



授予单位代码: 10459

学号或申请号: _____

密 级: _____

郑 州 大 学
硕 士 学 位 论 文

论 文 题 目: 《瓦尔登湖》: 人与自然和谐
关系的再现

作 者 姓 名: 吴 迪

学 科 门 类: 文 学

专 业 方 向: 英语语言文学

导 师 姓 名、 职 称: 赵建峡 副教授

二 零 零 五 年 十 二 月

论文摘要

亨利·大卫·梭罗（1817-1862）是美国十九世纪超验主义作家和环保思想家。他独自一人在马萨诸塞州康科德的瓦尔登湖畔度过了两年零两个月，之后他根据自己的经历，写了被认为是美国文学史上最优美的散文之一的《瓦尔登湖》。这是一部兼有自传和虚构性质以及社会批判主义的独特作品。梭罗主张简朴自足的生活方式，他认为，不断的工业化会给社会带来致命的影响，只有更为和谐的人与自然的关系才能矫枉过正。他的思想超越了他所处的年代，当时并没有引起人们的关注，但随着全球化的环境危机和环境保护运动的兴起，人们重又把目光投向了梭罗。现如今，他的《瓦尔登湖》得到了更广泛的认可和更深刻的理解，他的人与自然和谐的关系的主张是生态文学的重要源泉之一。越来越多的人受到他的作品的影响，把他的思想发扬光大，并加入了环境保护的行列。

该论文以一个与人类活动密切相关的环境问题沙尘暴开始，引出问题：梭罗在瓦尔登湖中描写的理想的人与自然的关系究竟是什么？该论文分三部分对此问题进行了深入研究。

第一部分主要讨论了梭罗自然意识的三个来源，即康科德镇、新英格兰超验主义和梭罗在瓦尔登湖畔的生活。康科德是梭罗的出生地，正是这片土地使他与自然建立起了亲密的关系，这里同样是新英格兰超验主义的摇篮。新英格兰超验主义崇尚自然，并给予了梭罗更多发展自己观点的空间。梭罗在瓦尔登湖畔居住了两年多的时间，在此期间，他的人与自然要和谐相处的观点日臻完善。

第二部分从四个方面分析了梭罗的《瓦尔登湖》一书中所反映出的和谐的人与自然的关系。梭罗以提倡简朴而著称，他到瓦尔登湖的居住本身就是对简朴生活方式进行的

一次实验。事实上，梭罗的主张并不仅仅是一种生活方式，同时也是人类对待自然时应采取的态度。在梭罗看来，所有的一切都是平等的，人类只是自然的一个组成部分，而不是征服者和主人。他热爱纯洁无瑕的大自然，对日益先进的文明带来的困扰深感忧虑，因此，他对工业化提出了质疑并呼吁人们保护自然。他一生追求形式简朴但内容丰富的生活，而只有当人与自然的关系和谐时，这样的生活准则才能成为可能。

第三部分主要讨论梭罗人与自然关系观点的现实意义。作为二十世纪生态思潮的一个重要分支，生态文学继承了梭罗的很多观点，并把它们发展成为生态思想，如：征服自然批判、工业与科技批判、生态责任、重返与自然的和谐等。梭罗在当代环保主义占据着重要位置。缪尔和利奥波德继承了梭罗关于人与自然和谐共处的主张，毕生从事环保事业。

本篇论文最终得出结论：保持人与自然和谐的关系是整个人类的责任。正如梭罗在瓦尔登湖中所倡导的那样，人类在治愈地球的同时也治愈了自身，只有这样，人类才能安享和谐的生活。

关键词：人与自然的关系，梭罗，《瓦尔登湖》

Abstract

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) is the 19th century American Transcendentalist writer and preservation thinker, and his *Walden*, a record of two years and two months that he spent alone in the woods near Concord, Massachusetts, is viewed as one of the finest prose works in American literature. Part autobiography, part fiction and part social criticism, *Walden* is a highly individual work. In it, Thoreau advocates a simple, self-sufficient way of life. He also pleads for a more intimate relationship between human beings and nature as an antidote to the deadening influence of an increasingly industrialized society. Thoreau's ideas went beyond his age and were thus ignored by his contemporaries. But with the coming of the global environmental crisis and the upsurge of environmental protection, Thoreau has been rediscovered. Today sees wider recognition, more studies and deeper understanding of his book *Walden*. His views on a harmonious man-and-nature relationship have become an important source of ecoliterature. And more and more people have been influenced by his works, who, in turn, developed his ideas and fought for environmental protection.

This thesis begins with one of the environmental problems, sandstorm, the occurrence of which is related to human activities and poses the question: what is the ideal man-and-nature relationship as reflected in Thoreau's *Walden*? This question is studied in depth in the thesis and answered in three parts.

The first part mainly discusses the three sources for Thoreau's nature consciousness. They are Concord, New England Transcendentalism and Thoreau's sojourn at Walden Pond. Concord was Thoreau's birthplace and the area of land that enabled him to establish a close

communion with nature. Concord was also the seedbed of New England Transcendentalism, which drew Thoreau to nature and allowed him space to develop ideas of his own. Thoreau went to live at Walden Pond for more than two years. During this period, he developed and experimented with his views on a harmonious man-and-nature relationship.

Part two seeks to analyze the harmonious man-and-nature relationship as reflected in Thoreau's *Walden* from four aspects. Thoreau is known for his call to simplify. His approach to Walden is in itself an experiment of a simplified lifestyle. As a matter of fact, what Thoreau preaches is not just a way of living, but also an attitude man should adopt towards nature. In Thoreau's eyes, all is equal in nature. Man, instead of a conqueror or a master, is just a constituent part of nature. Captivated by the loveliness of unspoiled nature and regretful for the disturbances brought by advancing civilization, Thoreau questioned industrialization and appealed to people to preserve resources. Throughout his life, Thoreau aspired to pursue a life that is simple in means, but rich in ends. Such life with principle is possible only when man maintains a harmonious relationship with nature.

Part three chiefly discusses Thoreau's legacy to the modern age. As an important branch of the ecological thoughts of the 20th century, ecoliterature inherits much of Thoreau's ideas of a harmonious man-and-nature relationship and develops them into such ecological thinking as nature conquest criticism, industry, science and technology criticism, ecological responsibility and returning to harmony with nature. Thoreau occupies a dominant place in contemporary environmentalism. His views on man-and-nature relationship were passed on to John Muir and Aldo Leopold, who dedicated all their lives to environmental protection.

This thesis draws the conclusion that it is the responsibility of all to maintain a

harmonious man-and-nature relationship as Thoreau propagated in his *Walden* so that people may, in healing the earth, heal themselves and thus enjoy a life with principle.

Key words: man-and-nature relationship, Thoreau, *Walden*

郑 重 声 明

本人的学位论文是在导师指导下独立撰写并完成的，学位论文没有剽窃、抄袭等违反学术道德、学术规范的侵权行为，否则，本人愿意承担由此产生的一切法律责任和法律后果，特此郑重声明。

学位论文作者（签名）：吴迪

2005年12月4日

Acknowledgements

The author of this paper would like to thank all my teachers for their priceless aid in every aspect of the preparation of this paper. My special gratitude should be given to Professor Guo Yingjian, who read the whole paper and offered valuable suggestions. I'm deeply indebted to my supervisor, Professor Zhao Jianxia, who has offered me so much guidance and so many painstaking and invaluable critical comments. Her standards of academic excellence have made my revision an exciting and gratifying experience. But for her constant encouragement, sincere help and great patience, this paper would not have been possible. My heart-felt thanks also go to my dear parents, my husband and my lovely six-year-old son. It is their understanding and love that support me to finally finish the present paper.

Introduction

A great yellow dust cloud enveloped the city, cutting visibility to less than 100 meters. Vehicles, with the lights turned on, wormed along the sand-shrouded streets. Pedestrians wearing scarves and gauze masks scurried along with their heads lowered to blowing grit. The number of vehicles and pedestrians decreased while there were more traffic policemen in the streets, working to ensure the expressways and airports in operation. This is the typical scene of a city tortured by dust and sandstorms. In recent years, sandstorms seem to be affecting Chinese people's lives more frequently and extensively. Almost every year from March to May since the late 1990s, strong cold winds from Siberia blow up a huge volume of yellow dust from the vast Gobi desert in Kazakhstan, Mongolia and northwest China. According to the State Forestry Administration, 18 sandstorms of different levels hit China in early 2004, affecting nearly 500 million people ("500 million people"). The 18 sandstorms, including one strong sandstorm, five sandstorms and 12 light sandstorms, affected some 800 counties in 15 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions. The most influential sandstorm affected about 2 million square kilometers with nearly 290 million people. And the strongest one affected almost 1.2 million square kilometers and nearly 70 million people. Sandstorms have posed a grave environmental scourge of northeast Asia.

The occurrence of sandstorms has certain connections with human activities, for it is the indiscriminate falling of trees on the part of human beings that brings about loose earth with sparse vegetation. Over the years, modern humanity has been rapidly destroying the natural world on which it depends for survival. Everywhere on the planet, man assumes himself the ruler and conqueror of nature, doing things as desire drives him, quite insensitive to all other natural entities. Therefore, forests are being cut down, wetlands drained, agricultural lands eroded, salinized or desertified. Pollution is generalized. Thousands of species are being made

extinct every day. Human destruction of the natural world in this way makes the planet progressively less habitable. If man continues the present pattern of human activity, there will be a major decline in the condition of nature and the quality of human life. In no more than a few decades, the planet will even cease to be capable of supporting complex forms of life.

So the traditional anthropocentric view has to be changed. As Richard St. Barbe-Baker claims, "Man has lost his way in the jungle of chemistry and engineering and will have to retrace his steps, however painful this may be. He will have to discover where he went wrong and make his peace with nature. In so doing, perhaps he may be able to recapture the rhythm of life and the love of the simple things of life, which will be an ever-unfolding joy to him." (Goldsmith 369) Then how can man "make his peace with nature" to "recapture the rhythm of life" and enjoy it? What is the ideal man-and-nature relationship? The 19th century American transcendentalist writer and preservation thinker, Henry David Thoreau, as early as 150 years ago answered the questions in *Walden*.

Walden, which is Thoreau's masterpiece, records the two years and two months that Thoreau spent alone in the woods near Concord, Massachusetts. With nature as its subject and the exploration of the relationship between man and nature as its content, *Walden* unfolds before our eyes a beautiful view of nature and the human soul. Far from being a mere account of his physical life at the pond, *Walden* is rich in descriptions of characters Thoreau encountered in the woods ranging from woodcutters to brute animals, comments on life in the United States and in ancient times, legends and historical anecdotes, and last but not the least, his own reflections on his reading. In this book, Thoreau depicted the charmingly simple and serene life he enjoyed at Walden Pond by coexisting harmoniously with nature.

With the development of modern civilization, nature has suffered unprecedented devastation. Today, nature is giving place to material goods, which renders people helpless on a spiritual wasteland. Cherishing the memory of the good, old days and the dream to return to

nature, modern people are in search of freedom and peace of the soul and a spiritual distillation, which is available only when man stays in harmony with nature. *Walden* is a book which propagates the harmonious coexistence between man and nature and transmits to human race “where he went wrong” and how he might “recapture the rhythm of life and the love of the simple things of life”.

Stanley Edgar Hyman, in his essay “Henry Thoreau in Our Time”, pointed out that “Central to any interpretation of Thoreau is *Walden*, both the experience of living by the pond and the book that reported it. As he explains in the book, it was an experiment in human ecology (and if Thoreau was a scientist in any field, it was ecology, though he preceded the term), an attempt to work out a satisfactory relationship between man and his environment.” (Thomas 318) This thesis is going to discuss the harmonious man-and-nature relationship as reflected in Thoreau’s *Walden*, along with the significance of his ideas in the modern society.

Chapter 1 Sources of Thoreau's Nature Consciousness

Before penetrating deeply into Thoreau's ideas of a harmonious man-and-nature relationship, a clear understanding of the sources of Thoreau's nature-consciousness is quite necessary. So such important factors as Thoreau's hometown Concord, his belief New England Transcendentalism, his sojourn at Walden Pond will be dealt with in this chapter, as all of them have contributed to some extent to the formation of Thoreau's ideas of man-and-nature relationship.

1.1 Concord

Thoreau was born in Concord, Massachusetts, on the 12th of July, 1817. A town of eastern Massachusetts on the Concord River, Concord provided Thoreau with much of his education and most of his literary subjects. He made Concord his only home and spent all his life in or near it, with only a few short trips to Maine or Cape Cod, and one longer journey to Canada. What he sought was the most energetic nature and Concord sufficed for this purpose.

Concord lies about 17 miles northwest of Boston at the confluence of the Sudbury River and the Assabet River. These broad, slow-moving rivers, together with five major brooks and the low-lying meadows along them, were the heart of old Concord ("Concord"). It was this area of land that enabled Thoreau to establish a close communion with nature and further cultivate his views on man-and-nature relationship.

Thoreau was interested in every natural fact. Wherever he went,

Under his arm he carried an old music-book to press plants; in his pocket, his diary and pencil, a spy-glass for birds, microscope, jack-knife, and twine. He wore a straw hat, stout shoes, strong gray trousers, to brave scrub-oaks and smilax, and to climb a tree for a hawk's or a squirrel's nest. He waded into the pool for the waterplants, and his strong legs were no insignificant part of his armor. (Stewart 64)

Emerson thus commented on Thoreau, "He chose, wisely no doubt for himself, to be the bachelor of thought and nature. His eye was open to beauty, and his ear to music. He found these, not in rare conditions, but wheresoever he went." As a result, "He knew the country like a fox or a bird, and passed through it as freely by paths of his own. He knew every track in the snow or on the ground, and what creature had taken his path before him." (Stewart 64-65) Thoreau had a habit of ascertaining the measures and distances of objects which interested him, the size of trees, the depth and extent of ponds and rivers, the height of mountains, and the air-line distance of his favorite summits. This, "and his intimate knowledge of the territory about Concord, made him drift into the profession of land-surveyor. It had the advantage for him that it led him continually into new and secluded grounds, and helped his studies of Nature." (Stewart 58) Just as he saw the day as an epitome of the year, he saw Concord an epitome of the world. He extolled his own town and neighborhood as the most favored center for natural observation. By centering his eyes on Concord, Thoreau grasped beauty of the whole nature.

Thoreau drew on his experiences in Concord for most of his literary subjects. He recorded in his *Journal* on September 4, 1841, "I think I could write a poem to be called Concord. For argument I should have the River, the Woods, the Ponds, the Hills, the Fields, the Swamps and Meadows, the Streets and Buildings, and the Villagers. The Morning, Noon, and Evening, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, Night, Indian Summer, and The Mountains in the Horizon." (Myerson 22) There was nothing in Concord that he would willingly let slip in his observation and in his nature writings. After a 7-day rowboat excursion with his brother John, he wrote his first book *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. And his 2-year solitary life at Walden Pond produced his masterpiece *Walden, or, Life in the Woods*. Other works such as essays like "Walking", "Autumnal Tints" and "Wild Apples" are all results of his concentrated life in Concord.

In addition to offering a chance to associate with nature, Concord provided a cultural and intellectual atmosphere because of the American literati and artists who took up residence there. Among them were Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Bronson Alcott and his daughter Louisa May, Daniel Chester French, and William Ellery Channing the Younger. Several others were frequent visitors of Concord, such as Margaret Fuller, Franklin Sanborn and Walt Whitman. They were unconventional thinkers, writers and reformers who helped make mid-century New England alive with unconventional ideas, which encouraged Thoreau in his own nonconformities. Besides, Concord had its active Temperance Society and the Middlesex Anti-Slavery Society, of the latter Thoreau was an enthusiastic supporter.

Almost every important aspect of Thoreau's life and works is connected, to some extent, with Concord. He lived there, worked there and "dedicated his genius with such entire love to the fields, hills and waters of his native town, that he made them known and interesting to all reading Americans, and to people over the sea." (Stewart 63)

1.2 New England Transcendentalism

New England Transcendentalism is an important source of Thoreau's nature-consciousness in that it drew Thoreau to nature and allowed him space to develop his own ideas of nature.

In the 1830's, a small group of like-minded New Englanders already gathered in Concord. Not quite contented with the material-oriented life of their time, they formed themselves into an informal club called the Transcendentalist Club, which was open to all who wished to exchange ideas on the new views in philosophy, theology and literature. While holding different opinions about many things, the group seemed in general harmony in their conviction that within the nature of man there was something which "transcended" human experience—an intuition and personal revelation. They discussed matters of interest, expressed their views, and published their journal, *The Dial*, in an attempt to reach more

people who would share their view. Under the editorship of Margaret Fuller and later of Emerson (aided by Thoreau), the journal published 16 issues over a period of 4 years. Although its circulation never exceeded 1,000, its influence was widespread.

There was “no hard and fast body of doctrine, no orthodoxy, of transcendentalism”. Transcendentalism “was a movement—philosophical, literary, and social—that emerged among New England intellectuals, mainly in the environs of Boston, in the 1830’s.” Emerson, looking back later in life on the movement, called it “a reaction against the too formal science, religion and social life of the earlier period.” (Brooks 340)

The transcendentalists “might love and respect nature”, but they love it because they take nature to be “his own work, a mirror in which he looks at himself and says (like a poet relishing his own verses), ‘What a genius I am! Who would have thought there was such stuff in me?’” (Brooks 341) They regarded nature “as an accident and an effect of the reality of spirit, as but a dream and a shade”. Therefore, the end of man is not to study objective nature, but to seek to engage the “spiritual fact” that nature symbolizes or to interpret the metaphorical burden of the human mind. (Brooks 343)

Speaking of transcendentalism, one can not neglect the leading New England Transcendentalist, Ralph Waldo Emerson. “No important American writer of his time was unaffected by Emerson”. (Rubinstein 31) Thoreau was no exception. In fact, the influence that Emerson had had on Thoreau and the help that he had rendered can never be exaggerated. While Thoreau was a senior at Harvard in 1837, he had read Emerson’s first book, *Nature*, which “has often been called the bible of New England Transcendentalism”, and on returning to Concord, he began a personal friendship with Emerson. (Stewart 7) He lived in Emerson’s house for some time as a live-in handyman, which undoubtedly provided him with even more access to Emerson’s library and conversation. It was during this period, between 1841 and 1843, that Thoreau began to try his hand at writing, since Emerson gave Thoreau the crucial

advice to begin a writer's journal and, later, offered Thoreau chances to publish articles in *The Dial*. And it was on land Emerson had just bought by the shores of Walden that Thoreau began his most famous experiment in living and writing. Thoreau made friends with Emerson, embraced his ideas and carried Emerson's ideas even further.

In *Nature*, Emerson summoned his readers to seek "an original relation to the universe, to attempt an active, direct, and personal perception of nature—of the physical nature which surrounds one on a country walk, and of the ideal nature which, in his view, lies behind and beyond that actuality." (Brooks 674) By "the ideal nature", Emerson meant to suggest that nature was in fact "a reflection—a bodying forth—of man's own spirit". (Brooks 761) Emerson loves nature, but is never concerned with the phenomena of nature for their own sakes. Though he claimed to be "the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty" and delighted in pondering in wilderness, he felt "certain that the power to produce this delight does not reside in nature, but in man". (Brooks 691) He believed that nature is a docile embracer of human dominion and that man can readily take nature as his own possessions.

The sentiments expressed by Emerson "stimulated Thoreau to explore nature for himself and gave him sanction and justification for doing so". (Brooks 761) Thoreau started as a devoted follower of Emerson, believing that nature simply reflects man's spirit as the moon reflects light borrowed from the sun. In 1839, Thoreau wrote, "All nature is our satellite, whose light is dull and reflected. She is subaltern to us, —an episode to our poem; for we are primary, and radiate light and heat to the system." (Brooks 762) Later, however, in the process of putting transcendentalist ideas into more rigorous practice in his individualistic style of living, his work as surveyor and lifelong observer of Concord's natural history, Thoreau developed thoughts of his own. He inverted Emerson's conception of nature as subordinate to man, the reason being that, by temperament Thoreau savored nature and enjoyed it for its own sake far more than Emerson ever did. One can not imagine Emerson

snorting and galloping with glee after a fox on a snowy hillside, merely to see what the fox would do, or seriously thinking of eating a woodchuck as a means of immersing himself more deeply in the wild creation. Here and there in Thoreau's nature descriptions, he established "a reciprocal relation between himself and the thing observed". (Stewart 76) In his eyes, nature exists for its own sake. Man should coexist harmoniously with nature.

It is quite natural for Thoreau to develop ideas of his own, for "Both as a loose intellectual community and as a loose convergence of ideas, transcendentalism provided a space where a young writer could practice without becoming a disciple, an echo chamber to first discern and then extend one's own voice." (Bickman 12) In a word, transcendentalist ideas drew Thoreau to nature and allowed him space to "extend his own voice", which contributed to the development of his views on a harmonious man-and-nature relationship.

1.3 Thoreau's Sojourn at Walden Pond

The one thing about Thoreau which everybody knows is his retirement to Walden. This experience must be given in any account of his life because it unquestionably served to release his creative powers and further shaped his ideas of a harmonious man-and-nature relationship.

1.3.1 Reasons for His Approach

Thoreau was neither a hermit nor a skulker. He might be a very competent "jack of all trades" if he had wanted to be. Emerson thus commented upon Thoreau:

Never idle or self-indulgent he preferred, when he wanted money, earning it by some piece of manual labor agreeable to him, as building a boat or a fence, planting, grafting, surveying, or other short work to any long engagements. With his hardy habits and few wants, his skill in wood-craft, and his powerful arithmetic, he was very competent to live in any part of the world. (Thomas 267)

He once devised an improved method of producing graphite which was to improve the

standard of living of his family. This invention in pencil-making could have secured his future as a very rich man. “But no discovery of Yankee ingenuity in himself was likely to divert him into the cultivation of so dubious a gift.” (Thomas 328) When his friends congratulated him that he had now opened his way to fortune, Thoreau replied that he should never make another pencil. ““Why should I? I would not do again what I have done once.”” (Stewart 58) It is obvious that he did not want to accept any of the ways of living he had tried. Joseph Wood Krutch commented on this point in his “Paradise Found”, “There seemed no way of making a living—teaching, writing, or pencil-making—which did not take up more precious time than he was willing to give to it...”(Thomas 329) “He resumed his endless walks and miscellaneous studies, making every day some new acquaintance with Nature, though as yet never speaking of zoology or botany, since, though very studious of natural facts, he was incurious of technical and textual science.” (Stewart 58)

Why did Thoreau reject all professions and go to live by the pond? There are mainly three reasons. First, he yearned to live alone by a pond for years. As early as 1841, he wrote in his *Journal* of building his own cabin by a pond: “I want to go soon and live away by the pond.... But my friends ask what I will do when I get there? Will it not be employment enough to watch the progress of the seasons?” (Harding 123) On December 24 the same year, he also wrote: “I want to go soon and live away by the pond, where I shall hear only the wind whispering among the reeds. It will be a success if I shall have left myself behind.” (Thomas 329) Living by a pond would best satisfy his need to observe the natural world. Second, the quietly picturesque scenery of Walden Pond was just right for Thoreau to accomplish his main goals of writing and studying nature. At that time, he was conceiving a plan to write a book about his boat trip with his brother John, which he did finish during the time and was later published as *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. And it was in the woods that he completed the first draft of his beautiful prose work, *Walden*. Third, he could lead a

life in his own way. In fact, from 1840 on, Thoreau had accumulated in his journal good reasons for withdrawing from social life. He was determined to leave the secular affairs for some time, to see how mean they were and to “move away from public opinion, from government, from religion, from education, from society.” (Thomas 328) And he went further, “No true and brave person will be content to live on such a footing with his fellows and himself as the laws of every household require. The house is the very haunt and lair of our vice. I am impatient to withdraw myself from under its roof as an unclean spot. There is no circulation there; it is full of stagnant and mephitic vapours.” (Thomas 328) Seeing the “quiet desperation” involved in his father’s running of the pencil factory as well as in his neighbors’ seeking a higher standard of living, Thoreau was resolved to experiment with a saner, less stressful alternative to this slave-like pursuit of material things. At Walden, Thoreau could simplify and experience the most unpretending life. By being in harmony with nature, he found a solution to the maddening influence of the increasingly industrialized society. However, such a life, in his neighbors’ eyes, was loafing. In answer to this, Thoreau declared:

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 practice 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, when 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.(126)

This paragraph is a declaration of Thoreau’s determination to “live deliberately”.

Instead of practicing resignation, Thoreau was ready to “reduce life to its lowest terms” and to live “Spartan-like” so as to “face only the essential facts of life, live deep and suck out all the marrow of life”. In other words, by living at Walden, Thoreau intended to find discipline, to seek truth in a simple and fundamental circumstance without the intervention of civilized and conventional life, to work out a satisfactory relationship between man and his environment, to promise a way to the “higher society”. His book *Walden* is, then, an expression of his philosophical meaning through his experience of the outward to inward, from material to spiritual. Therefore, Thoreau went to the pond, not to retreat from society but to try to find the truth which may change this society into a better and higher one. As Thoreau declared in the book, “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” from the blind negligence of nature. (116)

So in March 1845, Thoreau began to build his little hut by Walden Pond. On July 4, 1845, he officially took up the residence. The date was not chosen at random. Instead, Thoreau meant it to reveal to the world his desire to be independent and seek for truth of a harmonious relationship between man and nature.

1.3.2 Thoreau’s Life at Walden

Joseph Wood Krutch claimed in “Paradise Found”, “The retirement to Walden is the central feature in the legend of Thoreau.” (Thomas 327) During the 26 months Thoreau stayed at Walden, he reduced his material requirements to the minimum and tried to be self-sufficient in everything, spending about six weeks a year planting beans etc. and working to maintain a meager yet decent livelihood, but writing and enjoying nature most of the time for the rest of the year. He mainly worked on his book *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849), a narrative travel essay, recounting a boating trip he took with his brother John in 1839. Meanwhile he kept a large journal which, on Emerson’s advice, he had started and

made use of to record his life and reflections. This was the basis, on which he later condensed and reworked for five years into his masterpiece *Walden* (1854). He spent a night in jail in Concord in 1847, for refusing to pay taxes to the commonwealth of Massachusetts because of its endorsement of slavery and Mexican war both of which Thoreau morally opposed. Two years later he wrote an essay called "Civil Disobedience (1849)" out of this prison experience, which later inspired such diverse writers and leaders as Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Allen Ginsberg.

Thoreau was not really remote from the village and from his friends. Every now and then, he returned to the village, chatted with the townspeople and dined with his friends. There were also visitors who occasionally called at his cabin. So his retirement to Walden is a gesture and a symbol rather than an adventure. What he intended to achieve is that, through this gesture or symbol, he might express his thought which otherwise would have been too complicated to be understood easily. "Thoreau is a deeper and more complicated writer than we have been told, and that the book is essentially dynamic rather than static, a movement from something to something, rather than the simple reporting of an experience." (Thomas 319)

Thoreau put emphasis on the freedom of pursuing one's life instead of clinging to a certain way of living. He exclaimed in "conclusion", "The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity!" (452) In *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, one also reads such comments on Thoreau, "His whole life, after the period of uncertainty about an occupation in his early manhood, became a calculated refusal to live by the materialistic values of the neighbors who provided him with a microcosm of the world. By simplifying his needs... he succeeded, with minimal compromises, in living his life rather than wasting it in earning a

living.”(Baym 1558)

At the end of two years and two months, Thoreau moved back to Concord, feeling that he had lived one of the lives he was born to live in the world. “I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one.” (452) From these words, Thoreau’s philosophy of living in seclusion is clearly seen. When he felt like withdrawing from society and living in solitude, he did it without hesitation. But he would terminate his stay in the woods when he thought he had had enough. In this sense, the reason why Thoreau did not live at Walden for life despite his intense love of nature is evident. The fact is, Thoreau did not propose to discard real life completely, but to appeal to modern man to immerse in nature at certain times for serenity and a sense of belonging, to introspect whether he was justified in his doings, so that human society could develop more healthily. Thoreau believed that man must not cut out his roots in nature. Instead, a healthy society need maintain a balance between civilization and nature. While he stayed at Walden, he frequently went back to the town, met visitors, or even went on an excursion to the highest peak in New England.

Without interventions from the outside world because of his satisfaction with the simple life in nature, Thoreau began to discern his lifelong interest: sauntering in nature, studying and writing about it. He recorded his observations and reflected on how to maintain a balance between civilization and nature. While at the Walden Pond, Thoreau held close communion with nature during which he developed and experimented with his ideas of man-and-nature relationship.

Chapter 2 The Harmonious Man-and-Nature Relationship as Reflected in Thoreau's *Walden*

Through a close contact with nature, Thoreau gradually formed his own views on man-and-nature relationship. In this part, Thoreau's views are to be analyzed in four aspects, all of which are interrelated and the omission of any one of them might hinder the comprehensive understanding of a harmonious relationship between man and nature, as reflected in Thoreau's masterpiece *Walden*.

2.1 Simplicity—Way to End Man's Abuse of Nature

Emerson once declared Thoreau to be "a born protestant" (Stewart 74), one of the reasons being that Thoreau protested against a number of evils in our modern world in his masterpiece *Walden*, one of which was the rising expense of living. Man blindly strives for physical comfort and enjoyment at the cost of nature. Strongly against the luxurious life, Thoreau is known for his call to simplify. His stay at Walden is in itself an experiment of a simplified lifestyle. As a matter of fact, what Thoreau preaches is not just a way of living, but an attitude man should adopt towards nature.

2.1.1 A Way of Living

Thoreau expressed his idea of simplicity in the chapter "Economy". He began at the actual point at which he found his neighbors and himself. In Thoreau's eyes, the misfortune of his townsmen was "to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of". (4) "By a seeming fate ... they are employed ... laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal. It is a fool's life." (6) As for Thoreau, his home at Walden was a small cabin built by himself. His furniture, part of which he made himself, consisted of only things that were essential for life:

“a bed, a table, a desk, three chairs, a looking-glass three inches in diameter, a pair of tongs and andirons, a kettle, a skillet, and a frying-pan, a dipper, a wash-bowl, two knives and forks, three plates, one cup, one spoon, a jug for molasses, and a japanned lamp.” (88) Besides, Thoreau ate simply and plainly while at Walden. “Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion.” (126) Man might use as simple a diet as the animals, and yet retain health and strength. Thoreau restrained himself from meat, coffee and wine, but lived on the beans and other vegetables he raised, the berries and herbs he picked and the fish he caught. He chose to live by making his wants few, and supplying them himself. During the time Thoreau stayed at Walden Pond, his average outgo per week was 27 cents, which covered the necessities he could not produce himself.

Thoreau had adopted simplicity for many reasons. He had been confused concerning the means and ends of life, so he tried to reduce life to its simplest terms, to clear away the obstacles that stood between him and the “grand fact” of life. In 1857, Thoreau wrote in his journal:

By poverty, i.e. simplicity of life and fewness of incidents, I am solidified and crystallized, as a vapor or liquid by cold. It is a singular concentration of strength and energy and flavor. Chastity is perceptual acquaintance with the all. My diffuse and vaporous life becomes as the frost leaves and spiculae radiant as gems, weeds and stubble in a winter morning. You think that I am impoverishing myself by withdrawing from men, 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 society. By simplicity...my life is concentrated and so becomes organized ... which before was inorganic and lumpish. (Paul 246-247)

Thoreau lived in the middle period of the 19th century, during which the American

capitalism boomed. People fell over themselves for trade and fortune, and had profit pursuit and accumulation of wealth as the sole aim of life. In the view of Thoreau, money deprived man of conscience and distorted human nature. He seemed to be watching poor people “crushed and smothered” under the heavy load, “creeping down the road of life”. (4) Who made them slaves of the soil and of their own possessions? The answer is the men themselves because they failed to understand the “true necessities and means of life”, but just chose the common mode of living. Thoreau believed that “our life is frittered away by detail” and questioned “why should we live with such hurry and waste of life?” (128) Thoreau himself had reduced the means of life not because he wanted to prove that he could go without them, or to disclaim their value in enriching life, but because they were usually factitious. Wealth can not bring about richness. It robbed one of life itself. Life, in Thoreau’s understanding, is worthy of being called life only when it is up to a certain spiritual standard. “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”, because it made men slaves of money and thus became the tools of their tools. (18) Thoreau also commented on “that seemingly wealthy, but most terribly impoverished class of all”, by saying that they “have accumulated dross, but know not how to use it, or get rid of it, and thus have forged their own golden or silver fetters”. (20) By referring to their wealth as “dross” and “golden or silver fetters” they have forged for themselves, Thoreau showed his scorn for rich people. He is also scornful toward luxurious life and material benefits.

Seeing people “crushed and smothered” under the heavy load of accumulated dross, Thoreau, with the serenity of a sage, called on people to adopt the simplified life style. He believed only by “simplicity, simplicity, simplicity” can people obtain the true essence of life. This was not a deliberate pose in the least degree, but a call that Thoreau uttered from his innermost part of his heart. Thoreau had experimented to find out just how important the

commodities of life were. By simplifying, Thoreau did not mean to do without necessities of life, but wanted to see what was essential, that is, whether or not things served the grand ends of human life. He had learned from the economy of nature that “The necessities of life for man in this climate may, accurately enough, be distributed under the several heads of Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel”. (14) These were the essentials on the commodity level of life, necessary to any higher life, and he did not deny them. His conclusion was that the means were not so important as the ends of life, as the material society assumed they were.

Thoreau energetically advocated a simplified and thrifty way of life. The purpose was not to return to the savage and wild times, but to appeal to the public to break away from the conventions and hold fast to simplicity and unadornment. Thoreau canonized the wise and virtuous people of the ancient times, who, instead of seeking fame and wealth, deviated from the material pursuit and devoted all their time and energy to self-perfection. While at Walden, Thoreau reduced his material requirements to the minimum and maintained a satisfactory life, freeing himself for his true work of thinking and writing, and thus demonstrated to his fellow men a way of life—simplicity.

2.1.2 An Attitude Man Should Adopt toward Nature

Thoreau’s call to simplify is not only a way of living, but from the perspective of desire motivation criticism, also an attitude man should adopt towards nature.

Desire motivation criticism is an important ecological thought of the 20th century. In order to understand it, one has to make clear, first of all, of the desire motivation theory.

The so-called desire motivation theory is composed of three layers of meanings. Firstly, man lives for the purpose of satisfying his desires of all kinds. Secondly, man’s hard work and exploration of the world have not only gratified his desires and exploited his potentials, but promoted civilization and the development of mankind as well. Thirdly, man’s desires are endless; hence the development of mankind is without ending. Of all ages, thinkers have

agreed that human desire is the tremendous impetus that promotes the development of society. Kant once said that without the ruthless chase after fame and wealth, without the lustrous desire for possession and power, all man's natural talents would have been in deep slumber. (Li 333) Hegel also pointed out that without desire, all great enterprises in the world would not have succeeded. (62) Marx Weber believed that the desire for possession or for wealth has been in everyone ever since the beginning of private ownership and it is the very thing that drives man to pursue and develop. (7-8) However, ecological thought of the 20th century criticized this theory harshly, pointing out that human desire, like a devil released from a bottle, is hard to bring under control once it is set free. If human desire swells immoderately, man is doomed to suffer the contamination and devastation of nature, the result of which is inevitably the complete destruction of mankind.

The tale of Erysichthon in Greek mythology is a good example of how insatiable desire leads to destruction. Erysichthon, prince of Thessaly, unscrupulously chopped down oaks in a sacred forest belonging to Demeter, the goddess of the harvest, to encourage plantation. He was then condemned to perpetual hunger. His desire for food was endless and became ever stronger. The only purpose of his life was to satisfy his desire. He ate night and day, without stopping even in dreams. But the more he ate, the hungrier he became. Having consumed all the food supplies stored up by his ancestors and all his possessions, he sold his daughter in exchange for food. Finally, he could find nothing else to eat but to devour his own flesh. (Ovid 118-121)

Erysichthon is perhaps the first man to ruin nature to expand production in western literature. (Wang 191) For thousands of years, man has been following his tracks on the road of material production. And the doom he met symbolizes the phylogeny man is to trail after in the process of satisfying his endless desire. Man, like Erysichthon who consumed all the food supplies left over by his ancestors and sold his daughter for food, will not only exhaust all the

resources that mother earth has created through evolution of millions of years, but also deprive his offspring of materials necessary to their survival. The consequence is unavoidably to slaughter each other without mercy for limited resources until finally bringing mankind to complete destruction.

According to the Roman Club, an international, non-governmental academic research institute founded in Rome in 1968, man should restrain his insatiable desire self-consciously. Subdued by the temptation of the material revolution, man is now asking for far more than his physiological demand and being quite unreasonable toward his living environment. However, the earth is limited. If the world population, industrialization, pollution, grain production and the consumption of natural resources increase at the present rate, the economic development on this planet will come to its limit sometime in a hundred years. Percy, a member of the Roman Club, declared that man is now on his way to the final destruction. Man, then, has to find ways to stop advancement and change direction. (10) An effective means is for man to get rid of the habit of being extravagant and place the material desire at a low level so as to establish a view of living based on possibility. Otherwise, if man is unwilling to or unable to control his devilish desire, he is doomed to suffer a crushing blow together with the earth.

In addition to unscrupulous plundering of nature, swelling of human desire leads to dehumanization. William Wordsworth pointed out that unchecked human desire ruined man himself as well as nature. Just take a look at those "pleasure-hunters". They have no time to appreciate natural beauty. What they are keen on is just how to catch more games swiftly. Charles Pierre Baudelaire, a French poet, compared human desire to a monster that weighed heavily on people's back. But to the poet's surprise, people were most willing to carry the monster forward. (Wang 194) Is it human instinct to take the terrible, oppressive monster as a part of him? From the viewpoint of the ecological thinking (or desire motivation criticism), man should restrain and guide the monster-like desire by going by the guideline of being

beneficial to the wholeness, harmony and steadiness of the ecological system. By bravely shouldering up the ecological responsibility, pursuing simplified material but rich spiritual life, and going back to harmony with nature, man is able to save himself.

Some ecological thinkers put forward the responsibility principle as opposed to the desire motivation theory: man, as the most intelligent, most powerful and the most destructive species on this planet, must shoulder up the responsibility of the survival of all the creatures and the earth itself. Man should be responsible for the natural existence of everything on the earth as well as for the survival of man himself. Man should be responsible for the offspring and the long-term survival of mankind as well as for the human beings at present. In a word, man ought to keep himself in the ecological system and further be in charge of the balance and harmony of the whole system. (Wang 59) Those who are short of sense of responsibility toward nature are reckless because of ignorance. When they discover the destructive outcome, they tend to become pessimistic and desperate. Philosopher Anthony Weston answered the phenomenon in his *An Invitation to Environmental Philosophy*, saying that it is never too late for us to rescue the earth. We have to be aware that we are the only rescuers. This is the duty that we ought to start to perform now, to stop all destructions we can stop, to establish ecological consciousness of certain kind, to learn to live by the ecological consciousness and to live harmoniously with all the inhabitants on the earth. (56-57)

Thoreau, as early as 150 years ago, foresaw the ecological crisis brought about by untempered human desire. "By avarice and selfishness, and a groveling habit, from which none of us is free, of regarding the soil as property, or the means of acquiring property chiefly, the landscape is deformed." (234) All is because man "knows Nature but as a robber". Therefore, Thoreau called upon man to practise a simplified lifestyle as a way to end man's abuse of nature because it is after all the craze for luxury that results in the destruction of the environment. Simplicity is the only solution to the problem. In *Walden*, Thoreau pictured a

man with an immoderately swelled desire:

... his fingers grown into crooked and bony talons from the long habit of grasping harpy-like; ... who thought only of its money value; ...who exhausted the land around it, and would fain have exhausted the waters within it;... and would have drained and sold it for the mud at its bottom.... I respect not his labors, his farm where everything has its price, who would carry the landscape, who would carry his God, to market, if he could get anything for him; who goes to market for his god as it is; on whose farm nothing grows free, whose fields bear no crops, whose meadows no flowers, whose trees no fruits, but dollars; who loves not the beauty of his fruits, whose fruits are not ripe for him till they are turned to dollars.
(278-280)

Such people did not really care for nature. So long as they could sustain life and get some money, they would quite willingly sell their own share of natural beauty. Many of them did this for nothing more than a cup of rum. Thoreau is also against hunting, for "... any creature holds its life by the same tenure that he does. The hare in its extremity cries like a child."
(304)

Now that untempered human desire is destructive, it is pressing for man to propagate simplicity as it is a way to end man's abuse of nature and an attitude man should adopt toward nature. This is an indispensable part of Thoreau's views on man-and-nature relationship.

2.2 Equality—Ideal Man-and-Nature Relationship

Thoreau is a pure lover of nature. He gives priority to whole nature. In his eyes, instead of the master of nature, man is her child. So the relationship man has with all natural entities is that of equal brotherhood. In *Walden*, Thoreau asked, "What is the pill which will keep us well, serene, contented? Not my or thy great-grandfather's, but our great-grandmother Nature's universal, vegetable, botanic medicines, by which she has kept herself young always,

outlived so many old Parrs in her day, and fed her health with their decaying fatness.” (194) What Thoreau applies himself to observing and knowing is “our great-grandmother Nature” herself and all her offspring—all the plants and animals that Thoreau takes as his brothers and sisters. “Every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy and befriended me. I was so distinctly made aware of the presence of something kindred to me, even in scenes which we are accustomed to call wild and dreary, and also that the nearest of blood to me and humanist was not a person nor a villager, that I thought no place could ever be strange to me again.” (186) Thoreau further made his point clear by asking, “Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?” (194)

From his experiences at Walden in more than two years, Thoreau’s idea of equality is clearly seen. He exposed himself to nature as much as possible and chose to befriend with brute neighbors as birds and animals. “Though a naturalist, he used neither trap nor gun.” (Stewart 59) Squirrels and birds went regularly into his cabin or in front of it for food that Thoreau had especially prepared for them. A wild mouse came out of its nest underneath the house regularly at lunch time and picked up the crumbs at his feet. Thoreau depicted the little creature in *Walden*:

It probably had never seen a man before, and it soon became quite familiar, and would run over my shoes and up my clothes... At length, as I leaned with my elbow on the bench one day, it ran up my clothes, and along my sleeve, and round and round the paper which held my dinner, while I kept the latter close, and dodged and played at bopeep with it; and when at last I held still a piece of cheese between my thumb and finger, it came and nibbled it, sitting in my hand, and afterward cleaned its face and paws, like a fly, and walked away. (322)

Needless to say, without reverence and love for nature, without the belief of equality in mind, Thoreau would not have been on such intimate terms with the little creature, and he would not

have been able to give such a vivid description of the wild mouse. Lawrence Buell, an expert in the study of Thoreau, pointed out that Thoreau unfolded an existence beyond mankind in his works. That was the most important existence, one that went beyond the existence of any human member. (*Imagination* 209) Obviously, what Thoreau stresses is the whole nature. Man is not the master of nature but her child. The relationship that man has with everything in nature is that of equal brotherhood.

Over the years, Thoreau would look after the wild stock of the town, and water 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 otherwise in dry seasons. He would sit in the top of a pine tree, swaying with the wind, or crawl about on his hands and knees endeavoring to communicate with a reluctant wood-frog. In warm evenings, Thoreau would spend the hours of midnight fishing from a boat, conversing by a long flaxen line with mysterious nocturnal fishes or lying on Conantum's cliff intoxicated by the music of crickets in the damp grass. All of these exemplify the friendly relationship Thoreau establishes with everything in nature. Even the struggle among ants has fascinated Thoreau. Emerson once commented on Thoreau admiringly by saying that he "knew the country like a fox or a bird." (Brooks 761) In the course of studying the living habits of flying birds and wild animals, Thoreau came to discover the supreme truth that the harmonious coexistence between man and nature is an ideal state that man should aspire after.

The account given by some of his contemporaries clarifies Thoreau's intense love for nature. In September, 1842, Nathaniel Hawthorne, who had just moved to Concord, recorded his first impressions of Thoreau in his journal.

Mr. Thoreau is a keen and delicate observer of nature—a genuine observer, which, I suspect, is almost as rare a character as even an original poet; and Nature, in return for his love, seems to adopt him as her especial child, and shows him secrets which

few others are allowed to witness. He is familiar with beast, fish, fowl, and reptile, and has strange stories to tell of adventures, and friendly passages with these lower brethren of mortality. Herb and flower likewise, wherever they grow, whether in garden, or wild wood, are his familiar friends. He is also on intimate terms with the clouds and can tell the portents of storms. (Harding 138)

So by taking himself as nature's "especial child", Thoreau observes and gets to know mother nature herself and all her posterity—all the plants and animals which are his brothers and sisters.

Frederick Willis gave another vivid description when he recalled visiting Thoreau at Walden Pond in July 1847 with the Alcott family.

He was talking to Mr. Alcott of the wild flowers in Walden woods when, suddenly stopping, he said: 'Keep very still and I will show you my family.' Stepping quickly outside the cabin door, he gave a low and curious whistle; immediately a woodchuck came running towards him from a nearby burrow. With varying note, yet still low and strange, a pair of gray squirrels were summoned and approached him fearlessly. With still another note several birds, including two crows, flew towards him, one of the crows nestling upon his shoulder. I remember it was the crow resting close to his head that made the most vivid impression upon me, knowing how fearful of man this bird is. He fed them all from his hand, taking food from his pocket, and petted them gently before our delighted gaze; and then dismissed them by different whistling, always strange and low and short, each little wild thing departing instantly at hearing his special signal. (Harding 193)

Thoreau's relationship with the things in nature is vividly presented.

As far as Thoreau is concerned, all natural objects are joined together in a single animated whole. He cherishes a love for the whole order of being and natural kinship and

refuses to accept human-centered indifference toward nature. For those who lay much emphasis on the importance of man, Thoreau outpoured his contempt and anger. In the spring of 1852, he wrote, “The poet says the proper study of mankind is man. I say, study to forget all that; take wider views of the universe. That is the egotism of the race... Man is but the place where I stand, and the prospect hence is infinite. It is not a chamber of mirrors which reflect me. Man is a past phenomenon to philosophy. The universe is larger than enough for man’s abode.”(Worster 85)

All is equal in nature. Man, instead of a conqueror or a master, is just a constituent part of nature. This is the idea that Thoreau tried to advocate in his book *Walden* and the man-and-nature relationship that he proved to be right in his experimental life at the Walden Pond.

2.3 Preservationism—Criticism of Industrialization

According to the historian Richard Bartlett, the native Americans were “beautifully attuned to the environment” before the Europeans invaded America. (Steffoff 2) They deemed themselves as a part of nature and lived comfortably within the natural world. However, peace was disturbed with the arrival of the first European settlers. Holding the view that they are nature’s masters, the European colonists saw wilderness as a threat and as a barrier to the provision of safety, comfort, food and shelter. Therefore, in the name of completing a divine mission to civilize the wild land, they exploited the vast areas hastily. This tremendous expansion of modern civilization threatened to upset nature, putting unprecedented pressure on the well-being of the green world and the survival of the wildlife.

What was consolable was that, in this main trend, there were still instances of nature conservation. For example, William Penn “decreed at the foundation of Pennsylvania in the late seventeenth century that settlers leave an acre of trees for every five acres cleared”. (McCormick 10) A few sober-minded people were aware of the importance of conservation.

Thoreau was among them. Seeing man ruthlessly disrupt and exterminate nature, Thoreau could not but grieve in his writings over the violent disturbance brought about by economic development. "But since I left those shores the woodchoppers have still further laid them waste and now for many a year there will be no more rambling through the aisles of the wood, with occasional vistas through which you see the water. My Muse may be excused if she is silent henceforth. How can you expect the birds to sing when their groves are cut down?"

(274) Thoreau also lamented man's profanatory use of wood and water in the pond.

Now the trunks of trees on the bottom, and the old log canoe, and the dark surrounding woods, are gone, and the villagers, who scarcely know where it lies, instead of going to the pond to bathe or drink, are thinking to bring its water, which should be as sacred as the Ganges at least, to the village in a pipe, to wash their dishes with!—to earn their Walden by the turning of a cock or drawing of a plug!

(274)

Nature is threatened by encroaching civilization. In view of the damages that industrialization had brought to nature, Thoreau took a critical attitude. He loathed any kind of environmental destruction in the name of progress or civilization. When the Fitchburg Railroad was built through his town Concord, Thoreau, rather than celebrating this technological symbol, showed his disgust. In "The Ponds", Thoreau gave a vivid description of the train which well conveyed his resentment:

That devilish Iron Horse, whose ear-rending neigh is heard throughout the town, has muddied the Boiling Spring with his foot, and he it is that has browsed of all the woods on Walden shore, that Trojan horse, with a thousand men in his belly, introduced by mercenary Greeks! Where is the country's champion, the Moore of Moore Hall, to meet him at the Deep Cut and thrust an avenging lance between the ribs of the bloated pest? (274)

Thoreau used such words as “devilish”, “ear-rending neigh”, “muddied”, “browsed off” and “pest”, which clearly indicate his attitude toward this new invention. The word “mercenary” enables one to sense Thoreau’s contempt and hatred for those who were crazy about civilization. In Thoreau’s opinion, industrialization, in the process of seeking development at the cost of our natural resources, made man farther and farther away from nature.

Now that “nature has no human inhabitant who appreciates her” and “she flourishes most alone, far from the towns where men reside”, humans should learn to preserve nature so that they can “conspire with the wild luxuriant beauty of it”. (284) Nature exists for its own sake. Any means of human disturbance might ruin nature. Thoreau hoped that “As long as Eternal Justice reigns, not one innocent huckleberry can be transported thither from the country’s hills.” (248) In *The Maine Woods*, Thoreau criticized the practice of roughly possessing and utilizing nature and called upon people to seek poetry in nature and to live poetically in nature. If man approaches the wilderness with nothing more than a gun or an axe, he can not expect to live on the earth forever.

Technology and the growth of the city have divorced man from nature. Then can man thrive in a state of “separation from this great elemental source of sanity and strength”? Thoreau had shown how man can re-establish “vital contact with a world of which he is a part, and from which he has been estranged, not without peril to himself, by the conditions of modern living.” (Stewart 76) He had taken a great interest in the natural world ever since he was a young man. He was never tired of staying alone in nature. In fact, he took a pleasure in close observation of nature and solitary communion with it. Caught by the loveliness of unspoiled nature and regretful for the disturbances brought by advancing civilization, he questioned industrialization and appealed to people to preserve resources.

2.4 Life with Principle—Outcome of a Harmonious Relationship between Man and Nature

Thoreau aspires for a life that is simple in means, but rich in ends. In *Walden*, he showed pity for men who “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.” Thus, he “has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men.” (6) Thoreau refers to the cares that most men had as “factitious” and their labors of life as “superfluously coarse”. Simply out of “ignorance and mistake”, they took a wrong attitude toward life, failing to pluck “its finer fruits”. The result is the failure in both the development of “true integrity” and maintaining the “manliest relations to men”. By “finer fruits”, Thoreau refers to the essence of life in his eyes, including a gradual human development and the leisure originating from the process. According to him, human development is by no means material accumulation, but one’s rich spiritual life, the promotion of oneself and an interpersonal harmonization as well as a harmonious relationship between man and nature.

Thoreau’s problem was not what to do without society, but what to do with it. He did not want to abandon society. Even during the 26 months in the woods, he kept contact with the outside world by returning to the village once in a while. But he found the paradox of civilization was that it did not civilize but barbarized most men, reducing them to a level of want below that of the savage. His own life in the woods was, though very simple, remarkably civilized and social. Savages, after all, did not read Homer and write books in the woods. In his journal he wrote:

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 and development. The fact for the savage, and for the mass of mankind, is that it is better to plant, weave, and build

than do nothing or worse; but the fact for the philosopher, or a nation loving wisdom, is that it is most important to cultivate the highest faculties and spend as little time as possible in planting, weaving, building etc. (Paul 307)

He also observed in his journal, "There are two kinds of simplicity—one that is akin to foolishness, the other to wisdom. The philosopher's style of living is only outwardly simple, but inwardly complex. The savage's style is both outwardly and inwardly simple." (Paul 307)

Thoreau placed emphasis on one's inner world. He once said:

I am afraid to travel much or to famous places, lest it might completely dissipate the mind. Then I am sure that what we observe at home, if we observe anything, is of more importance than what we observe abroad. The far-fetched is of the least value. What we observe in traveling are to some extent the accidents of the body, but [what] we observe when sitting at home are, in the same proportion, phenomena of the mind itself. A wakeful night will yield as much thought as a long journey. If I try thoughts by their quality, not their quantity, I may find that a restless night will yield more than the longest journey. (Brooks 773)

For the masses of people, what he disapproved of was "their limited view, not in respect to style, but to the object of living", pointing out that the "view" was everything, that "a man who has equally limited views with respect to the end of living will not be helped by the most complex and refined style...". This is what he meant when he said that "the civilized man is a more experienced and wiser savage". It was the primitive style that attracted him, not the "barren simplicity of the savage". (Paul 336) Thoreau stresses the cultivation of one's "inner virtue and inward, spiritual grace of man" (Chang 90). As for him, the most important thing for man to do is to be self-sufficient and strive for personal spiritual perfection. In light of the fact that modern civilization is degrading and man is dehumanized by his craving lust for material possessions, Thoreau advises man to leave the hustle and bustle of the mundane life

and sink himself in the wholesome atmosphere of nature, since nature, in his eyes, is “a genuine restorative, healthy influence on man’s spiritual well-being” (Chang 89).

While in the woods, Thoreau worked only about six weeks in a year and dedicated the whole of his winters as well as most of his summers to study. He was leisurely but by no means idle, for leisure differs radically from mere idleness. In fact, an idle or lazy man is unable to experience leisure. As Pieper pointed out, “leisure is only possible ... to a man [who is] at one with himself, [and] who is also at one with the world.” (Brooks 760) The man who fails to come to terms with himself is restless. Time hangs heavy on his hands, so he is always trying to kill time. Unable to find a meaningful activity, such a man has no interest in contemplation of the world around him. Thoreau in his life at Walden Pond was not idle at all. In addition to exploring nature and exploring himself, he did a great deal of creative work. He read, wrote and contemplated a lot. He expressed his idea in *Walden*, “With respect to luxuries and comforts, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meager life than the poor. The ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindu, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward.” (18) It has to be noted that Thoreau was influenced by Confucius, the basic tenets of whose doctrine concern self-culture. In *Walden*, Thoreau quoted as many as ten times from the *Four Books* to support his thesis. Needless to say, it was the Confucius’ idea of neglecting material enjoyment and stressing spiritual pursuit that enlightened Thoreau. He brought the ancient Eastern theology into full play and in his own way, fought against the frenzy of acquisition which seemed the dominant spirit of the time. According to Thoreau, this kind of civilization with physical simplicity is the foundation of a higher life. And this was the kind of life that Thoreau was after by practising the simplified life style at Walden Pond during his sojourn there.

Thoreau believes that most men, in their frantic pursuit of the means for living, have lost sight of the true ends of life. If they ask for no more than the satisfaction of the basic needs in

material life, they can live a fuller and happier life. What Thoreau tries to go in for is not a simplified life itself, but a spiritual life that is as rich as possible at the cost of the pursuit of material well-being. This idea influenced several thinkers and statesmen of foresight. When awarded the Nobel Prize of peace, Martin Luther King delivered a speech, in which he made the point that the problem we are facing today is that we are lost in the material world. The destiny of the numerous and complicated modern life can be summed up with an apothegm by Thoreau, that is, such development means rushing for an ending that is impossible to develop. (Wang 109)

At Walden, Thoreau aspired to pursue a life that is simple in means, but rich in ends. Rather than seeing the acquisition of wealth as the goal for human existence, Thoreau saw the goal of life to be an exploration of the mind and of the magnificent world around us. Such life with principle frees man from mundane affairs and encourages him to unlock the secrets and underlying beauty of nature. In order to realize it, man has to be aware of the importance of life with principle and further cultivate a harmonious relationship between man and nature. On one hand, if man exploits nature indiscriminately, he is digging his own tomb. Any life is, in the long run, impossible without a harmonious relationship between man and nature, not to mention life with principle. On the other hand, Thoreau does not deny the importance of the necessities of life, but try to maintain a balance between material and spiritual cultivation. If man takes too much from nature, the result is the achievement of material enjoyment but negligence of spiritual development, which is a complete deviation from life that is simple in means, but rich in ends. So a harmonious relationship between man and nature is the basis on which man is able to maintain life with principle. In other words, a harmonious coexistence with nature leads to life with principle.

Chapter 3 Thoreau's Legacy

Thoreau's understanding of nature, which is unprecedented in American literature, originates from his close contact with it. He spent most of his life time observing nature and wrote works on nature and man-and-nature relationship. The ideas in his works went beyond his age and were thus ignored by his contemporaries. With the coming of the global environmental crisis and the upsurge of the environmental movement, Thoreau was rediscovered. The former American vice-president Albert Gore pointed out in his work *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* that writers as Thoreau have enabled us to realize the greatest threat to the environment is not the threats themselves, but the lack of perception of them on the part of people, for most people haven't realized ecological crisis will surely lead men to their tombs. (Wang 109) Thoreau's ideas of man-and-nature relationship are still of significance in modern age in that they helped form ecoliterature and stimulate the environmental movement.

3.1 An Important Source of Ecoliterature

Thoreau is deemed as the greatest ecological writer of the Romantic period. Lawrence Buell, an expert in the study of Thoreau, summed up Thoreau's life and his writings in two aspects, the first being his pursuit of a simple material life, to live an unvarnished life of primitive man, especially that of the ancient Greeks, the second being his experience of nature, to uncover the wonderful and mysterious beauty in nature. (Wang 107) On account of the fact that Thoreau's practice of a simplified lifestyle can be taken as a way to end man's abuse of nature, the two aspects of Thoreau's life and his writings summed up by Buell can be combined into one, that is, Thoreau's nature-consciousness. Thoreau dedicated his life to the study of nature and man-and-nature relationship. His influence on ecological thinking can not be underrated. Many writers later followed his example by living in nature. For instance,

Rachel Carson purchased one-and-a half acres on Southport Island at the tip of Boothbay peninsula and built a cottage with windows facing the sea. It was a perspective she found inspiring, because, as she recorded in her personal notes: "Even in the vast and mysterious reaches of the sea we are brought back to the fundamental truth that nothing lives to itself." (Payton) Jeffers, the famous American ecological poet, built a dwelling called "Hawk Tower" on his own on the hill by Carmel-by-the-Sea in California to live together with hawks, rocks, redwood and lichen. Facing the immense Pacific Ocean, he intoned his own poetic works.

Since the 1960s, Americans have set a higher and higher value on Thoreau and have become more and more infatuated with him. As an organization to study a single American writer, the Thoreauvian Society founded in 1941, is the biggest one with the longest history. This organization devotes to canonizing Thoreau's views on nature and human existence as well as to studying his life and works. In 1985, Thoreau's masterpiece *Walden* came out top among the ten books listed by the journal "American Heritage" to have constituted the American character. Critics all agreed on the fact that it was Thoreau who enlightened the Americans as to their nature-consciousness. (Wang 110) Lawrence Buell in his *Writing for an Endangered World; Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*, even referred to Thoreau as the idol of American culture. (7)

As a forerunner of ecological thinking, Thoreau's legacy to ecoliterature is undeniable. Being an important branch of the ecological thoughts of the 20th century, ecoliterature sprang from the present-day intense ecological crisis. A due expression of man's cry for alleviating and preventing ecological catastrophe in the field of literature, it is prompted by the sense of natural responsibility and sense of social mission on the part of men of letters. Wang Nuo defines ecoliterature like this, "With ecological integrity as ideological basis, benefit of the whole ecosystem as highest value, ecoliterature is literature that investigates and unfolds

man-and-nature relationship and seeks the social foundation of ecological crisis.” (Wang 11) Ever since the 1970s, the study of ecoliterature has been on the rise with the worldwide upsurge of ecological thinking. By 1990s, it has become a famous school of literary study. Ecoliterature inherits much of Thoreau’s ideas and develops them into such ecological thinking as nature conquest criticism, industry, science and technology criticism, ecological responsibility and returning to harmony with nature.

3.1.1 Nature Conquest Criticism

Thoreau enjoys taking excursions to locate the wild. In “Walking”, he said, “I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits unless I spend four hours a day at least—and it is commonly more than that—sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields absolutely free from all worldly engagements.” (Thomashow 35) He travels to the Maine woods and Cape Cod, and saunters every day around Concord. Walking seems to have become a must in his life, for it is a means of observing nature and seeking self-perfection. Thoreau also tells us how to walk. “Moreover, you must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates when walking.” (Armstrong 108) By “ruminates”, Thoreau means feeling, touching, experiencing the landscape and self-discovering. So nature in Thoreau’s eyes is by no means a belonging of mankind. Instead, it exists for its own sake.

Thoreau expresses his respect for nature. “I believed that the woods were not tenantless, but choke-full of honest spirits as good as myself any day, — not an empty chamber, in which chemistry was left to work alone, but an inhabited house, —and for a few moments I enjoyed fellowship with them” (*Maine* 181) Lamenting over man’s disturbance of natural process and conquest of nature, Thoreau records his feelings in journal.

I take infinite pains to know the phenomena of the spring, for instance, thinking that I have here the entire poem and then, to my chagrin, I hear that it is but an imperfect copy that I possess and have read, that my ancestors have torn out many of the first

leaves and grandest passages, and mutilated it in many places. I should not like to think that some demigod had come before me and picked out some of the best of the stars. I wish to know an entire heaven and an entire earth. (Torrey 221)

Here Thoreau compares nature to a poem which he intends to appreciate as a whole. Man's act to conquer and ruin nature is considered "many of the first leaves and grandest passages" that "ancestors have torn out" and the "many places" "my ancestors have mutilated", the result of which then is "but an imperfect copy". Wishing "to know an entire heaven and an entire earth", Thoreau is against any means of nature conquest of "picking out some of the best of the stars". Emerson, in his essay "Thoreau", wrote, "He [Thoreau] loved Nature so well, was so happy in her solitude, that he became very jealous of cities and the sad work which their refinements and artifices made with man and his dwelling. The ax was always destroying his forest. 'Thank God,' he said, 'they cannot cut down the clouds!'" (Stewart 68)

Thoreau's views have contributed to the formation of nature conquest criticism, which is one of the most important connotations of ecoliterature. According to Rachel Carson, the most distinguished 20th century ecological writer, man's conquest of nature is derived from the deep-rooted idea that has man as the centre. She points out that Christianity which holds man as the centre of the universe plays a dominant role in moulding our views, so that man considers himself the ruler of all on the earth. (Gartner 120) Although *Bible* contains some ecological thoughts, the parts attacked most are found in "Genesis". God said to men, created according to his image, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God went on saying, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food." (Genesis: 1-28) The Christians believe that God is the centre of the universe. God created man and granted him the right to conquer and exploit nature. Based on this ideology,

man has fallen into the habit of finding glory and pleasure in the conquest of nature. The more difficult to conquer an object is, the more glory and pleasure it has to bring man. Rachel Carson once says that we are not yet mature enough to realize we are just a very small part of the enormous universe. On the contrary, we are unscrupulously stressing the importance of conquering nature. (Lear 407)

Ernest Hemingway, in his novel *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), pictured a hero who realized self-fulfillment by conquering nature. Catching the giant marlin and winning the victory over the fierce sharks were the means by which Santiago set his value and testified his abilities. In that life-and-death struggle between man and fish, the old man was filled with pride, taking the solemn and stirring resistance against nature a necessity for man to maintain dignity. Ecological thinkers and researchers of ecoliterature are opposed to man's self-fulfillment in this way. Man can never prove to be great through the conquest of nature because nature is unconquerable. No matter how many victories man has won and how powerful he has proved himself to be in conquering nature, he is doomed to get severe or even destructive punishment. "A man can be destroyed but not defeated" is a widely quoted saying by Santiago. Hemingway intended it to be a revelation of tragic heroism, but scrutinized in the context of man-and-nature relationship, the saying is apparently absurd. Isn't it a thorough defeat if man is destroyed? And if man, as a species, is completely destroyed one day, can his spirit of victory still be glistening on the bleak planet? Man values spirit and self-esteem too much, the extreme of which is fallacious spiritualism. So man has to face up to the fact that the conquest of nature may bring man temporary pleasure, but because of the failure in establishing a harmonious relationship with nature, man is bound to suffer spiritually.

John Muir's words clarify the proper attitude man ought to take toward nature. "Why should man value himself as more than a small part of the one great unit of creation? ... Nature's object in making animals and plants might possibly be first of all the happiness of

each one of them, not the creation of all for the happiness of one.” (Nash 40) So nature is not for man only. Man ought to learn to revere and love nature, as man, together with other natural entities, are equally important parts of “the one great unit of creation”.

Man’s attitude toward nature is unusually critical today because modern man has had the ability to drastically change and completely destroy nature. It is “our misfortune or even tragedy” because man’s immense ability is not only beyond control of reason and wisdom, but has irresponsibility as its symbol. The ultimate price man has to pay for his conquest of nature is to dig his own grave. (Lear 407)

Thoreau pays homage to nature. Nature conquest criticism, as one of the most important ecological thinking in ecoliterature, owes much to Thoreau’s ideas of simplicity and equality.

3.1.2 Industry, Science and Technology Criticism

As previously discussed, Thoreau is a preservationist who harshly criticizes thoughtless industrialization and civilization. He is strongly opposed to disregarding nature in the construction of railroad. In *Walden*, he compared the railroad through the woods at Walden to an arrow and the Walden Pond a target to be hit by the arrow-like railroad. He also compared the train to an iron horse. “...when I hear the iron horse make the hills echo with his snort like thunder, shaking the earth with his feet, and breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils...it seems as if the earth had got a race now worthy to inhabit it.”(164) Moreover, the train “has muddied the Boiling Spring with his foot...and has browsed off all the woods on Walden shore.” (274) To Thoreau, the Walden Pond is the symbol of natural beauty, while the railroad and the train are symbols of industrial civilization and technological development that spoil nature.

In addition to the destruction of natural beauty and poetical existence, industrialization results in foul-up of ecological system and exhaustion of natural resources. In *A week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, Thoreau anguishes over the “poor shad” whose instinct to

swim upstream for their accustomed spawning run was thwarted by a new dam constructed on the Concord River. Thoreau asks "who hears the fishes when they cry?" Undoubtedly, Thoreau does. Irritated at the maltreatment that the fishes are suffering, he exclaims, "I for one am with thee, and who knows what may avail a crowbar against that Bellerica dam?" Industrial construction like this brings about not just ecological crisis. What is more serious is the foul-up of ecological system and the extinction of species afterwards.

Thoreau's ideas have become a source for industry, science and technology criticism, which is also an important connotation of ecoliterature. Ever since the 19th century, industrial production, science and technology have developed rapidly. Unfortunately, in many cases, the development is obtained at the cost of disturbance of natural process, violation of natural laws, destruction of natural beauty and ecological balance, and an overdraft or even exhaustion of natural resources. The criticism that ecoliterature now proposes against industry, science and technology is not a total negation of them, but a revelation of the fatal limitations embedded in industrial civilization, the purpose of which is to help man find the right direction and initiate green industry and green science and technology one day.

Industrial civilization not only devastates nature, but destroys fine nature in man as well. The only remedy for this problem is to go back to nature and resume native qualities of human beings.

At present, however, man is controlled by machines while controlling them. Industrial civilization, while developing at a fast pace, devours countless natural resources, many of which are irreproducible. How many years can such resources as land, petroleum and primitive forests sustain for industrial civilization to splurge? Who drives the train of industrialization so uncontrollably and quickly to catastrophe? Is it still possible for man to rescue himself and the planet? Ecological writers have been pondering upon these problems for a long time, but the problem that draws most of their attention is that scientific and

technological development is very likely to bring disastrous catastrophe to nature and mankind. Aldo Leopold analyzed in *Game Management* that the “progress” of the two centuries has brought most citizens suffrage, a national anthem, a Ford, a bank account and an overestimation of oneself; but has failed to bring people in densely populated areas the ability not to pollute and plunder the environment. The possession of this ability, however, is the criterion to judge whether man is civilized or not. (Wang 190) What on earth is civilization and progress? Leopold has posed a fundamental question. According to Leopold, only when man, in the present state of population explosion, urbanization, industrialization and an overestimation of oneself, obtains the ability to solve such problems as pollution and exhaustion of resources and goes back to harmony with nature, can man enjoy actual civilization and progress. As for Thoreau, the sign of civilization and progress is rich spiritual life on the basis of a harmonious man-and-nature relationship.

Thoreau sings high praise of preservationism. His criticism of industrialization develops into industry, science and technology criticism, which is another important ecological thinking in ecoliterature.

3.1.3 Ecological Responsibility

In *Walden*, Thoreau appeals to people time and again, “Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! ... Simplify, simplify.” (126) “In short, I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one’s self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely.” (96) If we can possibly simplify our life, “the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness.” (454) “Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life?” (128) Why can’t we make our “life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself”? (122) While encouraging simplicity, Thoreau also harshly criticizes the American way of life of seeking material comfort. “The nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements,

which, by the way are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land." According to Thoreau, "the only cure for it, as for them, is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose." (126-128) The so-called meritorious and noble aim in life includes a harmonious coexistence with nature and a rich spiritual life. "Things do not change; we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. ... If I were confined to a corner of a garret all my days, like a spider, the world would be just as large to me while I had my thoughts about me." (460)

As early as 1926, when people of that age had already forgotten Thoreau, Lewis Mumford, the American philosopher and literary critic, sang high praise of Thoreau's simplified lifestyle. He believed that Thoreau might be the only one to write down his rich experiences. When others were busy running about, Thoreau stayed calm. When others rushed for fame and wealth, Thoreau was content with plain living. Simplicity did not lead Thoreau to shallow-headed craze, but to higher civilization. Mumford predicted that Thoreau might become a prophetic figure, whose thoughts would be valued highly in the new era. (Wang, 205) Fifty years later, Mumford's prediction came true.

The responsibility to simplify material life, which is one of the three ecological responsibilities man is supposed to shoulder up, owes much to Thoreau's call to simplify. As a constituent part of nature, man has to shoulder up his own bit of ecological responsibility. The present ecological crisis is brought about by man. Therefore, man is obligatory to relieve and still further to eliminate the ecological crisis and restore ecological balance. Only when man restores ecological balance can he himself survive in nature. In addition to the responsibility to simplify material life, responsibilities man has to assume include the responsibility to protect nature and the responsibility to compensate for ecological debt and be

restricted in development.

All Carson's works can be summarized with the very word "responsibility". As a part of nature, man is to be responsible for the entire earth. In *The Sea around Us*, she appealed to man to treasure the islands in the ocean as a natural museum full of fair and mysterious masterpieces. They are invaluable because nowhere else in the world can we duplicate them. (Carson 96) Carson also said that if the powerful mankind continued their act to conquer nature unreasonably and recklessly, he will surely encounter a total destruction together with the earth.

Writers of ecoliterature are looking forward to a complete change in people's way of life, and still further a change in their concept of value. They hope that one day, wealth and luxurious life is no longer the sign of glory but becomes a sign of shame on account of the squander and exhaustion of natural resources; consumption of top grade is no longer enviable but is disgusting for causing too much pollution; the fast pace of economic development at the cost of nature and ecological benefits of our offspring is no longer encouraged. Instead, lowering the speed of economic development in order to compensate for ecological debt and restore ecological balance will be given the highest award. Is the beautiful day coming or is it just a dream ecological writers will never be able to realize? But we can be certain on one point that nature is testing human intellect to see if man can establish a just and rational order and shoulder up all the responsibilities demanded by nature.

By calling upon people to simplify and to be restricted in industrialization, Thoreau prompts human awareness of ecological responsibility, which has grown into a significant constituent part of ecoliterature.

3.1.4 Returning to Harmony with Nature

Thoreau spent a great deal of his life away from the town and civilization in the woods and wilderness of New England. The bulk of his works, including *A Week on the Concord*

and Merrimack Rivers, Walden, Excursions in Field and Forest, The Maine Woods and *Cape Cod* well reflect his interest in nature. In the famous essay "Walking", Thoreau criticizes western civilization alienated from nature. He compares our mother nature to a leopard who is omnipresent and affectionate, while we, her children, weaned and left her early to enter human society and accept the interpersonal civilization excluding nature. This civilization can, at most, produce English nobles and is destined to come to its end soon. (Wang 215) As a pure lover of nature, Thoreau likes to saunter through woods and over hills and fields, where he is absolutely free from all worldly engagements without any disturbance from "man and his affairs, church and states and school, trade and commerce, and manufactures and agriculture even politics." Thoreau says he is "pleased to see how little space they [the worldly engagements] occupy in the landscape." (Torrey 6) He reckons the undisturbed wilderness as holy land and calls the walk in such wilderness "à la sainte terre". (Glick 295) His famous statement "In wilderness is the preservation of the world" is later taken as motto by the Sierra Club, the famous American environmental protection organization.

Returning to harmony with nature is an everlasting theme and an important connotation of ecoliterature. The pursuit of a simplified material life and rich spiritual life in nature as advocated and practised by Thoreau is an ideal lifestyle dreamed of and described by many ecological writers. They agree that adopting this way of life is practical. Besides, it is the premise of a harmonious coexistence with nature. The present estranged and tense relationship between man and nature is the due result of traditional man-centered view. Man has to amend his wrongdoings by ceasing his rapacious exploration of nature, treating everything on the earth equally and paying tribute to nature. Only in this way can man attain forgiveness and go back to harmony with nature. This connotation has three layers of meanings, including going back to nature, immersion in nature and comprehension of nature. According to ecological writers, the ideal state of going back to nature is to be immersed in it.

On this basis, man ought to open all his senses to experience nature, enjoy the immense beauty and comprehend it.

As for Thoreau, while immersed in nature, he employs all the five senses to know nature better. He feels, hears, sees, tastes and smells to seek, with concentrated attentions, the most rustic and direct relationship between man and nature. Thoreau does not just “see” but gaze and observe the natural surroundings. When spring comes, “The grass flames up on the hillsides like a spring fire ...as if the earth sent forth an inward heat to greet the returning sun; not yellow but green is the color of its flame;—the symbol of perpetual youth, the grass-blade, like a long green ribbon, streams from the sod into the summer...lifting its spear of last year’s hay with the fresh life below.” (436) And Thoreau’s own life was tinged with the color and luster of nature. “Once it chanced that I stood in the very abutment of a rainbow’s arch, which filled the lower stratum of the atmosphere, tingeing the grass and leaves around, and dazzling me as if I looked through colored crystal. It was a lake of rainbow light, in which, for a short while, I lived like a dolphin. If it had lasted longer it might have tinged my employments and life.” (288) Thoreau’s “taste” affords for thought. He likes to picnic with nature. Nature abounds with fruits, with which Thoreau is often intoxicated. In cold winter, Thoreau would cut his way through snow and ice to open a window under his feet and knelt to drink. Meanwhile, he observes the marvelous spectacle of heaven being “under our feet as well as over our heads.”(400) Thoreau is extraordinary in his sense of hearing. Much merriment is passed to him in the form of sound. The singing of a wood thrush at night, the crowing of a chanticleer in the morning, the croaking of a frog at dusk, even the falling of a leaf would send him into ecstasies.

Muir thus described man in nature. “One fancies a heart like our own must be beating in every crystal and cell, and we feel like stopping to speak to the plants and animals as friendly fellow mountaineers. Nature as a poet, an enthusiastic working man, becomes more and more

visible the farther and higher we go; for the mountains are fountains—beginning places, however related to sources beyond mortal ken.” (Oelschlaeger 194) By taking “plants and animals as friendly fellow mountaineers”, one approaches nature. The closer he is to it, the better he knows about it.

To love nature does not mean, in the least degree, to possess it. Once love changes into the desire of possession, both love and nature will be ruined. On the contrary, if one is in harmony with nature, he is likely to be awarded with love. It is said that when his friend William Ellery Channing declared that in such conditions of their time, nobody could live happily, Thoreau claimed without hesitation, “I can.” He was being serious in saying so, for in the process of extending love and reverence to nature, Thoreau had got his due reward. He cuddled nature and gained countless pleasures in return. Thoreau cried out his love for nature, “Give me the ocean, the desert, or the wilderness! ... Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in town and cities, but in the impervious and quaking swamps.” (Torrey 16-17) In *Walden*, he made clear that his aim to go to the woods was to live deliberately, to front the essential facts of life, to live deep and suck out the marrow of life. By living in harmony with nature, he achieved what he wanted to. Nature, with her very beauty and nobility, came out as his greatest reward. Thoreau’s practice of returning to harmony with nature sets a good example for those who really cares for nature and replenishes the connotation of ecoliterature.

3.2 Impetus to Environmental Movement

During the early years of European settlement, there was little understanding of nature management techniques. “The axe was the symbol of early American attitudes toward nature.” (McCormick 10) By 1700, over 500,000 acres of woodland had been cleared for farming in New England. By 1880, 60 percent of the woodland in Massachusetts had been cleared. Fortunately, the beauty of North American wilderness inspired the writings of

Romantics, philosophers, and travelers throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. And their writings in turn stimulated more people to plunge into environmental protection. Thoreau was among the first nature writers whose writings “further influenced the early American philosophy of man and nature”. (McCormick 10) Pessimistic about nature suffering from mistreatment at the hands of humans, Thoreau has been quoted as saying, “Thank God, men can not yet fly and lay waste the sky as well as the earth.” He studied woodland management, and warned of the consequences of clearing forest and planting rye for short-term profits, proclaiming it “a greediness that defeats its own ends.” (McCormick 10) In 1853, he wrote of the desirability of “national preserves and suggested that wilderness preservation was ultimately important for the preservation of civilization.” (McCormick 12)

Mitchell Thomashow compared the evolving of environmentalism to a tree.

The roots represent the seminal ideas—the philosophical legacy and moral foundations, including the great teachers and role models, the classical books and essays. The branches reflect the evolution of those ideas, their multiple variations. They form a network of interpretations, in some cases revealing heated controversies, in others the convergence of separate paths. Then there are the people, organizations, and perspectives that make up contemporary environmentalism. These are the leaves of the tree, spreading out in a broad canopy, signifying the diversity of the movement. In the trunk, where the sap flows through the system, you perceive the dynamic interchange of ideas and actions, linking the present to the past, connecting the self to the world. (Thomashow 25)

Thoreau, being compared to the roots of the tree, occupies a dominant place in contemporary environmentalism. His views on man-and-nature relationship were passed on to John Muir and Aldo Leopold, who dedicated all their lives to environmental protection.

As “a champion of wilderness preservation”, no one could equal the naturalist John

Muir. (McCormick 12) He had access to Thoreau's works in early years and was considerably influenced by Thoreau's ideas of nature and a harmonious man-and-nature relationship. Like Thoreau, he enjoyed rambling alone in forests and hills, but knowing the forests would one day be gone without active promotion of his point of view, he resolved to spend less time in the wilderness.

As the most famous representative of the American preservation movement, Muir gave a warning about the fate of the forests. "All sorts of costly remedies have been tried and found wanting, and the costly lessons of our own experience, as well as that every civilized nation, show conclusively that the fate of the remnant of our forests is in the hands of the federal government, and if the remnant is to be saved at all, it must be saved quickly." (Steffoff 32) He strongly appealed to the federal government to take measures to preserve the forests. His earliest campaigning was instrumental in the creation of Yosemite National Park in 1890, the first preserve consciously designed to protect wilderness. In 1892, in order to further promote the mass environmental protection, Muir helped found the Sierra Club to introduce people to the wilderness through nature hikes and camping trips, to educate the public about the need for conservation, to urge the government to constitute acts in terms of nature preservation and to set up national parks. Muir and his Sierra Club played an important role in supporting environment-friendly legislation, and helping assure that federal and state laws are enforced by pointing out violations. As Donald Worster's comment upon the Sierra Club being "the church... that Muir built" suggests, Muir has come to "occupy an increasingly prominent place in the history of environmentalism". (Philippon 143)

Aldo Leopold spent much of his youth outdoors, walking in the woods with his father, who was an amateur naturalist. While he was away at school in New Jersey, he wrote considerable letters home, many of which recorded his daily tramps, the excursions he took whenever possible into the fields and forests around Lawrenceville. As the tramps grew

longer, so did the letters, which came to resemble Thoreau's journal in both content and function. Later, as Leopold suffered from a disease called acute nephritis, he gained unexpected advantages, for the sixteen-month sick leave enabled him to read widely about nature. Books covered during this period included Thoreau's *Journals* and William Temple Hornaday's *Our Vanishing Wildlife*. And "to his commonplace book he added a notable quotation from Thoreau's 'Walking': 'In wildness is the preservation of the world'." (Philippon 167) He inherited Thoreau's views on nature and man-and-nature relationship and developed them into environmental ethics. "The Land Ethic", one of the final selections in his book, *A Sand County Almanac*, is considered by many to be a modern classic. In it, Leopold attempted to articulate the relationship of human beings and the natural world by defining civilization "as a state of mutual and interdependent cooperation between human animals, other animals, plants, and soils". (Philippon 188)

Leopold has been called the "Father of the National Forest Wilderness System" not only because he was the first to argue for the preservation of wilderness on a large scale, but also because his wilderness proposal led to the creation of the first federally designated wilderness area. (Philippon 173) He also helped found the Wilderness Society in 1934, to which he made two critical contributions that deeply affected its choice of scope and direction. First, he encouraged his fellow councilors to "broaden the society's justifications for wilderness preservation to include ecological criteria, particularly through collaboration with the Ecological Society of America", and second, he encouraged them to broaden the society's notion of "wilderness" to "extend beyond traditional aesthetic notions and incorporate other kinds of land use". (Philippon 190) As Curt Meine says of Leopold, "When he returned to an active role in the wilderness preservation movement in the mid-1930's, he did so with all the additional insight that his intellectual evolution could bring to the cause, the significance of wild lands was no longer just aesthetic, recreational, cultural, historical, or social, but

scientific and ecological.” (Philippon 194)

Under the influence of Thoreau’s views on nature and man-and-nature relationship, with the promotion of preservationists like John Muir and Aldo Leopold, by the late 1960s, environmental awareness had become much more commonplace. Numerous grassroots environmental organizations were established, including the Environmental Defense Fund in 1967, Friends of the Earth in 1968, the Natural Resources Defense Council in 1970, and the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund in 1971. On April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day, approximately 20 million Americans gathered at various sites across the country to protest corporate and governmental abuse of the environment.

Conclusion

Thoreau earned his place in history on July 4, 1845, when he moved to Walden Pond "to live deliberately". Over the past century and a half, millions of people have read his musings on his life there and been inspired. That day defined his life. His time at Walden, slightly over two years, demonstrated the natural harmony that was possible when a thinking man went to live simply, reading books, writing his journal, cultivating his beans, and walking in the woods.

During his life, Thoreau was little known outside his small social and intellectual circle. Yet his reputation as a prophet for ecological thought and the value of wilderness, born at Walden, now grows with each passing year. His ideas of simplicity, equality, preservationism and life with principle have met with responses in an increasing number of people. Ecoliterature draws much on his ideas and develops them into such ecological thinking as nature conquest criticism, industry, science and technology criticism, ecological responsibility and returning to harmony with nature. Thoreau's ideas of man-and-nature relationship have also become an important source for environmental direct actions. His works have influenced more and more people, who, in turn, developed his ideas and fought for environmental protection. In this sense, Thoreau has realized his aim in that his voice served as that of a chanticleer to wake up people from their numb sleep.

Man has to reconsider his relationship with nature, for he has yet done too much damage to the earth, some of which are irreversible. As Bill McKibben pointed out, "It is the awesome power of Mother Nature as altered by the awesome power of man, who has overpowered in a century the processes that have been slowly evolving and changing of their own accord since the earth was born." (McKibben 60) Fortunately, with Thoreau as one of the pioneers to propagate a harmonious coexistence with nature, man is already aware of the significance of

preserving nature and that global environmental collapse is not inevitable. In order to surmount the present environmental troubles, man needs to change not only the way he acts but also the way he thinks. Sustainable development should have priority over economic expansion. Conservation strategies have to become more widely accepted, and man must learn that energy use can be dramatically diminished without sacrificing comfort. Man has to mend his wrongdoings as not to exploit natural resources too much, not to pollute the environment as he pleases. As for sandstorm, to prevent or lower the level of dusty and sandy weather, man should protect and restore the vegetation in areas where such natural disasters are prone to happen.

Richard St. Barbe-Baker claimed, "This generation may either be the last to exist in any semblance of a civilized world or it will be the first to have the vision, the bearing and the greatness to say 'I will have nothing to do with this destruction of life...I am determined to live and work for peaceful construction for I am morally responsible for the world of today and the generations of tomorrow'." (Goldsmith, 376) So it is the responsibility of all to maintain a harmonious man-and-nature relationship as propagated by Thoreau so that people may, in healing the earth, heal themselves and thus enjoy a life with principle.

Works Cited

- Armstrong, Susan J., and Richard G. Botzler. Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993.
- Baym, Nina. The Norton Anthology of American Literature. 2nd Edition. Vol. I. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1985.
- Bickman, Martin. Walden: Volatile Truths. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992.
- Brooks, Cleanth, R.W.B. Lewis, and Robert Penn Warren. American Literature: The Makers and the Making. Vol. I. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1973.
- Buell, Lawrence. The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Buell, Lawrence. Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond. U.S.A.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Carson, Rachel. The Sea around Us. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Chang, Yaixin. A Survey of American Literature. Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 1990.
- "Concord." Britannica Student Encyclopedia. 2005. Encyclopedia Britannica Premium. Service. 8 Sept. 2005<<http://www.britannica.com/ebi/article-9273769>>.
- Gartner, Carol B. Rachel Carson. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1983.
- Glick, Wendell. Ed. Great Short Works of Henry David Thoreau. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1982.
- Goldsmith, Edward. The Way: An Ecological World-View. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1993.
- Harding, Walter. The Days of Henry Thoreau: A Biography. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982.
- Hegel. (黑格尔). 《历史哲学》.王造时译.北京: 中国商务出版社, 1963.

- Lear, Linda. Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1997.
- Li, Zehou. (李泽厚). 《批判哲学的批判：康德述评》. 北京：人民出版社，1979.
- McCormick, John. The Global Environmental Movement: Reclaiming Paradise. London: Belhaven Pr., 1989.
- McKibben, Bill. The End of Nature. New York: Randon House Inc., 1989.
- Myerson, Joel, ed. The Cambridge Companion to Henry David Thoreau. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Nash, Roderick Franzier. The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.
- Oelschlaeger, Max. The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Ovid. (奥维德). 《变形记》. 杨周翰译. 北京：人民文学出版社，1984.
- Paul, Sherman. The Shores of America: Thoreau's Inward Exploration. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958.
- Payton, Brian. 8 Sept. 2005 <<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Library/Giants/Carson/printall.php>>.
- Percy. (佩奇). 《世界的未来——关于未来问题的一百页》. 王肖萍等译. 北京：中国对外翻译出版公司，1985.
- Philippon, Daniel J. Conserving Words: How American Nature Writers Shaped the Environmental Movement. Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2004.
- Rubinstein, Annette T. American Literature Root and Flower. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1988.
- Steffoff, Rebecca. The American Environmental Movement. New York: Facts On File, Inc., 1995.
- Stewart, Randall, and Dorothy Bethurum. ed. Living masterpieces of American Literature.

U.S.A.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1954.

Thomas, Owen. ed. A Norton Critical Edition: Walden and Civil Disobedience. New York: W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966.

Thomashow, Mitchell. Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995.

Thoreau, Henry D. The Maine Woods. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Thoreau, Henry D. Walden, or Life in the Woods. Bilingual. Trans. Yang Jiasheng. Tianjin: Tianjin Education Press, 2004.

Torrey B., and F. H. Allen. Ed. The Journal of Henry David Thoreau. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906.

Wang, Nuo. (王诺). 《欧美生态文学》.北京: 北京大学出版社, 2003.

Weber, Marx. (韦伯). 《新教伦理与资本主义精神》.余晓等译. 北京: 三联书店, 1987.

Weston, Anthony. Ed. An Invitation to Environmental Philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Worster, Donald. Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

“500 million people affected by 18 sandstorms in early 2004”. People's Daily Online 18 June 2004. 12 Sept. 2005 <http://english.people.com.cn/200406/18/eng20040618_146716.html>.