ETYMOLOGICAL PRACTICES IN THOREAU'S *WEEK*

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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Introduction

Thoreau's ability as a literary stylist has been commented upon by numerous scholars and critics from James Russell Lowell to Reginald Cook and F. O. Matthiessen. With the exception, however, of Matthiessen's distinctive contribution, it has not often been the subject for the deep scholarship and research that it deserves. Much of the early interest in Thoreau's writings centered around their use as a source of biographical information about the man himself, and consideration was given Thoreau as a social critic, student of nature, Transcendentalist, mystic, and hermit. Though it is important in the case of Thoreau as it is with any creative artist to know the details of his life, the fascination of biography should not be permitted to obscure the character of his writings as works of literature, and the measure of their success or failure in terms of his literary aims.

This thesis intends to undertake a study of Thoreau's A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers in relationship to his literary aims. My main concern will be with certain stylistic characteristics and how these practices demonstrate a careful craftsmanship which belies the accusations of carelessness and lack of form so frequently

brought against his first full length published work by early critics.

I know of no published work which concerns itself specifically with the subject of Thoreau's interest in etymology although several critics and scholars have treated this aspect of Thoreau's literary style in varying degrees of fulness. An excellent survey of the interest Thoreau's literary style has held for critics is to be found in an article by Lewis Leary in Eight American Authors.[1] Comparatively less critical work, as indicated by Walter Harding, has been done on Thoreau's Week.[2]

By far the best treatment of Thoreau as stylist is that given by Matthiessen in his American Renaissance.[3] There one finds a discussion which considers Thoreau's view of life and his literary practice in terms of his theories. Matthiessen demonstrates Thoreau's concern with language and etymology through sample passages from A Week and Walden. He suggests Thoreau's concept of the nature and function of language and expression primarily by contrasting it with Emerson's, a method particularly

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[1] Lewis Leary, "Thoreau," in Eight American Authors, ed., Floyd Stovall (New York, 1956), pp. 171-202.

[2] Walter Harding, A Thoreau Handbook, (New York, 1961), p. 90.

[3] F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, (New York, 1941).

revealing with reference to A Week, since this work is much more abstract and theoretical than Walden, and many of the ideas which it contains are the reflection of Thoreau's youthful enthusiasm for those of his Concord friend. Thoreau's view of the nature of language and of the "organic" nature of proper literary form has its roots in the discussion of these problems by Emerson in Nature (1836), who in turn learned much from Coleridge.[4] Matthiessen indicates that Thoreau's theory of language "seems at first glance to approximate Emerson's" but Thoreau had a "limitless tenacity in waiting to find the word."[5]

Before turning to look at the sources from which Thoreau drew his exact and precise language, we must for a moment consider his relationship to Emerson and Emerson's concept of language. Thoreau's youthful aspirations in language and writing were shaped and sustained by his reading of Emerson's Nature while he was a student at Harvard. Emerson had made the issues of Transcendentalism

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[4]Carl F. Hovde, "The Writing of Henry D. Thoreau's A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers: A Study in Textual Materials and Technique." (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton University, 1956), p. 10. This dissertation is the most thorough analysis of Thoreau's Week but it concerns itself very little with theme or ideas. The major emphasis is on the development of the finished work from early manuscripts and journal entries.

[5]Matthiessen, p. 86.

American when he turned America away from the European tradition and demanded of us a society founded freshly on our first hand experience with the American environment:

> Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?[6]

Emerson later found the answer to these questions in a new concept of an organic nature which he and Thoreau applied to the language of literary expression:

> We learn that the highest is present to the soul of man . . . that spirit creates; that behind nature, spirit is present . . . it does not act upon us from without, that is in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves: therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old.[7]

In A Week Thoreau echoes these remarks by Emerson when he states that "As naturally as the oak bears an acorn, and the vine a gourd, a man bears a poem, either spoken or done."[8] In this instance the use of "naturally"

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[6]Ralph Waldo Emerson, Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Stephen E. Whicher, (Boston, 1960), p. 21.

[7]Ibid., p. 50.

[8]Henry David Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, (Boston, 1961), p. 94. The text used for the basis of this study is the Houghton Mifflin Company Sentry edition.

carries the suggestion of a Supreme Being that exists behind all things. Since this Spirit, for Thoreau, exists behind nature, he can be re-created each day through a mystical communion with nature. Only when this correspondence with the Spirit had been completed could Thoreau reflect through language the world of natural objects that he saw about him. This idea of a Platonic Idealism existing behind physical symbols provides the basis for the sources Thoreau used in acquiring his literary language. We find the following remarks in the Journals:

> As in the expression of moral truths we admire any closeness to the physical fact which in all language is the symbol of the spiritual, so, finally, when natural objects are described, it is an advantage if words derived originally from nature . . . are used.[9]

In choosing their language for literary expression Thoreau and Emerson employed the classics to a great extent because these ancient civilizations were much closer in their vocabularies to describing an object through its name than were the later European cultures. In obtaining an original relation to the universe it was only logical that languages which expressed this relationship more closely should be used. Emerson states that:

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[9]Henry David Thoreau, The Journals, XIII, 145. All references to the Journals will be indicated by volume and page number. The Journal text used for the basis of this study is the Houghton Mifflin publication of 1906 based on the Riverside Edition of Thoreau's Works published in 1893.

> As we go back in history, language seems more picturesque, until its infancy, when it is all poetry; or all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols.[10]

It was for this reason, in proposing a re-generation of language, that Emerson advised the writer to "hold primarily on nature," to "pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things . . ." The power of language was to be found in its universality, and this was to be achieved by using words that were derived out of the nature of the object being described.

After remarking that one of the differences existing between Thoreau and Emerson was Thoreau's insistence upon waiting for the exact precise word, Matthiessen goes on to develop this difference a little more:

> According to Channing, in much that Thoreau wrote 'there was a philological side,--this needs to be thoughtfully considered.' He was always eager to probe roots and etymologies, and in some passages we can find him doing something more dynamic than this ordinarily amounts to.[11]

As Matthiessen suggests, Thoreau's interest in language and etymology extended past a simple concern for the root origins of words. As this thesis will show, it involved puns, and an etymological exactness in description which was achieved by the use of archaic expressions and meanings,

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[10] Emerson, p. 37.

[11] Matthiessen, p. 87.

the use of the New England colloquial idiom, and vocabulary which had its root origins in other languages. These etymological practices are the most illuminating way of pointing up certain characteristic practices of Thoreau's art. Thoreau employed etymological practices as the basis for his musical and rhythmic writing style and in the development of certain major themes and images.

As I have already indicated, my study of etymological practices is using for its text Thoreau's Week, which was published in 1849. This volume was composed largely at Walden Pond from early journals and notes of a trip made with his brother John some years earlier. It is an excellent example of etymological practices since we can see Thoreau working out his difficulties with language for the first time in a full length book.[12] The etymological techniques used in A Week are to a large degree typical of his method in Walden and other works at a later period.

Before turning to a consideration of Thoreau's use of etymological practices in the construction and development of his dominant images and themes, it is necessary that we first take a look at the various sources from which Thoreau obtained his language and vocabulary and

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[12]The doctoral dissertation by Carl F. Hovde provides a listing of extant manuscripts which if examined closely would show the various stages of development Thoreau's Week underwent before its submission for publication.

perhaps see why these sources were chosen rather than others that were available to him. The primary sources to which Thoreau went for his vocabulary were the Classical Languages--both Greek and Latin--though the primary emphasis appears to have been on either Latin words or English words derived from the Latin tongue. Numerous secondary sources include Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, and the languages of the American Indian. When he could not find the exact word he was looking for in these languages he often went to the idiom of the New England farmer. All of these sources have one thing in common. In these vocabularies there is an indication and suggestion of a closeness to the object being described. This original language serves to re-enforce one of the dominant themes of the Week--that of the creation myth.

Latin, Thoreau's primary language source, enjoys a great deal of consideration in A Week. Thoreau suggests the importance of reading the classics and states that he knows:

> of no studies so composing as those of the classical scholar . . . Reading the classics or conversing with those of Greeks and Latins in their surviving works, is like walking amid the stars and constellations, a high and by way serene to travel.[13]

Ethel Seybold tells us that Thoreau's use of Latin is

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[13] Week, p. 239.

obvious, "if at all, in his accuracy of word usage and perhaps in his neat and precise pronoun reference."[14] We do know of Thoreau's interest in the classical languages not only from A Week, but also from the Journals. In one of his early entries Thoreau tells us that he admires Latin verse for its "elegant terseness and conciseness of language."[15] In a later entry he recommends that Channing first write his poetry in Latin for he would "frequently have recourse to his grammar and dictionary."[16] Thoreau upon reaching Harvard went through the regular classical course which included two years of Latin and three years of Greek grammar. It appears that before Thoreau was graduated from Harvard he acquired some ten classical books which were not textbooks. Among these were Ainsworth's abridged Latin dictionary, Pickering's new Greek-English Lexicon, and Lempriere's Classical Dictionary.[17] Though I have not found these particular books mentioned in the Journals, there are frequent references to the dictionaries of Wright, Bailey, Oswald, and Lindley. Considering his etymological interests it is not surprising

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[14]Ethel Seybold, Thoreau: The Quest and The Classics, (New Haven, 1951), p. 17.

[15]II, p. 143.

[16]III, p. 118.

[17]Seybold, p. 21.

to discover that at one time Thoreau had twenty-nine dictionaries and grammars in his library.[18]

Turning to A Week we can see that this interest in the Latin Language was quickly put to a practical use in his writing style. It is perhaps best reflected as Ethel Seybold suggested in his correct word usage. Often we find him using his Latin adroitly as when he states that a book should contain glimpses of terra firma. Here Thoreau is making reference to the fact that language should be rooted in the soil. Through the very sound of the phrase there is conveyed the solidity of the ground and the soil. Even in a witty "cross-word puzzle" attraction such as the one we find in the "Sunday" section Thoreau can be seen striving for an accuracy of expression through the use of Latin:

> The Concord had rarely been a river, or rivus, but barely fluvius, or between fluvius and lacus. This Merrimack was neither rivus nor fluvius nor lacus, but rather amnis here, a gently swelling and stately rolling flood approaching the sea.

Thoreau's choice of amnis was not an accident. His knowledge of Latin would have showed him that this word is sometimes in poetry translatable as "ocean" or any deep flowing fluid. This would re-enforce the idea of the Merrimack as the body of water which carried Thoreau to

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[18]Harding, p. 162.

his inward ocean of thought. Notice also the gentle ending nis which contrasts sharply with the us ending on the other words and suggests the gentleness of this rolling flood through its sound and through the movement of the lips. Matthiessen has suggested that this type of usage is indicative of Thoreau's attempt to reveal "the kind of movement he wanted to catch in his own writing" by dwelling on the closeness of language to physical life.[19]

This close relationship between Latin terminations and the physical life or physical fact is reflected most clearly in what Thoreau called "lipped words," which, as he said:

> These Latin terminations express better than any English that I know the greediness, as it were, and the tenacity of purpose with which the husbandman and householder is required to be a seller and not a buyer,-with mastiff-like tenacity,- these lipped words, which like the lips of moose and browsing creatures gather in the herbage and twigs with a certain greed. This termination cious adds force to a word, like the lips of browsing creatures, which greedily collect what the jaw holds; as in the word "tenacious" the first half represents the kind of jaw which holds, the last the lips which collect. It can only be pronounced by a certain opening and protruding of the lips; so "avaricious." These words express the sense of their simple roots with the addition, as it were, of a certain lip greediness. Hence "capacious" and "capacity," "emacity." When these

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[19] Matthiessen, p. 87.

> expressive words are used, the hearer gets something to chew upon.[20]

Thoreau provides the reader with something to chew on with his frequent use of words with the termination cious in A Week. Perhaps the best examples of this usage are to be found in the "Saturday" section when Thoreau is commenting upon "our finny contemporaries" in the Concord River. Though on one level Thoreau is merely describing the various types of fish that inhabit the river, he is also using the fish as symbols of truths which the "contemplative man" should seek after in the river of thought which runs through his mind. The tenacity and grasping aspect of these fish or "truths" is reflected largely through Thoreau's use of words having the cious termination. After describing the fish as a "vivacious" race, Thoreau takes up the description of individual types. We are told, for example, that the pickerel has a "voracious" eye; that they are greedy and "impetuous." The horned pout is extremely "tenacious" of life; the lamprey eel builds a "curious" nest that is very "conspicuous." Further examples of Thoreau's use of Latin and words derived from the Latin tongue will be brought out in later chapters. For the time being, however, the above examples should show Thoreau's indebtedness to classical languages in his choice of a precise vocabulary.

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[20] II, p. 443.

Although Thoreau placed primary emphasis upon words which had their roots in classical tongues, he also employed the language of the American Indian in an attempt to obtain an etymological exactness in his descriptions. To Thoreau, the Indian was the "original primitive man" who was closer to nature and to natural insight. His language, therefore, always expressed a closeness to the object being described. In studying a dictionary of the Abenaki language, Thoreau learned that whatever the Indians had a word for they had a thing for. Their words were direct evidence of what they knew.

> A dictionary of the Indian language reveals another and wholly new life to us. Look at the word "canoe," and see what a story it tells of outdoor life . . . or at the word "wigwam," and see how close it brings you to the ground.[21]

Thoreau's primary use of the Indian language in A Week is to be found in the derivation of certain place names. In dealing with these place names Thoreau shows us that there is a close relation between the Indian name and the physical fact. In the "Concord River" section Thoreau tells us that the Concord River was called the Musketaquid or "Grass-ground" River by the Indians because "grass grows and water runs here." Frequently, in his mentioning of other place names, he will provide both the

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[21] Reginald Cook, Passage to Walden, (Boston, 1949), p. 88.

English and Indian name in an attempt to show that the Indian name grew out of a more intimate knowledge and deeper experience. After speaking of the river as the Merrimack, which was the English name, Thoreau remarks that the Indian name was the Sturgeon River because of the presence of the sturgeon fish and due to its characteristic "dark and monstrous back alternately rising and sinking in midstream."[22] Here, the movement of the river resembled the movement of this large fish and gave rise to the name of this body of water. In other examples we can find Thoreau tracing the root origin of the Indian name that he uses. In referring to Uncannunuc Mountain, he remarks that "its name is said to mean 'The two Breasts,' there being two eminences some distance apart."

In speaking of the various possible sources from which the Merrimack or Sturgeon river received its water Thoreau shows the preponderance of Indian place names in his section of the country. These names are not used merely to provide us with a geographical tour of the countryside. Thoreau is trying to impress upon Americans and especially American writers the fact that there are good vital words in our own language:

> It was already the water of Squam and Newfound Lake and Winnipiseogee, and White Mountain snow

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[22] Week, p. 117.

> dissolved, on which we were floating, . . . and Nashua and Souhegan and Piscataquoag, and Suncook and Soucook and Contoocook, mingled in incalculable proportions . . .[23]

In the "Sunday" section, after speaking of the crowding out of the Indian by the Whites, Thoreau traces the etymological origin of the name "Yankees" to the "red men."

> He comes with a list of ancient Saxon, Norman, and Celtic names, and strews them up and down this river . . . and this is new Angle-Land, and these are the New West Saxons, whom the red men call, not Angle-ish or English, but Yengeese, and so at last they are known for Yankees.[24]

As I have mentioned, Thoreau chose to use the language of the American Indian because of his closeness to the natural or physical fact. He could see no reason to borrow words from other countries if he could find the precise meaning he was seeking in his own surroundings. Thoreau, like Emerson, was seeking a re-birth of language that would shake off "the courtly muses of Europe."

> The roots of <u>letters</u> are <u>things</u>. Natural objects and phenomena are the original symbols or types which express our thoughts and feelings, and yet American scholars, having little or no root in the soil, commonly strive with all their might to confine themselves to the imported symbols alone. All the true growth and experience, the living speech, they would fain reject as "Americanisms." . . . A more intimate knowledge, a deeper experience, will surely originate a word. When I really know that our river pursues

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[23] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 87.

[24] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 53.

> a serpentine course to the Merrimack, shall I continue to describe it by referring to some other river no older than itself which is like it, and call it a meander? It is no more meandering than the Meander is musketaquidding. What if there were a tariff on words, on language, for the encouragement of home manufactures? Have we not the genuis to coin our own?[25]

Though, as Thoreau had discovered, American writers and scholars were unable to "coin their own words" there was a group of individuals to whom he could turn who did have their roots and language firmly fixed in the American soil. These were the New England farmers and woodchoppers. As Matthiessen suggests, "Thoreau knew that the farmer's lingo surpassed the scholar's labored sentences."[26] It was the ability of men like Minott to fasten words to visible things that made his speech both stinging and poetic to Thoreau:[27]

> Minott used the word "gavel" to describe a parcel of stalks cast on the ground to dry. His are good old English words, and I am always sure to find them in the dictionary, though I never heard them before in my life.[28]

In A Week Thoreau chose carefully from the idiom of New England those words and phrases that would add a

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[25]Laurence Stapleton, H. D. Thoreau: A Writer's Journal, (New York, 1960), p. 205.

[26]Matthiessen, p. 86.

[27]George Minott was a Concord farmer whom Thoreau greatly admired. Along with Edmund Hosmer and Reuben Rice, two other farmers, Minott provided Thoreau with old sayings and rural slang. To Thoreau he was "a poetical farmer."

[28]Stapleton, p. 71.

general earthiness of tone and color to his writing. He makes reference to the "long ducking guns," the "fowl-meadow grass," napkins spread by "fays," land is described as "bepastured" and farms are said to be "run out." This attempt to arrive at a concrete diction often resulted in the use of either archaic terms or in obsolete meanings for ordinary words. Thoreau speaks of bulrushes that "courtesied" a Godspeed, wood that "rudely" serves, the "birchen pole" of the "fisher," a "clove road," the "Virginia fence or rider," the "uplandish towns," and finally his mention of Lowell as being "dug out."

Thoreau had the writer's wisdom which is to use words that are part of one's actual experience. He felt that to reproduce the right language from words which have their roots in things, the writer must be conversant with his subject:

> A writer who does not speak out of a full experience uses torpid words, wooden or lifeless words, . . . which have a paralysis in their tails.[29]

I could continue further with more examples from other languages such as Celtic, French, Italian, Greek, Anglo-Saxon, and Arabic to support my point that Thoreau chose his vocabulary with the idea in mind that he wished to use words which showed a relationship between the symbol

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[29] IV, p. 225.

and the actual physical fact; but at this time it does not seem necessary. Many of these secondary sources along with languages already covered will receive attention and consideration in later chapters in connection with images and themes.

So far in this thesis I have concerned myself with an introduction to Thoreau's theory of language and literary expression and how this theory dictated his choice of vocabulary for A Week. Thoreau's etymological interests, as we have seen, provoked him to collect dictionaries and grammars of foreign languages. He spoke often of the value of language training; his journals are full of speculation about word derivation and meaning. It would be well to remember throughout the rest of this thesis that Thoreau was quite aware of the pitfalls which etymology offers to the amateur and he once commented that the chief difference between an educated lecturer and one who had not had the advantage of formal education was that the educated man would "if the subject is the derivation of words . . . maintain a wise silence."[30]

I have tried to maintain this "wise silence" in selecting examples to illustrate Thoreau's etymological practices. There will be, however, some disagreement with

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[30] III, p. 246.

my selections from readers of this thesis. Since language has a psychological basis, this is to be expected. My examples are not to be considered as definite facts by other scholars but rather as suggestions--suggestions which I hope will lead others to a broader study of Thoreau's writing style.

We must now move away temporarily from Thoreau's concern with a concreteness of diction to a study of the literary device which he employed as a method of transition that would tie together his images and themes into a total experience. This device to which he turned was the pun. It must be realized that Thoreau constantly strove for a double awareness of life and matter on the one hand, and the general qualities of which they are particular representatives on the other. The constant alteration of description, history, and meditation in A Week is the product of a man who instinctively tried to see things as they are, and then look beyond them for their meaning. It was this concept of Thoreau's style that suggested to Sherman Paul to describe the pun as "one of the devices he used in his lifelong attempt to turn common into transcendental sense."[31] F. O. Matthiessen has suggested that

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[31]Sherman Paul, The Shores of America, (Urbana, 1958), p. 148. This book is by far the best critical work that has been done on the writings of Thoreau.

Thoreau was "sensible of a certain doubleness that made him both participant and spectator in any event."[32]

It was this sense of "doubleness" or duality which has its basis for structure in the pun on which a great deal of the structure and meaning of the book seems to rest. The pun effect is a function of multiple meaning. In Thoreau's hands it becomes a symbolic device which is used to force us from the pragmatic realm of direct experience into a complex realm of Transcendental ideas; and perhaps most important, into a search for the inner self. The context-linking achieved by the pun is a result of what we consider to be disparate meanings for a word. Like the metaphoric sentence, Thoreau's puns function to define a complex meaning. The pun invariably reconciles disparate meanings, and this fact characterizes the metaphoric sentence. Thus the pun, even when all pertinent meanings are literal to the text, possesses a semi-metaphoric status which marks it as a significant symbolic accomplishment. The pun is the first step away from the transparent word, the first step toward the achievement of symbolic metaphor.

William Drake has commented that "This strategic metaphor offers us the key to the structural plans of his

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[32]Matthiessen, p. 162.

books."[33] Drake also remarks that in A Week Thoreau made use of the metaphor in the "exploring of the unknown land of one's self."[34] Though the pun or metaphor represents a dualism in meaning, it also represents an integration in a single word. It was this duality and integration that Thoreau expands upon in A Week. The voyage itself is only on the surface a trip up the Concord and Merrimack Rivers. In reality Thoreau is using the term voyage to refer to a journey on the "river of thought" in search of the inner self and the source of inspiration. The flow of the book is similar to the flow of the river and the flow of the mind. It changes directions rapidly, touching on a great many areas of thought which at the first reading appear to be digressions. As Carl Hovde states, "The interplay between the physical and mental worlds is deliberate with Thoreau."[35] It is not always well done, but when it is, it achieves a fluidity of attention and thought for which the movement of water in the book is a symbol.

This duality and integration of the voyage of the mind and the voyage on the two rivers is carried forward

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[33]William Drake, "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers," in Thoreau: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Sherman Paul, (Englewood Cliffs, 1962), p. 63.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Hovde, p. 273.

in the book through Thoreau's working of his images and themes. The puns, concrete diction, images, and themes all serve in support of the basic theme and voyage of the book--that of the mystical exploration in search of the source of inspiration for the poet. My next chapter will deal with an introduction of Thoreau's basic puns and we will see how they operate in relation to the inward voyage.

Chapter II

Puns, Basic Imagery, and the Inward Exploration

Thoreau's Week reflects an immense concern with the inner life and his attempt to translate into language this mystical communion with the inner self through nature.

In his essay on Pico della Mirandola in The Renaissance, Walter Pater says:

> The word mystic has usually been derived from a Greek word which signifies to shut, as if one shut one's lips brooding on what cannot be uttered; but the Platonists themselves derive it rather from the act of shutting the eyes, that one may see the more, inwardly.[1]

Thoreau's mysticism, as Reginald Cook has suggested, consisted "rather in opening than closing the eyes, and in feeling inwardly en rapport with the outward."[2]

In the previous chapter we saw how Thoreau (after Emerson) turned to an "original relation" with the universe in order to achieve a re-birth in language. For Thoreau, this archetypal theme of re-birth was carried one step further to a re-birth of the spirit through a "purely sensuous" correspondence with nature. Thoreau's

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[1] Walter Pater, The Renaissance, (London, 1877), p. 40.

[2] Cook, p. 134.

use of "purely sensuous," which carries the double suggestion of the need for clarified perception and of the vision into which it could lead him, brought out the mystical element that always remained part of his experience. Just as Thoreau had traced his words back to their roots to show that they were found to be borrowed from some physical or material appearance, he turned to the outward forms of nature to find the Spirit of the Universe. To Thoreau, the voyage of the body and the voyage of the mind were not separated; the world of nature was for him a symbol of spirit, and the actual voyage was a metaphor for the spiritual one. The rarest gift, for Thoreau, was the uncommon sense of being able to see the Real behind the apparent forms of nature. It was through this metaphor of the voyage that Thoreau was able to break through the outward symbols of nature and journey into the Realm of Spirit.

The metaphor of the voyage has its foundation in the puns and other etymological practices that Thoreau employed in the preface poems and the first two sections of the Week. Mention was made in the previous chapter of the principle of duality and integration which is achieved through the use of the pun. This idea of a double voyage is presented early in the book. Turning to the fragmentary poems which appear in the dedicatory preface to his

brother John,[3] Thoreau asks us to look at four lines which seem to set the tone and mood for this metaphoric duality:

> I am bound, I am bound, for a distant shore.
> By a lonely isle, by a far Azore,
> There it is, there it is, the treasure I seek,
> On the barren sands of a desolate creek.

In the opening line Thoreau is trying to wrench all possible meaning out of "bound." The first usage seems to suggest the voyage of the body with its limits of what is reasonable, permitted, and possible for it to undertake in this mystical exploration. The body itself is limited to a definite time and space which we must see as the period of a week on the two rivers. The second "bound" expands the meaning of the word and therefore expands the boundaries of the voyage. In this usage we have the implication that Thoreau's soul is prepared to go to or on the way to escaping from these limits of time and space and embark upon a type of mystical journey. Thoreau has made sure that there will be no question that he is undertaking a double voyage by his double use of "bound." Now that he has set up this theme of a double voyage, Thoreau will employ word-plays to move from the realm of the material and physical to the realm of the mind and spirit.

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[3]It is interesting to note that John's name is never mentioned in the Week. That John is never mentioned specifically by name in the volume is in the tradition of the pastoral elegy. Like all of Thoreau's works, A Week can be read on many levels. It can be read as a travel book, pastoral elegy, or spiritual autobiography. These levels complement each other.

The other terms in these four lines are all connotative of the solitude that Thoreau felt was necessary in his mystical correspondence. Though as Mark Van Doren has correctly suggested, "It was not so much the solitude of place that Thoreau was seeking but rather a solitude of the soul."[4]

In order to achieve this solitude of the soul, Thoreau sought a solitude for the body. In the fragmentary poem which has just been discussed and in the others of the preface we find Thoreau speaking of the river and his voyage in the same terms as one would use to refer to the ocean or sea. He mentions "lonely isle," a "far Azore" and "barren sands." These are followed by thoughts of headlands, capes, and ports. As we shall see in the "Saturday" section, he unites the river and the ocean through a word-play on "voyageur," which puns on "voyager." This pun serves to unite the physical voyage on the river to the inward voyage on the river or ocean of thought. Since the ocean is deeper Thoreau's thoughts and inward exploration can be what he refers to as "Atlantic depth." This word-play also served to unite and identify his voyage with that of the early French explorers of rivers. Thoreau, too, was a discoverer, a "voyageur" to the inner self. To the voyageur the real object in following the new road into

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[4]Mark Van Doren, Henry David Thoreau, A Critical Study, (Boston, 1916), p. 71.

the interior of the continents was the discovery of its source. Thoreau took the river as the "high-way" which would carry him back to his source of inspiration. It was in this same manner that Thoreau had traced words back to their original roots in order to find their true meaning. We can now see that Thoreau's re-birth in spirit is a further development of the re-birth that he sought in language. It seems logical, therefore, that he would use an "original" language in seeking the "original" spirit.

In tracing anything back to its source the question usually arises as to the producer or creator of the substance. In tracing language and words back to their root origins Thoreau had discovered their foundation in "things" or in actions. The final poem in the preface is a fragment from Ovid's Metamorphoses. This particular verse deals with the creation of rivers and Thoreau uses it to tie in the poems with the "Concord River" section. The interesting point here is that Thoreau seems to be starting on his voyage at the point of origin of the river. As one reads through the Week this becomes clear. Thoreau moves from Ovid's verse to a section dealing with the origin of the Concord River and later switches to the Merrimack River which is his "amnis" or ocean bound stream.[5]

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[5]For a fuller explanation of "amnis" see page 10 of Chapter 1.

The "Concord River" section, which is the shortest chapter in the Week, introduces the images of time and water, and some of the dominant word-plays which Thoreau will use through the rest of the book as the means of transition from the physical voyage to the mental and spiritual voyage. It is through these puns that the double voyage is integrated into a single experience.

The first pun that we are introduced to is the play on "concord." In speaking of the river, Thoreau states:

> . . . it received the other but kindred name of Concord from the first plantation on its banks, which appears to have been commenced in a spirit of peace and harmony.

In these three lines we see a triple use of the word. It refers to the river which derived its name from the village which in turn received the name from its ability to live in peace and harmony. Thus we see Thoreau using this word-play to unite the river on which he is to spend the first part of his journey, the home he is leaving behind, and the spirit of peace and calm that is to be a prominent characteristic of his inward exploration. Note also in Thoreau's derivation of "concord" that he is showing us again that the word is only a symbol of the spirit that is behind it.

In the previous chapter Thoreau's desire for a concrete diction was discussed. Thoreau loved facts and

he excelled in description. In the Week this desire for a concrete specific description of nature lends itself to the construction of "moral landscapes." In dealing with any mystical exploration there is always a concern with the soundness of virtue. Thoreau communicates this essential health or soundness of nature through his vivid verbs. He describes the vitality of nature as a "healthy natural tumult." There is a double suggestion in Thoreau's use of natural. The first implication is that by its very nature, the natural world is a vital, turbulent, living organ. The other usage carries the connotation of "spiritual" which for Thoreau is the source of the vitality to be found in nature.

It is through his choice of verbs that Thoreau demonstrates his point most clearly: ". . . the winds blow freshly . . . heaving up the surface into dark and sober billows . . .;" and later the waves are described as being "agitated," the spray "blowing" in your face, and the reeds and rushes "waving." All of this "natural" activity in nature leads Thoreau to conclude:

> Cranberries tossed on the waves and heaving up on the beach, their little red skiffs beating about among the alders;--such healthy natural tumult as proves the last day is not yet at hand.[6]

Thus through a more exact meaning for "natural" Thoreau

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[6] Week, p. 5.

has shown the relation between the natural world that his outward eye sees on the physical voyage and the spiritual world that his inward eye sees on the mystical exploration. Through his choice of verbs Thoreau has been able to describe what his senses have related to him about nature and the spirit which exists behind the outward symbol. This sensory communion leads to a vitality in his writing that is akin to the vitality of a nature that wore "none of the wrinkles of age."

This concept of health and soundness in nature is not limited only to the natural environment but is also applied to those "rude and sturdy, experienced and wise men" whose vocation carried them close to the spirit of nature. Again this soundness is reflected through Thoreau's choice of verbs. These men are described as "teaming up their summer's wood," or "chopping alone in the woods." Here we have the suggestion of the "vital heat" that is to be received from nature when one encounters it alone or in a state of inward solitude. It is with these woodchoppers that Thoreau associates himself. Their vocations are the same.

As we saw in the preface fragments, there was an attempt by the soul to escape from the limitations of time and space in any mystical experience. When this escape or liberation is achieved time becomes timeless and the past becomes contemporary with the present. Thoreau uses again

a pun to make the transition for these "rude men" who work in nature between time and the timelessness that is associated with the eternal re-birth that one finds in his association with the "natural" environment. They are described as "men . . . who were out not only in '75 and 1812, but have been out every day of their lives." The first "out" implies the connotation of being engaged in the wars whereas the second usage is suggestive of being "out" to the fullest degree; in other words, beyond the limitations of existence.

If as Thoreau has implied, the vocation of these men is similar to Thoreau's mystical exploration because of their association with nature, they should also be associated with some original meaning. Thoreau does this at the same time that he re-enforces the argument of the previous paragraph by using original meanings of words in his narrative of the farmers and woodchoppers. He goes back to the root meaning of the verb "to write" in order to associate and compare these men with Homer, Chaucer, and Shakespeare:

> Look at their fields, and imagine what they might write, if ever they put pen to paper. Or what have they not written on the face of the earth already, clearing, and burning, and scratching, and harrowing, and plowing, and subsoiling, in and in, and out and out, and over and over, again and again, erasing what they had already written for want of parchment.[7]

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[7] Ibid., p. 6.

The original meaning of "write" was "to score," i.e. to scratch the surface of the wood with a knife. Thus because of their closeness to the "vital heat" the implication is given that these men are greater than the early poets.

Thus far in this chapter we have seen Thoreau concerning himself with the establishment of a means of transition between the physical voyage and the voyage of the mind. This means of transition has been the pun. Thoreau now turned to a discussion of the dominant images of time and water and associated them together through a play on the word "current." He first speaks of the Concord River as being remarkable "for the gentleness of its current," and follows this in the same paragraph with the statement that "the story is current."

Having now established a relation between the images of time and water, Thoreau moved on to further explain these two images in association with the mystical exploration. The river, more than the pond that Thoreau was later to use in Walden, was deeper and therefore had the capacity for the reflection of deeper thought. A river, in its motion, indefinite length, and liberating influence, is suggestive of certain qualities that make it superior to a pond. We have seen already how Thoreau linked his images of time and water. Both of these images

flowed to an eternal reservoir; time into timeless eternity and the river into the ocean.

The Concord River, Thoreau writes, was "as old as the Nile or Euphrates;" it was the river universal and time timeless, as motionless, gentle, and "scarcely perceptible" as the native stream and "current" of Thoreau's own spirit. He had bridged the gap between the flow of the physical river and the stream of time and thought by his word-play on "current." For Thoreau, the Concord was the Xanthes and Scamander, the Mississippi, Ganges, and Nile--the inlet to the "ancient reservoir" and the constant lure to the "voyageur" whom I have mentioned before, whose real object in following the river road into the interior of the continents was the discovery of its source.

The river, as Sherman Paul suggests, "was the transcendental highway, a way of seeing all things 'from a new and wilder side.'"[8] It was like the Azore mountain that Thoreau mentions in the preface poem, "the outside and edge of the earth;" and also like the sun image that is to occur later--all three of these images "skirted" the outside of the "firm" consistent farm land of New England. They were all beyond the limits of time and space.

Thoreau felt something irresistible in the flow of water, that something so spiritually akin to him that he

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[8]Paul, p. 170.

felt himself called to it by a "natural" impulse and beckoned to "accompany its currents."

> . . . by a natural impulse, the dwellers on their banks will at length accompany their currents to the lowlands of the globe, and explore at their invitation the interior of continents. They are the natural highways of all nations, not only leveling the ground and removing obstacles from the path of the traveller, quenching his thirst . . .

From this paragraph selection we can see how Thoreau has integrated the physical and spiritual voyages by extending the connotations of "current" beyond those of time and water to include the intuitive feelings or spiritual "currents" of the soul. Time, water, and all life are now equated and the current becomes "an emblem of all progress, following the same law with the system, with time, and all that is made; . . ."

Having now firmly established the motif of a metaphoric voyage through his puns on bound, voyageur, natural, and current, Thoreau prepared to "launch himself on the bosom of the stream" and moved forward to the "Saturday" section which represented the day of departure.

Just as Thoreau had formed an integrated totality of the two voyages by a careful selection of words, he united the "Concord River" and "Saturday" sections through the use of "invitation." Where in the "Concord River" section the invitation had come from the currents of the soul and the stream, it now found its origin in Frances

Quarles's poem, Christ's Invitation to the Soul: "Come, come, my lovely fair, and let us try/Those rural delicacies."

After having re-established the idea of invitation through an ironic use of Quarles's poem,[9] Thoreau moved on to create a firmer foundation for the two voyages and at the same time introduced a new image--that of the sun:

> At length, on Saturday, the last day of August, 1839, we two, brothers and natives of Concord, weighed anchor in the river port; for Concord, too, lies under the sun, a port of entry and departure for the bodies as well as the souls of men; . . .

Notice that Thoreau is still relating the river to the ocean by his references to "anchor," "river port," and "port of entry." The double voyage motif is again brought in by the mention of Concord as a place of departure for both the body and the soul.

Stanley Edgar Hyman in a criticism of Walden has made the suggestion that:

> The sun is an old Platonist like Emerson that must set before Thoreau's true sun can rise; it is meanaced by every variety of mist, haze, smoke, and darkness; it is Thoreau's brother; it is both his cold affection and the threat of sensuality that would corrupt goodness as it

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[9]All of the sections of the book are introduced by lines from other poets that Thoreau admired. However, he seldom uses the lines with their original meaning but adopts them to his own purpose and meaning.

> taints meat; it is himself in a pun on s-o-n, s-u-n.[10]

Although Hyman feels that the basic images of Walden are to be found in ambiguities of the word sun, I cannot agree with his interpretation of this ambiguity. His final statement, however, does throw light upon Thoreau's word-play on "sun" in the Week. The reason that Thoreau's use of lines from Quarles's poem is ironic is the suggestion that Thoreau's worship is not a Christian worship but rather a pagan one--a worship of the sun as the source of intellectual inspiration for the poet. Just as there is a sun which provides the light and energy for the physical voyage, there is a sun that does the same for the voyage of thought--this sun is that which provides inspiration and wisdom. Thoreau has now provided us with two rivers, two currents, and two suns.

As one reads further in the section he comes to realize that the image of the sun becomes more complex. In one of the untitled poems of this section Thoreau speaks of Channing in terms of sun imagery. He is described as "A poet wise . . . whose fine ray/Doth often shine on Concord's twilight day." He is further related to "those first stars":

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[10]Stanley Edgar Hyman, "Henry Thoreau in Our Time," In Thoreau: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Sherman Paul, (Englewood Cliffs, 1962), p. 27.

> . . . whose silver beams on high,
> Shining more brightly as the day goes by,
> Most travelers cannot at first descry,
> But eyes that wont to range the evening sky,
> . . . . . .
> These stars are never paled, though out of sight,
> But like the sun they shine forever bright;
> Ay, they are suns, though earth must in its flight
> Put out its eyes that it may see their light.

These "first stars," as Thoreau tells us throughout the Week, to whom Channing is compared are Homer, Chaucer, and Shakespeare. They are sons of the sun, and suns in themselves because of the wisdom, guidance, and inspiration they give to Thoreau. The image of the sun will receive prominent attention in Chapter III when I discuss Thoreau's attempt at a mystical communion with the spirit that is represented by the sun.

The dominant tone in any mystical correspondence is that of calmness and a sense of communion that comes with solitude and silence. This tone is summed up for Thoreau in the person of the fisherman, who represented for him "the contemplative man." Thoreau admired the fisherman just as he had admired the woodchopper and farmer for a closeness to nature and the "natural" truths. As I mentioned in Chapter I, what appear to be digressions in this section on the types of fish to be found in the Concord River are on the mystic level a study of the types of thought and truths that are to be found in the stream of the human mind. These truths are investigated by the

fisherman with whom Thoreau compares himself:

> Perchance he is not confounded by many knowledges, and has not sought out many inventions; but how to take many fishes before the sunsets, with his slender birchen pole and flaxen line, that is invention enough for him.

Thoreau's word-play on "invention" first disassociates the fisherman from the contemporary progress of the material world and physical voyage and then through the archaic meaning of the same word he re-associates him with the discoverer, with those who find out. This is the same thing he had done earlier when he tied together his inward voyage of discovery with the early French explorers through the pun on "voyageur." The fisherman, too, is a discoverer; one to whom "Human life is very much like a river;" and fishing is regarded by Thoreau as "a sort of solemn sacrament and withdrawal from the world, just as the aged read their bibles."

Thus far we have been considering Thoreau's concern with etymological practices in relation to the theme of the metaphoric or double voyage. One aspect of this double voyage is to be found in Thoreau's belief that "man identifies himself with earth or the material." According to F. O. Matthiessen the quality of Thoreau's landscapes depends on this essential idea.[11] Though Thoreau believed

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[11] Matthiessen, p. 94.

in this harmonious integration between man and nature, just as he believed in the integration of the two voyages, he also maintained that "we are not wholly involved in Nature."[12] In the awareness of this partial detachment he felt that he associated with nature as a soul with its body.[13]

One of the best examples of the use of etymology to unify man and nature is the one which refers to the old Concord fisherman whose occupation was gone when the shad were blocked out by the factory dams:

> It purports to be a Fisherman's Account Current, probably for the fishing season of the year 1805, during which months he purchased daily rum and sugar, sugar and rum, N.E. and W.I., "one cod line," "one brown mug," and a "line for the seine;" rum and sugar, sugar and rum, "good loaf sugar," and "good brown," W.I. and N.E., in short and uniform entries to the bottom of the page, all carried out in pounds, shillings, and pence, . . . These were the necessaries of life in those days; with salmon, shad, and alewives, fresh and pickled, he was thereafter independent on the groceries. Rather a preponderance of the fluid elements; but such is the fisherman's nature. I can faintly remember to have seen this same fisher in my earliest youth, still as near the river as he could get, with certain, undulatory step, after so many things had gone downstream, swinging a scythe in the meadow, his bottle like a serpent hid in the grass; himself as yet not cut down by the great mower.[14]

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Week, p. 34.

Note the unified structure of the paragraph and the way in which Thoreau has unified the fisherman with his natural surroundings through the use of puns and other etymological practices. In the opening line Thoreau has used again a pun on "current" to establish a harmonious interaction. The suggested connotations include the idea of current time as well as the current of the stream which I have mentioned. The connotation of time is united with the last line which uses another popular image of time--that of the "Great Mower."

Matthiessen has suggested that Thoreau has caught the:

> . . . step of the fisher in unison with the sweep of his scythe, though the word undulatory blends too with the flow of the river, merging the old man as closely as possible with the source of his former pleasures.[15]

One point that Matthiessen seems to have overlooked is the manner in which the entire paragraph also undulates. Note the movement back and forth with the flow of "rum and sugar," and "sugar and rum;" also observe the preponderance of comma clauses and in the use of "and." All of these add the idea of an undulatory motion to the flow of the lines. In the play on "fluid elements" and "down-stream" Thoreau has not only connected the fisherman with the

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[15]Matthiessen, p. 94.

stream, but also related him to his drunken life, "the disintegration of which Thoreau conveys entirely in concrete terms, each suggesting a significance beyond itself."[16]

Following his use of "undulatory" to relate man and nature, Thoreau expressed again this harmonious interaction between the "two lives" by the use of "breathing," a rhythmical movement akin to that of the undulation of water:

> For the most part, there was no recognition of human life in the night; no human breathing was heard, only the breathing of the wind.[17]

From his sense of the Latin tongue, Thoreau would have recognized that "breath" is the same as "spirit."[18] Thoreau's very existence was a kind of inspiration. Man was meant to live in unison and harmony with the universe and nature. The life of man, that is to say the "breath" which was to give existence and movement to the whole person of man, had its origin in the depths of the Spirit of which nature was only a physical symbol. Thoreau existed as a s-o-n of the s-u-n because his life shared something of the reality of the sun's own breath or spirit.

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Week, p. 39.

[18] The Latin word spirit is related to spirare, to breathe.

One of the key images of the metaphoric voyage is to be found in the relation that exists for Thoreau in the idea of the relationship between the states of "Sound" and "Silence." As one might guess, the state of sound is primarily associated with the physical voyage and that of silence with the "mystical" journey. Earlier in this chapter I discussed Thoreau's concern with the soundness of nature and the way he expressed this vitality or health through a careful selection of verbs. This relationship is carried a step further in a short paragraph toward the end of the "Saturday" section.

> But the most constant and memorable sound of a summer's night, which we did not fail to hear every night afterwards, . . . was the barking of the house-dogs, . . . Even in a retired and uninhabited district like this, it was a sufficiency of sound for the ear of night . . . The night is equally indebted to the clarion of the cock, with wakeful hope, from the very setting of the sun, prematurely ushering in the dawn. All these sounds, the crowing of cocks, the baying of dogs, and the hum of insects at noon, are the evidence of nature's health or sound state.[19]

This short paragraph which deals with the sounds heard during the first night of the trip serves to prepare us for the more extensive treatment of "Sound and Silence" in the "Monday" section. Note, however, that even at this early point we can begin to ascertain that sound was important to Thoreau not only because it revealed the

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[19] Week, p. 40.

essential physical and moral health of nature but also because it showed that Thoreau's own state of virtue was sound--otherwise he would have been unable to hear these night sounds.

The fact that Thoreau was able to hear these sounds could also serve to remind him that his own language was only a dialect of the over-all language of nature and that if his state of virtue were sound enough he would be able to translate this language of nature into his own.

This chapter has seen the development of Thoreau's metaphoric voyage in terms of its basic structure--that is the pun. Through puns on "bound, concord, current, natural, sound, and sun" Thoreau has been able to form a transitory bridge between the physical and mental voyages. I have attempted to show that in Thoreau's mind these two voyages were not separate but rather were integrated through word-plays into a harmonious totality.

After now being completely prepared for this mystical exploration in these early sections of the Week, we will concern ourselves with the mystical ascent in Chapter III.

Chapter III

The Nature of the Mystical Ascent

In the closing paragraphs of "Saturday" we were able to see Thoreau reflecting upon the nature of sound and its relation to the health or soundness of his virtue. In this manner Thoreau has suggested that correspondence is possible only if man prepared himself to perceive it. Sherman Paul has stated that:

> Thoreau's use of sound as the agency of correspondence reveals that for the Transcendentalist the desired state of correspondence was not mystical merger with the One. For them, merger with the Unknown meant not only tapping a source of spiritual strength but a loss of individuality--the submergence of self--in personal, and therefore incommunicable, rapture.[1]

It is this "incommunicable rapture" that Thoreau tries to communicate to the reader through the remaining sections of the Week. "Poetry," he tells us, "is the mysticism of mankind."[2] It is the poet, a whole man with invigorated senses and imagination, who can interpret this state of Silence into language. It is the senses, Sherman Paul suggests, that "become channels for the

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[1] Sherman Paul, "The Wise Silence: Sound as the Agency of Correspondence in Thoreau," NEQ, XXII (1949), p. 511.

[2] Week, p. 350.

sensible or 'purely sensuous,' for the imaginative as well as the intellect."[3] Thoreau reminds us in the closing section of the Week that:

> We need pray for no higher heaven than the pure senses can furnish, a purely sensuous life. Our present senses are but the rudiments of what they are destined to become. We are comparatively deaf and dumb and blind, and without smell or taste or feeling.[4]

The perfection of the senses was to be found and achieved through a sympathetic correspondence with nature. This correspondence was the immediate and permanent need of Thoreau; for a mystical relationship with nature was what provided inspiration for the poet--the whole man. Thoreau's spiritual vocation was that of the poet. This is why we see his worship pointed at the sun--the sun that was a symbol of inspiration. The perfection he sought was the state of communion, "those moments of intense life," Sherman Paul tells us, "that rewarded his faithfulness; and communion itself was both means and end."[5]

Present in the spiritual language of almost all mystics is the imagery of mountains and ascent. Thoreau is no exception. The mystical ascent for Thoreau was an

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[3]Paul, "The Wise Silence," p. 512.

[4]Week, p. 408.

[5]Paul, The Shores of America, p. 23.

epistemological struggle between the real and the Ideal, and the victory was insight; an insight which was achieved through the senses. This mystical ascent is told in varying degrees of fulness in the "Sunday," "Monday," and "Tuesday" sections of the Week. Our concern in the remaining pages of this chapter will be to uncover as much of this mystical correspondence as we can, and to relate it to the metaphoric voyage and the etymological practices that we have seen Thoreau use in the earlier sections.

The "Sunday" section is built around the morning or sun-day vocation and develops Thoreau's ideas on the variety of ways of worshiping on the "natural" Sabbath. As Sherman Paul has suggested, "It defined the kind of day that was to make up Thoreau's Week."[6] Thoreau introduces the section with a verse from W. E. Channing's "Boat Song."

> The river calmly flows,
> Through shining banks, through lonely glen,
> Where the owl shrieks, though ne'er the cheer of men
> Has stirred its mute repose,
> Still if you should walk there, you would go there again.

Thoreau's selection of Channing's poem is highly appropriate for this particular section. Through the varying lengths of lines we are given the feeling of the river's flow; and then through the words themselves we achieve a feeling of inward solitude and silence that Thoreau felt

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[6] Ibid., p. 218.

was necessary for his mystical correspondence. Perhaps the key reason, however, for the selection of this particular verse is to be found in the word "walk" which occurs in the final line. Thoreau had once punned in his journal to the effect that he always walked, "to return to my senses."[7] Here, again, we have the suggestion of a "purely sensuous" correspondence with nature--a correspondence that comes with Thoreau's leisure pace of walking. Critics have noted the relationship that exists between Thoreau's rhythmic style of writing and the leisured pace of his walking. Emerson once remarked that: "The length of his walk uniformly made the length of his writing. If shut up in the house he did not write at all."[8]

In a discussion of the "true, sincere, human books" and the efforts of native Americans to write them, Thoreau said:

> These books will have sentences that are verdurous and blooming as evergreens and flowers, because they are rooted in fact and experience. This literature will be a stalwart man's work and the truly efficient laborer will saunter to his task, surrounded by a wide halo of ease and leisure, and then do what he loves best.

Thoreau's application of "saunter" to the writer has a strong relationship with his theme of "natural" worship and a return "to the senses."

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[7] II, p. 289.

[8] Matthiessen, p. 84.

In 1862 there appeared posthumously in the Atlantic Monthly an essay bearing the title, "Walking." In this particular essay Thoreau gave his etymological basis for using "saunter" in relation to the mystical ascent:

> I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understand the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks--who had a genuis, so to speak, for sauntering, which word is beautifully derived from "idle people who roved about the country in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretense of going a la Sainte Terre,"to the Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, "There goes a Sainte-Terrer," a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander. They who never go to the Holy Land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds; but they who do go there are saunterers in the good sense, such as I mean. Some, however, would derive the word from sans terre, without land or home, which, therefore, in the good sense, will mean, having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere. For this is the secret of successful sauntering. He who sits still in a house all the time may be the greatest vagrant of all; but the saunterer, in the good sense, is no more vagrant than the meandering river, which is all the while sedulously seeking the shortest course to the sea.

By having in the last statement related the flow of the "meandering river" to the saunterer, Thoreau has made the suggestion that his river journey is in reality a "water-walk."

A major portion of Chapter II of my thesis was spent in a discussion of Thoreau's handling of the motif of a double or metaphoric voyage. In my remarks an attempt was made to show that Thoreau wished to integrate these two voyages--the physical and the mystical--through

etymological practices. In the "Sunday" section Thoreau again is working with this same idea. The opening pages of the section present visual images of utmost calm and beauty which we find are not only reflected in the water, which is the eye of nature, but also the reflection is caught by Thoreau's own eye:

> The surface was so calm, and both air and water so transparent, that the flight of a kingfisher or robin over the river was so distinctly seen reflected in the water below as in the air above . . . We were uncertain whether the water floated the land, or the land held the water in its bosom.

Through the use of "reflection" Thoreau has provided us with the essential beauty of nature when realized as composition. Throughout this section as the rest of the Week, Thoreau makes extensive use of "reflection" with both the connotation of bending back to the eye another image, and with the suggestive meaning of the meditation and contemplation that comes with solitude and silence in nature.

Tied in with Thoreau's use of "reflection" to show the composition of nature is his attempt through a careful selection of words to illustrate the calm, serene, sauntering movement of this particular section. He speaks of the leaf "which is wafted gently from its twig to the water;" "wafted" is suggestive through the feel of the syllables in the mouth of the passage of a substance on a buoyant medium which in this instance is the movement from one

liquid to another. There is also implied in this word the complete freedom or "sauntering" quality of a leisure nature on a "natural" sabbath.

This attempt at describing the beauty of nature is the same idea that was illustrated in Chapter II when we saw that man could only be adequately described in so far as he was harmoniously integrated with nature. In the "Sunday" section Thoreau makes use of colors not only to relate man with nature but also to show a contrast in their soundness. The morning is described on the opening pages of the section as having none of the "yellow light in it;" later, in speaking of the New Testament, Thoreau remarks that his earliest impressions of the book were those of it being "the yellowest book in the catalogue." In this use of "yellow" with its connotations of decay and disease, Thoreau provided a contrast between his pagan worship of the sun and the worship that he sees among his Christian contemporaries in Concord.

The yellow provides an interesting contrast to the green (growth) of a vital living nature and the rose (precious) color which he used in connection with the sun. This idea of decay is re-enforced through a word-play on "dry." The white man is described as having come in to the area and "dried up a farm." Here the sense of the word is that of having used up the land. We later find

Thoreau applying this same word to the intellectual labors of these same men when he refers to their scheme of the universe as being "all cut and dried,--very dry." Thoreau's double meaning in "very dry" is pungent because it rids the air of any sense of solemnity that would be associated with their thoughts.

Having now in the "Sunday" section introduced the tone of a calm, leisurly sabbath, and at the same time contrasted his vocation with those of the people he found around him, Thoreau proceeded into the "Monday" section and began to reveal more of his mystical ascent.

In the introductory lines Thoreau turned to the voices or sounds of nature and gave them an eternal significance:

> When the first light dawned on the earth, and the birds awoke, and the brave river was heard rippling confidently seaward, and the nimble early rising wind rustled the oak leaves about our tent . . .

Like the sections before it, "Monday" opens with the dawn of a healthy nature which is made timeless through the phrase, "first light." There is a double suggestion here in the implication of the original creation as well as the idea of re-birth which should come with each new day. In these four short lines we can see the measured pace of Thoreau's writing as it reflects the measured pace of the action. The lines are in part concerned with

various sorts of motion; it is a motion that appeals to the eye as well as to the ear. Through a succession of independent clauses, Thoreau's images carry us to a sense of the vitality that is found in nature. Note that the surface of the water is not described as "dimpled" or "wavy," but "rippling." In the movement of the syllables in the mouth one has the feel of the movement of the water. In the phrase "rippling confidently seaward," the feel of the movement of the syllables in the mouth suggests the sense of the forward movement of the water as it does head toward the eternal reservoir. In the same manner a sense of elevation is suggested through the adjectives placed before "wind" in the third line.

The reason for dealing so extensively with a few short lines is not simply the excellence of the individual section. It is rather that in such lines as these we may most clearly discern the precise way in which Thoreau made use of language in driving home the point that the root meanings of words are to be found in some physical activity--the word is only a symbol of the spirit behind it.

Just as in the "Sunday" section Thoreau had contrasted his healthy scheme of the natural universe with the "very dry" scheme of his contemporaries, he now compared the awakening of nature with its calm, leusurely

pace to the hustle of enterprise that he saw among his contemporaries. Almost the entire "Monday" section is spent in contrasting his contemplative pleasures with those of the restless Yankees. Sherman Paul has suggested that "Thoreau's stream was at cross purposes with American life."[9] Throughout his metaphoric voyage, Thoreau has been going against the current in both his physical and mental voyage. His neighbors on the other hand have been crossing the stream. When after their unwilling leisure of their "unnatural" Sabbath, they struck out on Monday on their "unattempted adventures," they did not journey up the stream, but in the early morning began "to cross the ferry on the business of the week." There were:

> . . . children with their two cents done up in paper, jailbirds broke loose and constable with warrant, travelers from distant lands to distant lands, men and women to whom the Merrimack River was a bar.

The "busy-ness" of their week was in opposition to the leisure of Thoreau and nature.

Frequently in this section and throughout the entire book, we are able to see Thoreau very clearly use the word-plays which were established in Chapter II to form a transition between the two voyages of which we have spoken. After having spent quite a few pages in discussing the

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[9]Paul, The Shores of America, p. 226.

essence of the Higher Law which he was following in the "stream of thought," Thoreau remarks that:

> While engaged in these reflections, thinking ourselves the only navigators of these waters, . . . we found ourselves in the current of commerce once more.

Thus Thoreau's boat continued to spend its existence in two elements. In the "Saturday" section Thoreau had described the construction of his boat in relationship to these two elements:

> Our boat . . . painted green below, with a border of blue, with reference to the two elements in which it was to spend its existence . . . If rightly made, a boat would be a sort of amphibious animal, a creature of two elements, related by one half its structure to some swift and shapely fish, and by the other to some strong-winged and graceful bird . . . so our boat, being of wood, gladly availed itself of the old law that the heavier shall float the lighter . . .

The flow of the book, as I have mentioned, attempts to reflect the flow of the river. With this in mind, whenever there is a bend in the river, we should expect a bend in the "stream of thought" and thus wehhave what critics have spoken of as digressions in Thoreau's Week. After having spent a little time discussing the History of Dunstable, Thoreau returns to the physical voyage by using a play on reflection to express this bend in the narrative:

> Meanwhile, having passed the Horseshoe Interval in Tyngsborough, where the river makes a sudden bend to the northwest,--for our reflections have anticipated our progress somewhat . . .

The reflections on Dunstable in the "stream of thought"

are equal to the bend in the "physical stream," and the two voyages are integrated.

More often than not the transition from one voyage to another is very abrupt. Such is the case in "Monday" when Thoreau again uses a play on "current" to make the transition:

> Suddenly a boatman's horn was heard echoing from shore to shore, to give notice of his approach to the farmer's wife . . . The current of our reflections and our slumbers being thus disturbed, we weighed anchor once more.

After having spent most of the "Monday" section in presenting a contrast between his vocation of purity and leisure, and the vocation of "busy-ness" that he saw exhibited by his contemporaries, Thoreau began a further revelation of his mystical ascent. It is in his discussion of the nature of Sound and Silence in these closing pages that we find the intense emotional reception of the health that is to be found in a correspondence with nature.

The rhapsody begins with the beating of a drum in the night. The use of a drum is important because its beat is suggestive of a pulse beat in man as well as in nature. Through this idea of pulse beat Thoreau re-enforces the fact that man is once again brought into analogical relation with nature. Night, as we saw in the "Saturday" section was especially favorable to sound. Everywhere that Thoreau turned he found an effulgence of light and sound

that filled him with ecstatic inspiration.

Perhaps there is no more beautiful expression in his writing of the sense of the divine mind than the one which appears toward the end of the section:

> I see, smell, taste, hear, feel, that everlasting Something to which we are allied, at once our maker, our abode, our destiny, our very selves; the one historic truth, the most remarkable fact that can become the distinct and uninvited subject of our thought, the actual glory of the universe; the only fact which a human being cannot avoid recognizing, or in some way forget or dispense with.

It should be clear now that when Thoreau spoke of the nature of sound that it did not apply merely to the health of nature or to his own inward ear. Sound was an extension that included the health of all the senses. Here, then, was the "purely sensuous" correspondence with nature and spirit that he had sought.

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned the relation that existed for Thoreau between walking and writing. Thoreau attempted to illustrate through the pace of his writing the idea of leisure which was a part of his walking. This fact is brought forward at this point when Thoreau describes marching as "when the pulse of the hero beats in unison with the pulse of nature." To Thoreau, the hero is the poet; and the poet is the complete man. Thoreau was able to find an etymological basis for this relationship between the poet, the hero, and the soundness of virtue:

> The state of complete manhood is virtue, and virtue and bravery are one. This truth has long been in the languages. All the relations of the subject are hinted at in the derivation and analogies of the Latin words vir and virtus. Language in its unsettled form is the record of men's second thoughts, a more faithful utterance than they can momentarily give . . . The analogies of words are never whimsical and meaningless, but stand for real likeness. Only the ethics of mankind, and not of any particular man, give point and vigor to our speech.[10]

Thoreau compacted his most complex concern with sound and silence into the symbol of the telegraph wire. He often refers to it as the Aeolian Harp. "Aeolian," as Sherman Paul suggests, "was not necessarily synonymous with the wire, for 'Aeolian' signified any sound produced or borne by the wind."[11]

The wind, as we noted in the "Saturday" section, was the breath of the vital spirit behind nature which rippled the water and showed the soundness of the "natural" world. Nature was viewed by Thoreau as a harp at rest, which like the soul, awaited the divine inspiration. The vibrating harp, either the wave or the wind, produced the Aeolian music, the celestial harmony that Thoreau heard.

The human soul was also depicted as being a harp:

> The human soul is a silent harp in God's quire, whose strings need only to be swept by

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[10] I, p. 98.

[11] Paul, "The Wise Silence," p. 515.

> the divine breath to chime in with the harmonies of creation.[12]

But only the vibrations of the natural counterpart could activate the human harp. Once the human harp had been activated and the poet was in step with the harmonies of the universe, then his literary expression would have the spiritual pulse of nature in it.

Just as he had opened the "Monday" section with the sounds of a vital nature in the morning, Thoreau brings to a close this portion of the mystical ascent with the sounds of a vital nature in the evening:

> The pines murmured, the water rippled, and the tent rocked a little, but we only laid our ears closer to the ground, while the blast swept on to alarm other men, and long before sunrise we were ready to pursue our voyage as usual.

Having now in the "Sunday" section presented the calm, sauntering aspect of the mystical ascent, and in the "Monday" section revealed a "purely sensuous" correspondence with spirit, Thoreau now turned to the last phase of the ascent--the journey to the top of Saddle-Back Mountain.

The top of Saddle-Back Mountain, as far as the inward voyage was concerned, represented the individual prospect from which Thoreau was able to overlook his adopted sea--the sea of thought. In a journal entry for

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[12] V, p. 237.

January 26, 1852, Thoreau gives an etymological basis for assuming that he had prepared us for this mountain episode when toward the close of the "Monday" section he had remarked on the "murmur of the pines." "Our word pine," he tells us, "is from the celtic pin or pen, a rock or mountain, . . ."[13] It was thus the "natural" voice of these trees which he heard during the night that called his spirit to ascend the mountain on "Tuesday."

"Tuesday" begins "Long before daylight," just as "Monday" had begun with "the first light." Having established in the closing pages of "Monday" an intense emotional correspondence with nature, Thoreau knew that it would be only a short time before his "virtue began to waver." He states in one of his untitled poems in the early pages of the section that "Voyageurs 'gainst time do row." Even with this element of time involved his ascent of the mountain still maintains the calm sauntering pace which had been established in the "Sunday" section.

The opening description of his arrival at the foot of the mountain is suggestive of Pilgrim's Progress, which Thoreau had mentioned earlier in the "Sunday" section as being "the best sermon preached from the New Testament."

> I had come over the hills on foot and alone in serene summer days, . . . with a knapsack

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[13] III, p. 229.

> on my back which held a few traveller's books and a change of clothing, and a staff in my hand . . . putting a little rice and sugar and a tin cup into my knapsack at this village . . .

"My route," Thoreau begins, as he describes his ascent to the realm of the sun, "lay up a long and spacious valley called the Bellows, . . . sloping up to the very clouds . . . and a stream ran down the middle of the valley." This stream was not only a physical stream but also the one which carried his thoughts. He goes on to describe the stream as "It seemed a road for the pilgrim to enter upon who would climb to the gates of heaven." This description of the stream as a road is suggestive of the relationship that Thoreau found existing between the "river" and the "highway" in the "Concord River" section.

Thoreau's path up the mountain is contrasted with the route taken by students from Williamstown just as his voyage against the "current" of the stream had been contrasted with the ferry crossing of his contemporaries in the "Monday" section. These students, he tells us, "never went by the way I was going."

Springs for Thoreau were always symbols of heavenly purity and re-birth. Immediately upon reaching the top of the mountain he seeks out "a pure, cold, spring-like water" to "whet" his senses. There is a double suggestion in this use of "whet." The first implication is that of the need of the body for water. The second implication is more

important because Thoreau had arrived just as the sun was going down. The suggestion is that the water was required to sharpen and maintain his senses and virtue until the sunrise in the morning.

With the dawn of the new day came the revelation to Thoreau of "the new world into which I had risen in the night, the new terra firma perchance of my future life." The entire peak seemed to be out of the realm of time "if it were July there." This pure world of inspiration is described as:

> the dazzling halls of Aurora, into which poets have had but a partial glance over the eastern hills, drifting amid the saffron-colored clouds, and playing with the rosy fingers of the dawn, in the very path of the Sun's chariot, and sprinkled with its dewy dust, enjoying the benignant smile, and near at hand the far-darting glances of the god.

The whole scene on Saddle-Back Mountain is the most ecstatic recognition of the realm of the spirit to be found in the book and brings to a close the spiritual ascent. The language conveys an awareness of what is beyond man, but it deliberately shies away from traditional ideas and objects in which to rest one's faith.

In the "Sunday," "Monday," and "Tuesday" sections we have seen Thoreau work out his difficulties in making the transition from the physical voyage to the mystical ascent until its conclusion on Saddle-Back Mountain. The basic structure for these transitions were found to be in

the word-plays that Thoreau had developed in the early sections. When the word-plays did not appear to work Thoreau then attempted to allow the flow of the book to coincide with the "bends" of the river. These bends in the "stream of thought" have been incorrectly referred to by critics as "digressions." In reality these so called digressions are the essence of the mystical voyage.

Now that the final correspondence with nature has been completed we will be able to see Thoreau in the next chapter working out these same etymological difficulties on his return trip to Concord.

Chapter IV

The Mystical Descent

One of Thoreau's significant realizations concerning the "voyage of thought" or the mystical exploration was that the moment of intense correspondence with spirit is difficult to maintain, that the voyage cannot be prolonged indefinitely, that a return is inevitable. Even though it is true that the success may only be momentary, it is worth the effort; for in these brief moments Thoreau was able to receive and achieve insight into a higher plane of life.

The shortness of the mystical experience is illustrated by Thoreau when he remarked toward the end of the "Tuesday" section:

> But, alas, owing, as I think, to some unworthiness in myself, my private sun did stain himself, . . . for before the god had reached the Zenith the heavenly pavement rose and embraced my wavering virtue, or rather I sank down again into that "forlorn world," from which the celestial sun had hid his visage, . . .

Now that the mystical correspondence had been completed, Thoreau made "haste" back to the waters of the Merrimack River. In the mystical ascent, Thoreau had chosen words which would express the light, springy, sauntering quality of a leisure inward exploration. The sounds that he had heard had expressed the essential health and vitality of nature, and in return had reflected

the purity of Thoreau's virtue. This is not the case in his choice of words for the return descent. An early example of this change comes only a few short lines after the mystical correspondence has been completed:

> . . . although we could not see it on account of the fog, the few dull, thumping, stertorous sounds which we heard, impressed us with a sense of weight and irresistible motion.

In the description of the mystical ascent, Thoreau had used words like "waft" or "fluvatile" to express the leisure flowing quality of the journey. Now through words like "dull," "thumping," and "stertorous" we are given the sense of the slowness of the voyage and the weight of the sounds through the feel of the syllables in the muscles of the mouth and throat. He thus achieves weight and permanence through a choice of heavy words.

In the mystical ascent Thoreau had felt that solitude and silence were important in correspondence. Turning to the latter pages of the "Tuesday" section, we see Thoreau realizing that he is slowly beginning to leave the "stream of thought." The idea of this transition in the metaphoric voyage is expressed clearly when he remarks:

> Being now fairly in the stream of this week's commerce, we began to meet with boats more frequently, and hailed them from time to time with the freedom of sailors.

The "Wednesday" section develops this social theme to the fullest degree and at the same time keeps the point

of the "voyage of thought" in mind. This idea is developed almost primarily through the essay on Friendship.

This essay presents a most ethereal kind of love or friendship; one in which no allowance is made for the passions or the senses unless again they are "pure." There appears to be, however, a direct relationship existing between this essay and the ideas on Sound and Silence that were discussed in the last chapter.

The language of friendship is equated with the sound of melody; only it is a melody that one hears with the inward ear in a state of silence and solitude:

> The language of Friendship is not words, but meanings. It is an intelligence above language. One imagines endless conversations with his friend, in which the tongue shall be loosed, and all thoughts be spoken without hesitancy or end; but the experience is commonly far otherwise . . .
>
> Silence is the ambrosial night in the intercourse of Friends, in which their sincerity is recruited and takes deeper root.

The communication between friends, according to Thoreau, should be the same as the correspondence between man and spirit in a mystical experience. Only in solitude and silence can the two come close together. This ethereal quality of friendship is strongly presented through a complete and complex usage of "fine."

> I sometimes hear my Friends complain finely that I do not appreciate their fineness. I shall not tell them whether I do or not. As if they expected a vote of thanks for every fine

> thing which they uttered or did. Who knows but it was finely appreciated? It may be that your silence was the finest thing of the two. There are some things which a man never speaks of, which are much finer kept silent about . . . Our finest relations are not simply kept silent about . . .

Friendship, like the breath of spirit in nature, has the capacity for stirring "the strings of the lyre" of our friends in order that there might be communication in silence.

The "Thursday" section makes us aware of the change from solitude to sociability through the presentation of a "land walk" that Thoreau undertakes to Concord, New Hampshire. He felt that this would have been the proper place to conclude the voyage "uniting Concord with Concord by these meandering rivers, but our boat was moored some miles below its port."

Thoreau's walk on land is united with the shallowness of the lives of most men in one of his most leaden word-plays: "Go where we will on the <u>surface</u> of things, men have been there before us." Here we can again see Thoreau contrasting his inward voyage with the superficial living of his contemporaries. He remarks on the bravery of those who go below the surface of ideas in their exploration and states that "The frontiers are not east or west, north or south; but wherever a man <u>fronts</u> a fact." It is interesting that Thoreau in this instance has chosen

to use the verb "fronts" rather than the more common "confronts." What Matthiessen has suggested about a similar usage in Walden might well be applied here. He has remarked that "front" is barer than the more usual "confront," and also more muscular; "Behind Thoreau's use of it is his conviction that the only frontier is where a man fronts a fact."[1]

In the closing pages of the "Tuesday" section we saw an example of how Thoreau's choice of words had taken on a sense of weight and permanence through their muscular sound. This was in opposition to the lightness of words used in describing the mystic ascent. This idea is developed more fully in the measured pace of the opening paragraph of "Thursday:"

> When we awoke this morning, we heard the faint, deliberate, and ominous sounds of rain-drops on our cotton roof. The rain had pattered all night, . . .

The measured pace again seems to be in exact correspondence with his carefully measured thoughts. This is the same type of correspondence that Thoreau had achieved in the mystical ascent. The movement from "faint" to "deliberate" to "ominous" reflects Thoreau's awareness of the rain as he awakes. There is a quiet feel of "faint" in the mouth which is followed by a comma reflecting the

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[1]Matthiessen, p. 96.

attention Thoreau is giving to these three words. The comma compels us to read these words slowly. The full weight of the rain is then emphasized through deliberate; de-liberate, to weigh. A kindred desire to bring out the closest possible relation between the sense of the word and its sound seems to operate in the placing of "ominous," for again the pause emphasizes its heavy finality. Even in the feel and sound of "pattered" one is given the sense of the interval between rain-drops.

"Friday" presents a summary and recapitulation of the dominant characteristics of the metaphoric voyage. The pace and depth of the two voyages changes just as the seasons change from the summer of "Thursday" to the autumn of "Friday."

The finality of the return voyage is re-enforced by the change in season that Thoreau describes in the opening lines:

> That night was the turning-point in the season. We had gone to bed in summer, and we awoke in autumn; for summer passes into autumn in some unimaginable point in time, like the turning of a leaf.

Thoreau begins to hear "the sigh of the first autumnal wind," and "the rustling of the leaves." He then relates the voyage on the "stream of thought" to the natural voyage as he reflects that "our thoughts, too, began to rustle." Thoreau's use of "rustle" as a transition word

carries the suggestion of a succession or confusion of small sounds. In other words we can expect the stream of thought to become quite shallow as less time is spent on a variety of subjects which are discussed.

Having related the outward world of nature to his inward world of thought by this use of "rustle," Thoreau next united his thoughts with the flow of the river through his word-play on "current:"

> The current of our thoughts made as sudden bends as the river, which was continually opening new prospects to the east or south, but we are aware that rivers flow more rapidly and shallowest at these points.

The first "bend" which we encounter in the flow of this section is a discussion on the nature of poetry and the function of the poet. The poet is equated with the bird of paradise "who is obliged constantly to fly against the wind." This should suggest to us Thoreau's own struggle against the current in his mystical ascent. Recalling his word-play on sun, Thoreau refers to the poet as "but the toughest son of earth and heaven." This relationship between the "son" and "sun" leads into the consideration of that relationship and dependency that exists between the poet and the gods:

> When the poet is most inspired, is stimulated by an <u>aura</u> which never even colors the afternoons of common men, then his talent is all gone, and he is no longer a poet. The gods do not grant him any skill more than another. They

> never put their gifts into hands, but they encompass and sustain him with their breath.

This reference to the similarity which exists between the true poet and the "natural" man is an idea which we saw expressed early in the book when Thoreau referred to the farmer as an individual who "wrote on the face of the earth."

It is appropriate that a good deal of the concluding section be spent in a discussion of the nature of the poet and a consideration of other writers; for Thoreau's mystical ascent, as we have seen, was to the palace of the sun--a sun that was a symbol of inspiration to the poet. In speaking of this sun worship, Thoreau warns his contemporaries concerning Ossian that:

> it will not avail to call him a heathen, because he personifies the sun and addresses it; and what if his heroes did "worship the ghosts of their fathers," their thin, airy, and unsubstantial forms? We worship but the ghosts of our fathers in more substantial form.

Thoreau had earlier related his inward voyage to the journey of the early French explorers through the word-play on "voyageurs." He now contrasted the difficulty of his mystical exploration with the ease of Columbus's discovery of America:

> It is easier to discover another such a new world as Columbus did, than to go within one fold of this which we appear to know so well . . . But there is only necessary a moment's sanity and <u>sound</u> senses, to teach us that there is a nature behind the ordinary . . .

Having commented upon the necessity of "sound" senses, Thoreau concluded the return voyage with some pertinent remarks on the nature of Sound and Silence which had played such important roles in his correspondence:

> As the truest society approaches always nearer to solitude, so the most excellent speech finally falls into silence. Silence is audible to all men, at all times, and in all places. She is when we hear inwardly, sound when we hear outwardly.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the etymological practices that Thoreau employed in the stylistic and thematic structure of A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers.

Thoreau's stylistic structure had its foundation in his concept of language. In a desire to attain a vocabulary which would show the closeness of the word to physical life, Thoreau turned to various sources. His primary source was the Latin language, and secondary sources included Celtic, Indian, and Greek languages as well as the idiom of the New England farmer. Thoreau's theory of language, in so far as he recorded one, seems to rest on the fact that the origin of words is to be found in nature and that these words are only symbols of the spiritual. By driving to the primitive or root meanings of words he was able to approach closer to this spirit.

The earlier part of this paper concentrated on the sources Thoreau turned to in acquiring his language, and how these sources were used in the Week. We were able to see from his journals that Thoreau's interest in language and root words was not a whimsical, meaningless, pedagogical exercise. Instead, he hoped to drive through to the

real meaning of the word. By waiting tenaciously for the exact word, Thoreau was able to attain a concreteness of diction and a more precise and exacting style of description.

The thesis, which has been advanced, is that the basic thematic structure of the Week is built around the motif of the metaphoric voyage. Just as the word had been only a symbol of the spiritual in the stylistic structure, the physical voyage was only the symbol of a voyage on the stream of thought in thematic structure. The basic element that Thoreau used in forming the transition from the physical to the mental voyage was found to be the pun or word-play. Through these puns Thoreau attempted to show that the two voyages were not separate; but that they were integrated through the use of a structural metaphor.

Later sections of my study have concerned themselves with showing the relation that exists between the two voyages, and the manner in which they were integrated. The flow of the book, it has been shown, reflects both the flow of the physical river as well as the river of thought. When there are bends in the physical river there are, what critics have called, digressions.

It has occurred to me that the most conspicuous lack in the scholarly writing about A Week is an attempt

to demonstrate that the work is not just a series of notations and digressions intermingled with some paragraphs of excellent description, but that the material world and the mental world are combined into a unified work of art which demonstrates the style of writing for which Thoreau was striving in his work.

The number of people who have discussed Thoreau's Week has always remained small. The measure of praise that has been granted has often been given for what seems to me to be the wrong reasons. Typical of this critical judgment is that given by Walter Harding in his introduction to the Rinehart edition of the Week:

> Granted that it is not the tightly unified book that some of his later writings are, Thoreau did conceive of it as a unit and as a unit, in the last analysis it must be judged. A Week is not Thoreau's masterpiece. Walden in almost every respect is a far superior book. But A Week does have its virtues. The innumerable imbedded essays, digressive though they may be to the central theme are, many of them little gems that are worthy of concentrated study.

As I have shown in this study, Mr. Harding's criticism of the Week appears to be very loose and inaccurate. Granted that sometimes the flow between the natural and philosophical is strained and rough but we should remember that our own thoughts also change directions rapidly and touch on a great many areas of consideration.

Very little critical work on Thoreau's Week has been published. By far the best studies of the work are

those done by Sherman Paul and Carl Hovde, two men to whom I have made frequent reference in my thesis. The book is wide open for scholarly investigation.

One might start with Mr. Harding's criticism, and by a careful study of the text show the precise manner in which the supposed digressions fit in with the theme of a mystical ascent. One of the areas in which work should be done immediately is the compilation of a word index to the text. With this at hand, scholars and critics would be able to make a fuller study of Thoreau's philological tendencies and his language of natural description.

Thoreau's writing in the Week does not depend entirely on "the personality of the writer" for its unity. Instead, Thoreau was a master craftsman working with tools with which he was quite familiar. These tools give to the reader a concrete experience of Romantic idealism, perhaps ultimately inaccessible in any other way.

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