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A STUDY OF THE STRUCTURE OF THOREAU'S
WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS

by

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INTRODUCTION

A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers was first published in 1849. It was written during 1845 and 1846, however, during Thoreau's stay at Walden Pond. Walter Harding, in his introduction to the Rinehart edition of the work,¹ traces its development from a few skeleton entries in Thoreau's journal for 1839 when the actual voyage was made. A journal entry for June 11, 1840, which gives a three-page account of his embarkation, implies an early intention to write about the journey at greater length.

Harding records that

Further writing was done during the summer of 1840, but it was the sudden and tragic death of his brother John from lockjaw in January of 1841 that was the real catalyst. Henry then conceived the idea of making an account of their voyage together a memorial tribute to John (that John is never mentioned specifically by name in the volume is in the tradition of the pastoral elegy) and his journal for 1841 is filled with further expansions of the text. (vii-viii)

Thoreau apparently could not find time enough to write during the next few years. On March 5, 1845, his friend Ellery Channing wrote to him about his difficulty in making progress with the book. Harding quotes Channing's

¹Henry David Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (New York, 1963). All subsequent references to the Week, including those to the Introduction, will be included in the text. The Rinehart edition has been used because it is readily available.

suggestion that Thoreau should build himself a hut at Walden "and there begin the grand process of devouring yourself alive." (viii) Harding feels that when Thoreau wrote in Walden "My purpose in going to Walden Pond was not to live cheaply nor to live dearly there but to transact some private business with the fewest obstacles"² he meant by "private business" the writing of the Week. Harding's account of the gradual growth of the book implies that a great deal of work went into the making of it despite the fact that a number of the digressions or essays it contains had already been written and published or given as lectures. (xiii) Because of the time and effort that Thoreau spent on the Week, and because critics have demonstrated that he used a wide range of journal entries, unrelated in time to the journey, as raw material,³ it has been taken for granted that the Week should be regarded as a work of art rather than a factual account of the journey. There has not been critical agreement on the book's value as a work of art, however, largely because the structure -- and therefore the total meaning of the book -- has not been fully explained.

Initial critical responses to the book show little interest in the structure or general meaning. Critics either

²Henry David Thoreau, Walden (Boston, 1957), 13.

³Carl F. Hovde, "The Writing of Henry D. Thoreau's A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" (Princeton University unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1956), passim.

concentrated their attention on specific areas of subject matter or else showed they were troubled by the form and style. Harding gives some contemporary reactions. (x)

George Ripley (formerly the director of Brook Farm and a close friend of Emerson) devoted most of a review which he wrote for the New York Tribune to condemning Thoreau's pantheism. James Russell Lowell complained in the Massachusetts Quarterly Review that the book was woefully disorganized. The Athenaeum complained that "all Mr. Thoreau's best things are spoilt in the utterance." James Anthony Froude wrote to Thoreau thanking him for "that noble expression of yourself," but Harding points out that a few days later Froude wrote to A. H. Clough that he thought the book "soda-waterish." The sale of the book was almost non-existent; only the success of Walden encouraged Ticknor and Fields to buy from Thoreau, a month before his death in 1862, the 596 copies remaining from the first edition of 1,000. Yet evidence of the great care with which Thoreau composed the book is provided by the more than 1,400 revisions, most of them minor changes in spelling and punctuation, that he requested for the second edition, issued posthumously in 1868.

Since this inauspicious beginning the book, as Harding says, has become established as one of the classics of American literature and has been reissued in a number of different editions. It has remained a puzzle for critics

and scholars, however, by reason of its apparent disorder; Thoreau's attitude to literary craftsmanship, evidenced by his comments on other writers and his painstaking approach to his own writing would be expected to result in a carefully organized work. Harding himself says

"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 should be judged." (xvii)

Joseph Wood Krutch considers the book as based on three themes which recur in Walden. He writes of the Week:

Two of Thoreau's major themes -- mysticism on the one hand, and on the other, sympathy with wildness in nature and in man -- are both elaborately developed, but neither is as crisply presented as it was presently to be . . . the third of his major themes -- the conviction that practical steps might be taken by the men who compose society (if not by society itself) tending to lead mankind into the path of simpler and happier living -- hardly gets a due share of attention . . . The three themes . . . are like the three sides of a triangle . . . together they form a design, together they constitute a personality, if not a philosophy, which will stand up."⁴

Since Krutch is not interested in examining the structure further he can dismiss Thoreau's first book with the words "A Week . . . is a pendant to his fame and had it been his only book instead of the precursor to Walden, it is doubtful if his reputation would be very wide."⁵ Other critics,

⁴Joseph Wood Krutch, Henry David Thoreau (Toronto), 96-7.

⁵Krutch, Henry David Thoreau, 98.

however, have examined the book and evaluated it on its own merits, rather than merely as a precursor to Walden. Carl F. Hovde sees that a certain unity is given to the Week by an idea which informs the whole and which helps to explain the large number of quotations from other writers which Thoreau has incorporated in the work. He writes "The doctrine of man's intelligence as central to the scheme of things . . . is the informing principle of A Week; in it the mind as a learning and shaping power tries to achieve wholeness within the flux of existence."⁶ Hovde finds that in the pattern of the book the literary sources "are Thoreau's companions on the level of intelligence and insight, just as the companion was his brother during the actual voyage."⁷

William Drake, on the other hand, argues that Thoreau uses the river journey as a central metaphor in the book and as a way of representing the exploration of the self. He writes "It is important that self-exploration for Thoreau is metaphorically identified with the exploration of the natural world: it is not a dualism which he expresses, but an integration."⁸ Like other critics, however, Drake

⁶Hovde, "Writing of the Week", 83.

⁷Hovde, Ibid.

⁸William Drake, "A Formal Study of H. D. Thoreau" in Sherman Paul, ed. Thoreau: A Collection of Critical Essays (N.J. 1962), page 66.

feels that the book is not firmly unified: "The structural plan of the Week is basically an elaboration of that metaphor (of the self-explorer). But Thoreau still does not manage to hold together all the materials of his book."⁹

Sherman Paul includes a study of the Week in his book The Shores of America. He notes that the critical consensus has been in agreement with Professor Canby's statement that the Week is an "anthology carried upon a frame of story"¹⁰ and "not an organic expression."¹¹ Paul continues

Even Mr. William Drake, who recognized that the Week is 'an exploratory journey into thought' has said that 'one feels too strongly the simple alternation between one level and the other,' that Thoreau's difficulty 'lay in making the poetry and speculation about friendship, favourite authors, Christianity, and the art of writing develop naturally out of the context of the experience on its naturalistic level.' All this perhaps is just. And yet there is a unity . . . if one accepts the day and its manifold associations, then there is unity of theme, and the 'miscellaneous' speculations one finds on this level are all concerned with the problem of inspiration.¹²

Paul maintains that

As his own essays on writing in the Week explain, Thoreau was trying to write a deliberate book, a scripture, a myth. He wanted not only an out-of-doors book -- a book of inspiration and 'superfluity of life' but one that to be

⁹Drake, Ibid., 69.

¹⁰Canby, Thoreau (Boston, 1939), cited in Sherman Paul, Shores of America (Urbana, 1958), 272.

¹¹Paul, Shores of America, 272.

¹²Paul, Ibid., 203.

read required the very leisure that he was extolling in the Week.¹³

Paul shows that Thoreau's manipulation of his material was directed towards creating an organic form:

Because he worked from experience and wanted to show how ideas were rooted in places and actions he maintained an excellent balance between thought and occasion, making each occasion yield its thought. In fact, to this end he was artful, preparing every context and transition, and placing his longest contemplations in the "nooning" periods of the day. Nothing was fortuitous, and what seems so remarkable is that so slender a thread could carry so much without breaking.¹⁴

Paul sees that in the slender thread of a pilgrimage to the source of ecstasy, Thoreau "found the 'myth' which joined together his ecstasy, his sense of winning it day by day, and his heroism."¹⁵ According to Paul, Thoreau's problem as a writer when composing the Week "was to extend the principle of perception to structure: to create fables as well as symbols, or to make the structure itself symbolic."¹⁶ The voyage to the source of the Merrimack provided the framework of such a structure: "To ascend the river to its fount was to get to the beginning or youth of time, to the summit where water was mist and mingled with light and all was a

¹³Paul, Ibid., 204.

¹⁴Paul, Ibid., 204-5.

¹⁵Paul, Shores of America, 188.

¹⁶Paul, Ibid., 189.

golden age. Thoreau was retravelling time to his springtime."¹⁷

As well as the shaping symbol of the river, Paul notes the division of the Week into days and demonstrates that the structure could be described as organic in two senses. He sees a principle of design at work in the construction of the chapters, each of which is presented as a complete day in the narrative. He writes "Every day had brought its ecstasy; every morning -- the Week is composed of mornings and the day's promise."¹⁸ Then, a little later, he says of the book "its form, or shaping symbols of river and day, grew out of the perception of law, and its narrative basis was an experience in nature."¹⁹ In these two senses Paul considers the symbols organic. He sees, too, that there is a cumulative effect produced by the days in that "the chapters of Thoreau's journey unfolded his spiritual course from youth to maturity and each chapter carried the weight of the preceding ones."²⁰

Although Paul shows, as Drake does not, that the metaphor of the pilgrimage unites the reflections and that

¹⁷Paul, Ibid., 198.

¹⁸Paul, Ibid., 195.

¹⁹Paul, Ibid., 212.

²⁰Paul, Ibid., 218.

the book, if seen as chiefly concerned with inspiration, has unity of theme, yet his approach fails to explain in terms of myth the selection of material for each day. If nothing is fortuitous in the book then there should, for instance, be an explanation for the placing in "Wednesday" of the essay on Friendship; full understanding of Thoreau's mythic form should show what determined his choice of material in every chapter.

Even though critics have failed to find a structural pattern that embraces the whole of the book, there is reason to believe that a traditional form of structure was part of Thoreau's design for the Week. An article which appeared in PMLA as early as 1938 suggests that Thoreau took a conservative view of literary structure: Like Goethe, Thoreau saw no reason for rejecting the old and established forms, provided their use did not tend toward literary sterility. In his critical essay on Carlyle Thoreau found occasion to direct against Carlyle precisely the same charge that Carlyle had brought against Jean Paul Richter. Carlyle had said of Richter: 'the beaten paths of literature lead the safest to the goal; and the talent pleases us most which submits to shine with new gracefulness through old forms.' Thoreau heartily endorses the truth of this statement and wishes Carlyle had followed his own precept.²¹

Since no full explication of the structure and meaning of the Week has yet been offered, it is reasonable to assume that any structural pattern that awaits discovery is either quite complex or else a subtly indicated framework which has so far eluded careful readers.

²¹Fred W. Lorch, "Thoreau and the Organic Principle in Poetry", PMLA, LIII (1938), 293.

Thoreau's attitude toward his readers would support the hypothesis that there is a deliberate veiling of the structure in the Week. He believed that "A good book is the plectrum with which our else silent lyres are struck,"⁽³³¹⁾ that is, that a book should stimulate the reader's own imaginative and intellectual activity. He explains this attitude more fully in a digression on books in the Week: "Books, not which afford us cowering enjoyment, but in which each thought is of unusual daring; such as an idle man cannot read, and a timid one would not be entertained by . . . such call I good books."⁽⁷⁷⁾ If, therefore, Thoreau constructed his book in a way which would challenge the reader, it could be expected to appear forbidding to the "idle" or the "timid." Moreover, if the reader who was capable of responding to the challenge of the work had accepted the critical consensus about the weakness of its structure, he would not spend the "leisure" on reading the book which Sherman Paul suggests that it requires. It seems to be consistent both with Thoreau's attitude to readers, and with his approach to life, that he never indicated during his lifetime that the book was not woefully disorganized as Lowell and others supposed. He rejected self-justification; his position is illustrated by a comment, made in his journal, on misunderstandings with friends; he wrote "I do not believe in complaint, nor

in explanation."²² His journal also records his reception of the failure of the first edition when, four years after publication, the publisher applied to Thoreau to remove from his warehouse the 706 copies of the Week remaining there and Thoreau had them delivered to his home; he writes of their arrival without any attempt to complain or to explain the failure to sell them. He merely offers wry comment:

They are something more substantial than fame, as my back knows, which has borne them up two flights of stairs to a place similar to that to which they trace their origin. Of the remaining two hundred and ninety and odd, seventy-five were given away, the rest sold. I have now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself.²³

Although the book is now sold freely and accepted as a classic, it is still comparatively neglected. Apart from the critical studies already mentioned, "very little critical work on Thoreau's first book has been published." (xix) There are, of course, references to it in general works on Thoreau, some of which have been cited, but these are critically inadequate. This thesis is an attempt to carry considerably further work already done on the structure and meaning of the Week, although a full study is well beyond

²²Henry David Thoreau, The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau ed. Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen in Fourteen Volumes, Bound as Two (~~New York~~) VIII, 199. 1906
Boston

²³Thoreau, Journal, V, 459.

the scope of this paper. This thesis is limited to that part of the structure which has hitherto been least investigated, that is, the shaping symbol of the days of the week.

Walter Harding writes of this aspect of the structure:

Structurally, as the title implies, the book is organized around the seven days of the week. . . . The vacation trip actually took two weeks, the period from Thursday to Thursday having been spent on a journey from Hooksett, on the upper reaches of the Merrimack, up through the White Mountains with the return by foot and coach. (xii)

Harding also adds evidence of the degree of shaping and modification that Thoreau brought to the raw material of the journey when he points out that "the landward journey is dismissed by Thoreau in only three paragraphs and he picks up the narrative of the boat journey once again on his return to Hooksett." (xii) And Harding reminds us that Thoreau used "a similar structural device" in Walden when "he combined the experience of two years into one and used the revolution of the seasons for unification," (xiii) and that Cape Cod combines the accounts of three journeys into one. We can then conclude that Thoreau deliberately condensed his journey to present it enclosed in the form of a single week. In the Week he makes a break in the middle of the Thursday chapter -- at the point where the first half of the journey ends, at the source -- and then resumes his

narrative. In this manner he thrusts into the "Thursday" chapter parts of two Thursdays' adventures, and comments on the week which intervenes. It could be suggested that this process of condensation is simply a device to give the journey a heightened aesthetic value. Harding, however, points out that the travel narrative is not the major part of the book:

the travel narrative is only part of the book -- in fact not much more than fifty per cent of it. The remainder of the book is a series of digressions, which, as James Russell Lowell complained in his review, 'we come upon . . . like snags jolting us headforemost out of our places as we are rowing placidly up stream or drifting down.' (xiii)

Therefore, any explanation of the day-by-day structure of the Week needs to include not merely the reasons why Thoreau concentrated his recollections of the physical adventures of two weeks into one, but also the reasons for arranging these digressions in a particular order in seven chapters, preceded by some prefatory verses and an introductory chapter called "Concord River." Such an explanation has not yet been offered in detail by any critic and this thesis hopes to fill the gap.

THE MYTHS OF CREATION

In composing the Week Thoreau has constructed a myth of creation which embraces and transcends all other attempts to explain the universe in mythic form. Such a myth contains, of course, a metaphorical journey of the kind critics have found in the book, a journey during which man discovers, and so creates for himself his own internal and external worlds. The central figure of Thoreau's myth seems to be a nameless spirit of the shore which represents creative power in man and in Nature; this nameless spirit appears first as the controlling symbol of the prefatory verses to the book, then as a human figure in "Concord River," the introductory chapter, and thereafter in different aspects in the seven principal chapters of the work. Thoreau's concern with the whole process of creation, and not merely with inspiration, is further indicated by patterns of imagery which correspond to those of ancient creation myths. Parallels to the myth of creation in Genesis can be found in the appropriate days of the Week and they are accompanied by allusions to similar fables from other cultures. This imagery provides a traditional form and familiar emblems as a foundation for Thoreau's original thought. Both form and imagery, however, grow naturally out of a week's journey through

nature; the fact that they have eluded notice so long testifies to their truly organic character. Once a reader does perceive them, however, he gains a sense of strict order and consequently enriched meaning.

The prefatory verses to the Week, as mentioned above, offer a symbol which can represent the theme of the whole book. Although the verses are from various sources they are arranged to form in themselves a complete poem of which the controlling symbol seems to be an unnamed spirit of the shore. In the first verse Thoreau invokes a Muse, a figure who was, of course, traditionally one of the nymphs who lived beside Apollo's spring:

Where'er thou sailest who sailed with me
Though now thou climbest loftier mounts,
And fairer rivers dost ascend
Be though my Muse, my brother.

These words recall that the book was written as a tribute to his dead brother John, and that the two brothers made both the actual river journey and, by implication, a spiritual voyage through life together. In an earlier draft of this poem Thoreau included the name "John" at the end of the final line; as Harding has pointed out, the omission of John's name from the book is in the tradition of pastoral elegy; for whatever reason, in the final version the spirit that inspires Thoreau is nameless. Thoreau probably extends the word "brother" to apply to all mankind as the inspiration of his book; as he wrote in his journal, "A traveller is to

be revered as such. His profession is the best symbol of our life. Going from -- toward --: it is the history of every one of us."²⁴ When read in this light, the journey in the book becomes a Transcendentalist's metaphor for the exploration of the spirit of mankind. The second verse describes a journey in search of an undefined "treasure" that is to be found "on the barren sands of a desolate creek"; as Sherman Paul has shown, and as one should expect of a Transcendentalist work, the book implies that Thoreau is seeking something of spiritual value. In the third verse he describes his journey and concludes "But when I remember where I have been . . . THOU seemest the only permanent shore,/ The cape never rounded nor wandered o'er." Once more he avoids giving a name to the subject of the verse, although this time, by capitalization, he invests this unnamed spirit with a god-like character. The final four lines give part of Ovid's picture of the creation of the world, an image of moving waters shaped by bank or shore; and again no name is given to that shaping power which is the subject of the verse. Ethel Seybold has shown that at the time Thoreau was writing the Week he was especially interested in Ovid's retelling of the myths of creation.²⁵ His use of this passage is, of course,

²⁴Thoreau, Journal, II, 281.

²⁵Cited in Paul, Shores of America, 191.

additional evidence of his preoccupation with such mythic material.

All four verses taken together present an immortal spirit of the shore as symbolic of creative power and inspiration. The image is recognizable in the Week in such diverse forms as "the Walton of the stream . . . almost grown to be the sun's familiar" (17-8) and the smaller bittern, described as a contemplative bird, penetrating Nature's secret, "the genius of the shore . . . moping along its edge." (198) The special associations of the image, however, are with "Lycidas," Milton's elegy inspired by the death of a young and brilliant companion, which Thoreau may intend to link with his book. Milton's use of the symbol was certainly familiar to him; he quotes from "Lycidas" in his private writings²⁶ and Sherman Paul suspects that he must have committed large portions of Milton to memory.²⁷

References to this nameless genius also occur in the introductory chapter, "Concord River"; since this chapter is chiefly concerned with the New England elements in the book, as its name implies, it quite naturally presents the symbol in the form of nameless New England men

²⁶For example, Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau, ed. Harding and Bode. (New York 1958), 413.

²⁷Paul, Shores of America, 104.

who know how to live creative lives in harmony with Nature. Thoreau promises that if you go upstream "You shall see men you never heard of before, whose names you don't know . . . experienced and wise men . . . greater men than Homer or Chaucer, or Shakespeare, only they never got time to say so." (4) When he asks his readers to imagine what such men might write, Thoreau implies that his own book, so full of the rewards of living in sympathy with Nature, should be read as an exploration of the wisdom and experience of these nameless men of the banks of the river. During his description of them Thoreau refers to "demi-experiences of the life that is in Nature" (4) that are "outside to time, perennial, young, divine, in the wind and rain which never die." (4) Like the THOU of the prefatory verses, the creative genius in man, which corresponds to the life that is in nature, is immortal. Thoreau then adds a poem about "respectable folks" who live as part of Nature: they "never die" and "their good cheer never ends." (4-5)

The next specific reference to the nameless creative power occurs in "Monday," which Thoreau says he regards as the first day of the week. Perhaps it is because Monday thus represents the beginning of a cycle that it is the day on which Thoreau chooses to describe his concept of creative power in a precise form. He speaks of the "sublime conservatism" of Hindu philosophers, and regrets that "Their speculations never venture beyond their own tablelands." (110)

He then gives his own more adventurous conception of life; for him creation is not just a process of recreation, that is to say, pure conservatism. He writes of the Hindu philosophers "Buoyancy, freedom, flexibility, variety, possibility, which also are qualities of the Unnamed, they deal not with." (110) For Thoreau, as we have seen, the life of creative man is dynamic, a pilgrimage or quest for ecstasy; creation, then, is not mere cyclical repetition and this catalogue of qualities which give to the process of conservation of the Universe a dynamic character includes important aspects of the creative spirit. In listing them as joined with conservatism Thoreau indicates the pattern of his myth. A study of the Week gives ample evidence that Thoreau has used this "Unnamed" spirit of the shore as the controlling symbol for the whole book by taking one of these qualities of the Unnamed as the central concept of each of the active days of the week. In "Sunday" he shows throughout the chapter what the absence of creative activity entails. In "Monday" he discusses many forms of conservatism and also illustrates it in action. The quality of a day characterizes all the diverse material which Thoreau chooses to treat in that chapter. In "Tuesday," for instance, buoyancy is demonstrated in a multiplicity of images expressing the several senses of the word; Thoreau even makes a pun about "shooting" a buoy. (166) The other qualities appear precisely in the order in which they are listed. "Saturday,"

the first chapter, but the last active day of the week, defines and delineates possibility in numerous ways. Illustrations and discussions of the qualities do no violence to Thoreau's narrative of his river journey. He is careful to keep the actual journey's course present to the imagination of the reader. As Sherman Paul has shown it is a thread which runs right through the structure and links the material together. For example, after a long passage drawn from records of local history, itself securely linked not only to the quality of the day, conservatism, but also to a town they are passing on the bank, Thoreau recalls the reader's attention to the journey by writing "Meanwhile, having passed the Horseshoe Interval in Tyngsborough, where the river makes a sudden bend to the north west, -- for our reflections have anticipated our progress somewhat --." (99) In typical Transcendentalist fashion he avoids the necessity of arranging his symbolic material in a rigid manner because he is simply concerned to allow the total quality to emerge gradually from both the natural and the spiritual background. Since the qualities, as he sees them, together represent the total activity of life, suitable illustrations for them are freely available to him. It is probable that Thoreau devised these categories or qualities himself as being sufficiently extensive to embrace all activity within the seven sections he required for the structure of his book. He does not himself give any literary source for them when

he refers to them in the Week. Beginning with the chapter on possibility the reader's awareness of the Unnamed is steadily extended until in the final chapter, on variety, Thoreau is able to give a sense of culmination and fruitfulness.

Thoreau's study of the qualities of the Unnamed is closely linked with the traditional creation imagery which is to be found in each chapter; indeed it is highly probable that the form of the Creation myth in Genesis determined the number of chapters in the Week and so explains the compression of Thoreau's material upon which Harding has commented. Mythology, Thoreau says, has grown by "slow aggregation" (46) from the first; he describes its growth as "the fond reiteration of the oldest expressions of truth by the latest posterity, content with slightly and religiously retouching the old material." (46) He says that "Either time or rare wisdom writes it," (47) that "In the history of the human mind, these glowing and ruddy fables precede the noonday thoughts of men, as Aurora the sun's rays. The matutine intellect of the poet, keeping in advance of the glare of philosophy, always dwells in this auroral atmosphere." (48) Since he regards myth as an expression of truth and as the realm of the poet, it is not surprising to find in the Week a supporting framework of imagery derived from ancient fables. Each chapter contains images similar to those in the appropriate verses of the

account of the creation of the world in Genesis; for example "Monday" begins "When the first light dawned on the earth" (94) and is heavily endowed with imagery of light and darkness, day and night, through its entire length. In every chapter appropriate images relevant to companion legends from other cultures are also included. In "Wednesday," for instance, the day when dry land was created in Genesis, Thoreau gives legends from Pindar about the creation of islands. He apparently has used the form of the Genesis myth to determine the order in which he has arranged his list of qualities; at any rate they are paired with phases of creation which resemble them. For example, images of buoyancy are gathered together in "Tuesday" when, according to Genesis, the waters were divided into those above the firmament and those below it; "Friday," in which Thoreau's central concept is variety, is the day in Genesis when all living creatures were created.

Even in the introductory "Concord River" Thoreau has assembled parallel myths; at this point they are versions of the beginning of creation. According to Genesis "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," (1 i) and Thoreau suggests that his world also has an earthly and a heavenly aspect: he points out that the river "will be Grass-Ground River as long as grass grows and water runs here; it will be Concord River only while men lead peaceable lives on its banks." (1) Genesis

continues "And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (I ii) Similar imagery is seen in Thoreau's description of meadows covered with flood water over which "the wind blows freshly on a raw March day, heaving up the surface into dark and sober billows." (2) Thoreau also alludes to legends of the creation of mythical waters by poets:

Sure there are poets which did never dream
Upon Parnassus, nor did taste the stream
Of Helicon; we therefore may suppose
Those made not poets, but the poets those. (70)

The introductory chapter closes climactically with the image of Thoreau's own spirit brooding over the waters. He thus begins his book with not only a parallel to the spirit on the waters in Genesis, but also, of course, a personification of the creator of the book as the Unnamed genius of the shore:

I had often stood on the banks of the Concord, watching the lapse of the current, an emblem of all progress . . . the weeds at the bottom . . . the shining pebbles . . . the chips and weeds and occasional logs and stems of trees that floated past, fulfilling their fate, were objects of singular interest to me, and at last I resolved to launch myself on its bosom. (8)

Thoreau's qualities of the Unnamed can be regarded as a fresh approach to a composite creation myth which he is setting forth in the book because these qualities influence the character and organisation of the chapters more thoroughly than the familiar mythical material does.

The pattern of concordant myths of creation functions both to give structural unity to the individual chapters and to reinforce the impression of great cyclical movements in nature which are part of the work of the Unnamed as Thoreau sees the universe. Individually, the older myths -- especially the creation myth from Genesis -- provide imagery which binds together the diverse material within individual chapters; taken together, the myths show the creation and recreation of light and water, land, vegetation, the seasons and all living things. Thoreau's own myth of creation can be said to transcend the others he uses in that it is based on the Transcendentalist concept of a correspondence between Nature and the interior landscape of man. As he wrote in his journal, "Natural objects and phenomena are the original symbols or types which express our thoughts and feelings." As a consequence of this view of the universe, for example, when Thoreau demonstrates the quality of buoyancy he shows it not only in relation to water and air, but also in society and in the human mind. When the two levels of creation myth, that of the traditional imagery, and that of the qualities of the Unnamed, are fully perceived the book can be seen -- James Russell Lowell notwithstanding -- as a powerfully organized work, in which the carefully-wrought structure is an important part of the meaning.

SATURDAY: POSSIBILITY

Thoreau uses a recurring organisational pattern to present the material of his myths within each chapter. Early in each day he introduces imagery similar to that of the corresponding day of the Genesis myth; later he inserts parallels to companion myths; every day, of course, is filled with examples of its particular quality, and in each chapter Thoreau gains his most complete and vivid perception of the day's quality in a moment of direct revelation. These 'epiphanies,' as they will be called in this study, seem to bring Thoreau directly in touch with the Unnamed. Sherman Paul speaks of Thoreau's daily winning of ecstasy, and the epiphanies are sometimes, though not always, moments of high emotion. In "Monday," for instance, the chapter in which he lists the qualities and writes most explicitly about the Unnamed, he gives a long and ecstatic description of the epiphany of the day during which he exclaims:

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 which 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. (141)

It is this omnipresent and Unnamed "Something" which we are invited to study in its various aspects in the chapters of

the Week.

In "Saturday," the chapter on possibility, the brothers begin their journey, so full of possibilities for them. The epigraph draws attention to the main theme of the possibilities of Nature: "Come, come, my lovely fair, and let us try / These rural delicacies." (9) It directs attention also to the extensive pattern of fishing imagery in the chapter with its connotations of bait, temptation, luck and hope, all aspects of the meaning of the word possibility.

Thoreau begins the chapter with direct references to the possibilities of Nature; as the brothers depart on a mild afternoon he says that it seems "as if Nature were maturing some greater scheme of her own." (9) He explains that Nature suggested to them the way to build their boat, and he sees in Nature the possibility of success in boat-building which the brothers did not quite achieve: "If rightly made, a boat would be a sort of amphibious animal . . . the fish shows where there should be the greatest breadth of beam and depth in the hold . . . The bird shows how to rig and trim the sails." (10)

As they pass "North Bridge," which prompts a digression on local history because it was "the first regular battleground of the Revolution," (11) Thoreau thinks about human possibilities. He suggests that the hopes aroused by the winning of independence have not been

realized:

Ah, 'tis in vain the peaceful din
That wakes the ignoble town,
Not thus did braver spirits win
A patriot's renown. (11)

A bit later he adds the following:

But since we sailed
Some things have failed
And many a dream
Gone down the stream. (12)

After this digression he launches himself into the pattern of imagery of fish and fishing which dominates the chapter and develops a picture of the life of the river and its shores as he continues to turn our thoughts towards the idea of possibility. He writes of "the place where some fisherman had enjoyed unusual luck," (16) of passing a fisher and "rowing so near as to agitate his cork with our oars and drive away luck for a season" (16) although still "there would he stand abiding his luck." (16) Thoreau says of another "and yet I thought his luck was not in proportion to his years." (18) The fisher's technique of holding out desirable possibilities is seen at work in Nature. "Thus, by one bait or another," Thoreau writes, "Nature allures inhabitants into all her recesses." (16)

The fertile possibilities in Nature are suggested in a discussion of "the fish principle in Nature," the "fertile law itself, which deposits their spawn on the tops of mountains, and on the interior plains." (18) The life of thought is similarly fertile: "the fruit of the

naturalist's observations is . . . in new contemplations still, and science is only a more contemplative man's recreation." (18) Large shoals of suckers on "their mysterious migrations" suggest to Thoreau "the fertility of the seas" (23) and so provide him with an image both for potential fruitfulness and for all the possibilities contained in the word "mysterious."

The fish imagery enables Thoreau to explore other aspects of the central concept of the chapter. Possibility has its own limitations; in order that the harmony of all nature be preserved, projects cannot be successfully carried out if they are against the nature of things, and Thoreau shows this by an image of a dam. When it is built across the river conflict is initiated between man's idea of progress and the perfectly co-ordinated possibilities of Nature. The dam interrupts the natural rise and fall of the river and blocks the annual migration of the fish to their spawning grounds upstream. One slight ray of hope, one slender possibility remains: "It is thought that a few more enterprising shad may still occasionally be seen in this part of the river." (24) Thoreau uses the image of the dam to make an oblique attack on the misuse of power (which is, of course, an aspect of possibility) under a system of representative government, and so links this imagery with his earlier expressions of disappointment in his contemporaries:

It is said, to account for the destruction of the fishery, that those who at that time represented the interests of the fishermen and the fishes, remembering between what dates they are accustomed to take the grown shad, stipulated, that the dams should be left open for that season only, and the fry, which go down a month later, were consequently stopped and destroyed by myriads. (4-5)

Apparently no attention was paid to what was possible within the natural order. "Perchance, after a few thousands of years," Thoreau continues, allowing his imagination to suggest future possibilities, "nature will have levelled the Billerica dam . . . and Grass-Ground river run clear again." (25)

Thoreau continues to develop the theme of possibility within the order of nature when he discusses the life of men. He points out that "though Nature's laws are more immutable than any despot's" (26) they do allow many possibilities to the man who lives by them rather than by over-spiritualized regulations. They "permit him to relax with license in summer weather. He is not harshly reminded of the things he may not do." (26) With a shade of irony in his choice of words Thoreau continues: "She is very kind and liberal to all man of vicious habits . . . still they maintain life along the way . . . 'never better in their lives': and again, after a dozen years have elapsed, they start up from behind a hedge, asking for work and wages for able-bodied men." (26) With these men who seem to have endless possibilities of life Thoreau compares "the poor inconsistent aspirant man, seeking to live a pure

life, feeding on air, divided against himself" (27) who suffers throughout a life of spiritual sickness. Such a man is trying to live in a way which is not possible for him because it is against his nature.

Man is shown to be denying to himself and to other creatures the great possibilities available to all because he ignores the need to preserve the harmony of Nature. Thoreau expresses his sympathy with the shad, unable to come up to spawn, and then continues: "At length it would seem that the interests, not of the fishes only, but of the men of Wayland, of Sudbury, of Concord, demand the levelling of that dam. Innumerable acres of meadow are waiting to be made dry land . . . so many sources of wealth inaccessible." (28) Nevertheless, man is potentially able to work in harmony with Nature; the brothers see men "hayng far off in the meadow, their heads waving like the grass which they cut. In the distance the wind seemed to bend all alike." (28-9)

It is by the details of writing in this chapter that the pervasiveness of the quality of possibility is most firmly established. A number of short quotations may help to demonstrate how many different aspects of possibility Thoreau manages to exemplify by passing references or by particular turns of phrase: "Were it the will of Heaven" (10); "it may be many russet-clad children" (11); "let me believe a dream so dear" (11); "Who would neglect

the least celestial sound . . . If he could know it one day would be found, that star in Cygnus whither we are bound" (13); "it occurred to us that the farmer would go to church on the morrow, and would carry this news for us" (15); "we trusted to fare well under any circumstances" (16); "Perchance he is not confounded" (16); "a place for fauns and satyrs" (29); "that straight geometrical line . . . stood for the last refinements of civilized life and what of sublimity there is in history was there symbolized" (30); "the very dogs . . . excite more heroism in our breasts," (31) and so on. Taken singly, no one of these fragments attracts notice; read along with many similar expressions and with the idea of possibility in mind they have a powerful cumulative effect.

The images from Genesis for the day strengthen Thoreau's portrayal of the quality of possibility in a number of ways. This stage of the biblical myth of Creation shows man made in the image of God with all the potentiality such a description implies. Symbols for the phase of Genesis can be seen in the figures of three men which are carefully described in a paragraph early in the chapter, and which resemble the persons of the Christian Trinity. As Thoreau writes of them he also indicates the kind of power they wield:

Some men are judges these August days . . . arbitrating in the case of Spaulding versus Cummings, it may be . . . The fisherman, meanwhile, stands in three feet of water, under the same summer's sun, arbitrating in other cases between muckworm and shiner . . . His honor made a great discovery in bailments. (17)

God the father, of course, is commonly seen as an august judge; Christ, the fisher of men, could be said to have made a "discovery" in "bailments" when he revealed that he came to redeem all mankind. Thoreau completes the Trinity with the figure of an old man who is described as nearly a spirit -- "almost grown to be the sun's familiar." (17-8) Thoreau explains that "his fishing was not a sport . . . but a sort of solemn sacrament and withdrawal from the world, just as the aged read their Bibles." (18) These allusions to a sacrament and to the Bible help to strengthen the associations of the Holy Spirit evoked by the figure of the old man. Thoreau makes a comment on the figure's power that could be interpreted as a veiled allusion to lack of spirituality in contemporary Christianity: "I have seen how his coeval fates rewarded him with the yellow perch, and yet I thought his luck was not in proportion to his years." (18)

Man's possibilities are also indicated in the verses of Genesis for Saturday which state that man was given dominion over all living creatures; parallels to this dominion can be seen in the images of fishing, and in references to domestic animals. Thoreau's own mastery over fish is

shown in an account of how he has stroked and handled them in the water. (20) Domestic animals are mentioned with special emphasis at the end of the chapter:

But the most constant and memorable sound of a summer's night, which we did not fail to hear every night afterward though at no time as incessantly and favourably as now, was the barking of the housedogs . . . from the patient but anxious mastiff to the timid and wakeful terrier. (30)

The limitations to possibility imposed by the nature of things can also be linked with the imagery of Genesis for the day. The phrase about the creation of each living creature "after his kind" which is repeated in the verses for the sixth day of Genesis can be read as a reminder of the natural limitations of all created things. Thoreau provides parallels to this aspect of Creation, too. References to the breeds of dog, each with its character, can be observed in the quotation above. In his lengthy digression on fishes Thoreau tells us of the species of fish and the characteristics of each species. Man, too, was made after his kind. When Thoreau describes the diet of fishermen he remarks "Rather a preponderance of the fluid elements; but such is the fisherman's nature." (26)

Yet another parallel to Genesis is seen in the sentence "Here we found huckleberries still hanging upon the bushes, where they seemed to have slowly ripened for our especial use" (29) which should recall the words "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed . . . to you it shall be for meat." (I xxix) Genesis also says "And to every

beast of the earth . . . I have given every green herb for meat" (I xxx) and Thoreau may be alluding to those words when he describes the way in which the Billerica dam has destroyed grazing and conjures up the image of a hundred yoke of oxen "gazing wishfully meadowward at that inaccessible waving native grass." (28)

There are also images in the chapter reflecting a non-Christian image of man with the power of a god. The figure of a mower as the symbol of Time occurs several times; for example, the aged, drunken fisher who still mows near the stream "himself as yet not cut down by the Great Mower." (26)

It will be remembered that in Genesis creation takes place through the word of God; for example, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." (I iii) This point is stressed at the beginning of the Gospel according to St. John which says "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." At the end of his first full chapter Thoreau writes "such is the never-failing beauty and accuracy of language, the most perfect art in the world." (31) It seems likely that Thoreau intended these words to remind his readers of the creative power of language in a general way;²⁸ he has, however, been talking of the suggestive possibilities of

²⁸C.f. Emerson's Nature, "Nature as Language."

the sounds of Nature and using them as evidence of her "sound" state with an ostentatious pun. It therefore does not seem far fetched to suggest that he was also thinking of the power of the word of God in the biblical creation myth. It is, of course, the word of man, the godlike creator, that Thoreau is referring to here; he makes it clear that he is thinking of a comparatively new form of the Word when he writes "the chisel of a thousand years retouches it." (31)

Realisation of Nature's "sound state" comes to Thoreau as a comparatively calm epiphany at the end of the day as he lies in the dark listening to the noises around him. It expresses once again, and very thoroughly, the idea of Nature as the true indication of possibilities for man. Thoreau suggests that "The hounding of a dog . . . may have first suggested the notes of a hunting horn." (31) Finally he adds a strong image of possibility by referring to "the clarion of the cock, with wakeful hope, from the very setting of the sun, prematurely ushering in the dawn." (31)

The brothers' voyage actually began on a Saturday, according to Thoreau's journal; he probably chose to begin his account, which concentrates two weeks' journey into one, on this day of the week partly because it was the day of the making of man. Certainly an opportunity is offered by the verses of Saturday in Genesis to emphasize two ideas which

are important to the whole book: the god-like, or as Carl Hovde puts it, the "informing spirit" of man, and the "laws" of Nature, despotic or benign, which define the possibilities of creative life, whether in man or in the universe.

SUNDAY: REST

Thoreau lists only six qualities of the Unnamed, one of which is conspicuous in each of the six active days of the Week. The traditional creation imagery which he uses gives Sunday the character of a day of rest, and Thoreau uses his "Sunday" chapter to show how man can find true rest when he takes part freely in the life of nature. The chapter also seems to explore activity of the spirit in a general way and clearly demonstrates that spiritual inertia is not a healthy, recreative form of rest for man.

The epigraphs for the chapter draw attention to the theme of a life of calm and beauty to be found in Nature which the white man does not know. Early in the chapter Thoreau says that, unlike the white man, the Indian is "admitted from time to time to a rare and peculiar society with Nature," (43) and this remark may help to explain the second epigraph. The first is a verse by Channing for which Thoreau supplies a partial interpretation early in the chapter. The verse runs

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. (32)

In the passage which refers to this verse Thoreau claims that "There are other savager and more primeval aspects of nature than our poets have sung. It is only white man's poetry." (44) He tells us that he has "been out early on a foggy morning and heard the cry of an owl in a neighbouring wood as from a nature behind the common, unexplored by science or by literature." (44) The second epigraph links the Indian with glimpses of Nature unknown to the white man. It is from the Relations of the Jesuits, 1604, and records that "The Indians tell us of a beautiful River lying far to the south which they call Merrimack." (32)

The early part of "Sunday" is concerned with the ways in which we see the ideal in Nature and with images of the "natural Sabbath." At the beginning we are told that "It was a quiet Sunday morning, with more of the auroral rosy and white than of the yellow light in it, as if it dated from earlier than the fall of man . . . But the impressions which the morning makes vanish with its dews." (32-3) The travelers have some glimpses of the ideal life in Nature while the morning is still young. They see two men in a skiff who "seemed . . . to have very delicately availed themselves of the natural laws." (37) The sight "reminded us how much fairer and nobler all the actions of man might be, and that our life in its whole economy might be as beautiful as the fairest works of art or nature." (37) Reflections in water and the sound of the echo are mentioned as ways in which

Nature shows us the ideal.

Thoreau also puts into the morning of "Sunday" a description of the sabbath as it is kept in Nature. He writes first "The stillness was intense and almost conscious, as if it were a natural Sabbath" (35) and shortly afterwards describes the surroundings in detail. It will be noticed that though he stresses the serenity of the scene, he also shows universal activity, except for a brief but important allusion to the absence of human travellers on the bridges:

The sun lodged on the old gray cliffs, and glanced from every pad; the bulrushes and flags seemed to rejoice in the delicious light and air; the meadows were a-drinking at their leisure; the frogs sat meditating, all sabbath thoughts, summing up their week, with one eye out on the golden sun and one toe upon a reed, eying the wondrous universe in which they act their part; the fishes swum more staid and soberly, as maidens go to church; shoals of golden and silver minnows rose to the surface to behold the heavens . . . they swept by as if moved by one mind . . . now they wheeled, now shot ahead, and when we drove them to the shore and cut them off, they dexterously tacked and passed underneath the boat.

Then he adds that "Over the old wooden bridges no traveller crossed and neither the river nor the fishes avoided to guide between the abutments." (39) Later references to restrictions on travelling on the Sabbath help to show that in the sentence just cited Thoreau is drawing attention to the contrast between man's inhibited movements and the free activity of river and fishes.

The description of the natural Sabbath is followed by sketches of the small communities of settlers the brothers

pass as they row along. Billerica is a place without activity; its first settlers saw their environment as a "howling wilderness" and the community has remained out of touch with the recreative influence of Nature. Thoreau writes "See, is not nature here gone to decay, farms all run out, meeting house grown gray and racked with age?" (38) Carlisle, on the other hand, is a "city of the woods . . . where great men may be born any day, for fair winds and foul blow right on over it without distinction." (39) In Carlisle there is a comparatively free life in contact with the woods and so the place has promise of creativity. In Bedford, Thoreau recalls, the planters once drew up a petition to be erected into a separate parish, so that they would not have to travel far to their meeting house. The wording of the petition, which he quotes, presents a striking contrast in tone to his description of the natural Sabbath. The planters said "'In the extreme difficult seasons of heat and cold . . . we were ready to say of the Sabbath, Behold what a weariness is it'." (40)

Thoreau links the orderly life of the settlers to the idea of rest in a particular way as he embarks on a comparison of the "era in which men cultivate the apple" and that of the hunter. He writes of the country through which they are passing:

It seemed that men led a quiet and very civil life there. The inhabitants were plainly cultivators of the earth, and lived under an organized political government. The school-house stood with a meek aspect, entreating a long truce to war and savage life. (42)

The life of the settler, then, can be seen as one of peaceful order. Thoreau feels, however, that "Gardening is civil and social, but it wants the vigor and freedom of the forest and the outlaw. There may be an excess of cultivation as well as of anything else, until civilization becomes pathetic." (43) He says of the two ways of life that "neither can displace the other without loss." (42) While recognizing that the life of the cultivator is an orderly and peaceful one, Thoreau feels that "the heroic spirit will not fail to dream of . . . more rugged paths." (43) He says that "In civilization . . . man degenerates at length, and yields to the incursion of more northern tribes." (44) A passive kind of restful existence is not permanently healthy for man.

The chapter contains lengthy digressions on religion and Thoreau uses them to show that organized systems of belief tend to have a repressive effect on the individual spirit: "It seems to me that the god that is commonly worshipped in civilized countries is not at all divine . . . but is the overwhelming authority and respectability of mankind combined." (51) People cling to their belief in a scheme of the universe so that they may always have it to rest upon:

Most people with whom I talk, men and women even of some originality and genius, have their scheme of the universe all cut and dried . . . which they set up between you and them in the shortest intercourse; an ancient and tottering frame with all its boards blown off. They do not walk without their bed. (54-5)

He equates spiritual lethargy in matters of belief with sickness: "The church is a sort of hospital for men's souls . . . Those who are taken into it live like pensioners in their retreat or Sailors' Snug Harbor, where you may see a row of religious cripples sitting outside in sunny weather." (60)

The travellers now enter the Merrimack and Thoreau devotes some space to describing the river and bringing the thoughts of his readers back to the course of the journey. He reminds us in passing, however, of his theme of activity in Nature by writing of the Merrimack that it was "by the law of its birth never to become stagnant." (67) He offers his Yankee readers a symbol from his own era of rapid industrialization to stir them out of stagnation. He mentions "the whistle of the steam-engine, arousing a country to its progress." (70)

Passing on to a discussion of creative activity in writing Thoreau says "In an ancient and dead language, any recognition of living nature attracts us." (72) Homer's poetry makes him feel "as if nature spoke"; and Thoreau explores the theme of liveliness in natural conditions by selecting from the poet passages which vividly portray human

activity: Hector moving like lightning about the battlefield, the Danaans breaking the phalanxes of the enemy, the army of the Trojans keeping watch all night, Juno flying swiftly on errands for Jupiter. (74-5)

Nature does provide periods of rest, however, which can be fruitful. Thoreau includes a paragraph on hibernation in the digression on writing; he mentions "all that race of dormant creatures, which have such a superfluity of life enveloped in thick folds of fur," (79) and explains that "The poet . . . hibernates in this world and feeds on his own marrow . . . his words are the relation of his oldest and finest memory." (78-9) Thoreau's concept of the writer, however, is not of an inactive man: "Surely the writer is to address a world of labourers, and such therefore must be his own discipline." (84) He qualifies this a little later on by saying "Yet, after all, the truly efficient laborer will not crowd his day with work, but will saunter to his task surrounded by a wide halo of ease and leisure, and then do what he loves best." (85) The reading of books as well as the writing of them calls for activity; Thoreau says "He who resorts to the easy novel, because he is languid, does no better than if he took a nap." (77)

Thoreau does not only use the settlers to symbolize stagnation or over-cultivation in spiritual life. In this chapter they also represent courageous assertion of a firm position and so provide Thoreau with images for another aspect

of rest, that of stable values. He takes advantage of the fact that the journey has brought the brothers near Wicasuk Island to give an account of Jonathan Tyng, to whom it was given in payment for his services to the colony. Tyng put up a spirited defence of his home against the Indians. He "sat himself down in the midst of his savage enemies, alone, in the wilderness, to defend his home." (88) Thoreau finds that nowadays men of such firm courage are lacking: "a man may desert the fertile frontier territories of truth and justice, which are the State's best lands." (89)

Stability is one of the restful aspects of Nature for Thoreau, and he goes on to tell a story which shows the relative instability of the civilized man. The brothers encounter two men who appear to have been "waylaid by the Sabbath, meaning to go to Nashua, and who now found themselves in the strange, natural, uncultivated, and unsettled part of the globe which intervenes." (89) They ask to go as passengers in the brothers' boat "as if this were the street they had missed. . . This smooth way they much preferred." (89) What appears to them, however, to be a restful way of travelling, does in fact depend on the efforts of the travellers; their request is refused because the boat is heavily loaded "and moreover required to be worked for even it did not progress against the stream without effort." (89) The men run around wildly, discover that they are marooned on an island, and indulge in much foolish and thoughtless

activity as they attempt to cross the water, "the unsympathizing river ever flowing in the opposite direction." (90) Their movements comically exemplify needless waste of effort due to ignorance of the order of Nature. Thoreau reflects "We could not help being struck by the seeming, though innocent indifference of Nature to these men's necessities, while elsewhere she was equally serving others. Like a true benefactress, the secret of her service is unchangeableness." (90) Here, then, we are shown Nature's laws as the foundation of stability, just as in the previous chapter they were shown to set necessary limits to the possibilities of all creatures in the universal harmony.

— A series of images which runs through the chapter helps to link the material together and also to illustrate Thoreau's views on stable order in society and in Nature by relating life to the activities of the theatre. The series begins with the happy reference to frogs eying the wondrous universe in which they "act their part" which has already been quoted in Thoreau's description of the natural Sabbath. Imagery of the stage is also used to represent ways in which man's outlook restricts his activity to a narrow sphere and a mechanical repetition of prescribed actions. Thoreau quotes "all the world's a stage,/ And all the men and women merely players," (53) and then comments that

The world is a strange place for a playhouse to stand within it. Old Drayton thought that a man that lived here, and would be a poet, for instance, should have in him certain

'brave translunary things' and 'a fine madness should possess his brain!' Certainly it were as well that he might be up to the occasion. (53)

The stage imagery also occurs in the digressions on religion in the chapter. Thoreau tells us that "Christ was a sublime actor on the stage of the world." (57) His use of the metaphor here is clarified when he says "Even Christ, we fear, had his scheme, his conformity to tradition, which slightly vitiates his teaching." (55) It seems to be partly the repetition of a set role that Thoreau is thinking of when he speaks of Christ as an actor.

As Thoreau brings the chapter to a close he demonstrates that even in the lively world of Nature there are necessary limitations to activity. He writes that it is "a great blessing that we are obliged to forget our enterprises every twelve hours" (92) so that we may sleep. In this chapter, as in the previous one, Thoreau seems continually to be comparing the way in which the quality is embodied in Nature with the imperfect way in which it is embodied in human life. Having spoken of the blessing of natural rest, Thoreau then reports that the brothers were kept awake by "some Irish labourers on the railroad . . . still unwearied and unresting on this seventh day, who would not have done with whirling up and down the track with everincreasing velocity and still reviving shouts till late in the night." (92)

Thoreau at the beginning of the chapter had linked the imperfection of human life directly to the imagery of Genesis by his reference to a quiet Sunday morning that seemed as if it dated from earlier than the fall of man. Parallels to the verses of the Creation myth are also introduced at the commencement of "Sunday." Genesis says that "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God had created and made." (II iii) Rest, as noted, is the main theme of the chapter; specific references to sanctification are made in passages which show the difference between natural or organic rest in Nature and imposed or regulated rest in society. At the start of the day, when Thoreau is writing of the transient character of man's prelapsarian condition, he inserts a poem about "an early unconverted Saint,/ . . . Heathen without reproach." (33) Rigid ideas of sanctity, developed by New England communities and enforced by that authority which Thoreau views as considerably less than divine, that of the "respectability of mankind," (51) are exemplified by an extract from old papers of the town of Concord. Thoreau quotes accounts of restrictions on Sabbath travel which amplify his reference, already noted, to the absence of travellers across the bridges on this Sunday of their voyage. Then he writes that

In the latter part of the seventeenth century, according to the historian of Dunstable, 'Towns were directed to erect "a cage" near the meeting house, and in this all offenders

against the sanctity of the Sabbath were confined.' Society has relaxed a little of its strictness, one would say, but I presume that there is not less religion than formerly. If the ligature is found to be loosened in one part, it is only drawn the tighter in another [p. 50].

By italicising "religion" and "ligature" Thoreau draws our attention to the fact that both words are derived from a Latin root and so share the meaning of "to bind." Another example of a legalistic attitude to the sanctity of the Sabbath is introduced when Thoreau gives an account of the conversion of an Indian chief. It says in part "'Since that time I hear this sachem doth persevere . . . and sanctifieth the Sabbath, though he doth travel to Wamesit meeting every Sabbath, which is above two miles'." (64) The implication of the word "though" in this passage is that the sachem's sanctification of the Sabbath was marred by his making the effort to travel over two miles to the meeting.

Other parallels to the verses of Genesis include some to the seventh day. We have already noticed Thoreau's description of the way in which some Irish labourers spent the seventh day of the week. He alludes to formal Sabbath-keeping in an extended reference to the seventh day during which he also introduces one of the non-Christian creation legends appropriate to the day. Many of Thoreau's contemporaries probably thought and spoke of Sunday as the first day of the week, as some Christians do today; Thoreau, however, insists upon the same way of reckoning as is used in Genesis, and in some pagan mythology. He writes "According

to Hesiod, 'The seventh is a holy day, / For then Latona brought forth golden-rayed Apollo,' and by our reckoning this was the seventh day of the week and not the first."

(50) He blends together the Christian concept of Sunday and the pagan myth of the sun when he writes of "some indefatigable spinster of the old school" (51):

And when Apollo has now six times rolled westward, or seemed to roll, and now for the seventh time shows his face in the east, eyes wellnigh glazed, long glassed, which have fluctuated only between lamb's wool and worsted, explore ceaselessly some good sermon book. For six days shalt thou labor and do all thy knitting, but on the seventh, forsooth, thy reading. (52)

He reminds us of the natural Sabbath as he continues to allude to the pagan myth, and reminds us that the name used by Christians for the seventh day of the week is derived from the classical myth:

Happy we who can bask in this warm September sun, which illumines all creatures, as well when they rest as when they toil, not without a feeling of gratitude; whose life is as blameless, how blameworthy soever it may be, on the Lord's Mona-day as on his Suna-day. (52)

Allusions to Christian and classical myth are also brought together at the beginning of the chapter when Thoreau is writing about the ideal life as shown to us in Nature. In the Genesis verses for Sunday it is written "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished" (II i) and Thoreau, at the beginning of his "Sunday" chapter, seems to be demonstrating that earth and heavens are both visible about us in the universe. At the same point in the chapter he seems to be alluding to Astraea, the legendary virgin

of the Golden age of classical myth, who left the earth but is still periodically visible as a star in the heavens.

When Thoreau is explaining that reflections in water can show us the ideal, he writes

We noticed that it required a separate intention of the eye, a more free and abstracted vision, to see the reflected trees and the sky than to see the river bottom merely; and so are there manifold visions in the direction of every object, and even the most opaque reflect the heavens from their surface. (37)

He also quotes a verse on the same subject:

A man that looks on glass,
Or it may stay his eye,
Or, if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And the heavens espy. (37)

These references to glimpses of the ideal are linked to the theme of rest by Thoreau's argument that true rest can be observed in Nature. He refers to this idea again in his poem "To a Maiden in the East" which contains a clear allusion to Astraea. He mentions in another part of the chapter "the Virgin who was driven from earth to heaven at the end of the golden age." (46) This reference occurs in a digression in mythology which he sees to be, from one point of view, another instance of man's tendency to bring narrowness and rigidity into life. He remarks that the making of myths is "like striving to make the sun, or the wind, or the sea symbols to signify exclusively the particular thoughts of our day." (47) He sees the figure of Astraea, however, as a symbol of the more calm, restful and beautiful life that man could have. When he introduces the poem he

writes "At evening still the very stars seem but this maiden's emissaries and reporters of her progress." (35) The poem begins "Low in the eastern sky is set thy glancing eye," an apparent allusion to the constellation Virgo which is visible in this position, though only in the early part of the year; it goes on to speak of the influence of the maiden, even in her absence, which causes Thoreau to "strive to be / As if thou wert with me." (36) He emphasizes the gentleness and serenity of a life influenced by the thought of her. He writes

Whatever path I take,
It shall be for thy sake,
Of gentle slope and wide,
As thou wert by my side,
Without a root
To trip thy gentle foot.
I'll walk with gentle pace,
And choose the smoothest place
And careful dip the oar,
And shun the winding shore,
And gently steer my boat
Where water lilies float,
And cardinal flowers
Stand in their sylvan bowers. (36-7)

Every day of the Creation myth in Genesis comes to an end with the words "And God saw that it was good." This description of all Nature as good corresponds, of course, to the view that is constantly implied by all the text of the book examined thus far. There is, therefore, both a parallel to Genesis and a summing up of the argument of the "Sunday" chapter in the epiphany of the day which shows Thoreau that "the Good Genius is sure to prevail." (93) He writes at the

end of the day when they finally take their rest:

One sailor was visited in his dreams this night by the Evil Destinies, and all those powers that are hostile to human life, which constrain and oppress the minds of men and make their path seem difficult and narrow, and beset with dangers . . . But the other happily passed a serene and even ambrosial or immortal night, and his sleep was dreamless, or only the atmosphere of pleasant dreams remained, a happy natural sleep until the morning; and his cheerful spirit soothed and reassured his brother, for whenever they meet, the Good Genius is sure to prevail. (93)

Thoreau implies that it was in unnatural sleep that the sailor's imagination conjured up the Evil Destinies, while the Good Genius is associated with natural sleep.

MONDAY: CONSERVATISM

It seems particularly significant that Thoreau should have chosen to discuss conservatism in "Monday," the first day of the week, and to introduce the other qualities in relation to it. He appears to agree with Emerson's dictum: "every thing runs to excess; every good quality is noxious if unmixed."²⁹ We have already seen that Thoreau attaches great importance to conserving the harmony of Nature; in "Monday" we are shown that although the other qualities of the Unnamed require to be mixed with conservatism, that quality itself needs the admixture of more active qualities. Thoreau writes of the outlook of the Hindu philosophers: "It is a sublime conservatism; as wide as the world, and as unwearied as time," but he qualifies his praise by the second part of this statement: their outlook is "preserving the world with Asiatic anxiety in that state in which it appeared to their minds." (110) Then he goes on to speak of the other qualities of the Unnamed which are neglected by the Hindus. He concludes this passage, however, by quoting a comment on Oriental wisdom: "'there are there some vestiges of the eternal laws which govern the world." (110) These eternal laws on which the order of the world is

²⁹Ralph Waldo Emerson, Works, Centenary edition, Boston 1903-4, III, 65-66.

based seem to be the principal theme in this chapter on conservatism; no quality in any chapter is considered without reference to them, but in "Monday" order is itself the prime consideration.

The four epigraphs for "Monday" represent four different attitudes toward order, all of which are considered in the chapter. The first epigraph is close in tone and spirit to Thoreau's remark that "The nonchalance and dolce-far-niente air of nature and society hint at infinite periods in the progress of mankind" (103); the epigraph runs "I thynke for to touche also / The world which neweth every daye, / So as I can so as I maie." (94) And in the chapter Thoreau implies that real progress is chiefly a movement of renewal, not a process of radical change. The second and third epigraphs appear to be related to all the material in the chapter about conflict between groups who struggle to assert their way of life in opposition to that of others; this conflict can be said to arise from a conservatism that is not "as wide as the world." The epigraphs are taken from ballads about Robin Hood who, as both outlaw and champion of humane justice, is a symbol of both challenge to an old order and advocate of renewed social harmony. The first ballad excerpt presents an authoritarian view: "The hyshe sheryfe of Notyngname, / Hym holde in your mynde" (94); the line draws attention to later references to the sheriff in association with the tyranny of institutions. Thoreau writes

"In my short experience of human life, the outward obstacles if there were any such, have not been living men, but the institutions of the dead." (105) As he goes on he reintroduces the figure of the sheriff:

It is grateful to make one's way through this latest generation as through the dewy grass. Men are as innocent as the morning to the unsuspecting . . . Not being Reve of this shire

"The early pilgrims blithe he hailed,
That o'er the hills did stray,
And many an early husbandman,
That he met on the way";--
thieves and robbers all, nevertheless. (105)

The passage implies that if "he" had been the Reve he would have been conditioned by his office to see all he met as potential rebels against order maintained by law. They are "thieves and robbers all" to the Reve, but innocent to the unsuspecting. The other ballad excerpt expresses the viewpoint of the rebel outlaws: "His shoote it was but loosely shott, / Yet flew not the arrow in vaine, / For it mett one of the sheriffe's men, / And William a Trent was slain." (94) The lines draw attention to Thoreau's discussion of violent attempts to overthrow existing order and replace it with a new way of life. He devotes a whole digression in this chapter to criticism of "the restless class of Reformers." (102) The exploits of the outlaws are also linked by Thoreau to a sad catalogue of killings and reprisals that he has found in records of the Indian wars. He strengthens his argument that real change in society takes place only very slowly by showing the repetitive character of these outbreaks

of violence. Writing of some white men who fell into an ambushade near Thornton's Ferry Thoreau notes that "It is almost word for word as in the Robin Hood ballad:--They carried these foresters into fair Nottingham, / As many there did know / They digged them graves in their church-yard, / And they buried them all a-row." (135)

The single line which forms the fourth epigraph for "Monday";--"Gazed on the Heavens for what he missed on Earth" (94)-- draws the reader's attention to the various concepts of heaven-sanctioned order which are considered in the chapter. There is first the outlook of "good young Frye, / Who was our English Chaplin; he many Indians slew." (97) In Frye's dying moments, we are told, "He prays kind Heaven to grant success, / Brave Lovewell's men to guide and bless." (98) One of the men is moved to say "'Brave Chaplain I could wish / That Heaven had made me die for you'." (98) An equally sanguinary order of things is implied by the Hindu scriptures. Thoreau tells us "'Wherefore, O Arjoon, resolve to fight' is the advice of the God to the irresolute soldier who fears to slay his best friends," (110) but he complains that "No sufficient reason is given why Arjoon should fight. Arjoon may be convinced, but the reader is not, for his judgement is not 'formed upon the speculative doctrines of the Sankhya Sastra'." (113-4) Finally Thoreau demonstrates the kind of struggle that should be undertaken on behalf of Heaven. He offers to take part in

a metaphorical tournament and to champion the restoration of Heaven's fair name. Again he places emphasis upon the idea of renewal. He challenges an angel to knightly combat in a poem which ends

And if she lose her champion true,
Tell Heaven not despair,
For I will be her champion new,
Her fame I will repair. (145)

The related themes of order, repression, rebellion and renewal to which our attention is drawn by the epigraphs all give Thoreau opportunities to explore the quality of conservatism. His entire discussion of reform in human life is conducted with a recollection of the serene and universal harmony of Nature in mind: "All streams are but tributary to the ocean, which itself does not stream, and . . . are unchanged, but in longer periods than man can measure." (100) When he says that "It is a great pleasure to escape sometimes from the restless class of Reformers. What if these grievances exist? So do you and I" (102) he is arguing for a view of order which sees grievances in relation to the vast harmony of the universe. He writes "The Universal Soul, as it is called, has an interest in the stacking of hay, the foddering of cattle, and the draining of peat-meadows. Away in Scythia, away in India, it makes butter and cheese." (102) He does feel that "Undoubtedly countless reforms are called for, because society is not animated, or instinct enough with life. . . . Even virtue is no longer

such if it be stagnant"; he provides an illustration from Nature to show how he sees reform as a process of renewal. He writes "A man's life should be constantly as fresh as this river. It should be the same channel but a new water every instant." (107)

Those who try to escape from their grievances are shown to be as mistaken as those who rebel. Thoreau tells us early in the chapter that "Go where we will, we discover infinite change in particulars only, not in generals." (100) Because he knows this he is distressed when he meets some "green hands from the hills" who are going off to sea: "What grievance has its root among the New Hampshire hills? we asked." (117) Then he inserts a poem which begins

Though all the fates should prove unkind,
Leave not your native land behind.

It explains that

swiftly still our fortunes pace
To find us out in every place. . .
The vessel, though her masts be firm,
Beneath her copper bears a worm; . . .
Far from New England's blustering shore,
New England's worm her hulk shall bore,
And sink her in the Indian seas. (118)

A good opportunity for reflection is given by the noontide break in the brothers' journey, and it is at this point that Thoreau discusses the most torpid of conservative attitudes. He writes "All labourers must have their nooning, and at this season of the day we are all, more or less, Asiatics, and give over all work and reform." (102) He shows his own breadth of outlook when he remarks "In the experience

of this noontide we could find some apology even for the instinct of the opium, betel and tobacco chewers." (102)

In this passage on nooning he reminds us that rest depends on the natural harmony which preserves life by providing for security and repose: "There are moments when all anxiety and stated toil are becalmed in the infinite leisure and repose of nature." (102)

In this way he introduces his digression on the restlessness of reformers; as Sherman Paul has noted, Thoreau takes equal care to attach other digressions to the journey, for example, further reflections on Indian thought in this chapter. He writes, first, "Still the noon prevailed, and we turned the prow aside to bathe and recline ourselves under some buttonwoods," (119) and then glides into another essay on Oriental conservatism with the words "Still had India and that old noontide philosophy, the better part of our thoughts." (119) The subject of this digression is the Laws of Menu, a work which is given a conservative character by being described in the words of a Hindu as one of "four works of supreme authority, which ought never to be shaken by arguments merely human." (120)

Thoreau praises the book and presents it as an extraordinary example of the preservation of truth and wisdom:

Its tone is of such unrelaxed fibre, that even at this late day, unworn by time, it wears the English and Sanskrit dress indifferently; and its fixed sentences keep up their distant fires still, like the stars, by whose dissipated rays this lower world is illumined. (120)

But discussion of Hindu scriptures also gives Thoreau an opportunity to reject an extreme type of conservative society. He writes "Thank God, no Hindoo tyranny prevailed at the framing of the world, but we are freemen of the universe, and not sentenced to any caste." (120) We are free, however, only within the orientation provided by the laws of the universe, as Thoreau has made clear, and he discusses the way in which conscience makes us aware of universal law. He tells us that "Conscience is the chief of conservatives." (109)

As in previous chapters, Thoreau illustrates the quality of the day and gives further unity to his diverse material through his patterns of imagery. In "Saturday," as we have seen, he uses fishing images, in "Sunday" images of the stage. In "Monday" there is an extensive pattern of imagery related to seeds. There are obvious connotations of preservation and renewal or rebirth and its consequent growth attached to the image of a seed. The pattern begins to appear in a historical anecdote about self-preservation in the wilderness during the Indian wars. Two settlers, Davis and Jones, struggle home by different routes through the forest after a battle. Jones got into Saco after fourteen days: "'He had subsisted', says an old journal, 'on the spontaneous vegetables of the forest; and cranberries which he had eaten came out of wounds he had received in his body.' This was also the case with Davis." (98)

Shortly after giving this bizarre example of the preservation of human life and cranberries, Thoreau begins to eat a melon and takes the opportunity to introduce some related reflections: "Now that we are casting away these melon seeds, how can we help feeling reproach? He who eats the fruit, should at least plant the seed; aye, if possible, a better seed than that whose fruit he has enjoyed." (101)

This expresses the true conservative spirit as Thoreau understands it; i.e., one should work to preserve the best. He develops the image and links it with his discussion of reform with the words "eat not the seed of institutions, as the luxurious do, but plant it rather . . . that so, perchance, one variety may at last be found worthy of preservation." (102)

Through seed imagery Thoreau also attaches to the pattern another sequence of thought. After giving a remarkable catalogue of uses to which the linden tree may be put, he goes on to say "In all her products Nature only develops her simplest germs" (129) and suggests that "The hawk, which now takes his flight over the wood, was, at first, perchance, only a leaf which fluttered in its aisles." (129) Thrift appears as one of the aspects of conservatism, and both thrift and conservatism in general are related to the order of Nature.

The seed imagery also appears in a graveyard meditation in this chapter. Thoreau takes up a quotation from Virgil that he used in "Sunday" about apples lying under their trees -- "Strata jacent passim sua quaeque sub arbore poma (72) -- and changes apples into bodies very pointedly: "'Strata jacent passim suo quaeque sub lapide -- corpora,' we might say, if the measure allowed." (137) The use here of seed imagery with its associations of rebirth aptly fits his argument that "A monument should at least be 'star-y-pointing' to indicate whither the spirit has gone." (137) He touches upon another aspect of conservatism when he mocks attempts to preserve fame with epitaphs and writes "Fame itself is but an epitaph; as late, as false, as true." (138)

An instance of physical preservation by burial is given in Thoreau's account of a small desert between Tyngsborough and Hudson. This is one of the many illustrations of a quality of the Unnamed which blends without difficulty into the narrative. He writes "We saw near the river, where the sand was blown off down to some ancient surface, the foundation of an Indian wigwam exposed . . . a perfect circle of burnt stones . . . mingled with fine charcoal, and the bones of small animals which had been preserved in the sand . . . we found one perfect arrowhead." (118) Then, after giving more details of a perfect work of natural preservation, he implies that a way of life is also still

being preserved there. White men fish there now, and, as Thoreau writes, "Here, then," the Indians must have fished before the whites arrived." (119)

As the brothers proceed on their journey Thoreau describes the landscape and so finds an opportunity to include in the chapter a poem about mountains in which they appear as a strong symbol of conservatism in some of its aspects:

With frontier strength ye stand your ground,
With grand content ye circle round . . .
Firm argument that never stirs (132)

Wachusett mountain is singled out for praise: "Upholding heaven holding down earth / Thy pastime from thy birth." (133) With these verses Thoreau again reminds us of the unchanging order of Nature.

Natural order is, of course, reflected in the imagery from Genesis which is to be found in the chapter. A series of images occurring at the beginning of "Monday" seems to echo the words of Genesis for the first day of Creation: "And God said Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night." (I iii-iv) "Monday" begins "When the first light dawned on the earth." (94) A verse that is included shortly afterwards tells us about knights arming for combat before daylight, and comments "Syne on the land lampis; / The night is neir

gone." (95) Images of night and day are next worked into Thoreau's description of people crossing the Merrimack by ferryboat. He mentions one impatient traveller and asks "Whence, pray, did he come out of the foggy night? and whither through the sunny day will he go? We observe only his transit; important to us, forgotten by him, transiting all day." (95-6)

Thoreau's vision of the order of creation is expressed through imagery of daylight in the lines "Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs / And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the Suns." (101) He does see, as he explains more fully in "Friday," some progress in human life toward an outlook as universal as the scope of Nature. Sun imagery is again connected with the slow spiritual improvement of mankind when Thoreau writes

All good abides with him who waiteth wisely; we shall sooner overtake the dawn by remaining here than by hurrying over the hills of the west. . . Wait till evening, and other parts of our day's work will shine than we had thought at noon, and we shall discover the real purport of our toil. (104)

Thoreau also uses sun imagery to illustrate the difference between attitudes toward the order of the universe:

There is a struggle between the Oriental and the Occidental in every nation; some who would be forever contemplating the sun, and some who are hastening towards the sunset. The former class says to the latter, When you have reached the sunset, you will be no nearer to the sun. To which the latter replies, But we so prolong the day. (114)

Oriental thought in general is also represented by Thoreau with imagery that reflects the creation of light on the Monday of Genesis. He writes "Ex oriente lux may still be the motto of scholars, for the Western world has not yet derived from the East all the light which it is destined to receive thence." (116) When he writes of the teaching of the Laws of Menu, which prescribe regulations for the conduct of daily life in minute detail, Thoreau says that the book belongs to the noontide of the day, the midsummer of the year. . . It helps the sun to shine and his rays fall on its page to illustrate it. It spends the mornings and the evenings, and makes such an impression on us overnight as to awaken us before dawn and its influence lingers around us like a fragrance late into the day. (121)

In this passage Thoreau endeavours less to convey the precise character of the book than to impress upon his readers' mind images that match those of Genesis for the day.

It is in Oriental thought that Thoreau finds a non-Christian myth of creation appropriate for Monday. The conception of "the day of Brahma" corresponds to the Genesis myth in showing that creation begins with light. When Thoreau writes of the Hindu conception of creation he says

Nor will we disturb the antiquity of this Scripture; 'From fire, from air, and from the sun, it was milked out. One might as well investigate the chronology of light and heat. Let the sun shine. Menu understood this matter best, when he said 'Those best know the divisions of days and nights who understand that the day of Brahma, which endures to the end of a thousand such ages, (infinite ages, nevertheless, according to mortal reckoning) gives rise to virtuous exertions; and that his night endures as long as his day.' (123-4)

Again creation images for the day enable Thoreau to stress the fundamental conservatism of the universe which changes

only in periods too great for mortal reckoning.

Thoreau draws together the Oriental and the Genesis myths of creation for the day by showing that they also coincide in the period of time which they assign to the total process of the first creation. The "day" of Brahma finds its equivalent in one of the Genesis verses about creation. At the end of the account Genesis says "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens," (II iv) and Thoreau was careful to introduce a parallel to this, earlier, at the appropriate place in "Sunday": "The stillness was intense and almost conscious, as if it were a natural Sabbath, and we fancied that the morning was the evening of a celestial day." (35) This reference in "Sunday" foreshadows the Oriental myth which is to follow in "Monday" because the word "day" becomes established as a term for a period of creative activity rather than a precise measurement of time.

As in other chapters Thoreau's image patterns link together the diverse material of his "Monday" chapter and we find imagery of light runs through his discussion of history on this day. He says that

We should read it as little critically as we consider the landscape, and be more interested by the atmospheric tints and various lights and shades which the intervening spaces create than by its groundwork and composition. It is the morning now turned evening and seen in the west -- the same sun but a new light and atmosphere. (124)

The principal theme of the essay on history corresponds to a major preoccupation of the whole chapter, the idea that apparent changes and differences in life are superficial or illusory. Thoreau still stresses this view and continues to use imagery of light and darkness as he passes on to a discussion of "the dark ages":

They are dark, as one has observed, because we are so in the dark about them. The sun rarely shines in history . . . it is fit that the Past should be dark; though the darkness is not so much of a quality of the past as of tradition. . . What is near to the heart of this generation is fair and bright still. Greece lies outspread fair and sunshiny in floods of light, for there is sun and daylight in her literature and art. Homer does not allow us to forget that the sun shone. (126)

As before in this chapter, he here makes clear his opposition to indiscriminate preservation of the status quo: what was truly vital in the past has the same self-renewing value as sunlight to every generation, and other aspects of human life in the past should not be preserved.

Thoreau moves on to make the point that man, by his nature, is limited in what he can see:

some creatures are made to see in the dark. . . The eyes of the oldest fossil remains, they tell us, indicate that the same laws of light prevailed then as now. Always the laws of light are the same, but the modes and degrees of seeing vary. (126-7)

We are again reminded, by this passage, of the imperfection of man's life in comparison with the all-embracing function of the laws of Nature. Thoreau elaborates the theme of the unchanging universal harmony that lies behind the world of flux we think we see: "The gods are partial to no era, but

steadily shines their light in the heavens, while the eye of the beholder is turned to stone. There was but the sun and the eye from the first." (127)

Light, of course, represents illumination as well as being a symbol for vitality, renewal, and the unchanging rhythms of Nature. As we have seen, Thoreau uses the image of light to relate the sun to the eye; he also uses it in this chapter when he is referring to revelations of the universal laws. In his discussion of Conscience he writes I must conclude that Conscience, if that be the name of it, was not given us for no purpose, or for a hindrance . . . Does not his law reach as far as his light? The expedients of the nations clash with one another, only the absolutely right is expedient for all. (108)

Light also gives Thoreau an image with which to describe the revelation of universal health that comes to him on the evening of "Monday." He exclaims "I stop my habitual thinking. . . How can I go on, who have just stepped over such a bottomless skylight in the bog of my life." (141) Once again he implies the narrow and stagnant conservatism that may be adopted by man; references to living in a bog and thinking according to habitual patterns can be taken as illustrations of a limited type of human conservatism. The epiphany of the day, however, reveals the true character of this quality of the Unnamed. It comes to Thoreau in a flash of revelation while he is listening to the rhythmic beating of a distant drum. He has a vivid sense of the harmony of the universe and exclaims: "I have seen how the

foundations of the world are laid and I have not the least doubt that it will stand a good while." (141) The idea of reform as being properly the restoration of sound order is also expressed in his account of the power of music to reveal the universal harmony. He quotes Plutarch's statement that

Plato thinks that the gods never gave men music . . . for mere delectation . . . but that the discordant parts of the circulations and beauteous fabric of the soul, and that of it that roves about the body, and many times, for want of tune and air, breaks forth into many extravagances and excesses, might be sweetly recalled and artfully wound up to their former consent and agreement. (143)

Thoreau also quotes a passage from Jamblichus which reminds us of another time honoured metaphor for universal harmony, the music of the spheres:

Pythagoras did not procure for himself a thing of this kind through instruments or the voice, but employing a certain ineffable divinity, and which it is difficult to apprehend, he extended his ears and fixed his intellect in the sublime symphonies of the world, he alone hearing and understanding, as it appears, the universal harmony and consonance of the spheres. (143)

The reference to Pythagoras' "certain ineffable divinity" parallels the working of the Unnamed in man which gives him awareness of the true nature of conservatism. After giving this quotation Thoreau adds a recollection of an epiphany that came to him after hearing a telegraph wire vibrating in the wind. He likens it to the sound given out at sunrise by the statue of Memnon and so reminds us of his remark in "Sunday" about the transient character of the impressions of the morning. Imperfect man does sometimes have the

opportunity to hear the music of universal harmony that is being played about him: "It was the telegraph harp singing its message through the country, its message sent not by men but by gods." (144)

In "Monday," then, it appears from Thoreau's use of imagery and from his epiphanies that he is concerned not only to examine many aspects of conservatism, but also to present repeatedly to his readers an image of the universe harmoniously regulated by unchanging laws.

TUESDAY: BUOYANCY

The epigraph for "Tuesday" directs attention to material in the chapter related to buoyancy both in the sense of upward motion and in the sense of floating. It runs

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And through the fields the road runs by
To many-towered Camelot. (147)

The image of mounting to the sky is developed in the chapter in two accounts of mountain expeditions which seem deliberately included to illustrate the quality because they have little relation to the narrative of the day's journey. The reference to Camelot is also taken up in the chapter in allusions to feudalism; this is one of a number of social relationships examined in the chapter in which one class of persons is supported by another -- buoyed up, as it were -- in a hierarchy.

The whole chapter is marked by a buoyant tone, but it is particularly noticeable at the beginning and during the accounts of mountain climbing. As the chapter opens Thoreau describes the hearty behaviour of the brothers at three o'clock in the morning:

We tramped about the shore, waked all the muskrats, and scared up the bittern and birds that were asleep upon their roosts; we hauled up and upset our boat and washed it and rinsed out the clay, talking aloud as if it were broad day. (146)

Then he begins to demonstrate aspects of spiritual buoyancy as he gives a description of an ascent he once made up Saddleback Mountain. His excuse for introducing this digression is that this early in the morning of Tuesday it is not yet possible to distinguish objects; on this, the first of the two mountain climbs described during the chapter, Thoreau emphasizes his buoyant attitude toward physical difficulties. He insists on finding his own way up to the peak. He remarks "It is very rare that you meet with obstacles in this world which the humblest man has not faculties to surmount . . . Like most evil the difficulty is imaginary." (150) Near the top he is told that "nobody ever went this way," (150) but he persists and finds that "the ascent was by no means difficult or unpleasant, and occupied much less time than it would have taken to follow the path." (150) His contention that obstacles can be surmounted is borne out again by the success of his efforts to get water to drink. After contriving "ingenious aqueducts on a small scale" and obtaining water from hoof-prints (151), he digs his own well which promptly fills up with water and so contributes an image of physical buoyancy to the chapter.

It is in keeping with the cheerful spirit of the chapter that when Thoreau returns to the narrative of the day's journey he should find advantages even in being shrouded in fog: "The fog, as it required more skill in steering, enhanced the interest of our early voyage, and made the river seem indefinitely broad. . . In the present instance it was even fragrant and invigorating, and we enjoyed it as a sort of earlier sunshine, or dewy and embryo light." (157) When the day is a little advanced he tells us that there was "just warmth enough to prove the kindly disposition of Nature to her children. With buoyant spirits and vigorous impulses we tossed our boat rapidly along." (161)

During the forenoon he inserts the second account of mountain climbing and in this narrative displays buoyant cheerfulness and good nature in an encounter with some surly mountain people. He tells us that his host for the night, a farmer called Rice, "was, indeed, as rude as a fabled satyr. But I suffered him to pass for what he was . . . and was even pleased at the discovery of such a singular natural phenomenon." (171) He describes several rebuffs by Rice, which are cheerfully received; he also presents Rice himself as independent and self-reliant. The surly farmer therefore seems to function as an example of one kind of buoyancy himself. Thoreau writes "If you could represent the case to him, he would not let the race die out in him, like a red Indian." (171) It is interesting to notice that

in this chapter, at this point and elsewhere, Thoreau uses the Indian as a symbol of weakness, while in "Sunday" he praises the Indian for his free and natural existence; the difference arises, it would seem, from the difference in the qualities under consideration.

A variety of aspects of buoyancy are illustrated in the course of the journey before Thoreau introduces the series of images of social relationships. He gives, for example, a lively instance of physical vigour and buoyancy in a description of a squirrel that is playing about on the shore as they pass. At one moment it sits "extending its cheeks to a ludicrous breadth -- as if it were devising through what safe valve of frisk or somerset to let its superfluous life escape; the stream passing harmlessly off, even while it sits, in constant electric flashes through its tail." (161)

An encounter which mingles ideas of human aspiration with impressions of buoyant spirits is Thoreau's meeting with a young woman on his way up the mountain:

I had thoughts of returning to this house, which was well kept and so nobly placed, the next day, and perhaps remaining a week there . . . its mistress was a frank and hospitable young woman . . . with lively sparkling eyes, and full of interest in that lower world from which I had come. She had at first taken me for a student from Williamstown, for they went by in parties, she said, either riding or walking, almost every pleasant day, and were a pretty wild set of fellows. (149)

The students perhaps represent a slightly excessive buoyancy; Thoreau gives other examples of such excess. He implies that our imagination, for example, tends to be excessively buoyant: "The most stupendous scenery ceases to be sublime when it becomes distinct, or in other words limited, and the imagination is no longer encouraged to exaggerate it. . . . Nature is not made after such a fashion as we would have her. We piously exaggerate her wonders." (158)

In the case of the lively squirrel Thoreau described how superfluous energy passed harmlessly off; he later gives an instance of harm caused by excessive buoyancy in his description of a desert, created by sheep who had been worried by fleas. The animals "Began to paw the ground, till they broke the sod, and so the sand began to blow, till now it had extended over forty or fifty acres." (164)

He points out that "This evil might easily have been remedied, at first, by spreading birches with their leaves on over the sand and fastening them down with stakes to break the wind," (164) and thus shows the need to combine conservatism with the other qualities. Thoreau adds similar examples drawn from a wider sphere; he suggests that the Sahara may have been caused in such a way; then he tells us that "Railroads have been made through certain irritable districts, breaking their sod, and so have set the sand to blowing, till it has converted fertile farms into deserts." (164)

He seems thus to relate misdirected enterprise with

uncontrolled buoyancy.

Thoreau also shows that our youthful buoyancy and aspirations can be valuable and creative. He tells us that "near along life's stream are the fountains of innocence and youth making fertile its sandy margin; and the voyageur will do well to replenish his vessels often at these uncontaminated sources." (159) He explains that the boatman prefers the water of a spring to that of the "yellow and tepid river. . . . It is this purer and cooler element that chiefly sustains his life." (159) The word "sustains" reminds us once again of buoyancy.

Images of support within a social hierarchy form an important pattern in this chapter. Thoreau's reference in the epigraph to Camelot foreshadows an allusion he makes as he describes the progress of the voyage: "We imagined that the river flowed through an extensive manor, and that the few inhabitants were retainers to a lord and a feudal state of things prevailed." (161) This sentence reminds us that the feudal lord was supported by his vassals and retainers. The men who work the canal boats provide Thoreau with an image that combines both physical and social buoyancy. He notes that "their busy commerce did not look like toil, but rather like some ancient Oriental game still played on a large scale, as the game of chess for instance, handed down to this generation." (175) The metaphor of chess, presented in this way, brings associations of a

time-honoured social hierarchy, and so broadens the significance of Thoreau's ensuing description of the life of the boatman:

All the phenomena which surround him are simple and grand, and there is something impressive, even majestic, in the very motion he causes, which will naturally be communicated to his own character, and he feels the slow, irresistible movement under him with pride, as if it were his own energy. (175)

Thoreau also uses the boatmen as examples of another kind of hierarchical relationship and of simple physical buoyancy. He explains first that they were objects of hero-worship to him and his companions in childhood, and then continues that "We admired unweariedly how their vessel would float . . . it gave us confidence in the prevalence of the law of buoyancy, and we imagined to what infinite uses it might be put." (176)

Commerce provides Thoreau with another example of a social hierarchy:

If we may be pardoned the digression, who can help being affected at the thought of the very fine and slight, but positive relation, in which the inhabitants of some remote isle stand to the mysterious white mariner, the child of the sun? as if we were to have dealings with an animal higher in the scale of being than ourselves. (176-7)

There is an element of mutual support in this relation:

"It is a barely recognized fact to the natives that he exists and has his home far away somewhere, and is glad to buy their fresh fruits with his superfluous commodities." (177)

The image of the social hierarchy is further elaborated in an account of antagonism between Penacooks and Mohawks which is bred of suspicion and insecurity. As in his reference to the Indian who has "let the race die out in him," Thoreau reminds us that these tribes are now virtually extinct. He also extends this story of their mutual aggression inspired by fear with the comment "ubique gentium sunt?" (183) The tale is given in a letter in primitive spelling by a settler who heard it told. A Penacook, encountering strange Indians, spoke to the strangers "but he could not understand ther spech; and he having a conow ther in the river, he went to breck his conow that they might not have ani ues of it. In the mean time they shot about thirty guns at him." (183) The destruction of the canoe can perhaps be seen as symbolic for Thoreau of a loss of spiritual vigour and buoyancy because he refers to it again when he has finished telling the story, and remarks cheerfully that "we went unalarmed on our way without 'brecking' our 'conow'." (184) In the course of the story it becomes clear that in this New England social hierarchy a man's position depended on his strength in firearms. Thoreau reproduces a letter from a group of Penacooks imploring the white man for protection from other Indians; part of the letter runs "If your worship when please pray help me you no let Mohogs kill me at my

place at Malamake river . . . I will submit your worship and power, and now I want powder and such alminishon shot and guns." (184)

Thoreau then examines the killing of animals for food and thus develops the theme of ascendancy based on violence and, also, at the same time considers the topic of sustenance through food. The brothers decide that it is not right to support themselves by eating small animals.

Thoreau tells us that

The carcasses of some poor squirrels, however, the same that frisked so merrily in the morning . . . we abandoned in disgust, with tardy humanity, as too wretched a resource for any but starving men. It was to perpetuate the practice of a barbarous era. (187)

Later in the passage he shows an image of hunting in general and seems to extend his disapproval to all such ways of getting sustenance: "We remembered a picture of mankind in the hunter age, chasing hares down the mountains; O me miserable! Yet sheep and oxen are but larger squirrels, whose hides are saved and meat is salted." (187) Then he turns to Nature for guidance about food; he writes "there should always be some flowering and maturing of the fruits of nature in the cooking process." (187) He describes how parched corn expanded on his hearth into perfect blossoms and suggests "Perhaps some such visible blessing would always attend the simple and wholesome repast." (188)

The comparison of parched corn to flowers adds an image of buoyant lightness to the chapter and forms a link with a short essay on the poems of Anacreon which follows. One of the ways in which Thoreau attaches Anacreon to the theme of buoyancy is by imagery of lightness. He writes that Anacreon's odes have "an ethereal and evanescent beauty like summer evenings . . . which you must perceive with the flower of the mind." (189) He writes that they "charm us . . . by a certain flower-like beauty" and goes on "But perhaps their chief merit consists in the lightness and yet security of their tread." (189) To be buoyant, of course, is to be both light and secure.

The translations of Anacreon, which Thoreau made himself, provide examples of many facets of romantic love, another hierarchical relationship in the pattern already discussed. It is shown as a kind of slavery, though Anacreon does not ignore its delights. It is beauty that supports woman in a supreme position:

Nature has given horns
To bulls, and hoofs to horses,
Swiftness to hares,
To lions yawning teeth,
To fishes swimming,
To birds flight,
To men wisdom.
For woman she had nothing beside;
What then does she give? Beauty (192)

And the beautiful woman, we are told, conquers even iron and fire. One poem shows a young man defeated and wasted by love,

another shows a dove enslaved by it, another recalls the fearsome legend of Tereus' love for Philomela, two refer to the stings of love. (190-3) Thoreau himself sets an example for any man whose love or affection is despised by his charitable conduct towards Rice, his surly host in the mountains. After an evening in which he persists in returning civility for rudeness Thoreau feels that he observes at last in Rice's eye "a gleam of true hospitality and ancient civility, a beam of pure and even gentle humanity." (172) With the buoyancy and optimism which characterize the chapter Thoreau not only recognizes good qualities in Rice, but also responds by leaving for him a silver ninepence, which Thoreau presumably knew was a traditional love token.

Rice himself is supported by his firm belief that he is more fortunate than others. He is annoyed by Thoreau's suggestion that he must get fewer hours of daylight in his hollow and mountainous country. Thoreau relates that he "ventured to say, the days were longer there than where I lived, as I should find if I stayed; that in some way, I could not be expected to understand how, the sun came over the mountains half an hour earlier, and stayed half an hour later there than on the neighbouring plain. And more of like sort he said." (171)

An example of man supported by faith of a simple and practical kind is provided by a very old man whom Thoreau meets while he is still high in the mountains. The old man

Prayed aloud in the cool morning air, as if he had forgotten this exercise before, for his daily bread, and also that He who letteth his rain fall on the just and unjust, and without whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground, would not neglect the stranger (meaning me), and with even more direct and personal applications. (173)

But Thoreau also describes the old man's repellent manner towards himself and so shows that his was a religion of form, rather than of spirit, that served chiefly to make him feel secure about the details of his daily life. The reference to the fall of a sparrow helps to establish the kind of support the old man expected from his God.

Thoreau refers to a kind of support which is available to every man, whatever his attitude to religion, the support which is offered to all men by the order of Nature: "The routine which is in the sunshine and the finest days, as that which has conquered and prevailed, commends itself to us by its very antiquity and apparent solidity and necessity. Our weakness needs it and our strength uses it." (181) A serene existence, in which men seem almost to float along, is exhibited by the glimpses Thoreau gives us of New Englanders living "farmer lives, father and grandfather and great-grand-father, on and on and on without noise, keeping up tradition." (179) The tradition

that they support, and which in turn seems to support them in an untroubled life, is more serene and closer to Nature than those of feudalism and the other kinds of hierarchical order examined in this chapter.

An anecdote about a fur trader named Cromwell, prompted by the brothers' passing Cromwell's Falls, adds yet another illustration of a way in which men support themselves. Cromwell was suspected by the Indians of exploiting and cheating them; he made his escape, after burying his wealth to avoid their anger. While Cromwell's way of life in itself represents part of a social hierarchy, Thoreau seems to have included this story also on account of the buried treasure. He goes on to give an anecdote about a farmer who suddenly became well-to-do and was believed to have found Cromwell's buried treasure. Thoreau then makes plain his own faith in self-reliance as a sound way for a man to support himself: "The truth is, there is money buried everywhere, and you have only to get to work to find it."

(163)

A noontide digression about the adventures of Alexander Henry gives Thoreau an opportunity to draw the likeness of a fur trader after his own heart. Henry is buoyant and vigorous enough to withstand low temperatures and frontier dangers and his imagination is kept under control. "He has truth and moderation," Thoreau tells us,

"and is a traveller who does not exaggerate." (182)

Alexander Henry is also connected with commerce and traveling, of course, and so with the many images of boats in the chapter. Boats are, naturally enough, one of Thoreau's principal images for illustrating physical buoyancy. As the brothers pass some carpenters at work they observe that they are mending a scow, and this sight leads Thoreau's thoughts to the general subject of boatbuilding: "In the Adventures of Henry the fur-trader it is pleasant to read that when with his Indians he reached the shore of Ontario, they consumed two days in making two canoes of the bark of the elm tree." (180) Thoreau quotes some lines from Ovid about the making of the first ships. He even refers to Xenophon and claims that "A good share of our interest" in the story of his retreat "is in the manoeuvres to get the army safely over the rivers, whether on rafts of logs or fagots, or sheepskins blown up." (181)

As the chapter draws to a close Thoreau's narrative is both serene and enthusiastic in tone: "Thus we held on . . . up this broad river, smooth and placid, flowing over concealed rocks . . . eager to double some distant cape, to make some great bend as in the life of man, and see what new perspective would open." (194) At length they are tempted to disembark by the "unwearied, never-sinking shore." This might strike the reader as a strained attempt

to include yet another example of buoyancy; however, from Thoreau's point of view, the fact that the shore never sinks is indeed another instance of the all-pervading quality of the Unnamed. They take the path made by cattle "so judiciously chosen to overcome the difficulties of the way," as Thoreau writes (and so recalls his own assertions about the power of man to overcome difficulties). He describes all that they see with unflagging cheerfulness. He says that the fruit of the wild apple trees is "still green and crude" but adds that it "if not ripe, still was not poison." (195) At sundown they meet a young stone mason who provides another example of buoyancy. He helps them through the locks "with quiet enthusiasm." (196)

A number of images in "Tuesday" could be taken as parallels to the corresponding phase of the Creation in Genesis, that is, the creation of the firmament and dividing of the waters. Genesis says

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. (I vi-viii)

In the chapter Thoreau seems to use layers of cloud, haze, or fog to represent the firmament. He relates a "country of clouds" specifically to Paradise in a description of the sunrise which he saw after climbing Saddleback Mountain. The idea of separated waters is connected with this vision

of the firmament when Thoreau descends the mountain afterwards to find that it has been raining below. He tells us that "the inhabitants affirmed that it had been a cloudy and drizzling day wholly." (156) He describes the sunrise at length and makes his climb and the vision symbolic of human aspiration and buoyancy:

All around beneath me was spread . . . an undulating country of clouds. . . It was such a country as we might see in dreams, with all the delights of Paradise. . . The earth beneath . . . was not merely veiled to me, but it had passed away. . . As I had climbed above storm and cloud, so by successive days' journeys I might reach the region of eternal day. . . The inhabitants of earth behold commonly but the dark and shadowy under-side of heaven's pavement. (154-5)

He connects the climb further with successful aspiration when he writes of the eventual disappearance of the sunlit surface of the clouds: "alas, owing, as I think, to some unworthiness in myself . . . the heavenly pavement rose and embraced my wavering virtue." (156)

The circulation of water from ground level to rainclouds, or in terms of Genesis imagery from the waters below the firmament to the waters above it, is made symbolic of human aspiration by Thoreau. He first quotes from Belknap "the historian of this state" a description of the movement of vapours. Belknap says that "when risen to a certain height, they spread, meet, condense and are attracted to the mountains where they either distil in gentle dews, and replenish the springs, or descend in showers." (158)

Thoreau explains the symbolic significance of this movement for him as he returns to the narrative of the journey: "As the evaporations of the river feed thus these unsuspected springs which filter through its banks, so, perchance our aspirations fall back again in springs on the margin of life's stream to refresh and purify it." (159)

There are a number of references to the firmament of heaven, apart from those already mentioned. As Thoreau climbs the mountain he writes, "It seemed a road for the pilgrim to enter upon who would climb to the gates of heaven," (148) and later "It seemed as if he must be the most singular and heavenly-minded man whose dwelling stood highest up the valley." (149) A poem by Thoreau in this chapter conveys an image of waters above the firmament and of an Indian happy hunting ground up above; it begins

Where gleaming fields of haze
Meet the voyageur's gaze,
And above, the heated air
seems to make a river there

and goes on to describe "the spirits of the braves / Hovring o'er," (184-5) Another poem presents cloud as a kind of stratum of land, a firmament of the air: "Low-anchored cloud . . . Drifting meadow of the air,/ Where bloom the daisied banks and violets." (157) These images of floating water vapour have obvious relevance to the quality of buoyancy, and so do the images of water beneath a firm surface. We have already seen that Thoreau dug for water on the

mountain top and it immediately came welling up. He tells us later in the chapter that on Plum Island "you have only to dig a foot or two anywhere to come to fresh water." (165) When these images are taken in conjunction with references to springs of water in the chapter it can be seen that there are many parallels to the Genesis image of the water beneath the firmament.

As in previous chapters Thoreau includes in "Tuesday" references to other myths which complement the day's fable of creation according to Genesis. He associates his vision of heaven at sunrise with the classical myth of the "dazzling halls of Aurora," (155) the cloud palace of the goddess of the dawn. An elaborate sequence of images seems intended to invoke the legends of Mount Helicon. It was, of course, with this mountain that the Muses were most frequently associated; on its slope was found the fountain of inspiration named Hippocrene because it was created by the hoof of the flying horse Pegasus. The legend corresponds to the images of aspiration in the chapter because it recounts that Pegasus placed his hoof on Helicon to stop it rising up to heaven when inspired by the music of the Muses. The images in "Tuesday" that recall the fable of Hippocrene are worked into Thoreau's description of his ascent of Saddleback Mountain. As he climbs he alludes to the growth of mountain laurel, traditionally associated with Apollo and the Muses, and then he draws the reader's

attention to some hoofprints near the mountain top. Water has settled in them and Thoreau, who is thirsty, drinks it up; his description of the incident associates this stagnant liquid with the water of a spring; he writes "I lay down flat and drank these dry, one after another, a pure cold spring-like water." (151) Then, shortly afterwards, Thoreau recalls the groves of Greece when he speaks of an observatory built by students on the mountain top: "It were as well to be educated in the shadow of a mountain as in more classical shades." (154) While meditating on top of the mountain he thinks of the value of the written word and evokes recollections of Apollo again when he says "It seemed a divine invention, by which not mere shining coin, but shining and current thoughts could be brought up and left there." (153)

The epiphany of the day seems to take place, very fittingly, on the mountain top, when Thoreau sees the sunrise above the clouds. He writes "It was a favor for which to be forever silent to be shown this vision." (155) It is not a vision of static bliss; that would not be in keeping with the buoyant character of the day. When Thoreau, as already noted, imagines that by successive days' journeys he might reach the region of eternal day, he adds,

ay,
 Heaven itself shall slide,
 And roll away, like melting stars that glide
 Along their oily threads. (155)

Thoreau is buoyantly resolved to follow this ever-retreating goal despite discouragements. After the "heavenly pavement" has engulfed him, he writes, "In the preceding evening I had seen the summits of new and yet higher mountains, the Catskills, by which I might hope to climb to heaven again." (156) With this buoyant reference to heaven he once more links images from Genesis to the quality of the day.

WEDNESDAY: FREEDOM

The epigraph for "Wednesday" -- "Man is man's foe and destiny" -- can be understood in at least two ways in relation to freedom. It can mean that man is his own enemy and has his fate in his own hands, or that it is mankind rather than Nature, say, that threatens man, and that every man's fate is inseparable from that of mankind. In this chapter Thoreau examines freedom both as it is available to man in his social relationships and as it is offered to him to be exercised by his own choice within the harmony of Nature.

Thoreau establishes at the beginning of the chapter that to be alone, and so free of one's fellow men, is good. When the chapter starts the brothers discover that they have chanced to pitch their tent in the path taken by some stonemasons to their boat. Thoreau remarks that "This was the only time we were observed on our camping ground. Thus, far from the beaten highways and the dust and din of travel, we beheld the country privately, yet freely, and at our leisure." (198) He goes on to allude to the need to preserve privacy: "Other roads do some violence to Nature, and bring the traveller to stare at her, but the river steals into the scenery it traverses

without intrusion, silently creating and adorning it, and is as free to come and go as the zephyr." (198) Then he presents an image of a contemplative and self-sufficient bird, the smaller bittern, the genius of the shore, "bravely supporting its fate without sympathy from man."

There follows a sequence of images and thoughts summed up by Thoreau's remark "It might be seen by what tenure man held the earth." (201) Freedom, of course, becomes chaos when it does not rest on a framework of order; at this point in the chapter Thoreau seems to be concerned to show the limits of man's freedom within the order of Nature. Since the journey is taking the brothers past a brickworks, Thoreau tells us first about the enterprise and teamwork of the local farmers who produced the bricks from local clay. He says that "It was worth the while to see the place where Lowell was 'dug out'." (200) Man has tenure of the earth to the extent that he is able to use it in this way; the next paragraph shows a different aspect of his tenure. Thoreau notes that they are passing the graves of some aborigines and dwells briefly on the way in which man's body returns to the earth. These graves remind him that through man's agency a whole race of men has been deprived of its tenure of this land:

The land still bears this scar here, and time is slowly crumbling the bones of a race . . . the undying race of reed-birds still rustles through the withering grass. But these bones rustle not. These mouldering elements are

slowly preparing for another metamorphosis, to serve new masters, and what was the Indians will ere long be the white man's sinew. (200)

Man, in other words, is free to destroy a whole race of men, but not to destroy the whole economy of Nature.

Another race of men is created from the bones of the old by the natural process of metamorphosis.

The power of man over his environment is indicated in Thoreau's description of the way in which the brothers lock themselves through a series of falls: "Taking advantage of the eddy, we were sometimes floated up to the locks almost in the face of the falls; and by the same cause, any floating timber was carried round in a circle and repeatedly drawn into the rapids before it finally went down the stream." (201) The difference between men, who can take advantage of the eddy, and helplessly floating timber seems an indication of the extent to which man is relatively free from the pressures of his environment.

That man is, nevertheless, very vulnerable, is indicated in a long description of watching vessels from a vantage point on Staten Island that Thoreau next introduces into the chapter. He makes a digression to tell of how he has seen through his glass the newsman gathering momentous tidings from the captain of an incoming vessel, "which no American ear had ever heard, that Asia, Africa, Europe -- were all sunk." (202) Then Thoreau writes about vessels

putting out to sea "all counting on lucky voyages, but each time some of the number, no doubt, destined to go to Davy's locker." (202) A series of images then graphically shows sudden changes in life:

I have stood upon the same hilltop when a thunder shower, rolling down . . . passed over the island, deluging the land: and when it had suddenly left us in sunshine, have seen it overtake successively, with its huge shadow and dark, descending wall of rain, the vessels in the bay. Their bright sails were suddenly drooping . . . while still far beyond them . . . gleamed the sunny sails of those vessels which the storm had not yet reached. . . I have seen a field of trembling silvery light far out on the sea, the reflection of the moonlight from the ocean . . . and sometimes a dark speck in its midst where some fortunate vessel was pursuing its happy voyage by night. (203)

It seems that the adventurous are likely to be exposed to the vagaries of fortune. Thoreau then presents a picture of the carefree life of those who stay at home in New England. He writes "I have not read of any Arcadian life which surpasses the actual luxury and serenity of these New England dwellings" (204) in his description of the homes of the lockmen.

In a digression on Greece and Rome Thoreau again shows that there is more scope for liberty in America than abroad. He disagrees with the view that Rome and Greece represented a free way of life: "Some minds are as little logical or argumentative as nature; . . . If a historical question arises, they cause the tombs to be opened." (211-2)

He then proceeds to examine exhumed evidence of the era of Greece and Rome, and suggests that Rome's fame depends upon her conquests rather than upon her traditions of freedom and democracy:

The oft-repeated Roman story is written in still legible characters in every quarter of the Old World, and but to-day, perchance, a new coin is dug up whose inscription repeats and confirms their fame. Some 'Judaea Capta' with a woman mourning under a palm tree with silent argument and demonstration confirms the pages of history. (211)

What Thoreau finds recorded of Greece is valour and intestine strife. He mentions a dispute about the ownership of Salamis and the circular marks on the walls of the temple of Minerva made by shields taken from the enemy in the Persian war. Then he claims that "Our own country furnishes antiquities as ancient and durable and useful as any." (212) It is the age old features of the wilderness of which he is thinking; he writes that America has "rocks at least as well covered with lichens, and a soil which, if it is virgin, is but virgin mould, the very dust of nature." (212) He does not extoll the works of man in America that tend to restrict the freedom of the wilderness; he writes "The walls that fence our fields, as well as modern Rome, and not less the Parthenon itself, are all built of ruins." (212) He declares his independence of tradition and asserts his freedom to build a better life in his own country:

What though the traveller tell us of the ruins of Egypt, are we so sick or idle, that we must sacrifice our America and today to some man's ill-remembered and indolent story. . . Carnac! here is Carnac for me. I behold the columns of a larger and purer temple. (213)

Thoreau draws upon Indian tradition for an illustration of creative freedom. He tells us about the famous Sachem Pasaconaway who "was reputed a wise man and a powwow, and restrained his people from going to war with the English." (213) It was believed that "he could make water burn, rocks move, and trees dance, and metamorphose himself into a flaming man; that in winter he could raise a green leaf out of the ashes of a dry one, and produce a living snake from the skin of a dead one, and many similar miracles." (213)

Man's freedom to choose freedom is exemplified by the decision of Pasaconaway and later of his son, Wannalancet, to avoid fighting with the English. Thoreau tells next an anecdote of Wannalancet, who, when Philip's war broke out, withdrew his followers from the scene of the fighting.

On his return afterwards, he visited the minister of Chelmsford, and, as is stated in the history of that town, 'wished to know whether Chelmsford had suffered much during the war; and being informed that it had not, and that God should be thanked for it, Wannalancet replied "Me next".' (214)

The Indian apparently believed that it is man who is man's foe and can, to some extent, determine his destiny. Talking of destiny later in the chapter Thoreau demonstrates the

attitude which enables man to convert all that happens to him into a blessing when he writes "I have found all things thus far, persons and inanimate matter, elements and seasons, strangely adapted to my resources." (284)

The essay on Friendship, which takes up a large part of the chapter, can also be read as an essay on freedom in personal relationships. In it Thoreau develops the idea of an ideal relationship which allows each individual freedom to love and freedom to be himself. He writes "Friendship is, at any rate, a relation of perfect equality . . . the nobleman can never have a friend among his retainers, nor the king among his subjects." (229) He stresses the free character of the very idea of Friendship: "There is on the earth no institution which Friendship has established; it is not taught by any religion; no scripture contains its maxims." (223) Friendship even liberates man from the practice of common faults: "All the abuses which are the object of reform with the philanthropist, the statesman and the housekeeper are unconsciously amended in the intercourse of friends." The true friend will claim his freedom to love as a right: "'I never asked thy leave to let me love thee, -- I have a right'." (228) At the same time he will say to his friend "'Consent only to be what you are. I alone will never stand in your way'." (228) Thoreau repeatedly emphasizes the free and independent

character of friendship itself. He writes "Friendship is not so kind as has been imagined. . . We may call it an essentially heathenish intercourse, free and irresponsible in its nature, and practising all the virtues gratuitously."

(233) With the word gratuitous, of course, Thoreau adds another synonym for freedom. In one of the poems included in the essay he writes "My love must be as free / As is the eagle's wing" and begs that his friend "Be not the fowler's net / Which stays my flight." (236)

In a final section of the essay Thoreau addresses his Acquaintances and also "Strangers and Enemies." He advocates freedom in these relationships, too; using a free and easy manner appropriate to the quality of the day he urges them to feel free to make use of him.

Greeting. My most serene and irresponsible neighbours let us see that we have the whole advantage of each other; we will be useful, at least, if not admirable, to one another. . . Strike then boldly at head or heart or any vital part. Depend upon it, the timber is well seasoned and tough, and will bear rough usage. . . Use me then, for I am useful in my way. (241)

Thoreau also reflects upon the freedom of man's spirit in relation to his body. He shows that he thinks of soul and body as closely linked when he discusses the narrow [?]sheres in which priests and physicians practice. He asks "Why is it that the priest is never called to consult with the physician? Is it because men believe practically that matter is independent of spirit? . . .

There is need of a physician who shall minister to both soul and body at once, that is, to man." (218) Elsewhere in this chapter Thoreau implies that man does have power to free his spirit to some degree from corporeal ties:

This world is but canvas to our imaginations. I see men with infinite pains endeavouring to realize to their bodies, what I, with at least equal pains, would realize to my imagination, -- its capacities; for certainly there is a life of the mind above the wants of the body and independent of it. (246)

Although a large part of the chapter consists of reflections and argument, Thoreau does contrive to find images related to freedom along the shores of the river as they travel. An encounter with "a little flaxen-headed boy" yields some illustrations of lack of freedom; as in other chapters, we are shown that the quality of the day sometimes functions imperfectly in man. The little boy is refused leave to join the brothers on their voyage. Thoreau writes

He examined, at first from the top of the bank, our boat and furniture, with sparkling eyes, and wished himself already his own man. He was a lively and interesting boy, and we should have been glad to ship him; but Nathan was still his father's boy, and had not come to years of discretion. (244)

Nathan does not yet have freedom of choice; his freedom seems to be curtailed partly by reason of possessiveness on the part of his father who is revealed to us as a man of property. "He was a Methodist man, who . . . held a property in his melons." (245) The description of this

man recalls Emerson's statement that "the reliance on property, including the reliance on governments who protect it, is the want of self-reliance."³⁰ We are told that Nathan's father held his property "by the encouragement of distant political organisations and by his own tenacity." (245) His life does not seem to be that of a free man. He anxiously defends his property with trip wire and gun and sometimes sits up at night watching for thieves. Thoreau tells us "That night especially thieves were to be expected, from rumors in the atmosphere, and the priming was not wet." (245) Nathan's father is not his own man either, but instead a slave to his property.

The Genesis verses for Wednesday contain images of two kinds which appear in Thoreau's "Wednesday" chapter and function also as symbols of certain kinds of freedom. The relevant verses for the two image patterns are:

And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so . . . and God saw that it was good. (I ix-xii)

Thoreau includes in the chapter imagery of islands, continents and oceans to reflect the earlier part of this

³⁰Ralph Waldo Emerson, Works Centenary edition 1903-4, II, 87.

Genesis passage; he also uses a pattern of plant and seed imagery to link together some of his material. Islands help Thoreau to illustrate freedom in the form of independence; the idea of "kind" or species also seems to illustrate independence.

Much of the imagery of the earth being gathered together and freed from the waters is provided by allusions to myths and legends which resemble the Genesis myth; as in previous chapters Thoreau finds similar fables in other cultures. In his description of the smaller bittern at the beginning of the chapter Thoreau refers to a concept of creation put forward by a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher. He writes of the bittern that "It is a bird of the oldest Thalesian school, and no doubt believes in the priority of water to the other elements." (199) Genesis also implies the priority of water to the other elements, at least in so far as the creation of the earth is concerned. An allusion to the emergence of the earth from water is made in a later comment by Thoreau on the bittern: "There is something venerable in this melancholy and contemplative race of birds which may have trodden the earth while it was yet in a slimy and imperfect state." (199)

Fables taken from Pindar, as noted earlier, also show land emerging from waters. Thoreau introduces these fables with a passage of narrative which contains parallel imagery:

We passed a large and densely wooded island this forenoon . . . an island always pleases my imagination, even the smallest, as a small continent and integral part of the globe. . . By what a delicate and far-stretched contribution every island is made! What an enterprise of Nature thus to lay the foundations of and to build up the future continent, of golden and silver sands and the ruins of forests. (205-6)

The first passage from Pindar is about the creation of an island. It tells how Triton presents a clod to Euphemus, one of the Argonauts, as they are about to return home. The poet writes "But I hear it sinking from the deck, / Go with the sea brine . . . At evening, accompanying the watery sea . . . And now in this island the imperishable seed of spacious Libya / Is spilled before its hour." (206) The reference to a seed echoes the plant and fruit imagery of Genesis for the day.

Images of grassy islands could be regarded as reflections of the bringing forth of grass by the earth in Genesis. Thoreau refers to "a handsome green islet" (199) that they pass in the middle of the stream near Bedford, and then writes in a later passage that "Even a bare grassy isle, which I can see entirely over at a glance, has some undefined and mysterious charm for me." (205) A second fable by Pindar shows the creation of another island and mentions the good grazing upon it. The poet tells how the sun looked down into the sea one day and saw the island of Rhodes "springing up from the bottom, / Capable of feeding many men, and suitable for flocks." (206) In his poem

"The Atlantides" Thoreau uses imagery that seems to reflect the Genesis verses and links them to his idea of the elusive character of ideal friendship:

The smothered streams of love, which flow
More bright than Phlegethon, more low,
Island us ever, like the sea,
In an Atlantic mystery. (222)

He continues to use island imagery as he writes "Columbus has sailed westwards of these isles by the mariner's compass, but neither he nor his successors have found them. We are no nearer than Plato was." (222)

The reference to the Atlantic in these verses is one of a number connected with oceans which appear to be parallels to the words of Genesis for the day. Thoreau introduces a passage about ocean travel with a sentence which relates his digression to the condition of the whole earth: "For my part, but for the geographers, I should hardly have known how large a portion of our globe is water." (201) The description of ships setting out on ocean voyages, which has already been discussed as part of the picture of the limitations of man's freedom, includes a reference to the separation of things according to kind. Thoreau writes of the boats which he is watching from the hilltop: "I could no longer class them all under the several heads of ships, barks, brigs, schooners and sloops, but most were faint generic vessels only." (202)

Imagery of trees bringing forth fruit after their kind appears in a passage in which Thoreau makes a direct reference to myths of their creation. It occurs in the digression in which he claims that America's wilderness is a better heritage than the antiquities of Rome and Greece:

There are the red-maple and birchen leaves, old runes which are not yet deciphered; catkins, pine-cones, vines, oak-leaves and acorns; the very things themselves, and not their forms in stone. . . And even to this current summer there has come down tradition of a hoary-headed master of all art, who once filled every field and grove with statues and god-like architecture, of every design which Greece has lately copied. (212)

An explicit reference to the Bible is made in a passage about various kinds of herbs. Thoreau has been led into a digression by the associations of a spot where an old woman, seeking pennyroyal, found an antique kettle:

But we were most interested to hear of the pennyroyal; it is soothing to be reminded that wild nature produces anything ready for the use of man. Men know that something is good. One says that it is yellow-dock, another that it is bitter-sweet, another that it is slippery-elm bark, burdock, catnip, calamint, elicampane, thoroughwort or pennyroyal. . . There is no kind of herb, but somebody or other says that it is good. I am very glad to hear it. It reminds me of the first chapter of Genesis. (217)

After having alluded in this way to the words "And God saw that it was good" so frequently repeated in the fable of the Creation, Thoreau complains about the narrow attitudes that men display to the curing of bodies and souls; he reminds us that all things are good, but we need to take a broad view to understand what each thing is good for as part of the whole good of Creation. Men are

free to enjoy the benefits of Nature in proportion to their understanding of her whole economy. He complains that "Since all things are good, men fail at last to distinguish which is the bane, and which the antidote." (217)

Thoreau also employs herbs as images when he is asking his acquaintances to make free use of him; again he stresses the special ways in which different things may be good:

Use me then, for I am useful in my way, and stand up as one of many petitioners, from toadstool and henbane up to dahlia and violet, supplicating to be put to my use, if by any means ye may find me serviceable; whether for a medicated drink or bath, as balm and lavender; or for fragrance, as verbena and geranium; or for sight, as cactus; or for thoughts as pansy. (242)

Thoreau reflects the Genesis image of the herb yielding seed after his kind in the poem "Lately, alas, I knew a gentle boy" which he includes in the essay on friendship. The image helps to show that true friendship is not dependent on proximity; now that Thoreau is separated from the boy he regrets that he never told his friend of his admiration, but by the end of the poem he realizes that what was both essential to his friend and of true value to Thoreau remains with him. He first writes "I quite forgot my homage to confess. . . Eternity may not the chance repeat,/ But must I tread my single way alone . . . Is't then too late the damage to repair'" (221) Then he answers his own question and introduces an image of a seed to show that the

personality of his friend, that part of him which distinguishes him according to the kind of person he was, remains in the possession of Thoreau: "Distance, forsooth, from my weak grasp hath reft / The empty husk, and clutched the useless tare, / But in my hands the wheat and kernel left." (221) Friendship is free of the restraint of circumstance.

When the brothers visit the "Methodist man" fruit and seed imagery is used to suggest the wider view that embraces the good that permeates all Nature. The brothers suggest "melon-seeds of new varieties and fruit of foreign flavor to be added to his stock." (245) When Thoreau describes this man's farm he refers to the universal beneficence of Nature and writes "Strawberries and melons grow as well in one man's garden as another's." (245)

The images that reflect the verses of Genesis for the day, whether of island, herb, or species of seed are all used to illustrate Thoreau's conception of freedom as the independence of individual creatures within the limits set by universal, beneficent order. The epiphany of the day comes to Thoreau in a dream in which justice is done to him for the suspicions of a friend; this makes him realize afresh that "we bless and curse ourselves." (250) It is, perhaps, another way of expressing the meaning of the epigraph to the chapter: "Man is man's foe and destiny."

By his stress on self-reliance and on the freedom that is available to man if he understands the natural world in which he must exist, Thoreau suggests that man can enjoy freedom, and the security which is an essential part of that freedom, within the harmony of nature, in which, if properly understood, all things are good.

THURSDAY: FLEXIBILITY

In Thoreau's list of qualities of the Unnamed freedom is followed by flexibility and the "Thursday" chapter of the Week illustrates adaptability within an unchanging framework of Nature. The verses from Emerson that form the epigraph to the chapter show man fully at home in Nature and adapting himself to his environment. Emerson writes "Where darkness found him he lay glad at night; / There the red morning touched him with its light . . . Go where he will the wise man is at home." (252) Thoreau makes clear in the chapter that flexibility should be combined with a firm confronting of reality and purposeful mental travelling; other lines of the epigraph can be read as an expression of these thoughts: "Where his clear spirit leads him, there's his road, / By God's own light illumined and foreshowed." (252)

A passage that occurs early in the chapter indicates the limits of flexibility while it gives examples of the quality. Thoreau writes "We do not avoid evil by fleeing before it, but by rising above or diving below its plane; as the worm escapes drought and frost by boring a few inches deeper." (257) The idea of flexibility is illustrated by suggestions of alternative choices

as the passage continues:

The frontiers are not east or west, north or south, but wherever a man fronts a fact, though that fact be his neighbour, there is an unsettled wilderness between him and Canada, between him and the setting sun, or, farther still, between him and it. Let him build himself a log-house with the bark on where he is, fronting IT, and wage there an Old French War for seven or seventy years, with Indians and Rangers or whatever else may come between him and the reality. (257-8)

In a similar vein Thoreau writes about travelling; he shows how a resourceful and adaptable man can make a living in many ways while on the road. He goes on to show that he is chiefly thinking of mental travelling; he writes "I mean those to whom travelling is life for the legs, and death too, at last. The traveller must be born again on the road, and earn a passport from the elements, the principal powers that be for him." (259-60)

The kind of adaptability that earns man a passport from the elements is illustrated at the beginning of the chapter. Unable to travel further by boat, the brothers adapt themselves to their situation and continue their journey on foot, and Thoreau tells us how they proceeded: "On foot, however, we continued up along the bank, feeling our way with a stick through the showery and foggy day, and climbing over the slippery logs in our path." (253)

Thoreau prescribes a complete acceptance of natural conditions. He begins by suggesting that "when compelled by a shower to take shelter under a tree we may improve that

opportunity for a more minute inspection of Nature's works," (254) but then goes on to suggest that rain should not merely be tolerated but rather should be welcomed:

"Surely one may as profitably be soaked in the juices of a swamp for one day as pick his way dry-shod over sand.

Cold and damp, -- are they not as rich experience as warmth and dryness?" (254) Later in the chapter he points out that the forest is "to the white man a drear and howling wilderness, but to the Indian a home, adapted to his nature, and cheerful as the smile of the Great Spirit."

(274)

A flock of sheep gives Thoreau an image which expresses flexibility both in the sense of adaptability and of docility at the start of the chapter. The sheep come rushing down towards the brothers, but are struck with astonishment at the sight of their tent: "the whole flock stood stock-still endeavouring to solve the mystery in their sheepish brains. At length concluding that it boded no mischief to them, they spread themselves quietly over the field." (253) The image of sheep is taken up again in Thoreau's description of a young soldier, encountered in the woods, whose military bearing becomes ludicrously modified: "he skulked past as if he were driving his father's sheep under a sword-proof helmet." (265) The soldier presents a striking image of pliability as he shivers like a reed.

We are told that his legs wavered so that "His greaves chafed and wrestled with one another." (266) Yet adaptability of a more robust type is indicated also in the description: "But he did get by . . . and lived to fight another day." (266)

The idea of flexibility is introduced even into a description of the Pinnacle, a hill that the brothers pass on their journey. Thoreau seems to go out of his way to say that "As Uncannunuc Mountain is perhaps the best point from which to view the valley of the Merrimack, so this hill affords the best view of the river itself." (256) Thoreau thus recommends a flexible attitude toward viewing the landscape so as to gain full advantage from what Nature has to offer. Settlers provide him with examples of resourceful adaptability; a sentence appended to an anecdote about pioneering exploits tells us that "The crank of the first saw-mill was manufactured in Haverhill, and carried to Penacook on a horse." (257)

Thoreau includes a digression on Persius to discuss matters related to the quality of the day. He introduces the digression with a reference to the adaptable mood of the brothers; he seems to regard Persius as an inferior author but is prepared to consider him here; as he says, "Walking had given us an appetite even for the least palatable and nutritious food." (260) Satire, which is Persius'

genre, seems to be an example of misdirected flexibility to Thoreau. He writes "Truth never turns to rebuke falsehood; her own straightforwardness is the severest correction." (261) The kind of flexibility that he recommends in this passage is that of development. He says that a Juvenal or a Persius "stand but just outside the faults they condemn, and so are concerned rather about the monster which they have escaped than the fair prospect before them. Let them live on an age and they will have travelled out of his shadow and reach." (261) We can see in this context that travelling is a symbol of flexibility when it represents mental or spiritual development. Thoreau refers to this type of flexibility when he speaks of the traveller being "born again on the road." The development of genius is also discussed in the digression on Persius: "A sort of necessary order in the development of Genius is, first, Complaint; second, Plaint; third, Love." (262) Thoreau goes on to say that "Complaint, which is the condition of Persius, lies not in the province of poetry," but he persists in suggesting the prospect of improvement; he continues, "Erelong the enjoyment of a superior good would have changed his disgust into regret." (262)

The topic of Persius also allows Thoreau to discuss the flexibility of language. He writes of Persius

flexibility. They travel "in fair days and foul," "by the side and o'er the brows of hoar hills and mountains, across the stumpy, rocky, forested, and bepastured country." (266)

Thoreau also conveys the adaptability and resource of Nature; he reflects that "In the wildest nature there is not only the material of the most cultivated life, but a greater refinement than is ever attained by man. There is papyrus by the river side and rushes for light, and the goose only flies overhead, ages before the studious are born or letters invented." (268) The reference to invention is one of several allusions to the power of men to cooperate with Nature in the work of moulding or developing the possibilities of material. Thoreau sees the relationship between Art and Nature as itself a flexible one: "A perfect work of art would also be wild or natural in a good sense. Man tames Nature only that he may at last make her more free even than he found her." (268) In a study of Goethe Thoreau returns again to the theme that creativity is necessarily related to the order of Nature. He begins "We can never safely exceed the actual facts in our narratives. Of pure invention, such as some suppose, there is no instance." (276) He says that Goethe is faithful to Nature in his descriptions, but "his whole education and life were those of the artist. . . Nature is hindered in

his education though she prevails at last in making an unusually catholic impression on the boy." (277) Thoreau explains that the "man of Genius" acts in harmony with the creative work of Nature, however original he may appear to be to his fellow men:

The Man of Genius, referred to mankind, is an originator, an inspired or demonic man, who produces a perfect work in obedience to laws yet unexplored. The Artist is he who detects and applies the law from observation of the works of Genius, whether of man or Nature. (278)

To these statements Thoreau adds a comment which admits all men to a share in the qualities of the creative spirit of the universe. "There has been no man of pure Genius"; he writes, "as there has been none wholly destitute of Genius." (278)

Man's power to mould his environment, one of the important aspects of the quality of flexibility as Thoreau presents it in this chapter, is also shown in relation to the concept of time. After telling an anecdote about adventures that took place a hundred and forty-two years before the brothers made their voyage (271), Thoreau says, "But its antiquity is not the less great for that, for we do not regulate our historical time by the English standard, nor the English by the Roman, nor the Roman by the Greek." (274-5) Our idea of time depends in part on our imagination; Thoreau writes, "On beholding an old picture of Concord, as it appeared but seventy-five years ago, with a

fair prospect and a light on trees and river . . . I find that I had not thought the sun shone in those days or that men lived in broad daylight then." (275) He shows how duration of time can seem longer or shorter according to how we imagine it. First he demonstrates how long it can seem:

The age of the world is great enough for our imaginations, even according to the Mosaic account. . . From Adam and Eve at one leap sheer down to the deluge, and then through the ancient monarchies, through babylon and Thebes, Brahma and Abraham, to Greece and the Argonauts; whence we might start again with Orpheus and the Trojan war . . . and after a breathing space at the building of Rome, continue our journey down through Odin and Christ to -- America. It is a wearisome while. (275)

Then he sets about the task of showing how short the same period of time can be made to seem:

And yet the lives of but sixty old women, such as live under the hill, say of a century each, strung together, are sufficient to reach over the whole ground. Taking hold of hands they would span the interval from Eve to my own mother. A respectable tea-party merely, -- whose gossip would be Universal History. (276)

As he continues the passage he ranges back in time even more rapidly than he has just skimmed forward to the present, and coaxes our imagination to conceive of time as completely subject to its power:

The fourth old woman from myself suckled Columbus, -- the ninth was nurse to the Norman Conqueror, -- the nineteenth was the Virgin Mary, -- the twenty-fourth the Cumaean Sibyl, -- the thirtieth was at the Trojan War and Helen her name, -- the thirty-eighth was Queen Semiramis, -- the sixtieth was Eve the mother of mankind. So much for the
 'Old woman that lives under the hill,
 And if she's not gone she lives there still.'

It will not take a very great-granddaughter of hers to be in at the death of Time. (276)

This elaborate demonstration of the flexibility of time suggests that Time is not a fact to be "fronted," not part of the unchanging order of Nature.

A succession of images of pliability in the chapter is initiated by the sight of rippling water.

Thoreau remarks that

The forms of beauty fall naturally round the path of him who is in the performance of his proper work; as the curled shavings drop from the plane and borings cluster round the auger. Undulation is the gentlest and most ideal of motions . . . the two waving lines which represent the flight of birds appear to have been copied from the ripple. (269)

Other images of flowing movement occur in a lively description at the end of the chapter. Thoreau relates how the wind

breathed harder than usual, flapping the curtains of the tent and causing its cords to vibrate . . . we heard the river whirling and sucking . . . sometimes rippling louder than usual and again its mighty current making only a slight, limpid, trickling sound . . . and then the wind would lull and die away, and we like it fell asleep again. (282)

In this passage Thoreau has added to images of rippling movement the flexible rise and fall of volume and intensity.

Thoreau uses images that reflect the Thursday of Creation in Genesis to show regular fluctuations taking place in the order of Nature; Thursday is the phase when "God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to

divide the day from the night." The lights were to be "for signs and for seasons and for days and for years"; it is explained that the lights were "to give light upon the earth," and we are told that "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also." (I xiv-xvi) These four aspects of creation are all reflected in the imagery of the "Thursday" chapter in the Week.

Lines from the epigraph to the chapter, already discussed, speak of the beneficent character of the lights of heaven. Emerson writes of man "By God's own light illumined and foreshowed." (252) In the first paragraph of the chapter Thoreau refers to the rainbow, familiar sign in the heavens of approaching fair weather, when he writes of "the cheery faith" of a bird whose persistent trilling in the rain is a substitute for "a bow in the heavens." (252) The cycles of night and day are discussed in a lengthy passage and a poem; Thoreau has been writing of "the scheme of Nature" to which man, often unconsciously, adapts himself:

Her undertakings are secure and never fail. If I were awakened from a deep sleep, I should know which side of the meridian the sun might be by the aspect of nature. . . The landscape contains a thousand dials which indicate the natural divisions of time, the shadows of a thousand styles point to the hour.

Not only o'er the dial's face,
 This silent phantom day by day,
 With slow unseen, unceasing pace
 Steals moments, months and years away. (271)

He measures the passing of days by suns in the chapter when he writes that "Suns rose and set and found us still on the dank forest path." (265) He unites the changing play of light and shade, day and darkness with an unfailing cyclical rhythm:

It is almost the only game which the trees play at, this tit-for-tat, now this side in the sun, now that, the drama of the day. In deep ravines Night forwardly plants her foot even at noonday, and as Day retreats she steps into his trenches. (271)

Time in Nature, as shown in these images, is a pattern of cycles eternally repeated, not the chronological or linear concept of time which, as we have seen, Thoreau treats as simply a construct of the human imagination.

As a supplementary myth for this phase of Creation Thoreau apparently includes a New England version of the legend of Chronos. He tells in careful detail the story of Hannah Dustan which offers several parallels to the fable. It will be recalled that seven of the children of Gaea, Cronos' mother, were banished from her sight; they included Uranus, who was also her husband and father of the others, and who had been killed and castrated by Cronos. Thoreau records that Hannah had seen "her seven elder children flee with their father." (272) She had also "seen her infant's

brains dashed out against an apple tree"; the Uranus was Gaea's infant as well as her husband, according to the myth. Gaea was later party to a plot to destroy Cronos and the Titans; ten Titans were banished to the underworld with the help of Zeus, a member of the new generation of Olympians. Through the agency of Hannah and "an English boy" ten Indians were killed (and Thoreau is careful to tell us twice how many Indians there were). One of the Titans, Hyperion, escaped and with him went Mnemosyne, memory, who was wounded. Thoreau tells us that Hannah and the boy killed all the Indians "excepting one favourite boy and a squaw who fled wounded with him into the woods." (272) After the defeat of the Titans Gaea's other children were released from the underworld where they had been imprisoned, except for Uranus, who was dead. Thoreau tells us that "the family of Hannah Dustan all assembled alive once more, except the infant whose brains were dashed out against the apple tree." (274) This legend can be related to the Thursday of Creation in Genesis in two ways: it records the beginning of time with the commencement of the rule of Cronos; also, it refers to Hyperion, the mythical father of the sun and moon.

The epiphany of the day comes to Thoreau as they sail along and gives him insight into the fluid motions of life and the flow of metamorphosis in Nature. It also

corresponds to Genesis in revealing a universe designed to benefit man; lights, signs and stars are said in Genesis to have been placed for the sake of the earth; Thoreau comes to realise that "Let us wander where we will, the universe is built round about us." (280) He writes of his moment of revelation that

All things seemed with us to flow . . . the hardest material seemed to obey the same law with the most fluid, and so indeed in the long run it does. Trees were but rivers of sap and woody fibre, flowing from the atmosphere, and emptying into the earth by their trunks, as their roots flowed upward to the surface. And in the heavens there were rivers of stars, and milky-ways, already beginning to gleam and ripple over our heads. There were rivers of rock on the surface of the earth, and rivers of ore in its bowels, and our thoughts flowed and circulated, and this portion of time was but the current hour. (280)

After this vision of universal flexibility Thoreau reminds us again of the verses of Genesis for the day when he writes "The stars so low there seem loath to depart, but by a circuitous path to be remembering me, and returning on their steps." (281)

FRIDAY: VARIETY

In the final chapter of the Week Thoreau offers many kinds of evidence of the rich variety of life; he also keeps in mind, however, the words of Emerson about the unity of Nature: "Herein is especially apprehended the unity of Nature, -- the unity in variety, -- which meets us everywhere."³¹ As in the other chapters, we are frequently reminded in "Friday" of the conservatism of the universe.

The first of the two epigraphs for "Friday" shows a boatman steadfastly pursuing his course through a "watry wilderness," (283) and it is related to passages in the chapter which urge man to realize the power of his imagination to bring order to the variety of life about him; it also seems intended to draw attention to ideas of progress that are discussed. The second quotation, "Summer's robe grows / Dusky, and like an oft-dyed garment shows," (283) contains the idea of change, one of the meanings of variety; it also matches the descriptions of early autumn in the chapter.

"Friday" begins with a change in the weather and a change in the season. Thoreau writes "We heard the sigh

³¹Ralph Waldo Emerson Works (Centenary edition) I, 43.

of the first autumnal wind, and even the water had acquired a grayer hue. The sumach, grape, and maple were already changed and the milkweed had turned to a rich deep yellow." (284) The list of varieties of plants in this quotation is typical of the chapter, in which Thoreau includes many references to varieties of birds as well. At this point in the narrative he introduces a description of the diversity of animals and of entertainments at the annual Cattle Show. He says, however, that "They may bring their fattest cattle and richest fruits to the fair, but they are all eclipsed by the show of men." (286) Thoreau discusses the varieties of men; he writes that there are many crooked and crabbed specimens among them, but "they furnish the stocks of sweet and thrifty fruits still. Thus is nature recruited from age to age, while the fair and palatable varieties die out and have their period." (287) Then he reminds us of the unity which embraces all varieties of men: "This is that mankind. How cheap must be the material of which so many men are made." (287)

As Thoreau continues the narrative of the journey he mentions changes that are taking place both around them and in the direction of their thoughts: "The current of our thoughts made as sudden bends as the river, which was continually opening new prospects to the east or south." (287)

The landscape is changed in appearance for them because they are now approaching it from a different direction: "Sitting with our faces now upstream, we studied the landscape by degrees, as one unrolls a map, rock, tree, house hill and meadow assuming new and varying positions as wind and water shifted the scene and there was variety enough for our entertainment in the metamorphosis of the simplest objects." (295) Yet in all the enjoyment of change and variety Thoreau still feels the need for stability: "When my thoughts are sensible of change, I love to see and sit on rocks which I have known, and pry into their moss, and see unchangeableness so established. I not yet gray on rocks forever gray, I no longer green under the evergreens." (297) In this way he regains a sense of the unity of Nature that lies beneath the superficial changes.

In this chapter Thoreau takes up again the topic of the man of genius, but now with emphasis on the power of his vision to bring unity in variety: "The poet will write for his peers alone. He will remember only that he saw truth and beauty from his position, and expect the time when a vision as broad shall overlook the same field as freely." (289) He continues:

Poetry is a communication from our home and solitude addressed to all Intelligence. . . . Knowing this we may understand those sonnets said to be addressed to particular persons, or 'To a Mistress's Eyebrow.' Let none feel flattered by them. (289)

An example of universality is provided by Ossian in an essay about him which Thoreau includes in this chapter. Thoreau says "Ossian reminds us of the most refined and rudest eras. . . In his poetry . . . only the simplest and most enduring features of humanity are seen." (291) Ossian's heroes provide an image of unity in variety: "Their joy and their sorrow are made of one stuff, like rain and snow, the rainbow and the mist." (294)

Chaucer supplies for Thoreau other images of unity in variety. He describes the variety of English poetry as "an archipelago," (312) and then says that Chaucer is the "father of English poetry" and praises him for his broad humanity (312): "We can expand at last in his breadth." (314) He also speaks of Chaucer's role in establishing English as a literary language, and his attitude to the variety of tongues. He quotes from Chaucer: "let then clerkes enditen in Latin . . . and lette Frenchmen in their Frenche also enditen their queinte termes . . . and let us shewe our fantasies in soche wordes as we lerneden of our dames tongue." (313) Thoreau reminds us that Chaucer held that any language would serve to teach truth "'right as divers pathes leaden diversfolke the right waye to Rome'." (313) Again we are given an image of unity which lies beneath difference.

Thoreau suggests that the choicest variety is offered by the life of the mind and spirit. He tells us that "He is the rich man, and enjoys the fruits of riches, who summer and winter forever can find delight in his own thoughts." (297) There is an endless variety of observations to be made; "If there is nothing new on the earth, still the traveller always has a resource in the skies. They are constantly turning a new page to view." (304) Furthermore, "an always unexplored and infinite region makes off on every side from the mind." (304) Autumn brings awareness of other variety in life than we experience at present. "We are sensible that behind the rustling leaves and the stacks of grain and the bare clusters of the grape, there is the field of a wholly new life, which no man has lived . . . in the hues of October sunsets, we see the portals to other mansions than those which we occupy." (319) As the journey upriver was made from the town of Concord to the town of New Concord (256), so perhaps one can see the spiritual progression of the book as being from possibility to new possibility. The "Saturday" chapter is concerned with familiar possibilities in Nature; in "Friday" Thoreau looks forward to discoveries. He suggests that man can make the transition from "a comparatively narrow and partial, what is called a common sense view of things, to an infinitely expanded and liberating one." (326) It

is in keeping with the quality of the day that he should be concerned with an important change in outlook.

Man's power to find unity in the variety that surrounds him is explored in a digression on mathematics. "The most distinct and beautiful statement of any truth," Thoreau says, "must take at last the mathematical form. We might so simplify the rules of moral philosophy, as well as of arithmetic, that one formula would express them both." (307) After complaining that scientists in their researches "make no steady and systematic approaches to the central fact," (308) he writes, "But above all there is wanting genius . . . the power to perceive a law is equally rare in all ages of the world, and depends but little on the number of facts observed." (308-9) It will be noticed that when Thoreau writes about genius in this chapter he expresses himself so as to reflect the central concept of the day; he talks in terms of "all the ages of the world" and "the number of facts observed" and so keeps the quality of variety present in the mind of his readers.

Thoreau also complains of the lack of a unifying vision of the "various ages and styles" of literature. (311) He writes "there is no just and serene criticism as yet. Nothing is considered simply as it lies in the lap of eternal beauty, but our thoughts, as well as our bodies, must be dressed after the latest fashions." (318)

He pleads for a life which encompasses the variety of Nature. Here again he suggests new possibilities for man; he writes "Who shall conceive what kind of roof the heavens might extend over him, what seasons minister to him, and what employment dignify his life!" (320) He is not suggesting changes in man's life that would place him outside Nature: "The winds should be his breath, the seasons his moods, and he should impart of his serenity to Nature herself." (320-1)

Thoreau expresses his personal sense of a lack of unity in a poem that begins "I am a parcel of vain strivings tied / By a chance bond together." (324) He returns to the theme of new discoveries about Nature and man's power to change his life to one of greater unity with the universe: "This world has many rings, like Saturn, and we now live on the outmost of them all." (325) He exclaims "Surely we are provided with senses as well fitted to penetrate the spaces of the real, the substantial, the eternal, as these outward are to penetrate the material universe." (326)

As the day comes to a close Thoreau addresses a poem to the nameless "gods of the shore" asking for full admission to the sphere that they inhabit; the poem also expresses his sense of infinity, which is of course the widest possible rendering of the concept of variety:

All things are current found
On earthly ground,
Spirits and elements
Have their descents.

Night and day, year on year,
High and low, far and near,
These are our own aspects,
These are our own regrets.

Ye gods of the shore,
Who abode evermore,
I see your far headland,
Stretching on either hand;

I hear the sweet evening sounds
From your undecaying grounds;
Cheat me no more with time,
Take me to your clime. (329)

The third verse of the poem recalls the prefatory verses of the book which mention the "only permanent shore,/ The cape never rounded, nor wandered o'er." In his exploration of the qualities of the Unnamed Thoreau has now arrived at the point where he can say with confidence that he has certain knowledge of immortality and eternity. He sees that variety creates variety and so represents infinity.

The Friday of Genesis can also be seen to represent eternity of existence for all kinds of living creatures. The verses for this day tell us "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven . . . and God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply." (I xx-xxii) At the beginning of his "Friday" chapter Thoreau records that they "even felt

encouraged by the unusual activity of the elements." (283)

In Genesis it was, of course, spirit and waters which brought forth living creatures with the power to recreate themselves. He stresses the activity of waters and so suggests a parallel with Genesis: "The wind in the woods sounded like an incessant waterfall dashing and roaring amid rocks. . . . He who hears the rippling of rivers in these degenerate days will not utterly despair." (283)

"The moving creature that hath life" is vigorously represented in the chapter. Thoreau writes "Already the cattle were heard to low wildly in the pastures and along the highways, restlessly running to and fro." (285) He describes men who come swarming to the annual fairs:

"The wind goes hurrying down the country . . . while every farmer lad . . . appears to scud before it. . . . All the land over they go leaping the fences . . . rushing tumultuously in herds from spectacle to spectacle." (285)

Thoreau associates other myths about the fruitfulness of Nature with these country fairs. He refers to Isis, the Egyptian equivalent to Demeter, to the Corybantes, attendants of the Mother Goddess Cybele, and the Bacchantes, devotees of Bacchus whose rites are also connected with fertility.

Thoreau also includes in the chapter an extensive sequence of imagery which corresponds to the myth of the

dying and reviving god which is associated in many cultures with the rites of spring and the idea of fruitfulness. As Thoreau presents it, it contains some Christian symbolism and therefore is associated with the most recent version of the myth, the legend of Christ's death and resurrection. He shows first the traditional image of a decaying land:

Some have thought that the gales do not at present waft to the voyager the natural and original fragrance of the land . . . the earth, they say, having been long subjected to extremely artificial and luxurious modes of cultivation, to gratify the appetite, converted into a sty and hot-bed, where men for profit increase the ordinary decay of nature. (301)

This seems to be an example of the quality of variety in which change has violated the order of nature. Thoreau then tells us about an exceptional freshet on the river. He uses the freshet elsewhere as a symbol of unusual spiritual activity; in an entry in his journal he says "What is called genius is the abundance of life or health. . . . The shrunken stream of life overflows its banks, makes and fertilizes broad intervals from which generations derive their sustenance."³² In this chapter he associates "one of the greatest freshets on this river" (302) with the mark of its height made by a nail driven into an apple tree. He then seems to develop this apple tree as a symbol of the crucifixion, and so of a great outpouring of the spirit, a

³²Thoreau, Journal, IV, 219.

sacrifice which restored health and fruitfulness to human life. Thoreau relates that an engineer made inquiries of inhabitants along the bank as to how high they had known the river to rise; he was conducted to the apple tree.

At this point in the narrative Thoreau becomes very precise about details and seems to attach importance to them; he writes

As the nail was not then visible, the lady of the house placed her hand on the trunk where she said that she remembered the nail to have been from her childhood. In the meanwhile the old man put his arm inside the tree, which was hollow, and felt the point of the nail sticking through, and it was exactly opposite to her hand. (302)

While this imagery of nails and hands is still fresh in the reader's mind he is told that the tree is called "Elisha's apple tree after a friendly Indian who was killed here by people of his own race." The sacrifice of god or king during the rites of spring was, of course, by his own people. Even if the reader does not associate Elisha's death with the crucifixion he will probably think of the resurrection as he reads the passage which follows the mention of the death. Thoreau tells us that Elisha was buried near by, but no one knew exactly where until, after a flood had risen and then subsided, "a sunken spot, exactly of the form and size of the grave revealed its locality." (303) This image of an empty grave is followed by a discussion of "the crisis when the spirit ceases to

inspire and expand the body" and the "crisis when the body ceases to take up room as such in Nature." (303) This emphasis on change as an aspect of the imagery helps to relate it to the quality of the day.

Thoreau goes on to describe the garden in which Elisha's apple tree grew in terms which suggest the garden of Eden and so continues to mirror the traditional fable of fruitfulness restored by the sacrifice of the hero. The garden is rich in varieties of fruit. Thoreau writes that there grew there

Prunus littoralis . . . the Canada plum . . . fine Porter apples, some peaches, and large patches of musk and water melons. . . Elisha's apple tree too, bore a native fruit which was prized by the family. (303)

After giving this catalogue of varieties of fruit and so indicating the health of the land, Thoreau associates it with Eden through the farmer who raised so fine a blood-peach that "To see a single peach upon its stem makes an impression of paradisaical fertility and luxury." (303) Thoreau adds another image suggestive of Eden at the end of the sequence: "there was a pleasure boat containing a youth and a maiden on the island brook." (304) This image, as part of the sequence, recalls the happy Adam and Eve in Paradise.

There are a number of images in the chapter which seem to reflect the creation of "every winged fowl after his kind." Thoreau draws a striking picture of a bird coming

forth from water when he describes their boat sailing
homeward:

Thus we sailed, not being able to fly, but as next best,
making a long furrow in the Merrimack toward our home,
with our wings spread, but never lifting our heel from
the watery trench . . . it was very near flying, as when
the duck rushes through the water with an impulse of her
wings, throwing the spray about her, before she can rise.
(306)

Different species of birds, of course, help to illustrate
the quality of variety as well as the Genesis verses for
the day. The bird imagery links much of the material of
the chapter together. At the beginning of "Friday" there
are references to "the goldfinch on the willow" and
"flickers flying in flocks" which Thoreau introduces as
signs of the change in the season. (284) He tells us that
at the fair the men "sweep by in crowds . . . like migrat-
ing finches." (286) Then, in his essay on Genius, Thoreau
uses several images of varieties of "winged fowl." He
writes "These winged thoughts are like birds and will not
be handled; even hens will not let you touch them like
quadrupeds." (288) Later he says that "The bird of paradise
is obliged to fly against the wind" as the poet is against
"the breeze of popularity." (288) "When the poetic frenzy
seizes us, we run and scratch with our pen, intent only on
worms, calling our mates around us like the cock." (290)
He compares the poet to song-birds in a poem called "The
Poet's Delay":

Shall I then wait the autumn wind,
 Compelled to seek a milder day,
 And leave no curious nest behind,
 No woods still echoing to my lay? (291)

To these images of birds he adds others later in the chapter. He writes of

Two herons, Ardea herodias, with their long and slender limbs relieved against the sky, were seen travelling high over our heads . . . a symbol for the ages to study, whether impressed upon the sky, or sculptured amid the hieroglyphics of Egypt. (329)

This description recalls the image in Genesis of "fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven" (I.xx) that were created on Friday. Thoreau refers, too, to dense flocks of blackbirds in the sky (329) and then, on the last page of the book, to yet another species of bird which also helps to illustrate the fruitfulness of the day. He has been writing of the difficulty for the author of trying to "interpret the Silence," that is, to express what has not yet been expressed about Creation. "Nevertheless," he says, "we will go on, like those Chinese cliff swallows, feathering our nests with the froth, which may one day be the bread of life to such as dwell by the seashore." (332)

The epiphany of the day is brought about by the sound of rippling water. Thoreau writes "Still occasionally in my dreams I remember that rippling water," and then he breaks into verse:

Oft, as I turn me on my pillow o'er,
 I hear the lapse of waves upon the shore,
 Distinct as if it were at broad noonday,
 And I were drifting down from Nashua. (305)

Yet another image of unity in variety is added to the chapter by this allusion to the way in which memory can bring separate experiences together. The rippling waves stir in him an awareness of the infinite scope of thought:

Sometimes we see objects as through a thin haze, in their eternal relations . . . and we wonder who set them up, and for what purpose. If we see the reality in things, of what moment is the superficial and apparent longer? What are the earth and all its interests beside the deep surmise which pierces and scatters them? While I sit here listening to the waves which ripple and break on this shore, I am absolved from all obligation to the past. (305)

Fridays seem to have had special meaning for Thoreau. He wrote in a letter that

My bark ever seemed thwarted by some side wind and went off over the edge and now only occasionally tacks back toward the center of that sea again. I have outgrown nothing good, but, I do not fear to say, fallen behind by whole continents of virtue . . . but I trust -- what else can I trust? -- that with a stiff wind some Friday . . . I may make up for all that distance lost.³³

This remark is perhaps easier to interpret if it is read in the light of a statement from Thoreau's journal: "I could watch the motions of a sail forever, they are so rich and full of meaning . . . so am I blown on by God's breath."³⁴

³³Thoreau, Correspondence, 286.

³⁴Thoreau, Journal, I, 155.

Friday in Genesis, of course, is the day when all living creatures were created, presumably man also; it is the day before man was made in the image of God and so took on the power and burden of consciousness. In the letter which refers to Friday as a day when a stiff wind may help one to make up the distance lost on a spiritual journey, Thoreau may be referring to his own belief that "The unconsciousness of man is the consciousness of God." (279) In respect of inspiration, then, the Friday of Creation could be seen as the most favourable phase for man. Although, as we have observed, Thoreau devotes space at the end of his "Friday" chapter to the scope of man's consciousness, yet in the earlier part he does show us man in a state almost as unconscious as that of the animals around him at the fair. He says, for instance, "I love to see the herd of men feeding heartily on coarse and succulent pleasures, as cattle on the husks and stalks of vegetables," (287) and "I love these sons of earth every mother's son of them, with their great hearty hearts rushing tumultuously in herds. . . . Wise Nature's darlings, they live in the world / Perplexing not themselves how it is hurled." (285-6) Friday, then can be for Thoreau symbolic of a life in harmony with Nature and in touch with the creative spirit; from this aspect it represents the possibility for man of achieving a life of unity in variety.

The constant stress on order, remarked throughout the book, seems in itself to be an argument for the existence of an all-embracing order in Thoreau's work. It has not been possible, in this brief study, to do more than suggest that such an order exists and try to show that Thoreau selected incidents, images, essays and quotations that fit into a carefully-wrought structural plan. His sense of unity in variety certainly extended to the practice of literary composition. He wrote in his journal "Find out as soon as possible what are the best things in your composition and then shape the rest to fit them. The former will be the midrib and veins of the leaf."³⁵ We have seen that the pattern of a myth emerges in so natural a manner from the work as a whole that the book can be described as being both carefully shaped and truly organic. Thoreau himself used the metaphor of a basket to describe the structure of the work. He makes an obvious allusion to the commercial failure of the Week in Walden in an anecdote about an Indian who tried to sell the products of his own weaving. "I too had woven a kind of basket of a delicate texture, but I had not made it worth any one's while to buy them."³⁶ For more than a hundred years since

³⁵Thoreau, Journal, XII, 39.

³⁶Thoreau, Walden. Boston, 1957, p.12.

Thoreau wrote those words there have been buyers for the Week, readers drawn to it by the charm and vigour of its style or by the thoughts that it expressed; few in that time, however, seem to have perceived the strength and shapeliness of the framework about which the strands of the composition are so skilfully and delicately woven. The book could be described as an example of the art that conceals art, or of Thoreau's own conception of successful creation, the "perfect work of Man's art" that "would also be wild or natural in a good sense." (268) Judged by this standard Thoreau's apparently spontaneous expression of himself comes close to perfection; moreover in the immense scope of his symbolic pattern he has been faithful to his ideal of sympathy with the natural order which brings unity to the variety of man's life and work. All myth, of course, represents an attempt to impose imaginative order; Thoreau's myth of the Unnamed not only embraces other myths of creation, but also gives characteristic expression to the thought of the man who wrote:

He is the richest who has most use for nature as the raw material of tropes and symbols with which to describe his life. If these gates of golden willow affect me, they correspond to the beauty and promise of some experience on which I am entering. If I am overflowing with life, am rich in experience for which I lack expression, then Nature will be my language full of poetry -- all Nature will fable and every natural phenomenon be a myth.³⁷

³⁷Thoreau, Journal, V, 135.

A Selected Bibliography

(Very little work specifically concerned with the Week has been published.)

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