher nature. But Thoreau realized that it was almost inevitable, especially in modern life, to get involved in the pursuit of luxuries. Even in the struggle to obtain the basic things such as food and shelter, Thoreau knew from his own experience that men are often forced to use up life striving after the necessities at the expense of the aesthetical.

Walden is also linked with the pastoral through the

kinship of the narrator to the pastoral hero. The narrator of Walden is the physical, conscious embodiment of the pastoral ideal which makes him an object of sympathetic attraction for the reader. This fact points to another way in which genre works toward supporting point of view, for the reader is drawn by sympathy toward the narrator's position as hero of the pastoral. The conventional pastoral is concerned not only with a symbolic landscape, but also with a hero who is free from the restrictions and complications of civilization, while, at the same time, he is not the victim of natural uncertainties. He lives a simplified life, but his mind is cultivated; thus, he enjoys both the contentment and comfort of nature and the arts of the civilized world. The key to the relationship with the landscape is his oneness with the natural world. In the chapter on solitude, the narrator of Walden inquires, "Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?" (II, 153) Nature supplies the pastoral hero's practical needs while the arts supply his aesthetic desires. One need only think of Thoreau living the simplified life at Walden Pond, cultivating his two and one half acres of beans, corn, potatoes, and turnips, fishing and reading the Iliad, in order to get the perfect picture of the pastoral hero incarnate. The attractiveness of the hero, from the point of view of pastoral, goes a long way toward

control of distance.

In the retreat, the hero can become an integrated being following a course back and forth between his desires for society and his instincts for the natural self. Living in his self-imposed exile, the hero of the pastoral can have an integrated experience or psychic renewal, the thing Thoreau appears to have desired when he went to live by Walden Pond. After renewal, the hero may return to society where he can be relied upon to restore harmony and values to a culture that has become fragmented by civilization. The hope of the hero is that what has been discovered about life in the pastoral retreat can be applied to the world. On September 6, 1847, Thoreau left Walden Pond ". . . for as good a reason as I went there," he said. Six years and eleven months later he published Walden (the manuscript having gone through the toilsome labor of seven revisions in the meantime). The publication of Walden was apparently his way of carrying out the pastoral design upon his return from the retreat.

Walden, from the point of view of pastoral, may thus be seen as Thoreau's effort to restore harmony and values to a society that had become frustrated by civilization. Of the book he said, ". . . 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" (II, 94). He ends Walden with an image of morning and wakening, reminding his reader that, "Only that day dawns to which we are awake" (II, 207). The only thing Thoreau worried about in his effort to communicate his vision in Walden was that, as he said, ". . . my expression may not be extra-vagant enough, may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced" (II, 357). The thing Thoreau wanted to do in Walden was to create a work of art analogous to that of the artist of Kouroo.

What Thoreau sought from the pastoral ideal in his actual life at Walden Pond and in writing Walden was not only a way of life for himself, but also a social policy which would combine man's primitive instinctual values with the basic achievements of civilization. A hundred pages deep into Walden, in a passage already quoted in this essay, he said, "I went to the woods because I wanted to live deliberately, to front only the essentials of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach . . ." indicating by this that the experiment was based upon personal desires. But it is to be remembered that eighty-one pages before that he said, "So many autumn, ay, and winter days, spent outside the town, trying to hear what was in the wind, to hear and carry it express!" indicating that he was interested in the social order as well as

in himself, for what he wanted to "carry express" was what he had learned about life living in the woods, and he wanted to carry it to others. At the center of the pastoral ideal as it is given in Walden is the hope that the possibilities for a simplified and meaningful existence that have been discovered by the pastoralist and represented in his art might actually be achieved in real life.

Thoreau was acutely aware of the possibilities of the pastoral ideal as a plan for real life and, hence, a foundation for social theory. He believed that the society of the pastoral ideal was possible, and toward this goal he directed two years, two months, and two days of his life, not to mention the six years and eleven months he spent after the experiment was over formulating it into art. When he went to live by Walden Pond, he hoped to prove the validity of the pastoral life as it is described in his doctrine of simplicity and to show that it was possible and right.

The pastoral design, as it is embodied in Walden is not merely a descriptive idyl depicting a tranquil pastoral scene. It engages a larger, more complicated order of experience than the typical idyl (it is more like the eclogues of Virgil than the idyls of Theocritus, for example) in which the ideal pastoral vision is brought into contrast with the vision for life the real world

offers, the real world being a place the pastoralist believes to be filled with repression and confusion, all of which he has fled. It is through the contrast between the ideal world of the pastoral and the real world that the pastoral artist is able to make his commentary upon the real world, and, often, prescribe something to effect a cure for its ills.

J. E. Congleton notes that ". . . a constant element in the pastoral as known to literature is the recognition of a contrast, implied or expressed, between pastoral life and some more complex type of civilization"7 The contrast between the complex life of chapter one in Walden where a farmer, in order "To get his shoestrings . . . speculates in herds of cattle," is almost constantly contrasted to the simple life of chapter two where "The morning wind forever blows" and "the poem of creation is uninterrupted." Thus, the pastoral world in Walden is not only a source for a subject, but a framework within the metaphor of which the artist can comment upon reality as he understands it. It provides both the objects of discussion (Thoreau wanted "to hear what was in the wind, to hear and carry it express!") and the point of view from which they are seen. The pastoral becomes latent whenever an artist adopts its special point of view by identifying himself in the role of a country dweller, as Thoreau does in Walden, and writes about life mainly

in terms of the contrast between the rural world with its simplicity and psychological security and the anxious, complex world of civilization. In this way the pastoral evaluates the complex social world by what is said about the simple pastoral world.

Thoreau loses no time in availing himself of the contrast to comment upon "civilized life" to which he tells in the first paragraph of Walden he has returned. No later than the third paragraph he begins, looking back upon his own successful life at the pond, by saying, "I would fain say something, not so much concerning the Chinese and Sandwich Islanders as you who read these pages, who are said to live in New England; something about your condition, especially your outward condition or circumstances in this world, in this town, what it is, whether it is necessary that it be as bad as it is, whether it cannot be improved as well as not" (II, 4). With this, Thoreau launches his major attack upon New England civilization--its materialistic values and its work ethic that cause men to labor under a mistake--which prepares the way for his discussion of the essentials of life.

The special point of view which characterizes the pastoral as it is used in Walden, a point of view that creates an artistic perspective in which the objectivity of the fictional mode is almost perfectly balanced with

the subjectivity achieved through the genre's natural exploitation of a psychological fantasy common to everyone, comes to life when Thoreau assumes a rural posture and comments on the affairs of the real world through the contrast between the ideal world, as it is symbolized by his residence in the environment of Walden Pond, and the civilized world of sophistication, as it is represented by Concord. The perspective of the pastoral in Walden creates an orientation for the reader that is far enough removed from the subjectivity of the phenomena of the narrative to allow an objective view of the events of the work, but close enough to the events to allow them to be experienced subjectively. It is in this way that the use of pastoral in Walden works toward creating that personal detached point of view imperative in aesthetic appreciation, and it is in this way that genre supports point of view and contributes to the overall pattern of aesthetic distance.

The pastoral world created in Walden is a world of symbol, and Thoreau's method as an artist involves an exploration of the real world of human experience through the imaginative world of the pastoral, which, it must be remembered, is anchored to reality by the autobiographical dimension of the work. In this sense, the rural setting of Walden is used for much more than a point of view, though it is used for that, too. In his usual way, Thoreau con-

fronted nature directly in Walden as a means of investigating the human condition and of discovering what man can know of ultimate truth about himself and the world in which he lives. Thus, Thoreau's effort in the Walden experiment as it is symbolized in chapter seven where he "was determined to know beans" was, partly at least, to become acquainted with himself and with the spiritual world as it was latent in himself, not merely to know outward nature as the scientist might wish to know it. "Going to Walden for Thoreau," Sherman Paul suggested, "was comparable to Melville's going to sea, an economic act, certainly, but more profoundly an attempt to recast his own life: to measure society, to find himself, and, above all, to meet the ungraspable phantom of life."⁸ Thoreau returned to nature to become more cultivated and civilized, to live the simplified life of the philosopher, not to escape civilization in a return to primitivism. That Thoreau was conscious of the difference between the simplified life of the philosopher and the merely primitive life can be illustrated by a journal entry he wrote while he was at work on the Walden manuscript in which he says, "The savage lives simply through ignorance and idleness or laziness, but the philosopher lives simply through wisdom. In the case of the savage, the accompaniment of simplicity is idleness with its attendant vices, but in the case of the philosopher, it is the highest employment

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and development" (XI, 410).

But the object of the pastoral, as Thoreau uses it in Walden, is not merely to point out the conflict between the peaceful simplicity of the pastoral life and the confusion and anxiety of civilization or to merely criticize civilized life. Once Thoreau has pointed out the contrast by opposing the life viewed in the first chapter as it is lived by the materialistic-minded New Englanders to the life he has lived in his retreat at Walden Pond about which he tells in the remainder of the book, he attempts to offer a resolution for the ills of society in terms of an alternative. He was not content with dismissing the fact that the real world exists and resting in the fantasy of pastoral illusion. He strove in Walden to awaken the masses to their lives of desperation and pointed out ways by which something could be done about their condition.

Thoreau's effort to offer an alternative to the condition of society in the metaphor of the pastoral in Walden is admirable, and it endears him to the reader in such a way that through genre a close identity is established with him as narrator, an identity that assures some measure of control of the distance between the reader and the narrator through control of sympathy and of the distance between the reader and the events of the work through control of sentiment for the subject.

What makes his effort admirable is that he is practical and truthful about things. He is not altogether an idealist who believes he offers an answer to social problems by merely offering an artistic illusion to his reader. He knows that at best what he can offer in the suggestion in his art will be a kind of admonition concerning the direction life has taken in an age given to materialism. In the train episode in chapter four where the train is a symbol of technology and all the things that lead men to lives of quiet desperation, he says, "To do things 'railroad fashion' is now the byword; and it is worth the while to be warned so often and so sincerely by any power to get off its track. There is no stopping to read the riot act, no firing over the heads of the mob, in this case. We have constructed a fate, an Atropos, that never turns aside" (II, 131). The only way to avoid catastrophe is to get off the track. If the pastoral does not offer concrete solutions to social problems (though Thoreau seems to offer something rather concrete in his doctrine of simplicity), it at least suggests that alternatives are possible.

Perhaps the important thing the pastoral does is to offer a kind of integrity by asserting man's individuality (something he largely loses in the conformity of civilization) and his unique capacity for creativity which includes his ability to influence his own destiny. In Walden,

Thoreau repudiated the notion that deprivation and suffering must be accepted as an unavoidable part of civilization, as his visit to Baker Farm illustrates. Speaking to John Field, he tries to persuade the poor man to accept his recommendation for a better life through simplified existence. Thoreau offered John Field the pastoral alternative, but John Field had not "arithmetic enough to carry it through." That men unaware, unthinking, gave their lives over to the values of materialism was what troubled Thoreau, and he wanted to tell them it was not necessary to do so. "It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow, unless he sweats easier than I do" (II, 78), he said.

Because of Thoreau's sincere interest in the real world where the reader must at last reside, the reader tends to trust his conclusions and Thoreau is able to control sympathy and sentiment effectively through the reader's confidence in him. The John Field episode draws the reader very near as he receives his instructions for a better life along with him. Thoreau must have worked hard on this episode, for it is one of those central scenes where he had a chance to do what he so seldom got to do in the Concord lyceum hall. In 1842 Thoreau wrote in his journal, "I would fain communicate the wealth of my life to men, would really give them what is most precious in my gift. I would secrete pearls with the

shellfish and lay up honey with the bees for them. I will sift the sunbeams for the public good. I know no riches I would keep back" (VII, 250). No other statement of Thoreau's characterizes his effort in Walden better than this one. But even while he was in the process of writing Walden, he acknowledged in a lecture which was published the year after his death under the title of "Life Without Principle," "commonly, if men want anything of me, it is only to know how many acres I can make of their land They never will go to law for my meat; they prefer the shell" (IV, 455). The John Field scene in Walden gave Thoreau an opportunity to give men his meat if only they have "arithmetic enough to carry it through" which he tries to assure by careful control of distance.

Objectively considered, Walden presents a beautiful illusion in the light of pastoral that fashions an ideal utopia outside space and time. From this point of view, the reader senses a feeling of detachment from the events of the work in the beginning where the social order is the dominant subject, and the phenomena of it can be considered apart from the self in order to be contemplated critically. But when the reader becomes involved with the actual text of Walden in the reading encounter and discovers that Thoreau went to the woods with the attitude of an empiricist, assuming, like the pastoralist, that

natural phenomena properly understood would yield truth, but determined to prove it much like the empiricist, the credibility of the general tone establishes a personal factor between the self and the art. The empirical attitude superimposed upon the illusion of pastoral convictions creates a latent contrapuntal theme; there is an attitude which affirms pastoral possibilities, while simultaneously, there is another attitude that is skeptical. This gives the impression that Thoreau will tell exactly what happened in his experiment at Walden Pond, giving both the positive and negative aspects of his discovery whatever each might be. An atmosphere of credibility is thus established. Thoreau constantly assumes the attitude of the pastoralist and empiricist at once in such passages as the one already quoted at greater length in this essay in which he says,

I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved mean, why then to get the whole 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 (II, 101).

The basic honesty of the general tone created by a combination of the empirical attitude with the idealism of the pastoral makes Thoreau's account of his experiment infinitely more credible than it would have been if he had merely

written a book praising and advocating the pastoral life. It is in this way that genre shapes not only outward structure, but inward tone, and the credibility the empirical tone gives to the work of art elicits a willingness on the part of the reader to join with the events the work tells of, and, in this way, evaluative distance is reduced to a minimum, while, at the same time, the reader is kept at a sufficient distance by his recognition of the illusion of the fictional pastoral mode to view the events objectively enough to apprehend them aesthetically.

The title of the first chapter of Walden, among other things, suggests in its own ironic way the empirical undertone of the work. The word "Economy" carries with it a suggestion of the kind of pragmatic attitude usually associated with Benjamin Franklin, but the chapter, while no doubt referring to the basic economy Thoreau practiced at Walden Pond, the thing that liberated him from having to spend too much of his time obtaining the necessities while attempting to live, suggests also the spiritual economy that he took upon himself in his withdrawal out of which it was hoped would come revitalization of spirit and recognition of inner self. The empirical tone is sustained throughout the book in the lists of statistics, in the recognition of the failure of the primitive life as it is exemplified in the episode of the Canadian wood-chopper in chapter six ("I did not know whether he was

as wise as Shakespeare or as simply ignorant as a child," Thoreau said of the woodchopper, "whether to suspect him of a fine poetic consciousness or of stupidity"), in the failure of the simple life as it is suggested by John Field in chapter ten who had not enough arithmetic to live the outwardly simple but inwardly complex life, and in the narrator's own sense of failure as it is suggested in various passages such as one in the closing paragraphs of the first chapter where Thoreau writes, "I never dreamed of any enormity greater than I have committed. I never knew, and never shall know, a worse man than myself" (II, 86).

What Thoreau really wanted to do in Walden by assuming the pastoral perspective and tempering its idealism with the realism of the empirical tone (the whole Walden experiment is much like a controlled laboratory experiment) was to awaken his readers to what he referred to as the crisis of their lives. He did not call upon men to give up their places in the social order and go to places like Walden Pond and build themselves huts with borrowed axes ("I would not have any one adopt my mode of living on any account . . . I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue his own way . . ." II, 79), but he did ask men to get rid of the complacency in their lives that smothered out all meaning by allowing themselves to become shackled to a social order where "men

have become tools of their tools.' A simplified existence was, in his opinion, the answer to many social problems. The pastoral was a perfect ready-made aesthetic convention in which to embody the doctrine of simplicity, and the empirical tone Thoreau imposes upon the genre gives a credibility to the artistic illusion commonly associated with it the effects of which establish a sympathetic bond between the reader and the events of the work.

In order to write a book like Walden based upon an autobiographical experience, it was necessary for Thoreau to assume a point of view from which he could comment upon humanity critically without losing artistic perspective and merely presenting extracts from life in the form of undisguised polemic. He chose a rural posture as a particular point of view in order to see and comment upon society from a detached position. In this sense, the rural setting of Walden is a deliberate device for a particular literary method, in which case Thoreau adopted the pastoral not altogether as an escape from the world but as a means of giving opinions upon it. The reader, aligning himself with the narrator, shares the detachment the pastoral makes possible, thereby gaining a certain amount of objectivity for a clear-headed view of things.

Aesthetically considered, much of the richness of Walden depends upon a knowledge of the generic tradition with which it has an affinity. If a reader is ac-

quainted with the pastoral tradition in literature, with its artistic conventions, its limitations, and its idioms, Walden is more comprehensive and aesthetically appreciable than it would be otherwise. Participation in the myth the pastoral in Walden opens up allows the reader to come into contact with a range of experience that lies beyond possibility in real life.

The basic metaphor of the pastoral is a fortunate one for Walden. It evolves around a penetration into space and time which, in effect, produces an attitude of illimitable spacelessness and timelessness. Thoreau seems to have been troubled even in the conclusion of Walden that the informing attitude of Walden provided in part, at least, by the generic attitude of the pastoral might not be understood. In a passage, part of which has been quoted above on page ninety-eight, he wrote,

It is a ridiculous demand which England and America make, that you shall speak so that they can understand you . . . I fear chiefly lest my expression may not be extra-vagant enough, may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced. Extra Vagant! it depends on how you are yarded . . . I desire to speak somewhere without bounds; like a man in a waking moment, to men in their waking moments; for I am convinced that I cannot exaggerate enough even to lay the foundation of a true expression (II, 356-7).

Psychologically, the reader's own claustrophobic tendencies rising from his being subordinated to the conventions of social traditions and the recognition of his own natural

human finitude can find release in the pastoral world, for there are few barriers in its realm to frustrate the psyche.

When Thoreau chose to use the pastoral myth as the informing generic element in Walden, he knew well what kind of art object the culture required as the occasion for artistic perception. The general failure of the prevailing industrial social order to offer an adequate theory for a way of life was apparent to more people than Thoreau alone. The pastoral myth, recognized as an artistic "illusion," would likely have been considered inadequate also for such a profound purpose as offering a way of life had it been presented untransformed as just an illusion. But Thoreau's effort in Walden was to pull the myth out of what he would himself have considered the ineffectual land of dreams and give it a basis in real life. As has been suggested earlier, what Thoreau does in Walden is this: he takes the myth of a fictive mode and applies it to realistic content. In this sense, Walden is a blend of myth and realism, of ideal and actual, telling of a mythical movement within actual experience. Thus, there is the myth that makes the reader constantly aware of art and the experience that makes him tend to believe what is said in the art. Here is the scheme for the personal orientation of the reader. Thoreau's superimposition of the pastoral upon autobio-

graphical experience creates a perspective with the pastoral that satisfies the aesthetic sense, while, at the same time, the actual autobiographical experience has the effect of making the events of the work remain true to real life.

The pastoral world in Walden and the autobiographical world overlap each other and work together in such a way that the autobiographical content with its aspect of verisimilitude is a means to the pastoral illusion. Walden is just enough of the mythic to allow the reader to introject his libido into the whole affair and just realistic enough to keep the introjection in a real and familiar world. By using autobiography, Thoreau confronts the reader directly, and much of the intense and meaningful quality of Walden results from the fact that what the reader observes in the events of the work is a real flesh and blood human being like himself acting. The vividness, the intensity, and the basic humanity of the experience a reader derives from the work is a result of his awareness and rapport with the art object of which a real human being is the central part. His affinity with the narrator and the events is thus established and genre works toward perspective.

Footnotes

¹James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver, editors, Perspectives on Fiction (New York, 1968), p. 232.

²Theory of Literature (New York, 1942), p. 226.

³The Dynamics of Literary Response (New York, 1968), p. 221.

⁴"The Dehumanization of Art" in A Modern Book of Esthetics, ed. Melvin M. Rader (New York, 1938), p. 353.

⁵Holland, p. 310.

⁶Holland, p. 67.

⁷Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England (Gainesville, 1952), p. 4.

⁸Paul, p. 132.

FORM AS AN AESTHETIC PRINCIPLE

CHAPTER IV

The importance of form to the aesthetic principle in Walden will be realized when a reader understands that it is through form that Thoreau directs his readers to aesthetic recognition by processes of separating and uniting the events in various selected combinations which work toward the center of the subject dealt with. In a sense, the influence of form in Walden is as powerfully appealing to the mind as the subject matter, and more definite, so far as aesthetics is concerned, than the subject matter itself, for the meaning of the subject depends, to some extent, at least, upon personal experience of the reader. The subject matter of Walden, as the many commentaries written on Walden show, admits of many different interpretations. But the way in which Thoreau makes his reader think by use of form does not admit of many differences, for form can never be anything else but what it is in a work of art. This is not to say, of course, that aesthetic values are limited to formal aspects alone; aesthetic values are bound up in both form and subject. Collectively, form and subject work toward

a kind of higher mental action in aesthetic experience. In Walden, as in all works of art, values are expressed by the creative activity of the author when he provides in his art the means through such things as form of aesthetic valuation. But form and subject are equally related to the aesthetic process and are not easily separated. Any change in one necessarily involves some change in the other. Form is partly objective and partly subjective. So far as it is a structural framework for a work of art it is objective. But form, as every reader knows, shapes responses, and, in this sense, it is subjective.

Among other things man desires a predictable, ordered world, a world toward which he can orient himself comfortably. Much of his desire for an ordered world is the motivation behind the pleasure he finds in the formal aspects of art. This is not to say that art always offers order to man, but if it does not it at least offers protected situations characterized by barriers of psychic insulation which allow him to be aware of the disparity between his desire for order and what he may actually receive in art. Psychologically, form in art is thus very important, for, as Norman Holland points out in his chapter on form in The Dynamics of Literary Response, the ordering and structuring powers in art can be felt by the reader to be equivalent to ordering powers of his

own. In the face of the disjointed experiences that daily life offers, the psychological desire for form and order is satisfied by the structure of a work of art like Walden

An idea or an emotion as a human possibility is a kind of momentary, one-dimensional thing of being. But, as Robert Zimmerman has conjectured, when it is embodied in an appropriate form in art, it may expand and assume other dimensions by being set into an artistic situation within which there occur various interactions, oppositions, and modifications. He goes on to say, ". . . form becomes the consciously created and objectified schema or organizational arrangement within which matter as material or content is placed. It is a mode of relating and realizing the material components, of setting them against each other and igniting the aesthetic tension."¹ When content begins to live within a formal pattern, a work of art becomes an aesthetic object for a reader. Form, in this sense, serves to actualize matter, to aid in releasing whatever potentialities it has by placing it in new and perhaps fertile relationships. In this way, an appropriate form heightens and stimulates the process of presentation drawing out from the material all the latent phenomenal qualities it possesses. Form creates relationships and produces tensions by fusing various qualities into relational patterns capable of draining

them of their aesthetic qualities. The organic life-process Thoreau presents in Walden is in this very way made a phenomenal experience for the reader. But, as Mark Schorer points out, form is a great deal more than merely an organizational schema around which the various materials are centered; it is an artist's means of exploring and developing his content, and the means of his conveying its meaning and evaluating it.²

The central purpose of this chapter will be to discuss how form works toward perspective and definition of a theme through its support of the pattern or distance in Walden, as that pattern has earlier been described. The form Thoreau creates for Walden (a form that is, to a degree, suggested by the genre he uses) both enriches and renews the reader's apprehension of the whole range of action told of in the work. The exact accounts of surveying the ponds, the building of the hut, the lists of statistics given, etc., in Walden are all a part of Thoreau's method which comprises a part of the structure which, in turn, goes a long way toward defining the tone. Form not only discovers values to the reader as the work progresses, but, by establishing an atmosphere, along with other elements, evaluates them for him.

In order to manage the autobiographical material in Walden that could have been extremely monotonous, Thoreau had to find a method of narration, a point of view, a

genre, a structure, and a style, all of which would work toward creating a proper perspective that would elicit aesthetic responses. Structure is very important in this process as can be seen when a reader discovers the significance of the central movement in Walden which is involved with a passing from the world of the diseased social order told of in the first chapter to the world of the awakened man described in the conclusion. But this is not to say that Thoreau was a formalist who would exclude the human element from art and reduce art to such things as genre, structure, etc. Such an artist would have received Thoreau's scorn, for he felt that by such principles ". . . are made the belle-lettres and the beaux-arts and their professors," for which, he felt, we have no use.

According to what Thoreau had to say about art, a reader could get the idea that he thought the most important aspect of a work of art was the idea that informed it rather than matters of genre, structure, etc. His theory for art suggests that idea is to dominate formal aspects of medium. It supports self-expression of the artist, which includes a subjective origin of artistic concepts and an organic theory for the growth of a work of art. In 1840, defining his position on art theory, he wrote in his journal, ". . . the highest condition of art is artlessness" (VII, 153); in 1852 he continued in his journal, "I do not know but thoughts written down thus

in a journal might be printed in the same form with greater advantage than if the related ones were brought together into separate essays. They are now allied to life, and are seen by the reader not to be far-fetched. It is more simple, less artful. I feel that in the other case I should have no proper frame for my sketches" (IX, 239). Art in which the expression was vital and natural was best, he thought, as an 1859 journal entry shows, where he continues,

When I hear the hypercritical quarrelling about grammar and style, the position of the particles, etc., etc., stretching or contracting every speaker to certain rules of theirs,--Mr. Webster, perhaps, not having spoken according to Mr. Kirkham's rule,--I see that they forget that the first requisite and rule is that expression shall be vital and natural, as much as the voice of a brute or an interjection: first of all, mother tongue; and last of all, artificial or father tongue. Essentially your truest poetic sentence is as free and lawless as a lamb's bleat. The grammarian is often one who can neither cry nor laugh, yet thinks that he can express human emotions. So the posture-masters tell you how you shall walk,--turning your toes out, perhaps, excessively,--but so the beautiful walkers are not made (XVII, 386).

These journal entries, spanning almost Thoreau's whole career as an artist, clearly illustrate that his theory for art was somewhat anti-formal. But, in practice, it can be seen that Thoreau was very much interested in creating a perspective through formal devices out of which would rise the greatest aesthetic possibilities for his art. He was very careful with such things as

arrangement and unification, the presence of which enforce artistic perspective by distinguishing art from the confused and disjointed forms of actual experience. Thoreau's theory and practice may thus appear to be contradictory; perhaps a brief explanation of his aesthetics will aid in understanding the matter better.

Believing that aesthetic contemplation was an integral part of the normal order of actual life, Thoreau opposed a priori theories of art that made art a thing divorced from life and reality. The thing Thoreau found wrong with Ruskin's Modern Painters, for example, was that it lacked the very life of which it spoke. But rhetorical devices that created perspective for art were condoned; he praised Gilpin's casting a certain tint of coloring over his completed paintings, giving them an appearance of distance, and he enjoyed looking at the landscape through the bottom of a tumbler or observing a sunset with his head inverted between his legs because it added an "unusual" perspective to things.

True to the principles of Transcendentalism, Thoreau's aesthetics began by assuming that nature was the prototype of all beauty. This conception of beauty was obviously based not upon the static, inanimate forms of art of various kinds, but, being based upon nature, was based upon dynamic, organic forms. The effect of such a theory of art and of aesthetics was a passing beyond conceiving

form as an object to thinking of form in terms of a function and passing beyond limiting aesthetics to admiration of isolated entities to thinking of aesthetics as a part of the normal order of life itself. The question to be asked about art then was not whether it was an object to be admired aesthetically, but whether it performed a function in relation to life. If it performed a function in life, then it was aesthetically admirable. Such a concept of art and aesthetics required the perceiver of beauty and the creator of art to deal with both the form and the function of the art object. This concept allowed the artist to think of his work as an aspect of life itself. This is probably what Thoreau had in mind when he wrote Walden where the cycle of seasons underscores the three-part structure modeled on the typical religious ritual of purification that will be discussed later. Though form was carefully attended to in his works, his dynamic theory did indeed put more emphasis upon conception than execution, and the aesthetical attitude that informed his works included the ethical, the scientific, and the aesthetic, all bound up together, for he believed that the good, the true, and the beautiful were all inseparably related.

Art created according to the dynamic formula Thoreau prescribed has the psychological effect of minimizing the artistic distance between the reader and the art, making

the reader less aware of the rhetoric of genre, structure, etc. Because of his nearness to the work, the reader's investigation of the events of the work of art such as Thoreau created was the equivalent of investigating life itself. It would seem, with Thoreau's opposition to established theory, that the inspiration for creating a work of art from the point of view of identifying art with life was not to be found in the annals of established artistic tradition but rather in life itself. It would also seem that the aesthetical possibilities of a work of art were to be judged by whether the work participates in the goals of life itself rather than in ancient artistic tradition or in antiquated aesthetic theories, and that the proper orientation of the perceiver leads not to some kind of detached aesthetical admiration, but to participation in the fullness of a kind of imaginative life that was in many ways equivalent to real life. But this is not so, as the technique of Walden clearly illustrates. His use of the pastoral for genre and his elaborate structure in Walden indicate his interest both in artistic tradition and in life itself.

In theory and in practice, Thoreau seems never to have separated the beautiful from the useful. As his comments upon Greenough's theory of architecture show, outward embellishment in any thing meant very little to him. Of Greenough's theory Thoreau wrote,

But as for Greenough, I felt as if it was dilettantism, and he was such a reformer in architecture as Channing in social matters. He began at the cornice. It was only how to put a core of truth within the ornaments, that every sugar-plum might in fact have an almond or carroway seed in it, and not how the inhabitant, the indweller, might be true and let the ornaments take care of themselves. He seemed to me to lean over the cornice and timidly whisper this half truth to the rude indwellers, who really knew it more interiorly than he. What of architectural beauty I now see, I know has gradually grown from within outward, out of the character and necessities of the indweller and builder, without even a thought for mere ornament, but an unconscious nobleness and truthfulness of character and life; and whatever additional beauty of this kind is destined to be produced will be preceded and accompanied, aye, created, by a like unconscious beauty of life. One of the most beautiful buildings in this country is a logger's hut in the woods, equally beautiful will be the citizen's suburban box, when the life of the indweller shall be as simple and as agreeable to the imagination, and there is as little straining after effect in the style of his dwelling (IX, 182-3).

This comment suggests that Thoreau would have challenged any system of aesthetics that separated the aesthetic from the useful and a sense of reality, and it also suggests that art should always have an organic structure, be fitted to serve life. He believed the foundation of whatever is beautiful was located in the movements, sentiments, and sensations of daily life, and he probably would have rejected any explanation of the aesthetic attitude by negation which holds that it is something other than the useful, the moral, the elemental, etc., which characterizes aesthetic experience.

For Thoreau, art and beauty and imagination were

integral parts of normal human experience. Beauty was to be identified with whatever is desirable and good; things ranging all the way from ordinary sensual satisfaction (standing in a swamp up to his chin) to the highest moral demands such as he describes in "Higher Laws" were possible aspects of beauty. Instead of some abstract external existence, the aesthetic was a part of the normal order of existence itself, and when Thoreau strives after a form in A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers and Walden that will reflect life, he means to make his art a part of the normal order of experience. He felt that the aesthetic sentiments had their basis in life; hence, his belief that art should not be a luxury of the imagination merely, but an integral part of daily experience. It follows from such an aesthetic position that it is a far richer experience when instrumental values can be combined and enjoyed with what is usually thought of as aesthetic values. Because Thoreau was interested in the aesthetic finding its fruition in real life, he was disappointed with the social order where the best part of a man is plowed into the soil for compost. The tragedy of humanity, as he saw it in Walden, was that it was unaware of the possibilities for living a good life. For this reason Thoreau concluded Walden reminding his reader, "Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn."

Thoreau's theory of aesthetic perception is relevant to a discussion of his aesthetics because its subjectivity indicates his requiring a functional relationship between life and such things as art. As he explained it, "There is no beauty in the sky, but in the eye that sees it" (XVII, 367-8). Linked to his theory of perception was the notion that the perception of the aesthetic was dependent upon the virtue of the perceiver. Writing of this matter he said, "The constant inquiry which nature puts is: 'Are you virtuous? Then you can behold me.' Beauty, fragrance, music, sweetness, and joy of all kinds are for the virtuous" (X, 80). In Walden Thoreau's bleaching and purifying the boards of his hut before building, his bathing in Walden Pond, etc., are symbols of purification linked with becoming virtuous enough to perceive the aesthetic in life.

From the reader's point of view this hypothesis indicates, to use Thoreau's own words, that, "Nature is fair in proportion as the youth is pure. The heavens and the earth are one flower. The earth is the calyx, the heavens the corolla" (XI, 225). From the artist's point of view it means that, ". . . the perception and love of the beautiful and a delicate moral sense betrays what kind of beauty the writer has been conversant with" (IX, 31). The perceiver must be virtuous if he is to discover beauty in life or in anything else such as art. The artist must

be virtuous if he is to be able to create art with aesthetic possibilities. The structure of Walden, as it will later be pointed out, follows the typical religious pattern of purification through renunciation, withdrawal, meditation, and renewal. Though a reader need not necessarily be virtuous in order to see this, it might help to be virtuous in order to feel it as Thoreau wanted him to feel it. Of Gilpin, who apparently did not share Thoreau's view, he wrote, "Gilpin talked as if there was some food for the soul in mere physical light and shadow, as if, without the suggestion of a moral, they could give a man pleasure or pain!" (XII, 103). By this, Thoreau seems to suggest that formal aspects of art should provide "food for the soul." The structure, by exploring and developing the content of Walden, does this.

When Thoreau's theory of perception is considered in any detail, it will be found to be somewhat ambivalent from the point of view of philosophy if not from the point of view of art. When Thoreau was fronted with the Romantic dilemma regarding whether the world of natural phenomena was actually real or only a symbol of the real, he apparently attempted to balance both views. In one of his early essays, aligning himself with those who felt the natural world was real, he wrote, "Let us not underate the value of a fact; it will one day flower into a truth" (V, 130).

In "Natural History of Massachusetts" Thoreau was

surveying a number of scientific articles on natural history at Emerson's request. A journal entry, under a heading simply listed, "Goethe," and dated December 8, 1837, further indicates Thoreau's propensity for factual evidence. In the entry he praises Goethe by saying,

He is generally satisfied with giving an exact description of objects as they appear to him, and his genius is exhibited in the points he seizes upon and illustrates. His description of Venice and her environs as seen from the Marcusthurm is that of an unconcerned spectator, whose object is faithfully to describe what he sees, and that, too, for the most part, in the order in which he saw it. It is this trait which is chiefly to be prized in the book; even the reflections of the author do not interfere with his descriptions (VII, 15).

These comments illustrate how Thoreau differed from the idealists such as Emerson who apparently thought that the ideal theory of existence was superior to the more or less instinctive belief in the absolute existence of external phenomena. Emerson, voicing his opinion on the matter, wrote in the chapter on idealism in "Nature,"

Culture inverts the vulgar views of nature, and brings the mind to call that apparent which it uses to call real, and that real which it uses to call visionary. Children, it is true, believe in the external world. The belief that it appears only, is an after-thought, but with culture this faith will as surely arise on the mind as did the first. The advantage of the ideal theory over the popular faith is this, that it presents the world in precisely that view which is most desirable to the mind. It is, in fact, the view which reason, both speculative and practical, that is, philosophy and virtue, take. For seen in the light of thought, the world always is phenomenal; and virtue subordinates it to the mind. Idealism sees the

world in God.

Evidently, Emerson subordinated the idea of absolute existence to the ideal theory of existence. In contrast to Emerson, Thoreau sought to maintain a balance between the two views. April 2, 1852, Thoreau recorded in his journal after an excursion to Sudbury meadows, "Too late now for the morning influence and inspiration. The birds sing not so earnestly and joyously; there is a blurring ripple on the surface of the lake. How few valuable observations can we make in youth! What if there were united the susceptibility of youth with the discrimination of age? Once I was part and parcel of Nature; now I am observant of her" (IX, 378).

From what he says in "Nature," it is apparent that Emerson thought the artist needed only to see the world of actual phenomena from the right angle of vision and simply record what he saw in order to create valuable art with symbolic potentialities. This is the hypothesis to which his theory of ideal existence rather naturally led. But Thoreau's actual experience with nature had taught him that the artist himself had to create the symbols that went into his art if his art was to be symbolic. However, he did feel that the artist must draw upon nature for the source of his symbols. His various revisions of Walden, Lyndon Shanley illustrates in The Making of Walden, was a struggle for symbols as he transformed his autobio-

graphical recording into a work of art. "He is the richest," Thoreau recorded in his journal while he was at work on the Walden manuscript, "who has the most use for nature as raw material of tropes and symbols with which to describe his life . . . If I am overflowing with life, am rich in experience for which I lack expression, then nature will be my language full of poetry, --all nature will fable, and every natural phenomenon be a myth" (XI, 135). Perhaps Thoreau's point is made more lucid in Walden, where, speaking of his labor in the bean-field, he says, ". . . some must work in fields if only for the sake of tropes and expression, to serve a parable-maker one day" (II, 179).

When a reader surveys the works of Thoreau, he can see that as an artist Thoreau took advantage of both sides of the Romantic dilemma. In A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, the idealistic position is generally presented. Near the ending of the work Thoreau sums up his position by explaining,

We need pray for no higher heaven than the pure senses can furnish, a purely sensuous life. Our present senses are but the rudiments of what they are destined to become . . . The eyes were not made for such groveling uses as they are now put to and worn out by but to behold beauty now invisible. May we not see God? Are we to be put off and amused in this life, as it were with a mere allegory? Is not Nature, rightly read, that of which she is commonly taken to be but the symbol merely? (I, 408)

But even in his idealistic argument, Thoreau was a little

uneasy. To read nature rightly was no easy thing. "It is easier to discover another such a new world as Columbus did . . ." Thoreau said, but quickly added, ". . . there is only necessary a moment's sanity and sound senses, to teach us that there is a nature behind the ordinary, in which we have only some vague preemption right and western reserve as yet. We live on the outskirts of that region" (I, 409). In Walden, as C. R. Anderson has illustrated, Thoreau turns from philosophic idealism to the other side of the dilemma. Actually, only once does Thoreau concern himself at much length with philosophic idealism in Walden when near the ending of the second chapter he writes,

Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous. If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale . . . I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think that is which appears to be" (II, 106-7).

The "reality" of which Thoreau speaks in this passage is probably a kind of transcendental reality, the reality of idealism. But following immediately upon this passage is another already quoted near the end of the second chapter of this essay, which is a passage that exploits the other side of the dilemma in which "reality" refers to the reality of absolute existence. Thoreau concludes in it,

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 . . . Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe . . . till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call reality, and say, This is, and no mistake; and then begin, having a point d'appui, below freshet and frost and fire, a place where you might found a wall or a state . . ." (II, 108-9).

Thoreau knew that an artist needed the vision to look beyond the world of actual phenomena, but he felt that he needed the actual world, too, in order to make his images concrete. It was, in his opinion, the prerogative of the artist to declare the limits of the world in his artistic creation. "The boundaries of the actual," he recorded in his journal in 1853 while he was at work on the final manuscript revisions of Walden, "are no more fixed and rigid than the elasticity of our imaginations" (XI, 203). Thus, Thoreau's theory of perception indicates not a struggle to prove some philosophical hypothesis, but an effort to balance reality and ideality.

Perception for Thoreau meant a great deal more than mere seeing; it meant looking into a thing and discovering its relevance to the perceiver's own mode of being. For this reason such views as the scientific vision of things Thoreau felt to be inadequate. Thoreau was concerned over the scientific exclusion of value from the world of fact. He felt that fact deprived of value could never contribute much to human experience. He believed that things must be

known aesthetically as well as factually, and one of Thoreau's most valuable recognitions as an artist was that the world is not merely a material to be used, but an object to be enjoyed; it was not a means to something else, but of great value in its own offering. To know anything in any worthwhile fashion meant not only to experience a vivid apprehension of the outward features of the object, but to go further and apprehend a reality that lies far deeper than the face of things. For this reason, the scientific way of knowing was only a partial way of knowing, and the chief problem with the scientific view is that science does not concern itself with the inward nature of the object; it cares only for casual and logical relations to other things. The reality of the object was thus, from Thoreau's point of view, left undisclosed. In one of his late journal entries, Thoreau, summing up his position, wrote,

The scientific differs from the poetic or lively description somewhat as the photographs, which we so weary of viewing, from paintings and sketches, though this comparison is too favorable to science. All science is only a makeshift, a means to an end which is never attained. After all, the truest description, and that by which another living man can most readily recognize a flower, is the unmeasured and eloquent one which the sight of it inspires. No scientific description will supply the want of this, though you should count and measure and analyze every atom that seems to compose it (XX, 117).

Apparently, Thoreau thought that by turning the subject's attention from the object to things to which it

is merely related, science obscures the reality of the object with substitutes for it. Art comes nearer to the true reality of the thing, he thought, by penetrating appearances and dealing with its deeper life. "A written word is the choicest of relics," he wrote. ". . . it is . . . nearest to life itself" (II, 114). Thoreau realized what every artist has known, that, to use the words of Hugo Munsterberg, ". . . the scientist analyzes where the artist interprets, the scientist seeks elements where the artist aims at the meaning, the scientist works towards laws where the artist seeks values, the scientist explains where the artist appreciates; but both . . . aim to give us an understanding of the objective world, both give us truths."³ Thoreau believed that the scientist had endangered his capacity for understanding the meaning of phenomena by trusting too much in his analytic methods of knowing. Of the matter he said,

I witness a beauty in the form or coloring of the clouds which addresses itself to my imagination, for which you account scientifically to my understanding, but do not so account to my imagination. It is what it suggests and is the symbol of that I care for, and if, by any trick of science, you rob it of its symbolicalness, you do me no service and explain nothing. I, standing twenty miles off, see a crimson cloud in the horizon. You tell me it is a mass of vapor which absorbs all other rays and reflects the red, but that is nothing to the purpose, for this red vision excites me, stirs my blood, makes my thoughts flow, and I have new and indescribable fancies, and you have not touched the secret of that influence. If there is not

something unexplainable to the understanding, some elements of mystery, it is quite insufficient. If there is nothing in it which speaks to my imagination, what boots it? What sort of science is that which enriches the understanding, but robs the imagination? (IX, 155-56).

The problem with the scientific view, as Thoreau understood it, was that it was non-aesthetic. This is why he feared in his later years, as comments in his journal indicate, that his observations were becoming more scientific, less artistic. "I fear that the character of my knowledge is from year to year becoming more distinct and scientific; that, in exchange for views as wide as heaven's cope, I am being narrowed down to the field of the microscope. I see details, not wholes nor the shadow of the whole. I count some parts, and say, 'I know.' The cricket's chirp now fills the air in dry fields near pine woods" (VIII, 406), he wrote.

Thoreau believed that natural phenomena and natural processes couldn't be understood unless they were closely studied in their actual living connections. As one commentator has pointed out, "His spirit rebelled against artificial classifications, against the unreal isolation of the dissecting room and the laboratory, against the rigid application of formulas to natural phenomena."⁴ Still, like the scientists, he observed closely as his journal shows where page after page is filled with recording of minute observation. But what he sought to do as an artist was to somehow go beyond observation of

facts to the meaning of facts as they are related to human life, while at the same time recognizing the validity of facts.

From Thoreau's own experiments, it is evident that he knew the analytic ability of science could contribute to aesthetic experience, but he feared it might stifle it also. From his personal experience, he knew that it was an easy step to move from the aesthetic way of seeing things to the purely cognitive. "Man cannot afford to be a naturalist, to look at Nature directly," he wrote, "but only with the side of his eye. He must look through and beyond her. To look at her is fatal as to look at the head of Medusa. It turns the man of science to stone. I feel that I am dissipated by so many observations" (XI, 45). What he believed was that in order to ever know reality in all its aesthetic uniqueness and novelty, one had to get beyond the practical observation of science, to go beyond being a spectator merely, and penetrate by a kind of sympathy to the real nature of phenomena, to become a participant, thus discovering its beauty and the multiplicity of its qualities. It is observable that what Thoreau believed about nature, so far as aesthetics is concerned, he believed about art also. This means that the aspects of narrative technique, genre, structure, and style would have to function toward revelation of the vital forces latent in the material of art, else they

would be the stuff out of which belle-lettres are made.

Thoreau's theory of art and aesthetics suggests that no form of artistic beauty can be confined to a work of art alone, that the work of art itself must somehow participate in the visionary goal toward which a social order is working, or ought to work. In Thoreau's reconstruction of the world (as it is created in Walden) the most characteristic feature of the imaginative process, whereby it is distinguished from practical activity and ordinary experience in the everyday world of actual life, is the creation of an artistic pattern or form that works toward conveying meaning and evaluating it. Whereas the story of the experiment at Walden Pond, as the narrator relates it, appeals to the reader's curiosity and the genre to his intelligence, the pattern appeals to his aesthetic sense, for it is through the pattern that the events of the book are discovered as a whole. "'Pattern,'" as E. M. Forster once said, "which seems so rigid, is connected with atmosphere, which seems so fluid."⁵ The basic symmetry of the pattern created in Walden is memorable and beautiful long after many of the details have been forgotten.

Most of the commentaries written on the structure of Walden have been concerned with pointing out that, generally, the book is patterned after the cycle of the seasons of a year. The unfolding of the year's experience in the woods suggests, in turn, the Romantic ideal

of organic form, and it is generally supposed that the structure of Walden is to be explained in terms of organic form. It is commonly known that the organic theory of form suggests that literary invention involves the natural, unplanned, and unconscious process by which things grow, and that the parts of a work of art should be interrelated like the various parts of a living organism. The theory further suggests that form and content should have an internal aesthetic relationship, that ideally form should exist through and in content and that content should exist in and through form. Assuming that the beauty of nature was the highest kind of beauty and that natural forms constituted the highest art, Thoreau patterned the structure of Walden, to some degree, after the model of the seasons of the year. He believed that the best way for an artist to learn how the mind creates the forms for its ideas was by observing natural forms in nature. Thus, it appears as if Thoreau was conscious of the romantic theory of organic form and employed its method in his own artistic creation.

Thoreau's journal entries, as well as his art practice, illustrate that he felt man might relate his art to nature and create a higher form of art than would otherwise be possible by imitating nature directly or, as Charles Metzger put it, speaking of Emerson, ". . . by creating forms in terms of natural principles of growth and adapta-

tion; in short, by consciously relating the various forms of art to their significant function."⁶ For Thoreau, as every reader knows, nature was the thing that drew out the best in men, and the beauty of the natural environment constituted a major resource that was unavailable to those who were oblivious to the natural world. The universe conceived as an organic entity, evolutionary, vitalistic, and immanent with spirit, offered a way to revitalize human experience through a kind of participation with nature. Thoreau, believing that the laws that governed nature and the laws of the mind had a common source in the Creator, felt that nature understood correctly provided, as he once said, "tropes and expression, to serve a parable-maker one day." For this reason, the scenery in Walden is highly symbolic and the form is functional since it is modeled upon the seasons. Thus, such natural phenomena as the passage of the seasons around which Walden is structured have deep psychological significance. "In the seasons of Walden," Sherman Paul said, "he could trace his metamorphoses; the passage from servitude to liberation, and the self-transcendence of his transformation from impurity to purity--the rebirth of new life out of the old."⁷

What actually took place at Walden Pond during Thoreau's residence there is difficult to discover. It is known that he was trying to put into practice the

doctrine of simplicity illustrated in Walden, that he was keeping journal notes and writing A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, and, perhaps, preparing the first rough draft of Walden. But the external events are not told in Walden; instead, there is given an account of a kind of inward exploration of the author's soul, and the chapters of the work that tell of that exploration are arranged in such a manner that they suggest a rather casual unfolding of the year's experience in the woods. This manner of narration suggests, of course, the Romantic ideal of organic form. But the chronicle aspect of the autobiographical experience is more of an artistic device from ordering various materials than it is a strict form. It is notable that the account of the two years spent at the pond is reduced into a single year and the material of the work is expanded to include incidents all the way from 1837 to 1854. But Thoreau went to the woods to live the organic life, and it is only natural that the autobiographical account of it would suggest an organic form. Sherman Paul points out that, "Walden . . . follows the cycle of developing consciousness, a cycle that parallels the change of the seasons. It is a recapitulation of Thoreau's development . . . a development from the sensuous, active, external (unconscious and out-of-doors) summer life, through the stages of autumnal consciousness and the withdrawal inward to the self-reflection of winter, to

the promise of ecstatic rebirth in the spring."⁸ Paul goes on to say that Walden not only advocated the organic life in its theme and structure, but it also filled Thoreau's need for self-therapy, and that by creating an organic form for his work he effected his own resolution for rebirth.

The structure of Walden shows that Thoreau, as an artist, was trying to create a pattern which would embody for contemplation and recognition the idea of renewal he had discovered in his experience in nature. Thoreau thus structured Walden, to an extent, around the seasons of the year in an attempt directed toward achieving the unity and order for his work that he observed in the natural cycle. He knew that human beings need order because it, to use Morse Peckham's words, ". . . is an adaptational necessity for us that we experience order."⁹ In a sense, the basic pattern of Walden is expressed by alluding to the seasons. Technically speaking, this pattern would give great balance and a sense of steady progression if the seasons were worked out so that each was allotted about the same proportion of the text. Most readers feel that, anyway, the pattern works toward a sense of completion, as regards feelings and logical processes, and that there is a natural discipline and coordination of function achieved in the formal arrangement. The sense of movement in time constantly present in Walden

resulting from its being structured around the passing phenomena of the seasons does give a sense of progress as well as process to the narrative. This creates interest in what is happening and keeps the reader involved in the events of the work as the reader looks forward to the outcome of things.

By arranging the events of Walden around the passing phenomena of the seasons, Thoreau does achieve a kind of symmetrical form. This makes the facts of his subject more easily exhibited, but it produces, contrary to much critical opinion, a rigidity of form that is not very relevant to life, for the facts of life do not exist in such neatly arranged form, and neither do feelings. But the form of Walden is logical, and logical activity is emotionally pleasurable to the reader who is sensitive and intelligent enough to grasp the aesthetic possibilities of form.

When Lyndon Shanley made his study of the structure of Walden, he noticed that the cycle of seasons was inadequate to explain the balance and proportion of the whole work, for it is summer from the first chapter through the twelfth, autumn in only one chapter, the thirteenth, winter in the following three, spring in the seventeenth, and the conclusion falls outside the time cycle. Shanley goes on to explain the structure of the work by pointing out that the general framework for the structure rests in the

autobiographical narrative Thoreau wrote to explain what his life was like at Walden Pond, adding, "Within this frame, Thoreau ordered the story of his experiment in three ways: by topics, describing various qualities and aspects of his life; by the cycle of the day, telling of the events and occupations of typical days; and by the cycle of the year, narrating the changes in his surroundings and his doings that the progress of the seasons brought about. These factors do not operate separately, but together or in turns."¹⁰ Though this is a fairly accurate analysis of the structure of Walden, it hardly needs to be said that it is vastly complicated and suggests that steady progression of the central theme and balance of the whole is next to impossible to comprehend for the average reader, the postulated common man, to whom, after all, the book was probably directed.

In his attempt to explain the structure of Walden, C. R. Anderson notes that the annual cycle is important to the total design of the work, but that it is no mere mechanical formula as is illustrated by the way in which the contents are proportioned in the light of the seasons. Beneath the autobiographical chronicle and annual cycle, he saw two structures of "much greater subtlety and significance." The one more apparent is a set of patterns in chapter groupings, "beginning with the dualities that plagued all transcendentalists in their search for unity."

The old problem of civilization as it is opposed to nature with man as a product of both is worked out, Anderson points out, in the structure, as Thoreau, for instance, balances chapter three, which deals with the language and instruction of men, against chapter four, which deals with the language of nature. In this way (through contrast) the first six chapters of Walden (exclusive of the initial chapter which does not fit into this scheme for structure) "are woven into a design of contrasting threads of society and solitude but with the latter dominant . . ." he concludes. The other scheme for structure which comprises the last half of the book "can be shown to follow transcendental patterns," Anderson says, and continues to point out how it does so beginning with the triad formed around chapter eleven where the hero of the work begins to work his way up through nature toward the higher life of the spirit.

Both Shanley's and Anderson's commentaries on the structure of Walden are very helpful to the serious student who is interested in the formal aspects of the work, for their comments on structure offer valuable insights into the arrangement and presentation of the materials of Walden. However, when their commentaries on structure are considered, along with those of other critics like Lauriate Lane, Jr., who is primarily interested in the organic structure of Walden in the sense

that all parts are carefully interrelated, and John C. Broderick, whose comments on structure are primarily interested in the contrast between night and morning, sleep and awakening, it is evident that the structure of Walden is such that it admits to a number of various analyses. Considering that Walden is a carefully designed work of art calculated to illustrate a system of values through rhetorically managed materials, it is, perhaps, possible and logical to assume that one aspect of rhetoric would support another, and that just as genre functions towards supporting point of view, it also suggests a particular structure.

The genre in which Walden participates is the pastoral, a classical aesthetic convention which shapes much of the structure of the work. The structure that the genre suggests is a three-part structure which embodies withdrawal and renunciation in the beginning, meditation and renewal in the middle chapters, and discovery and rebirth in the ending. It will be noticed that the structure of Walden with its symbolic passage of seasons, etc., follows the form suggested by the classical pastoral tradition in which natural phenomena consistently suggest psychological and spiritual phenomena. The autobiographical chronicle also supports this organizational schema. Thoreau's act of withdrawing from the complex life of civilization in order to merge with the

life of nature, thus leaving the artificial for the real, is told of in the first chapters. In the middle chapters, his life of meditation at Walden Pond is reported. A kind of triumphant rebirth is narrated in the last three chapters. When a reader realizes the structural significance of the pastoral in Walden, he can see that the form becomes the artist's means of exploring and developing the content, of conveying and evaluating its meaning. It is commonly known that the form of the pastoral is the expression of instincts and impulses deeply rooted in the nature of humanity which form an important part of human thought.

Considered as being linked with the three-part pastoral connotation of form, Walden divides up structurally in precise proportions. Chapters one, two, and three describe a spatial movement away from the complexities of the social order toward nature, chiefly characterized by an atmosphere of withdrawal and renunciation; chapters four through fifteen describe life in nature, the main characteristic of which is contemplation and renewal; the final three chapters are marked by discovery, rebirth, and return. This organizational schema suggests precise balance and proportion of material, and it functions in such a way that the principal theme of the work (the renovation of man in nature) is discovered and explored through structure. In this sense, structure be-

comes much more than a mechanical device for ordering materials; it functions rhetorically in such a way as to support both point of view, as it has been explained, and genre, all of which work toward the central meaning of Walden.

In chapter one Thoreau tells of building his hut from timbers he hewed with a borrowed axe and from boards he salvaged out of a shanty he had bought from James Collins. He tells of digging his cellar on the side of a sloping hill and of, at last, on the 4th of July, 1845, beginning the occupancy of his hut. This movement away from Concord toward the green landscape is, symbolically considered, an act of withdrawal and renunciation. Thoreau makes it clear in the first three chapters of Walden that the effort in the experiment will be to merge with nature, to get rid of the world so far as that is possible and to discover the self. But nature is not the goal of his experiment; it is the means of attaining it. Through anticipating nature's ways and living a life of simplicity in nature, Thoreau hopes to regain his grip on life by regaining the acquaintance with nature that has been lost in civilization. As the structure suggests, he will participate in nature's cycle. Explaining why he went to Walden Pond he said, "To anticipate, not the sunrise and the dawn merely, but, if possible, Nature herself!" (II, 19). Living the organic life close to nature at Walden Pond,

Thoreau is able in the first chapter to set up a contrast between the mechanistic image of man as he is in the diseased social order and oppose to it an organic image of man as he might be and as Thoreau believes he should be. It becomes clear from what Thoreau says in the first chapter of Walden that the purpose of his experiment at Walden Pond is to discover whether man, once he has secured the things which are necessary to life, can really have another choice other than to work toward the superfluities. He meant to live his own life in such a way that he might make this discovery, believing that "... the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run" (II, 34).

Thoreau's boasting about the enjoyment of his life of simplicity in the early pages of Walden becomes a kind of satire on the materialistic economy that places its values in a philosophy of abundance. This prepares the way for chapter two which he begins with a metaphor of property owning, suggesting that the reader should live free and uncommitted as long as possible. "But I would say to my fellows, once for all," the narrator says, "As long as possible live free and uncommitted. It makes but little difference whether you are committed to a farm or the county jail" (II, 93). Thoreau goes on in chapter two opposing his free, simplified life to the imprisoned,

complex life of civilized man, and an atmosphere of renunciation is sustained in the process of the opposition.

Chapter three is concerned with man's debt to man and to the past illustrated in the metaphor of reading. It is admitted that reading calls forth the past to provide a foundation for the present and make it more meaningful. Reading offers much revelation for living, but, as the next chapter shows, the decision is finally to turn from the language of men toward the language of nature. The beginning of chapter four makes it fairly clear that with the ending of chapter three renunciation and withdrawal have been completed as the life of contemplation begins. Thus, the first three chapters of Walden form a block of the structure that is rounded out with the ending of the third chapter.

In his journal, two days after Thoreau took up his residence at Walden Pond, he recorded, "I wish to meet the facts of life--the vital facts, which are the phenomena of actuality the gods meant to show us--face to face, and so I came down here" (VII, 363). The long process of "meeting the facts" and of renewal begins in chapter four, and in the course of the following eleven chapters lengthens into a trial of discipline, of endurance, and of hope in the long process of meditation that characterizes these middle chapters. Just as reading is the language of men and a symbol of society in chapter three, sounds

is the language of nature and a symbol of the beginning of meditation in chapter four, ". . . the language which all things and events speak without metaphor" (II, 123).

What Thoreau worked toward in Walden was to find a form that would express his experiment in life and sum up the materials of that experiment. At the beginning of chapter four, the structure of Walden begins to closely chronicle Thoreau's search for the regenerative forces of nature, the first three chapters having told of the renunciation of and withdrawal from the old life. Thoreau began chapter four by saying, "I love a broad margin to my life. Sometimes in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a revery, amidst the pines and hickories, in undisturbed solitude and stillness . . ." (II, 123-4). Listening to the sounds of nature, he says that he ". . . grew in those seasons like corn in the night." This chapter, as has been stated earlier in this essay, suggests that an awareness of nature (brought about by living the simplified life) meditated upon, is a way to achieve a relationship with the spiritual world which is linked with nature. This fact is emphasized time after time in the middle chapters, notably in chapter seven where Thoreau is determined to "know beans" and where the beanfield becomes a symbolic link with nature, and at the

close of chapter eleven in the John Farmer episode in which John Farmer, listening to the music of the flutist (Thoreau's music in Walden) is able to escape his own finitude by practicing some "new austerity" and letting ". . . his mind descend into his body and redeem it"

To briefly review the middle chapters which form the block on meditation (this discussion has already been explored to some extent in the second chapter of this essay), chapter five continues the meditational communion with nature as the narrator informs the reader, "I come and go with a strange liberty in Nature." He has penetrated far enough into nature through his contemplation in chapter four that he can feel a direct relationship with the natural world, "a part of herself," as he says. This chapter asserts the narrator's kinship with nature which offers him "such sweet and beneficent society" that he inquires, in a passage quoted earlier in this essay, "Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?" (II, 153). The society of visitors in the following chapter furnishes a contrast to the solitude of chapter five, a contrast which emphasizes the importance of meditation that will lead to discovery in the concluding chapters. In chapter seven the daily labor in the bean-field becomes a kind of ritual of participation in nature as farming is linked through mythology with a sacred art. Communion is thus emphasized and another step toward

discovery is worked out as action is added to the inactivity of meditation.

Chapter eight is another excursion into society designed, apparently, to underscore the necessity of becoming lost to the world in order to find oneself in the spirit. The metaphor of the village (where the houses are arranged in lanes in such an order as to make the most of mankind, a place where everyone may get a lick at those who pass through them) emphasizes the necessity of becoming lost in the woods near Walden Pond as a prerequisite to discovering the spiritual world, and thus underscores the validity of the process of meditation. Chapter nine takes an objective look at the spiritual self in the middle of the meditational process. The description of the seasons of Walden Pond becomes a metaphor of the seasons of the narrator's spiritual life, metaphorically recalling in the image of the passing phenomena of the seasons his spiritual progress to the present and previewing what is to come. Thoreau evidently thought of the pond as his essential self. It lies "between the earth and the heavens" partaking of the color of both.

Chapter ten is another excursion into society in which the active life of the impoverished John Field is set over against the meditative life of the narrator. John Field goes on ". . . without arithmetic, and failing so" while the narrator runs "down the hill toward the

reddening west" with the rainbow over his shoulder, and some faint tinkling sound tells him to "Go fish and hunt far and wide day by day,--farther and wider,--and rest thee by many brooks and hearth-sides without misgiving" (II, 230). In chapter eleven the austerity program for the good life to which the meditative ritual in nature will lead is outlined. The rules for it are very transcendental, but even in his transcendental meditation, the spiritual journeyer recognizes that the primitive, bodily part of life is a fact also. The chapter ends with the notion that though the human body cannot escape its own limitations, the mind can redeem it in its finitude.

Chapter twelve begins with a dialogue between a hermit and a poet. The unmistakable identification of Thoreau with the hermit underscores the fact that the middle chapters deal with the life of spiritual meditation. Hermits have been traditionally associated with the inactive life of contemplation, and Thoreau's identifying himself with a hermit at this point in the text of Walden suggests more than accident. The problem in the little drama is concerned with whether the hermit should go a-fishing with the poet with whom he converses or go to heaven. Typical of Thoreau's humanism, he decides to go fishing. What this says is important to the understanding of Walden. Here, in the center of the chapters concerned

with meditation, it suggests that the end of the meditation will be the good life on earth, not merely a preparation for some after-life. The quest is, after all, a quest for perfect man, not merely for spiritual perfection.

Chapter thirteen is the beginning of the final stage of meditation as the narrator prepares for winter by gathering and storing food and firewood and moving inside his newly-plastered hut. These activities are highly symbolic, suggesting a deeper internalizing of the narrator's life which, at this point in the ritual of contemplation, may be analogous to the second stage of the archetypal religious experience sometimes called the "dark night of the soul" which, in turn, precedes illumination. The restrictions winter brings are symbolic of leaving the world without (becoming "lost to the world," as the narrator says in chapter eight). Chapters fourteen and fifteen continue the intensified withdrawal and renunciation begun in chapter thirteen as the narrator recalls the past and discusses winter animals with which his living suggests total immersion in nature.

With the ending of chapter fifteen the block of structure dealing with meditation is completed and an abrupt shift occurs that will continue throughout the remaining chapters. The movement is from an atmosphere characterized by meditation to an atmosphere permeated

with discovery and illumination. Chapter sixteen begins with the image of awakening as the narrator awakens with the impression that he has been asked a question as, "what--how--when--where?" The title of this chapter ("The Pond in Winter") suggests that Thoreau has returned to the subject of his essential self. The careful survey of the pond is analogous to a survey of the soul, and when the narrator says, "I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless" (II, 316), it is clear that the question asked at the beginning of the chapter, a question about the spiritual life, no doubt, is answered by the revelations found in nature through the survey of it.

Thoreau's awareness of the spiritual life in nature through his discoveries in meditation prepares the way for rebirth and return in the next chapter. Spring comes bringing with it new life, and out of the spring thaw Thoreau makes a metaphor of his own illumination and rebirth. "Walden was dead, and is alive again," he says. The chapter closes with Thoreau leaving Walden Pond: "Thus was my first year's life in the woods completed; and the second year was similar to it. I finally left Walden September 6th, 1847" (II, 351). In this casual remark about his departure, Thoreau sums up in a suggestion of return the three-part structure of the work.

The final chapter rounds out the structure of Walden as the hero speaks to society after his return, prophesying in a passage quoted earlier that ". . . if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours" (II, 356). There follows the fable of the artist of Kouroo which is a summary of what Thoreau was trying to do in writing Walden. The fable recapitulates the structure of Walden almost exactly in its three-part structure characterized by withdrawal and renunciation, meditation, and return. The book closes with a restatement of the theme in the fable of the beautiful bug in the appletree table which is a metaphor for organic renewal and transcendental hope. The structure of the work carefully underscores the theme. In going to the woods Thoreau had given himself up to an experiment of purification, designed to discover his own divinity. The three-part structure of the book is a rhetorical symbol of the way that was done as it suggests the typical religious purification pattern of withdrawal, contemplation, and, finally, illumination.

Since technique objectifies the material of art, since only through technique can materials be objectified and evaluated by an artist, and since Walden does such a superb job with these matters, it is evident that when Thoreau says such things as "The highest form of art is

artlessness," he must not mean that technical matters of form, etc., should not be an integral part of art. He must mean that art should not "appear" contrived though it really is. In fact, the virtue of Thoreau as an artist in Walden is to be found in the meticulous care spent on technicalities such as the role of the narrator, genre, structure, and style, all forming his medium into art. It is especially noticeable that structure in Walden is no mere external mechanical affair, but a deep and primary operation. In a sense, it embodies the moral and intellectual implications, and it elucidates and evaluates them for the reader.

In a book like Walden, which is a kind of self-analysis, technique had to function properly if the work was to have an aesthetic dimension. Otherwise, looking into the heart and writing, which autobiography could have so easily become, would have led to presenting mere extracts from life. But in Walden, Thoreau's form is an almost perfect embodiment of subject, and it gives the subject a range of meaning that is effective and comprehensive.

It is notable that the "I" in Walden is a version of the investigating analyst who must be objective so far as form is concerned since the narrator spins out the structure. The "I" as an analyst who spins out the structure defines the value and quality of its experience through

the form it creates as well as through expository comment. At first, the "I" is the artist, alienated from his environment, but exploring the environment from which he is alienated and evaluating it. Then, as the narrative progresses, the environment impinges directly upon the consciousness as the "I" moves to the center of things. But the environment is still analyzed and judged as the survey of the ponds illustrates in chapter sixteen. Walden reaches a climax in chapters thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen as the pastoral world is substituted for the real world in the total rejection of the domestic and religious values of the materialistically diseased society. In the next chapter, the facts of discovery are considered intellectually as the intellectual search for faith is worked out in the metaphor of the survey of the pond.

Essentially what happens in Walden, so far as technique is concerned, is this: a highly self-conscious use of method defines the quality of experience. There is a progressive alienation from contemporary life and a progressive initiation into the new life of the awakened man. Thus, Walden, with its technical operation directing the imaginative forces of the reader, develops a pattern with immediate human situations at its center which passes beyond the ordinary vision of experience almost to the limits of the human imagination. And Walden is aesthetically appreciable because of Thoreau's technique which

orders within a single work the greatest amount of human experience. Since Thoreau did not have a point of view beyond his own that separated his material and its effect, he had to make form do that job for him. This is not to say that Thoreau did not know what his subject was. It is to say that his theory of art, in order to be adequate, had to employ all the devices of point of view, genre, form, and style in order to be effective. One of the things that makes Walden so great is that its form is almost exactly equivalent to its subject.

Footnotes

¹"Form, Content, and Categories in Art," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XXV, p. 172.

²"Technique as Discovery," Perspectives on Fiction, editors, James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver (New York, 1968), p. 200.

³Rader, p. 376.

⁴Roy R. Male, Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (New York, 1957), p. 28.

⁵Aspects of the Novel (New York, 1927), p. 215.

⁶Emerson and Greenough: Transcendental Pioneers of an American Esthetic (Berkeley, 1957), p. 49.

⁷Thoreau: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, 1962), p. 100.

⁸"Resolution at Walden," Accent, XIII, p. 106.

⁹Man's Rage for Chaos (New York, 1965), p. 39.

¹⁰The Making of Walden (Chicago, 1957), p. 77.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Since an artist intends to create a work of art that will embody aesthetic possibilities, he endeavors to create a work toward which the reader's aesthetic perception can be sensitive. Mainly, the creation of such a work is a matter of casting the work into a perspective, the relativity of which is accommodative to the perception of the reader. Aesthetic distance is one of the prime factors involved in the process, for it determines the position from which the reader grasps the norms that are embodied in a work of art. The position from which a reader views a work of art determines, to a degree, at least, the meaning of the work. If distance is maximal, the position of the reader will be that of a spectator in which case the work of art will be comprehended critically and its values will be weighed and accepted or rejected more or less according to the dictates of the reader's reason. But if distance is minimal, the position of the reader will be that of a participant in which case the work will be understood emotionally and its values will be accepted or rejected more or less according to the reader's emotional

sensibilities. This is not to say that critical judgment rules out all emotion or that emotional judgment is devoid of reason. In the former case, there is always some emotion involved; in the latter, some reason. That is human nature. But predominantly, where the distance is maximal, judgment will be chiefly characterized by reason. Where distance is minimal, judgment will be mainly characterized by emotion. In a sustained piece of literature, aesthetic distance varies from event to event, offering different points of view in the process of becoming acquainted with the object of the work.

With the successful manipulation of aesthetic distance, the artist provides enough prescriptions to control the behavior patterns of the reader (by controlling his responses to the work of art) in such a way as to make him respond to the artist's own wishes. If one reviews the pattern of distance in Walden (as it was surveyed in the second chapter of this essay), it is noticeable that at the beginning of the work, the reader is aligned with the events of the work because of his familiarity with the social order, which is the subject. The object of the author is to draw the reader outside the events, to put "distance" between the events and the reader, so to speak, in order that the reader may view the events of the work critically. Once outside the events of the work, the reader is led by rhetorical devices (point of

view, genre, structure, style) to observe critically what has been his own institutions, beliefs, customs, etc.

The reader thus assumes the attitude of the author, seeing from his detached position what the author has already seen, and rejecting what the author has already rejected. Then the subject shifts and the events of the work become concerned with philosophical speculation about an ideal order that the author wants to discuss. He shifts his own position from a critical outside view to an inside view of things. But the reader, unable to very readily identify with the unfamiliar philosophical abstraction, remains aloof. The object of the author is to draw the reader into the events, to minimize the distance between the reader and the subject. Through a kind of rhetorical persuasion, his efforts bring the reader near as the reader comes to trust the author's conclusions and to participate in the philosophical speculation that is focussed on an ideal order which transcends the earthly order rejected in the beginning.

In the process of manipulation of distance, the reader is taken from being an unaware participant in a diseased social order to being a critical observer of that order, to being an observer of philosophical speculation on a better way of life, to, finally, being an interested participant in speculation upon spiritual realities. It is not merely through expository means,

as this essay has attempted to illustrate, that the author convinces the reader of his system of values, but through aesthetical inducement by using various devices of art such as point of view, structure, genre, and style. This chapter will discuss style, since style in Walden helps to achieve the objectives of point of view, genre, and form.

Critics seem to agree that style may not only be considered as a grammatical category, but as a linguistic means of an author's expressing his creative intentions.¹ René Welleck and Austin Warren suggest that, "Stylistic analysis seems most profitable to literary study when it can establish some unifying principle, some general aesthetic aim pervasive of the whole work."² If style can be related to the aesthetic effects of a work in regard to larger units of matter than grammatical constructions generally suggest, the features of an author's style may be interpreted in terms of the whole aesthetic purpose of a work. Style thus regarded may be seen as a reflection and an extension of the basic vision of life offered by a work, and it can be examined in the light of evidence for an author's system of values.

When style is considered in Walden in terms of the general aesthetic aim pervasive of the whole work, it is apparent that Thoreau has formulated a stylistic pattern which works toward creating a proper perspective. As a reader infers the personality of the narrator of Walden

from the language he uses (style viewed as an index to the personality of the narrator is an important element in the determination of distance between the reader and the narrator), he discovers the narrator to be casting himself in the first part of the work in the role of a rather subtle prosecutor who indicts the social order before the reader who sits as jury. The language of polemic he uses in his indictment is a carefully formulated part of his whole stylistic plan which involves moving from the language of polemic as the work unfolds to the language of poetry, thus shifting the aesthetic appeal from the rational level to the emotional level which is accomplished by shifting from a more or less verbal effect in language to an imaginative effect. The process is not nearly so simple as a summary statement may suggest, a fact which calls for further comment on the matter.

To begin, words may be thought of as being either exact and denotative or suggestive and connotative. When they are exact and denotative, words are, generally speaking, prosaic and explanatory with rational effects. When they are suggestive and connotative, words tend to be evocative and affective. They are poetic and demand a response to an impression rather than a reaction to a fact. When a reader notices how Thoreau uses words in Walden, how, generally, he begins with exact, denotative words and, in the long process of the book,

shifts his use of language so that he ends with suggestive, connotative words, the reader will notice that style is not static in Walden, but dynamic, moving from the irony and satire of the somewhat exact language of polemic in the beginning to the poetry of the ending.

The pattern that develops in Thoreau's language in Walden suggests that the pattern of aesthetic distance out of which rises the possibilities for aesthetic appreciation is not only worked out through point of view, genre, and structure, as the earlier chapters of this essay have indicated, but through style also. It is apparent that the language used at the beginning of Walden is intentionally the caustic, ironic language of satire, tough and biting language; it is also apparent that there is an intentional progression toward the lyrically beautiful poetic language of the ending. If a reader asks why this is so, the answer is to be found in the fact that Thoreau wanted his style to support the other elements of his rhetoric he employed in his composition; and it does.

At the very beginning of Walden (with the opening of the third paragraph, to be exact), Thoreau suggests the kind of language he will employ in the first part of his work when he addresses his audience saying, "I would fain say something . . . about your condition . . . whether it is necessary that it be as bad as it is . . ." (II, 4).

The sense of immediacy and the basic attitude embodied in the language of this address tend to provoke anxious feelings in the reader. Thoreau continues, "I have travelled a good deal in Concord; and everywhere, in shops, and offices, and fields the inhabitants have appeared to me to be doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways" (II, 4). Here, the language of humor and of polemic is mixed. The psychological effect is to make the reader look more objectively at the subject (the social order) of which he feels himself to be a part. Thoreau, to the further anxiety of the reader adds, in a passage quoted earlier, "I see young men . . . whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools . . . 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. Who made them serfs of the soil?" (II, 5). The condition has become such, as Thoreau sees it, that ". . . men labor under a mistake" and "the better part of the man is soon plowed into the soil for compost." "It is a fool's life," (II, 6), he concludes.

Though somewhat caustic, the reader realizes that what Thoreau says is, for the most part, truth. It is difficult to refute him when he goes on to say, ". . . most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the

factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them" (II, 6). The pointed exactness of the language and the basic truths that it embodies work toward forcing the reader to align himself with the prosecutor-narrator who stands detached from the events. Two things are accomplished when this happens: psychologically, the reader finds comfort by aligning himself with the narrator and reason, thereby escaping much of the polemic; technically, distance is reduced between the reader and the narrator to a degree which enables the author to control reader responses effectively through control of sympathy. If the reader were not aligned with the narrator, a classic example of what Edward Bullough once described as "under-distancing"³ would occur when Thoreau goes on to say, in a sentence referred to earlier, "It is very evident what mean and sneaking lives many of you live . . . lying, flattering, voting, contracting yourselves into a nutshell of civility, or dilating into an atmosphere of thin and vaporous generosity, that you may persuade your neighbor to let you make his shoes, or his hat . . . or import his groceries for him; making yourselves sick, that you may lay up something against a sick day" (II, 7).

Not to allow anyone guilty of propagating the disease of materialism with which Thoreau believed the social order to be generally infected to escape his prosecution

(since presumably the young who have inherited farms and the middle aged who have plowed themselves into the soil for compost have been dealt with), Thoreau continues, "Practically, the old have no very important advice to give the young, their own experience has been so partial, and their lives have been such miserable failures . . ." (II, 9). Then his attack broadens to include various social classes as he says in his digression on clothes, "We know but few men, a great many coats and breeches . . . It is an interesting question how far men would retain their relative rank if they were divested of their clothes" (II, 24-5). The farmer receives his blow ("The farmer is endeavoring to solve the problem of livelihood by a formula more complicated than the problem itself. To get his shoestrings he speculates in herds of cattle," II, 36), industry is included ("Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end . . ." II, 57-8), and even the shepherd is brought under attack ("I am wont to think that men are not so much the keeper of herds as herds are the keepers of men, the former are so much the freer," II, 62). Thoreau's general conclusion is that ". . . men have come to such a pass that they frequently starve, not for want of necessities, but for want of luxuries . . ." (II, 68).

It is noticeable to the reader of Walden that such

comments as those quoted above occur much more frequently in the first part of Walden than in the last, and that the effect of the language used in them is to distance the reader from the subject. In this way, style works toward supporting point of view, genre, and structure, which work in the same direction. Much of the rhetoric in the first part of Walden is thus consciously designed to force the reader to take an outside, critical view of the events of the work.

When the subject shifts from the social order in the first chapter against the follies of which Thoreau inveighs to philosophical speculation about an ideal order of the awakened man, the basic temper of the language changes. In the second chapter of Walden the language of polemic begins to be replaced by language the basic beauty and effect of which suggests poetry, as, for example, when Thoreau contrasts his hut by Walden Pond to the houses of the first chapter, by saying, "The winds which passed over my dwelling were such as sweep over the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains or celestial parts only, of terrestrial music. The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted" (II, 94). It is noticeable that as the narrative progresses the poetry generally deepens. "We must learn to reawaken . . . by an infinite expectation of the dawn," Thoreau continues, speculating upon the life of the awakened man,

"which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep" (II, 109). Even alliteration, one of the oldest poetic devices in English, is noticeable in the close of this sentence as it is in other especially poetic utterances in the work. Just as the first chapter closes on a note of invective, reminding the reader that "Our manners have been corrupted by communication with saints. Our hymn-books resound with a melodious cursing of God and enduring him forever" (II, 87), the second chapter ends in language which, by contrast, suggests poetry, thus setting the pattern for the dynamic drift of the style. "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in," Thoreau says near the close of the second chapter, and continues, "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" (II, 109).

The chapters centered around the ponds are notable for their poetic language. They call forth some lovely sentences. Speaking of the two ponds he thought most beautiful, Thoreau says, "White Pond and Walden are great crystals on the surface of the earth, Lakes of Light. If they were permanently congealed, and small enough to be clutched, they would perchance, be carried off by slaves, like precious stones, to adorn the heads of emperors . . ." (II, 221). Later, writing of Walden

Pond he said, "I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless" (II, 316). Even of the hard Massachusetts winter, Thoreau had something poetic to say: "Many of the phenomena of Winter are suggestive of an inexpressible tenderness and fragile delicacy. We are accustomed to hear this king described as a rude and bolsterous tyrant; but with the gentleness of a lover he adorns the tresses of Summer" (II, 342).

The seventeenth chapter of Walden turns almost constantly upon a delicate lyrical beauty. The sounds of birds returning with the spring leads Thoreau to express his sentiment by saying (in what could well be a beautiful lyric poem), "The first sparrow of spring! The year beginning with younger hope than ever! The faint silvery warblings heard over the partially bare and moist fields from the bluebird, the song sparrow, and the red-wing, as if the last flakes of winter tinkled as they fell! The brooks sing carols and glees to the spring" (II, 342). Of a young nighthawk he saw sporting in the spring sky, he wrote, "The tenant of the air, it seemed related to the earth but by an egg hatched some time in the crevice of a crag;--or was its native nest made in the angle of a cloud, woven of the rainbow's trimmings and the sunset sky, and lined with some soft midsummer haze caught up from earth" (II, 349). The poetic passages in the last

part of Walden illustrate a style that is elegant and touching. The poetry Thoreau employs enriches language, making it an aspect of the life-process itself. The living language has a tendency toward eliciting sympathetic reaction in the reader, thus leading the reader to join with the events of the work and to move toward aesthetic experience as he participates in the philosophical speculation focussed upon the ideal order of the awakened man. Distance becomes minimal as aesthetic experience is enriched by the use of poetic language. Thoreau knew that the language of poetry is not factual statement by which an artist merely relays his thoughts; he knew that it is an art medium that sets the reader's mind and emotions to work, urging him to imaginative living for a time. He knew that poetry is a stimulus, not a statement, that has the power of transmuting a literal setting into an imaginary world of the beautiful. By no accident Walden ends in the most beautiful of poetry, echoing what the whole work has been about, reminding the reader that "Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star."

But the general aesthetic aim Thoreau's style works toward in Walden involves more than mere utterances of polemical and poetical language. When one examines the style of the passages quoted above in this chapter in

terms of the grammatical category, the first thing he will notice is Thoreau's use of verb tense. Thoreau was apparently more than casually conscious of the fact that, as one modern grammarian says, "Tense is a set of responses to temporal conditions."⁴ Thoreau's consciousness of time is suggested not only by his careful use of tense in his distancing patterns, but also by the frequency with which he mentions time in Walden. In the opening pages of the work, he warns those who use up valuable moments of life in pursuit of materialistic ends against doing so, "As if you could kill time without injuring eternity" (II, 8). A few pages later, speaking of his own endeavor in life, he says, "In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time . . . to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment" (II, 13). Returning to the topic pages later, he continues, "In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime in the lapse of all ages" (II, 107), and concludes by saying, "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in" (II, 109). Examples of Thoreau's concern with time could be multiplied, but perhaps these few illustrate his desire to stand in the immediacy of the present. Feeling that he had escaped the clutches of time by going to live in the woods, at one point in Walden he says, in a passage quoted near the beginning of this essay, "My

days were not the days of the week, bearing the stamp of any heathen deity, nor were they minced into hours and fretted by the ticking of a clock . . ." (II, 124). Thoreau's awareness of time probably made him unusually conscious of verb tense, and it appears that it is thus by no accident that in passages such as those quoted earlier in this chapter the tenses used generally suggest the immediacy of the present, often taking the "ing" ending of the progressive form. In a book the genre of which generally suggests the use of past tense, there must be a special reason why some passages are characterized by verbs that suggest present time the effect of which is to create a sense of immediacy.⁵

In the passages where the language of polemic is characteristic of the general atmosphere, the psychology behind the use of verbs as predicates that indicate present moments may be to evoke a sense of immediacy in the face of a subject that is somewhat unacceptable (the sentences in these passages speak of "factitious cares," "superfluously coarse labor," "mean and sneaking lives," "miserable failures," etc.). Brought directly into the presence of an unpleasant subject, the reader tends to recoil from the events. In this way, distance between the reader and the events of the work is increased, and style works toward the general pattern of aesthetic distance outlined above. If Thoreau had used some form of

past or future tense in the passages marked by the language of polemic and thus presented the matter with which they deal as having taken place in the past or as a prediction of the future, the reader would not react toward them as he does, for he would feel safely distanced from the events through time. But through the use of tenses suggesting the immediacy of the moment, Thoreau is able to effect a strategic maneuver in the control of distance.

The use of verbs generally suggestive of present time as predicates in the passages marked by poetic language has the same psychological effect of producing a sense of immediacy as similar verbs used in the passages characterized by the language of polemic. But there is obviously one important difference. The sense of immediacy is evoked in the face of a subject that is generally acceptable to the reader (these sentences speak of "celestial music," "morning wind," "tresses of Summer," etc.). Brought directly into the presence of a pleasant subject, the reader senses a pleasure from his involvement, and the distance between him and the subject is reduced. When one notices that most of the poetic passages come in the latter portion of the work, he can see that style once again works toward the overall pattern of aesthetic distance pervasive of the whole work.

But it must be admitted that the movement from the rather exact language of polemic that characterizes the

first part of Walden to the somewhat suggestive language of poetry in the last is actually not so uniform and complete as the discussion presented may suggest. Indeed, there is some poetry in the first chapter and a great deal of polemic in the last. Near the beginning of the first chapter, the vocationless Thoreau, perhaps defending the life he has lived, says that he has always "been anxious to improve the nick of time . . . to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment" and adds, in what moves very close to lyricism, that it has been his intention, "To anticipate, not the sunrise and the dawn merely, but, if possible, Nature herself." In a very beautiful sentence, he continues, "I never assisted the sun materially in his rising, but, doubt not, it was of the last importance only to be present at it" (II, 19). When a few sentences later he casts himself in the role of the faithful shepherd and says, in a passage quoted at greater length earlier, "I have watered the red huckleberry, the sand cherry and the nettletree, the red pine and the black ash, the white grape and the yellow violet, which might have withered else in dry seasons" (II, 20), the bucolic vein of classical pastoral poetry is latent. Just as many examples of the lyrical can be found in the first chapters of Walden, numerous instances of the polemical can be found in the last. As a matter of fact, six of the concluding

seven pages of the book, starting with the paragraph which begins, "However mean your life is, meet it and live it . . ." (II, 361), are a tirade against the average man, telling of the hurry and waste of the modern world. But even if there are lyrical passages in the first part of Walden and polemical passages in the latter part, the careful reader will notice that the language of polemic far outweighs the language of poetry in the first part and the language of poetry is dominant over the language of polemic in the last part.

That Thoreau was aware of the possibilities for a functional, dynamic style need not necessarily be argued at length. Perhaps it does not stretch a point too much to say that his awareness of the possibilities for such a style is suggested in the organic terms he uses when he speaks of style. In A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers there is an essay on style in which Thoreau says that Virgil's sentences ". . . were written while grass grew and water ran" (I, 93). He continues with his comments on style by saying that Raleigh's style has about it a "natural emphasis" which suggests "English parks" or a "Western forest." In fact, all the distinguished writers of Raleigh's period, he points out, ". . . possess a greater vigor and naturalness than the more modern," and when readers come upon a quotation from one of them within the text of a more modern writer, ". . . we seem to have come suddenly

upon a greener ground, a greater depth and strength of soil. It is as if a green bough were laid across the page, and we are refreshed as by the sight of fresh grass in midwinter or early spring" (I, 107). Their sentences are ". . . verdurous and blooming as evergreen and flowers, because they are rooted in fact and experience . . ." (I, 107). This organic theory for style suggested by the comments on Virgil and Raleigh is to be observed at work in Walden as Thoreau moves from criticism of a social order he disliked to a record of his life in nature.

Style is a conscious part of Thoreau's rhetoric in Walden. It functions, like point of view, genre, and structure, toward a realization of the overall pattern of distance in the work, and, in doing so, supports those other aspects of meaning, all of which induce the reader through aesthetic means toward the set of values Thoreau wanted the reader to accept. In a passage from his journal quoted earlier in this essay, he said, "I would fain communicate the wealth of my life to men, would really give them what is most precious in my gift. I would secrete pearls with the shellfish and lay up honey with the bees for them. I will sift the sunbeams for the public good. I know no riches I would keep back" (VII, 350). That was his effort in Walden.

Footnotes

¹Shiv K. Kuman and Keith McKean, editors, Critical Approaches to Fiction (New York, 1968), pp. 163-174. Jaroslav Hornat's essay on style included in Kuman and McKean's collection of essays on fiction makes a number of comments which define style, not merely as a grammatical category, but as a linguistic means of embodying an author's intentions. She suggests that style becomes one of the chief aspects of an author's rhetoric.

²Theory of Literature (New York, 1942), p. 132.

³"'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle," British Journal of Psychology, V (June 1912), p. 95.

⁴J. R. Kantor, An Objective Psychology of Grammar (Bloomington, 1952), p. 247.

⁵It is assumed in this discussion of Thoreau's use of verb tense that the present perfect tense evokes a sense of immediacy, not so completely as present tense, of course, but to a degree, as it is opposed to past and future tenses.

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