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THOREAU'S WILDERNESS EDUCATION:
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STRUCTURE AND UNITY IN THE MAINE WOODS

A THESIS
PRESENTED to
the FACULTY of the GRADUATE SCHOOL
APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

In PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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MASTER OF ARTS

BY
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BY

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ABSTRACT

To date there has been no full-length study of Thoreau's The Maine Woods. Most critics set aside the work as travel and nature writing, primarily because of its outward structure. Seemingly, the book is simply three travel essays united by little more than a similarity of subject matter and genre. Added to this problem is the fact that the first two sections of The Maine Woods were originally published in magazines as essays complete in themselves; yet when they were published posthumously as The Maine Woods they remained essentially the same. These factors suggest that Thoreau did not or had not been able to revise the essays, or to condense or unify the events into the topical or thematic approach he had given to his Walden and Cape Cod experiences.

In the first two chapters of this study I review the critical work that has been written on The Maine Woods, and I investigate the textual questions surrounding the work--particularly those concerning Thoreau's intentions for his Maine material and critics' charges that Thoreau did not revise the original essays. While most literary scholars offer qualified praise for Thoreau's Maine book, they assume that it is lacking in artistic structure and unity, and thus fails as a literary work. Nevertheless, both the external and internal evidence suggest that The Maine Woods went through a number of revisions much as Walden did. Furthermore, Thoreau did not conceive of the essays as individual pieces. He worked on his Maine material as a whole on and off for five years, and was actively working on it at the time of his death.

I suggest that Thoreau did not combine the three Maine trips into a single narrative because he wanted to maintain the integrity of each experience for philosophical and thematic purposes. If Thoreau's concept of travel, discussed in Sherman Paul's The Shores of America, is extended to The Maine Woods, it can be assumed that Thoreau's travels to Maine represent a quest, and that each trip represents a unique aspect of that quest. To maintain the separateness of these trips is to punctuate their significance. My thesis is that in The Maine Woods the narrator learns three things in three ways, and that each journey represents one of those lessons. What he learns and how he learns is more important than the sights or adventures along the way.

Because I believe that a design in three parts is a clue to the meaning of the work, I examine The Maine Woods as it is written, section by section. Thoreau comes to the Maine woods each time to learn about man's relation to the wilderness. In "Ktaadn" the narrator confronts nature that is greater than and indifferent to man. He is shocked and alienated by his experience. In "Chesuncook" Thoreau reveals the other side of man's relation to nature and demonstrates how man, who is indifferent to nature, is a threat to the wilderness. Here the narrator is alienated from civilized man. "The Allegash and East Branch," the final section of The Maine Woods, provides a resolution to "Ktaadn" and "Chesuncook." On the third trip the narrator comes to understand the benefits of both wilderness and society for civilized man.

In The Maine Woods Thoreau illustrates that exploration and experience, symbolized by travel, are the first steps to knowledge. Yet understanding of nature and perception of truth require more than worldly experience. In each section Thoreau describes a unique experience, which enables the narrator to apprehend truth and results in a particular kind of poetic

insight. Ultimately Thoreau shows that such experiences result in an intuitive knowledge that is more meaningful than scientific fact.

Throughout The Maine Woods the two themes--what is the meaning of wilderness for civilized man and how does man understand nature and apprehend truth--are interrelated.

In this study I illustrate that there are recurrent themes, symbols and motifs in The Maine Woods, and that there is a development of those themes from the beginning to the end. I conclude that if The Maine Woods is not as satisfactory as Thoreau's other work, it is for reasons other than structure or unity.

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Chapter I

The Maine Woods: The Critical Consensus

Today Thoreau is acclaimed as one of our greatest American writers; yet his fame rests almost totally with a single work, Walden. It is generally believed that after Walden Thoreau's creative powers declined—despite five volumes (Excursions, 1863; The Maine Woods, 1864; Cape Cod, 1864; Letters to Various Persons, 1865; and A Yankee in Canada, 1866) and a fourteen volume Journal all published posthumously. With the possible exception of the Journal the posthumous volumes are considered minor works. Most critics feel that after Walden Thoreau was no longer inspired, and that the vitality of his writing waned. In the Journal Thoreau often expressed his own concern: "I fear that the character of my knowledge is from year to year becoming more distinct and scientific; that in exchange for views as wide as heaven's cope, I am being narrowed down to the field of the microscope. I see details, not wholes nor the shadow of the whole."¹ Critics cite such passages, frequent from 1851 on, as evidence of the change in Thoreau's method of observation after Walden. Joseph Wood Krutch explains:

As time went on, certain changes took place in what may be called the technique of his intercourse with the visible and invisible world. Inevitably, of course, he moved farther and farther away from the unthinking, almost unconscious activity which . . . was the source of his earliest ecstasies. But that is not all. As the mature man grew older, the mystic communion which replaced thoughtless activity itself gave way more and more to deliberate observation, and threatened at times to transform him completely from a transcendentalist into some sort of quasi-scientific observer.²

Critics see The Maine Woods as one example of the increasingly methodical approach to nature that Thoreau exhibited in the latter part of his life. Some speculate that had Thoreau lived longer his work would have been more scientific, on the order of his "Succession of Forest Trees." In a review of The Maine Woods in 1864, F. B. Sanborn suggests that a factual book about Indians would have been Thoreau's other great work:

This constant celebration of the Indian and his native characteristics should be carefully attended by all readers of [The Maine Woods], for it is the only result we are likely to see of Thoreau's researches into the history and qualities of the North American Indian. It was his purpose to write a book on this topic, and he collected great heaps of matter relating to it.³

In a review of Cape Cod in the following year Sanborn adds that the Indian book "would have been so priceless had Thoreau lived to complete it."⁴ Furthermore, Sanborn reiterates his point about an Indian book in his biography of Thoreau. Later Albert Keiser, in "Thoreau's manuscripts on the Indians," restates Sanborn's theory. In this article Keiser announces the rediscovery of eleven manuscript volumes of Thoreau's "Indian Notebooks" in the Pierpont Morgan Library.⁵ Keiser assumes, as does Sanborn, that this tremendous accumulation of facts about Indians was to be the basis of an authoritative, objective, and definitive Indian book. Speculation about the "Indian Notebooks" continues to promulgate the idea that The Maine Woods, a book about Thoreau's personal experiences with Indians, is a lesser work that Thoreau wrote because his illness prevented him from writing a more important and different kind of Indian book.

Thoreau made three trips into the Maine wilderness, first in 1846, again in 1853, and lastly in 1857. On each trip Thoreau and a companion

initially engage Indian guides, who become a focus of interest in The Maine Woods. The Maine Woods consists of three long essays, each recounting one of these trips, and a factual appendix listing plants, animals, and Indian terms. The text is also filled with details of the journeys, observations on flora and fauna, and information about Indians. Today The Maine Woods is most often criticized as being too factual, unpoetic, and unintegrated, merely describing the events of three trips. But to his contemporaries Thoreau the nature writer, not Thoreau the philosopher, had the greatest appeal. A reviewer in the Times recommends The Maine Woods to anyone "who desires to become acquainted with the author in his best mood--an earnest lover and student of nature in all her phases and seasons," and notes that "there is nothing about 'Boodh' in it. 'Brama' and 'Vishnu' are alike unnoticed. In short, it is clear of Thoreau's most objectionable peculiarities."⁶ In a review of The Maine Woods in the Continental, the reviewer, who commends the book, says that "the woods have never before had such an accurate biographer, such a painter. He saw them with the eyes of the poet as well as that of the naturalist."⁷ John Broderick, in an analysis of the contemporary reviews, says that of the posthumous books The Maine Woods and Cape Cod received the most sympathetic reviews because they came closest to being the nature writing that appealed to the public.⁸ Today, on the other hand, The Maine Woods is dismissed for this very reason--because it blends travel with natural history.

The major Thoreau critics of the twentieth century find little more in The Maine Woods than its contemporary reviewers, who praised it for its depiction of the wilderness. F. O. Matthiessen's American

Renaissance, published in 1941, is a turning point in Thoreau criticism. Matthiessen speaks of complexities in Thoreau's writing, which involve "organic" unity and subtle symbolism founded on an integrated theory of art. Matthiessen argues that Thoreau "could fuse his thought and his observation by means of a symbol, which was not just suggested but designed in sharp detail," and that "he was able in Coleridge's phrase, to 'elicit truth as at a flash.'"⁹ Yet in approximately fifty-five pages that Matthiessen devotes to Thoreau, he mentions The Maine Woods just one time. If he thought that The Maine Woods had such patterns of meaning he did not say it. Seven years later Joseph Wood Krutch, in his book entitled Henry David Thoreau, sets aside The Maine Woods saying,

Both The Maine Woods and Cape Cod belong, as neither Walden nor A Week on the Concord and Merrimack River does, to a familiar genre; they are, that is to say, 'travel books.' Moreover, though both contain some fine passages and a scattering of knotty sayings, much of both is relatively relaxed, even relatively superficial. Thoreau seems to be subduing his personality to a point where he can seem merely an entertaining original traveler, whose occasional crankiness is diverting rather than exasperating or challenging.¹⁰

Walter Harding, who sums up the major Thoreau criticism to this time, gives Fannie Eckstorm as the authority on The Maine Woods.¹¹ This alone illustrates the low position appointed to The Maine Woods, for Eckstorm hardly looks at it as a literary work. While she does praise Thoreau's ability to capture the essence of the coniferous forest, her main point is that "Thoreau was not a woodsman; he was not infallible; he was not a scientific observer; he was not a scientist at all."¹² Eckstorm then proceeds to illustrate that Thoreau made errors in "estimates of distance, area, [and] speed," that he was not an ornithologist, nor a

geologist, and that he knew nothing of woodcraft. While Harding cites Eckstorm as the authority on The Maine Woods, he is even more deprecating of the book when he says,

That The Maine Woods is not a well-integrated book but a collection of three separate essays is obvious. The essays are frequently repetitive, and Thoreau makes explanations in the latter two which are not necessary after reading the first But it should be remembered that Thoreau died before he completed the task of editing the Maine papers.¹³

A lack of integration has been and still is the primary criticism of The Maine Woods.

Because The Maine Woods was written at a time that is considered Thoreau's period of literary decline, because it is considered the lesser work written instead of a more important Indian book, and because it is described as "obviously not unified," it is not surprising that criticism dealing with The Maine Woods does not examine its literary or artistic merits. Almost invariably criticism of The Maine Woods is concerned with how the book reveals the development of Thoreau's ideas. Sherman Paul's evaluation of and approach to The Maine Woods is representative:

Of all Thoreau's travel books, The Maine Woods best reveals his development, simply because each excursion was complete in itself. Like Cape Cod, it covered three trips extending over a period of years. Though the development is also apparent in Cape Cod . . . the later excursions were worked into the narrative of the first, and Cape Cod, therefore, was a more unified work.¹⁴

In particular, two aspects of The Maine Woods that reveal Thoreau's developing ideas are of interest to Thoreau critics. Many are puzzled by the darker vision of nature that is expressed in "Ktaadn," the first section of the book. The purpose of Thoreau's first trip into the

Maine wilderness was to climb Mt. Katahdin. The account of his ascent and the effect of this experience on Thoreau is difficult to reconcile with Thoreau's transcendental and pantheistic vision in A Week and Walden--especially since "Ktaadn" was written while Thoreau was at Walden Pond. On Mt. Katahdin he was overcome by the "presentiment of the alien, cold, indifferent nature of naturalism" that he found.

"Unmoored by this experience," says Paul, "he wrote the most frenzied passage he was ever to write"¹⁵ --"What is this Titan that has

possession of me? Talk of mysteries! Think of our life in nature,--daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it,--rocks, trees wind on our cheeks! the solid earth! the actual world! the common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? Where are we?"¹⁶ --John Blair and

Augustus Trowbridge suggest that while Thoreau's "feelings on the summit stand out in surprising contrast to almost everything he ever wrote," his experience on Mt. Katahdin "merits study as the source of important qualifications to his transcendentalism. . . . The stark, inhuman nature Thoreau experienced at Katahdin . . . threatened his most basic premise."¹⁷ James McIntosh says that though neither

"Ktaadn" nor "Shipwreck," the first chapter in Cape Cod, is typical of Thoreau, both are important, "first because they contain some of his most highly charged and daring writing, and second because they show in what way he is willing under stress to depart from his usual perspective."¹⁸ The thesis of his book, Thoreau as Romantic Naturalist,

His Shifting Stance Towards Nature, of which "Ktaadn" serves as one example, is that Thoreau's vision of nature is not static but actually fluctuates between poles--although it always returns to his transcendental one. The analysis of "Ktaadn" in McIntosh's book is most

perceptive. Nonetheless, McIntosh explains "Ktaadn" in terms of Thoreau's other writings, not in terms of the rest of The Maine Woods.

Although a number of studies of "Ktaadn" are published, it is interesting that not one article focuses on either "Chesuncook" or "The Allegash and East Branch," the two other sections of The Maine Woods. The only studies that do look at the rest of The Maine Woods are those concerned with Thoreau's interest in Indians. For these critics The Maine Woods is the most important book. While the Indian is discussed to some extent in most of Thoreau's writing--A Week, Walden, and the Journal all discuss "the Indian"--the Indian dominates The Maine Woods.

Throughout The Maine Woods Thoreau observes his Indian guides as carefully as he does the flora and fauna of the wilderness. On the first trip, because the Indian guides fail to show, Thoreau must view Indians from a distance. His portrayal of "the Indian" in "Ktaadn" is a typical nineteenth century picture of the primitive man who has been degraded by civilization. On the second trip Thoreau is able to observe his Indian guide, Joe Aitteon, more closely. Aitteon, however, has acquired too many attributes of civilized America to meet with Thoreau's ideal of "the Indian." Thoreau seems much more pleased with the savage Indians with whom they camp at the end of the trip. It is on Thoreau's last trip that he is able to have both a tolerance and respect for his Indian guide Joe Polis. Joe Polis, says Robert Sayre, is "the most fully developed personality (after the author himself) to appear anywhere in Thoreau's writing."¹⁹ In Thoreau and the American Indian, a comprehensive study of Thoreau's Indian education, Sayre traces Thoreau's attitudes from his earliest writings to his

notes on his Minnesota journey in 1861. Sayre says that of all his work, The Maine Woods best records "his progress in breaking through many of the prejudices of savagism to a point where he could present his guides . . . as both Indians and complex interesting individuals."²⁰

Critics who look at Thoreau's writings on Indians--Paul, Gura, Murray, Weidman, and Sayre--see "the Indian" as the unifying element in The Maine Woods. Weidman says that "Thoreau's treatment of Indians in The Maine Woods provides a unifying theme for the book Walter Harding criticized as unintegrated."²¹ Like Weidman, Murray believes that The Maine Woods "has a good deal of unity because of its increasing focus on the Indian."²² Murray adds that "this unifying movement from ignorance about the Indian to knowledge is accomplished not simply by methodical piling of facts, but by use of descriptive and narrative techniques usually associated with fiction."²³ This, however, is the closest any critic comes to suggesting artistic merit in The Maine Woods.

Traditionally critics approach The Maine Woods from a biographical or philosophical perspective. For understanding Thoreau as a thinker, The Maine Woods is important as it reflects Thoreau's ideas about nature and his attitudes towards the American Indian. For understanding Thoreau the man, The Maine Woods serves as one of the best examples of Thoreau as woodsman and nature lover. In terms of time, however, the Maine experiences involve only a small part of Thoreau's life--not quite a month. So while The Maine Woods is interesting in regard to Thoreau as a transcendentalist or a romantic naturalist, it is not as important as his two year stay at Walden Pond; and while it is interesting in regard to Thoreau's Indian attitudes, it is not any more important than the "Indian Notebooks." Without question Thoreau's

response to the wilderness and to Indians is central to any discussion of The Maine Woods, but so far critics have analyzed these issues only in relation to Thoreau's other work--particularly Walden and the Journal—and not in terms of The Maine Woods as a whole. If The Maine Woods is ever to be considered important in itself, it must first be shown to have a unity of form and idea essential to all works of art. Major problems associated with The Maine Woods have led critics to assume that it is not a unified work. Thus before any theory of design can be credible, these problems must be investigated.

Chapter II

A Problem of Form

The primary deterrent to recognizing an artistic design in The Maine Woods is its outward structure. Seemingly the book is simply three separate travel essays, united by little more than a similarity of subject matter and genre. Added to this problem is the fact that the first two sections of The Maine Woods, "Ktaadn" and "Chesuncook," were originally published in magazines as essays complete in themselves; yet when they were republished as The Maine Woods they remained essentially the same. These two factors suggest that Thoreau did not or had not been able to revise the essays, or to condense or unify the events into the topical or thematic approach, which he had given to his Walden and Cape Cod experiences. Further implication of The Maine Woods as a relatively unrevised work came with the publication of the Journal when the editors decided to omit sections pertaining to Thoreau's Maine trips. The explanation given in the 1853 Journal serves as an example:

Here follows an account of Thoreau's second excursion to the Maine woods As the story is told elsewhere, virtually in the language of the Journal, it is here omitted, with the exception of a few scattered sentences and paragraphs which for one reason or another were not used in the paper entitled "Chesuncook."¹

This passage implies that the book is basically a travel journal, and that the published account had undergone only minimal revisions.

That Thoreau did not revise these essays is simply not true. Since the publication of the Journal, scholars have been able to examine the passages relating to the Maine trips. Everything these scholars note indicates that Thoreau wrote and revised The Maine Woods much as he had Walden. This method of writing involved hastily taking down notes, later expanding these notes, and finally copying a revised version into his Journal.² Often at a later time the Journal material was worked into lectures--Walter Harding cites five lectures based on the Maine material. Afterwards the lectures were revised into a form suitable for publication. In the textual study that accompanies the CEAA text of The Maine Woods, Joseph Moldenhauer describes the extant manuscripts and outlines the evolution of the text. The facts Moldenhauer presents clearly show Thoreau's usual pattern of revision. Because some of the particulars are so important in illustrating Thoreau's method of composing this work, they are summarized below.

The "Ktaadn" first draft, which is now in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, served as both journal and draft book. The draft begins with a nine-page capsule of the trip, followed by a list of words and phrases under headings for August 31 through September 10. Moldenhauer says that "the precise detail and telegraphic style suggest that Thoreau carried the notebooks with him at least as far as Bangor and possibly all the way to the mountain."³ The next six pages are drafts of the published essay. This section is followed with records of the nocturnal steamboat trip that Thoreau took from Bangor to Portland, which was eventually used in the "Chesuncook" section. Robert Cosbey, who also examined this working draft, says the impression at this point of the manuscript is that

Thoreau "did not know . . . where his essay should begin." It is as if "he has not yet settled on the proper tone or style of his narration" ⁴ After the nocturnal steamboat section, what follows essentially duplicates that of the finished account. This draft shows numerous revisions in ink and pencil, and references to "V" (vide), the next or new notebook. Cosby says that it is obvious from a glance at the draft that Thoreau did not write easily or intuitively.

There is hardly a sentence of the whole draft in which he has not made deletions, insertions, inversions of order, or substitutions, and in many places he has added fairly long passages in the margins or between the lines There are many . . . deletions of whole passages . . . and many places where he breaks a train of thought, even in the middle of a sentence, and starts again. ⁵

Cosby notes that in revising, Thoreau suppressed personal details and added various information from his readings. Cosby's most important argument is that only after working with his materials did Thoreau begin to find a theme—a theme of wilderness—and subsequently revised to emphasize this theme. James McIntosh concurs with Cosby's thesis: "My own examination of the first draft of "Ktaadn" . . . strongly suggests that in the process of composition he became conscious of this polarity between wilderness and civilization and used it thematically to give the essay structure." ⁶

Moldenhauer discusses similar stages of revision in the extant manuscripts of the "Chesuncook" section. The largest portion of the "Chesuncook" first draft is in the Morgan Library Journal sequence, volume 22, September 16 - September 27, 1853. Other drafts date October through December, 1853, and summer 1857 through early spring 1858. The fair copy of "Chesuncook" gives evidence of two distinct

periods of preparation—some parts are written on off-white papers and others on light blue papers. Moldenhauer notes that there are numerous ink and pencil revisions on the drafts. In addition he counts one hundred and ten authorial changes on the fair copy. It is significant that for the "Chesuncook" essay Thoreau drew upon one episode from the "Ktaadn" trip and included information acquired from Concord Indians for his Indian camp episode. Also several worksheets in the Houghton Library combine matter used in "Chesuncook" and "Allegash." These facts are contrary to the assumption that The Maine Woods is purely sequential travel writing. Although no analysis has been published on the writing of "Chesuncook," such as Cobey's article on "The Writing of 'Ktaadn'," the information Moldenhauer provides on the "Chesuncook" drafts indicates that this episode went through the usual number of revisions.

After "Ktaadn" and "Chesuncook" were published, Thoreau continued to make additions and minor revisions in the texts. In "Ktaadn" Cosbey notes some stylistic and factual changes, and two small but significant changes reflecting his attitude about Indians. Most changes, however, reflect his further reading about Maine. "Chesuncook," on the other hand, received minimal alteration: "Thoreau corrected an error or two, restored a sentence that had been expurgated in the first publication, added another sentence, and deleted a passage based on misidentification of a bird species."⁷ It is generally known that Thoreau's last years, after his confining illness, were spent in preparing a number of his papers for publication. The major work on The Maine Woods at this time was in perfecting the third narrative "The Allegash and East Branch."

Because there was no major revision of "Ktaadn" or "Chesuncook" for The Maine Woods' publication, it is usually inferred that Thoreau did not have time to integrate or finish the book. But I propose that the revisions are minimal, particularly with "Chesuncook," because Thoreau had a general concept of a whole work about Maine when he was getting "Chesuncook" ready for publication. This period of preparation was after the Allegash trip and his draft of that work. Most likely, sometime between summer of 1857 and spring 1858 his plan evolved. Moldenhauer dates the writing of the final version of "Chesuncook" between summer 1857 and spring 1858. This is the same time Thoreau was writing the first draft of the "Allegash" narrative—the early "Allegash" manuscripts are dated July 20 through August 3, 1857, and September through November 1857. Moldenhauer says:

That Thoreau had completed the basic work on "The Allegash" by the time he sent "Chesuncook" to James Russell Lowell is indicated by his correspondence and certain manuscript remains. He reported to Thatcher on January 1, 1858, that he had "written out a long account" of the excursion, "part of which I shall read to our Lyceum—but I do not know how soon I shall print it." Three weeks later he told Lowell that for the sake of his relationship with Polis he could not provide an "Allegash" article, but not long after the final "Chesuncook" installment appeared in the Atlantic he wrote to George William Curtis of Putnam's, "I am glad if you are not weary of the Maine Woods, partly because I have another and larger slice to come."⁸

In respect to Thoreau's formulation of The Maine Woods, Robert Sayre's study of the "Indian Books" (i.e. Indian Notebooks) is quite relevant. Sayre argues that the dates of the "Indian Books" suggest that the period "when Thoreau most seriously regarded himself as working on a book about Indians (as well as the 'Indian Books') was from December 1852 [just before the "Chesuncook" trip] through February 1858"

just after the "Allegash" trip.⁹ Significantly, the first half of "Chesuncook" was sent to Lowell on March 5, 1858. Two-thirds of the material in the "Indian Books" was collected during this period, although Thoreau worked on them from 1850 until the end of his life. It is Sayre's thesis that sometime after his personal experiences with the Indians, Aitteon and Polis, Thoreau changed his mind about the nature of an Indian book. Specifically, "January and February [1858] were months of decision about a book on Indians."¹⁰

To summarize, after the Allegash trip, during the time Thoreau was working on the "Chesuncook" and "Allegash" sections, Thoreau most likely formulated The Maine Woods as a whole. I suggest that Thoreau did not have to re-work his published material to any great extent because the three sections had been part of his plan from the composition of "Chesuncook." He only needed to get the "Allegash" segment ready and make sure instructions for publication were clear. Indeed, according to his friends and biographers, Ellery Channing and F. B. Sanborn, that is what happened. The task of getting the volume in order for publication fell to Ellery Channing and Sophia Thoreau. After an examination of all the evidence, Moldenhauer concludes:

Beyond question . . . Thoreau intended to issue the four parts as a single volume: he left a rough plan for the organization of the essays and a statement of their collective title; and he drew on all three chapters for his appendix materials. At the time of his death he was perfecting the third narrative, "The Allegash and East Branch."¹¹

As a posthumous work, the finished state and authenticity of The Maine Woods text has been an issue. With the publication of the critical text, the CEAA Princeton edition, the authenticity of the

work is established. Whether the text is "finished" is a rhetorical question. It is generally known that Thoreau continued to revise all his works throughout his life. Shanley notes that even with Walden Thoreau made some revisions after its publication.¹² So Thoreau would probably have continued to revise The Maine Woods as long as he lived. But as to the more pertinent question, whether Thoreau had given The Maine Woods its final form, the evidence indicates that Thoreau's intention for the final form is its existing one.

The last major deterrent to seeing The Maine Woods as a significant work is its genre. If for no other reason, The Maine Woods is set aside as a lesser work because it is a travel book, and, as such, is considered too low-brow and popular to be serious literature. Yet almost all of Thoreau's writing, whether a ramble like "Walking" or a sojourn like Walden, fits into this genre. The Maine Woods, however, has the elements of the simplest of all travel writing. It is a daily journal recording the events of an actual trip. In The Maine Woods Thoreau gives much factual information to aid a traveler in the wilderness, ranging from a list of supplies to geographic details. Along the way he makes observations on the plants, the animals, the weather and the natives. In short, in The Maine Woods Thoreau follows the pattern used by less perceptive and less literary travelers in ordinary tourists' accounts. Almost unanimously Thoreau's "travel" writings that reshape the actual or mix the actual and the fictive, such as A Week and Walden, are considered creative and literary, while his sequential travel works such as The Maine Woods are discounted as being too factual or, in Robert Louis Stevenson's words, simply "not Literature."

Historically the travel account is one of the oldest forms of writing, dating back at least to Herodotus and Xenophon. Through the ages all kinds of writers have written travel accounts, from explorers, naturalists, and missionaries, to literary writers. In nineteenth century America, however, travel writing was experiencing an unparalleled popularity. Almost everyone tried their hand at writing about their travels, including the most serious writers of the day--Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson, Cooper, and James all wrote at least one travel piece. In spite of this, there is almost nothing written about travel as literature. Traditionally travel works are set aside as less serious writing.

Critics adopt this position towards Thoreau's works that most closely resemble the travelogue, such as The Maine Woods and Cape Cod. The consensus of opinion is that these works are superficial travel pieces, lacking the metaphorical and mythological significance of Thoreau's serious writing. Some critics suggest that Thoreau's travel writings are written to appeal to the tastes of the day. In the words of Joseph Wood Krutch, they are "too deliberately directed at a vulgar audience,"¹³ and in the words of Sherman Paul, they are "his attempt to find an audience."¹⁴ Yet everything Thoreau's biographers have said and everything Thoreau wrote indicates that he took all of his writing seriously--even his Journal, which he could have only vaguely envisioned being published. F. B. Sanborn, one of Thoreau's first biographers, says that "it was his thirst for final and concentrated expression, and not love of fame or 'literary aspirations' . . . which urged him on to write. For printing he cared little,--and few authors since Shakespeare have been less anxious to publish what they wrote."¹⁵

In Thoreau's correspondence regarding the publication of both "Ktaadn" and "Chesuncook" there is no indication that he considered these as less serious, popular pieces. They were certainly not written for money. In fact, after Horace Greeley wrote and apologized for being able to pay only twenty-five dollars for "Ktaadn," Thoreau replied with a letter rejecting the benefits of receiving pay for writing. Part of that letter follows:

Scholars are apt to think themselves privileged to complain as if their lot was a peculiarly hard one. How much have we heard about the attainment of knowledge under difficulties of poets starving in garrets--depending on the patronage of the wealthy--and finally dying mad. It is time that men sang another song. There is no reason why the scholar who professes to be a little wiser than the masses of men, should not do his work in the ditch occasionally, and by means of his superior wisdom make much less suffice for him This money therefore comes as a free and unexpected gift to me--.¹⁶

Greeley felt that the letter was so significant that he published parts of it in his paper, the New York Tribune, on May 19, 1848.

Furthermore, this correspondence indicates that neither was Thoreau writing to please the tastes of the public if it did not suit him. In the same correspondence Greeley asked Thoreau for shorter articles: "The length of your papers is the only impediment to their appreciation by the magazines."¹⁷ With the Maine narratives, at least, Thoreau never saw fit to follow Greeley's suggestion. In fact, each subsequent essay became substantially longer than the preceding one. The most infamous incidence of Thoreau's unwillingness to comply with anyone's preferences but his own involves the publication of "Chesuncook." When reading the proofs Thoreau discovered that the editor, James Russell Lowell, had deleted a statement about the pine: "It is as

immortal as I am, and perchance will go to as high a heaven, there to tower above me still." Thoreau responded with a seething letter, saying,

I have just noticed that that sentence was, in a very mean and cowardly manner, omitted. I hardly need to say that this is a liberty which I will not permit to be taken with my MS. The editor has, in this case, no more right to omit a sentiment than to invent one, or put words into my mouth. I do not ask anybody to adopt my opinions, but I do expect that when they ask for them to print, they will print them, or obtain my consent to their alteration or omission. I should not read many books if I thought that they had been thus expurgated. I feel this treatment to be an insult, though not intended as such, for it is to presume that I can be hired to suppress my opinions.¹⁸

Lowell's subsequent failure to publish the sentence was the culmination of a life-long animosity between the two men. Instead of reflecting any concern for money or popularity, these letters and the intensity of their statements show a total disregard for such matters.

Probably the main reason that critics assume that The Maine Woods was a less serious enterprise is Thoreau's apparent deprecation of travel books in Walden. In the "Reading" chapter of that work Thoreau seems to apologize for his interest in travel accounts as though it were a weakness: "I read one or two shallow books of travel in the intervals of my work, till that employment made me ashamed of myself, and I asked where it was that I lived."¹⁹ Yet Thoreau's real attitudes towards travel writing were not so simple. As John Christie shows in Thoreau as World Traveler, "the travel book shared a significant place beside Thoreau's standard fare of poetry and philosophy."²⁰ Gleaned from Thoreau's writings and the extant library check-out records, Christie documents 172 travel books that Thoreau read, in most cases methodically enough to take copious notes. Perhaps then the Walden sentence should be read according to the stress Thoreau placed on it.

When he says, "I asked where it was that I lived," he is emphasizing the importance of living and seeing over any form of vicarious pleasure. In Walden's next chapter, "Sounds," immediately after his discussion of reading, Thoreau asks: "What is a course of history, or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen? Will you be a reader, a student, merely, or a seer?"²¹ Rather than rejecting travel, he saw it as another way of seeing, of experiencing.

In Thoreau's first published book he verbalizes the significance of travel that he nurtured to the end: "true and sincere traveling is no pastime, but it is as serious as the grave or any part of the human journey." Thoreau believed that travel books should reflect this seriousness and have a universal significance. Compared to Thoreau's ideal for travel, most of the accounts he read were shallow. But Thoreau found fault in the observer, in the narrowness of the traveler, not in the possibilities of the form, as his critics have. He used the forms and symbols of the genre in almost all of his writing. The points of travel--mountains, lakes, and rivers--and the symbols of travel--the going out, the exploration, the discovery--pervade his work. Thoreau learned many facts from his travel readings; but in his writings metaphors and symbols make those lessons transcend the particular.

Unquestionably the idea of travel as quest is central to any understanding of Thoreau. Sherman Paul explores the symbol and metaphor of travel in Thoreau's writing; John Christie investigates the significance of Thoreau's travel readings; and Lawrence Buell discusses

the influence of the travel narrative on the structure of Thoreau's writing. Yet none of these critics extend their theses to The Maine Woods, for they conceive of this work as a straightforward narrative of Thoreau's Maine trips. Although The Maine Woods very closely follows the structure of mundane travel pieces, its form does not necessarily make it an exception to Thoreau's other work. In this study, I hope to show that The Maine Woods exemplifies man's quest for truth and that the travel mode is the key to the structure, unity, and meaning of the book.

Chapter III

"Ktaadn"

All of Thoreau's writing, in fact his whole life, can be seen as a quest for truth, for the "higher laws" of the universe and man's relation to them. From his earliest work to his last, Thoreau testifies that the discovery of truth lies in a direct intercourse with nature. Because Thoreau's way to knowledge begins with outward exploration, the spirit of place is pivotal to the meaning of each of his works. At Walden Pond an idyllic sojourn gives him a unified vision, of which the pond is the major symbol. His three trips to the Maine woods, however, involve three unique and different experiences. In "Ktaadn" he climbs a mountain in solitude; in "Chesuncook" he peacefully glides through moonlit lakes; and in "The Allegash and East Branch" he experiences camaraderie on the rapids. Quite naturally the experiences of each trip affect Thoreau differently. On each trip Thoreau discovers something new about his relationship to nature and to man. Because the circumstances of these trips carry their own psychological impact, he comes to his understanding in three different ways, ways quite apart from his practical experience. Thus in each section Thoreau not only illustrates how man can be affected by what he sees and experiences, but also the means by which he is able to gain understanding of that experience. By treating each trip in a separate section, instead of integrating them into a continuous narrative, Thoreau isolates the emotional impact and special insight of each journey.

The purpose of Thoreau's first trip to Maine was to climb Mt. Katahdin, the second highest mountain in New England. This ascent, recounted in the first section of The Maine Woods, was to remain one of the most dramatic events of his life. What happened to Thoreau on Katahdin made such an impact on him that years later he dreamed about it and referred to it in his correspondence. On November 16, 1857, eleven years after the Katahdin trip, Thoreau wrote a letter to Harrison Blake about mountain exploration that is remarkable in its echoes of the "Ktaadn" essay. In this letter Thoreau says:

You must ascend a mountain to learn your relation to matter, and so to your body, for it is at home there, though you are not. It might have been composed there, and will have no farther to go to return to dust there, than in your garden; but your spirit inevitably comes away, and brings your body with it, if it lives.

The philosophical implications that the Katahdin experience held for Thoreau have been discussed by numerous critics. Yet what exactly Thoreau learns about his relationship to the mountain in "Ktaadn" remains cryptic--it is not something that can be readily understood. Nevertheless, his experience in "Ktaadn" prepares the way for his vision of truth in "Chesuncook," and that in "Chesuncook" for his concerns in "The Allegash and East Branch." In other words, each section illustrates a lesson in Thoreau's wilderness education, and from beginning to end there is a progression in Thoreau's search for truth. What Thoreau experiences in "Ktaadn" is just one aspect of man's relation to nature. Throughout The Maine Woods Thoreau investigates the effects of experience on the various ways that man perceives the world and apprehends truth--especially the transcendental and poetic ways. Since each section focuses on a particular kind of wilderness experience, I propose

to analyze the sections individually. Ultimately, I hope to illustrate that a structure in three parts is artistically appropriate, as each section explores a different epistemological and philosophical concern, and that the sections become interrelated as Thoreau moves towards a more complete understanding of man's relation to man and his world.

For convenience I speak of the narrator here, and throughout this study, as "Thoreau." However, if we read The Maine Woods strictly as biography there are a number of problems: How do we accept Thoreau's assertions in "Ktaadn" when they seem contrary to his most basic beliefs? How can we believe that Thoreau is writing with sincerity when he produced "Ktaadn" while he was at Walden Pond? I believe that it is important to understand the narrator in "Ktaadn" and throughout The Maine Woods not simply as Thoreau but as a persona—i.e. "civilized man," who comes to Maine to explore the wilderness. Like any traveler he comes to an unfamiliar place with certain assumptions and expectations. But each time something happens to change those attitudes, and he is left with a different perspective on life. Within the confines of his actual itinerary, Thoreau writes his narrative to produce a dramatic and ironic effect. From "Ktaadn" to "Allegash" the narrator continually examines and assesses the more primitive life of men in the backwoods. Yet because the narrator is always affected by the experiences of his travels, it is only fitting that there is a slightly different tone in each section.

As the Romantic traveler in "Ktaadn," Thoreau initially thinks of mountains as "connecting the heavens with the earth," that is, uniting man with the universe and powers of creation (p. 33). Virtually all mountain descriptions in Romantic and pre-Romantic literature can be

discussed within an aesthetic of the sublime. Theories of the sublime are concerned with the strong emotional effect produced by the grandeur in nature, such as mountains and oceans. Almost every author of the period who wrote about nature was influenced by an aesthetic of the sublime. The most widely studied of these theories was Edmund Burke's Enquiry Into the Sublime and Beautiful. In his senior year at Harvard, Thoreau was required to write an essay examining Burke's theory that "The thunder's roll, the lightning's flash, the billow's roar, the earthquake shock, all derive their dread sublimity from Death."¹ In his essay, "The Sublimity of Death," Thoreau argues:

The emotion excited by the Sublime is the most unearthly and godlike we mortals experience. It depends for the peculiar strength with which it takes hold on and occupies the mind, upon a principle which lies at the foundation of that worship which we pay to the creator himself. And is fear the foundation of that worship? is fear the ruling principle of our religion? Is it not rather the mother of superstition?

Yes,--that principle which prompts us to pay involuntary homage to the Infinite, the Incomprehensible, the Sublime, forms the very basis of our religion.²

Although that was written eleven years before "Ktaadn," Thoreau's mountain experience in "Ktaadn" clearly involves "an involuntary homage to the Infinite, the Incomprehensible, the Sublime."

When Thoreau finally reaches Katahdin's summit the tone of the narrative completely changes. Until then Thoreau is a rational observer, who carefully describes all he sees along the way. But on the mountain's summit he becomes disoriented. Something seems to take hold of him-- "Vast, Titanic, inhuman Nature has got him at disadvantage, caught him alone, and pilfers him of his divine faculty" (p. 64). His response to Katahdin is emotional, with none of the objective clarity of the first part of the narrative. The experience has a powerful impact and leaves

him with an overwhelming sense of awe and reverence for the power of creation. Yet it is important to note that Romantic theories of the sublime essentially involve high admiration, enthusiasm, and emotional response to vast scenery. Thoreau's response to the Katahdin summit, however, is not a result of the vista, as is the case in Cape Cod, for any view from the mountain is hidden by the clouds. Thoreau does not even experience the immensity of space or the grandeur of the mountain's rise. The fact is that Thoreau's response is not aesthetic, but a result of his psychological state of mind. By clarifying what happens to Thoreau at the climax of "Ktaadn," it is easier to appreciate the significance of his experience and the philosophical implications of the essay.

Long before an aesthetic developed to explain men's response to mountains or the sublime in nature, men spoke of having mystical experiences on mountains. Because Thoreau's Katahdin experience seems to be more psychological than aesthetic, I believe that it should be understood as a mystical experience as well as a Romantic traveler's response to the sublime. There is a tremendous body of literature that attempts to explicate mystical experience. William James, in The Varieties of Religious Experience, offers a handy, explicit definition from the point of view of psychology, not religion. According to James, all mystical experience involves four characteristics: 1) ineffability, 2) noetic quality, 3) transiency, and 4) passivity.³ As I read "Ktaadn," Thoreau's experience involves all of these. It is most significant, however, that his mountain experience does not include the mystic's ultimate sense of oneness or union with God or nature. Rather it shows a basic separation between man and nature. Moreover, the noetic aspect of "Ktaadn" basically concerns man's relation to creation and the cosmos, and has very little to do with his relation to God.

The failure of conventional Romantic expectations and the narrator's initial assumptions about mountains, man, and nature, along with the inadequacy of his mystical experience is the basis of the meaning of the first section of The Maine Woods.

Initially Thoreau is interested in discovering the true wilderness—nature untouched by man. Thoreau relates his journey as a departure from the amenities of civilization. By train and steamboat Thoreau travels to Bangor to meet George Thatcher. From Bangor they travel two days by horse and buggy along the Penobscot River to Mattawankeag, where they meet their companions. From that point there is no further road, so they hike for the next day and a half through the woods. At the last cabin they engage two lumbermen as guides. Then, to get to the foot of Mt. Katahdin, they traverse lakes and rivers. The expedition is a dramatic move into a wilderness that becomes increasingly wild, alien, and impenetrable. Explanations of the supplies that are necessary for the journey, of difficulties of carrying batteau across portages, and of inclement weather attest to the challenges civilized man encounters on his foray into the wilderness. As these men advance into the forest, they venture farther and farther from civilization, passing from the last settler's cabin, to a rough logging camp, to the remains of an Indian campsite near the foot of Katahdin. Perhaps the potential threat of the wilderness is already evident to the narrator. Nevertheless, when he confronts true wilderness, totally alone, on the mountain's summit, he is shocked by the alienation he experiences. Until this point Thoreau is interested in the life of the woodsmen, the hardships they face, and their fellowship in camping and exploring together. But on Katahdin the focus of the

narrative changes drastically—so much so that the meaning of the essay revolves around this incident.

Thoreau is unprepared for what he finds on Katahdin. He is bewildered. His primary impression is that of being surrounded by clouds. Thoreau says: "The summit was concealed by mist At length I entered within the skirts of the cloud which seemed forever drifting over the summit I was deep within the hostile ranks of clouds, and all objects were obscured by them. . . . It was like sitting in a chimney and waiting for the smoke to blow away. It was, in fact, a cloud factory . . ." (p. 63-64). Generally in Thoreau's writing "clouds" signify an inability to discern the truth. A number of critics have used this cloud symbolism in arguing that the Katahdin ascent was a failure in Thoreau's quest for truth. It is worth noting, however, that in a classic of mystical literature, The Cloud of Unknowing, "clouds" are used as a metaphor for the temporary lack of understanding that its author considers a necessary part of the mystical process. Although this anonymous Middle English Christian work was not known in the nineteenth century, it is perhaps significant that cloud symbolism used in connection with mystical experience is found in other works. I suggest that in "Ktaadn" Thoreau uses cloud imagery in a similar fashion—as a symbol of the temporary inability to see or know, and that this unknowing is indicative of his state of consciousness.

What Thoreau initially suggests metaphorically through clouds and mist, he states in a more direct manner later on in the same passage:

Some part of the beholder, even some vital part, seems to escape through the loose grating of his ribs as he ascends. He is more lone than you can imagine. There is less of substantial thought and fair understanding in him, than in the plains where men inhabit. His reason is dispersed and shadowy, more thin and subtile like the air. Vast, Titanic,

inhuman Nature has got him at disadvantage, caught him alone, and pilfers him of some of his divine faculty (p. 64).

This passage clearly indicates that Thoreau's state of mind is removed from logic or understanding. In discussing mysticism, James says, "Mystical states are more like states of feeling than states of intellect. No one can make clear to another who has never had a certain feeling, in what the quality or worth of it consists."⁴ Thoreau's experience on the summit is simply a presentiment, an intuition, and a feeling. The glimpses of sunlight through the clouds are symbolic of those brief moments of light or truth he is able to perceive on the mountain. A clear view or understanding at this point would be premature in the context of a mystical experience. Thus clouds are a perfect symbol of the quality of his experience.

That Thoreau is experiencing a mystical state of consciousness on Katahdin's summit becomes more evident if that part of the narrative is examined in relation to other key sections of Thoreau's mountain experience. In his initial exploration of the mountain side, Thoreau stresses the physical exertion required to climb a mountain. He explains: "Following up the course of the torrent which occupied this--and I mean to lay some emphasis on this word up--pulling myself up by the roots of fir and birches, and then, perhaps, walking a level rod or two in the thin stream . . ." (p. 60). On the summit, however, clouds drift and wind blows, but Thoreau is passive. Something takes hold of him, and he loses his self-awareness. Moreover, after he reaches the peak of Katahdin, there is a change in point of view. Thoreau no longer speaks of himself as "I," but as "the beholder." In effect he moves out of himself. Likewise the modes of perception and comprehension on the

summit can be contrasted with those of the initial exploration and the descent. As Thoreau first explores the mountain side, the surrounding scenery of thickets, torrents, and ravines is described within the conventional sublime. Later on in this passage he uses another traditional means to describe this "treacherous country." He says:

Having slumped, scrambled, rolled, bounced and walked, by turns, over this scraggy country, I arrived upon a side-hill . . . where rocks, gray, silent rocks, were the flocks and herds that pastured, chewing a rocky cud at sunset. They looked at me with hard gray eyes, without a bleat or a low (p. 61).

One critic argues that this is a "fine instance of Coleridgean fancy— . . . a compulsive assertion of the sufficiency of man to make a place in the wilderness for its own business."⁵ Garber suggests that when Thoreau reaches the summit and can no longer find an analogy between the imagination and the landscape, it is a failure of his imaginative powers. I agree, but would add that the failure of the imagination or of the sublime aesthetic on Katahdin's summit demonstrates that Thoreau's experience there ultimately involves another kind of apprehension, i.e. mystical intuition. Moreover, the "Ktaadn" experience is not entirely a failure for his inability to see is but a passing cloud, and his experience ultimately brings him closer to an understanding of his relation to nature.

Considering that the journey to Katahdin's summit is the *raison d'etre* of the essay this passage is relatively short, as mystical experiences are, while the ascent is long and arduous. Yet the transcendency of his experience is most obviously marked by an abrupt ending, when Thoreau suddenly switches to an historical passage concerning the state geological surveyor's measurement of Katahdin. The factual nature

of that passage, by contrast, points up the transcendental nature of Thoreau's experience. It is sometime after, when Thoreau and his companions pass over burnt lands, that normal consciousness returns and he can again give visual descriptions with realistic details and fanciful comparisons.

Not until this point does Thoreau gain any sort of insight into the meaning of his experience, and even then he does not present a straightforward explanation of what has taken place. In fact, the "Burnt Lands" passage remains one of the most difficult in all of Thoreau. For that reason, it is necessary to examine the passage in detail and as it is related to the other key parts of the Katahdin experience.

During the Katahdin ascent the substance of Thoreau's discovery is suggested by numerous mythic allusions. It is interesting that in an earlier draft of "Ktaadn" Thoreau included a "digression about the nature of fable and myth."⁶ Although Robert Cosbey, who examined the draft, does not discuss the content of this digression, I think that one can assume that the discussion of myth in the draft is similar to that in the Journal and in the "Sunday" chapter of The Week, as they were all written at about the same time. Elizabeth Seybold says that in the Journal Thoreau "moved steadily towards the idea that myth contained the substance of truth" and that myth approached universal language.⁷ In the final version of "Ktaadn," Thoreau deleted the discussion of myth as truth in favor of a more artistic integration of man's myths about mountains with his own experience. In this way, he transforms "Ktaadn" into an archetype of man's confrontation with mountains and the power of nature. How these allusions are made provides a clue to the meaning of his experience.

The first time Thoreau leaves his companions to explore higher ground, he says:

I began to work my way, scarcely less arduous than Satan's anciently through Chaos, up the nearest, though not the highest peak. At first scrambling on all fours over the tops of ancient black spruce-trees, (Abies negra,) old as the flood, . . . their tops flat and spreading, and their foliage blue and nipt with cold, as if for centuries they had ceased growing upward against the bleak sky, the solid cold This was the sort of garden I made my way over . . . certainly the most treacherous and porous country I ever travelled

"_____ nigh founder'd, on he fares,
Treading the crude consistence, half on foot,
Half flying " (p. 60-61).

The quotation is from Book II, Paradise Lost, and Thoreau is alluding to Satan's ascent through Chaos in search of the Garden of Eden. Less obviously, Thoreau also seems to be alluding to Thomas Burnet's Sacred Theory of the Earth, in which Burnet argues that mountains were formed as a result of the deluge.⁸ The allusions to both Milton and Burnet, however, are ironic, for on Katahdin Thoreau does not find a garden as did Satan, but a "vast aggregation of loose rocks"; and he does not find the mountain as "old as the flood," but an "undone extremity of the globe . . . in the process of formation" (p. 63). In a sense Thoreau walks into the process of creation, for he discovers an earth which is ever forming. His discovery is a corroboration of the uniformitarianism of Lyell's Principles of Geology and not of the catastrophism of Burnet or Judeo-Christian theology. Lyell's geological studies suggested that the earth had not been made in seven days, but had developed over eons of time. Such evolutionary theories destroyed the belief that man was especially created by God in His image, and thus broke down the wall between the animal kingdom and human

realm. The implications of Thoreau's discovery, which do not begin to emerge until he is passing through burnt land, are of primary importance in his next Maine essay.⁹

Later Thoreau returns alone again, and after climbing over huge rocks he finally reaches the mountain top. He says: "It reminded me of the creations of old epics and dramatic poets, of Atlas, Vulcan, the Cyclops, and Prometheus. Such was the Caucasus and the rocks where Prometheus was bound It was vast, Titanic, and such as man never inhabits Pomola is always angry with those who climb to the summit of Ktaadn" (p. 64-5). Like Satan, these classical gods, full of pride and insolent to a higher being, were kicked out of heaven. Atlas, Vulcan, the Cyclops, and Prometheus were condemned to inhabit the mountains for their behavior.¹⁰ According to Penobscot myth, man's attempt to explore nature's highest realms is an effrontery to the gods. On Katahdin, Thoreau senses that he is a trespasser and is not welcome. Nature "does not smile on him as in the plains. She seems to say sternly, why came ye here before your time?" (p. 64). Again Thoreau quotes Satan in Paradise Lost:

Chaos and ancient Night, I come no spy
With purpose to explore or to disturb
The secrets of your realm, but * * *
* * * * * * * * as my way
Lies through your spacious empire up to light " (p. 64).

These allusions serve to show that our myths have commonly associated mountains with man's pride, with his desire to reach beyond his realm and to pry into the mysteries of life, and with his transgressions against his maker. Only demi-gods and presumptuous men seek light

beyond the mountains. Simple races and men do not--"their [mountain] tops are sacred and mysterious tracts never visited by them" (p. 65). Is Thoreau suggesting that man should be satisfied with superstitious explanations of phenomena? In spite of the fact that he shows how myths express universal sentiments, his meaning is certainly not so simple. Thoreau's journey to Katahdin is a quest. Like Satan, he is seeking a way to light. On Katahdin Thoreau is reminded of the fate of others who sought to go beyond the vistas of ordinary man. Thoreau's experience, which parallels that of man's myths, suggests that although man's quest for higher knowledge and experience is a heroic pursuit, he should expect that at times he will be disillusioned, diminished, and even isolated by that search.

Thoreau comes to the mountain in anticipation of some sort of communion with, if not God, at least the mountain as part of nature. Yet he experiences something vastly different. Man's myths or Romantic notions about mountains do not prepare him for the reality he finds. On Katahdin he is shocked by the drear, awesome and hostile in nature. Ironically then, while his experience is mystical in a psychological sense, he is alienated from what he finds on Katahdin. Furthermore he discovers an absolute indifference of nature to man.

The identification of nature's indifference to man is the most important lesson of his experience, for it eventually changes his way of looking at the world. Initially this idea is advanced through ironic allusions to Burnet and Milton. But during the descent Thoreau states the irony of man's presumptions: "We habitually presume [man's] presence and influence everywhere" (p. 70). Man he says, conceives of the earth as "made for ever and ever,—to be the dwelling of man, we

say,--so nature made it, and man may use it if he can" (p. 70).

Thoreau seems to be implying that the order or meaning he finds in nature is the order he is able to perceive. "Here," he says, "was no man's garden, but the unhandselled globe. It was not lawn, nor pasture, nor mead, nor woodland, nor arable, nor wasteland" (p. 70)--all of which acquire their meaning through man's ability to conceive of order out of wilderness. This idea is only suggested here, but it becomes very important in "Chesuncook," the next section of The Maine Woods, where Thoreau illustrates that man does not know because he sees, but sees because he knows.

The second lesson of "Ktaadn" involves Thoreau's confrontation with pure matter and inorganic nature. On Katahdin, Thoreau sees the mountain as a "vast aggregation of loose rocks" (p. 63). The word "rocks" is repeated again and again. In this "unfinished part of the globe" rocks represent essential phenomena. When Thoreau is better able to understand his experience, in the "Burnt Land" section, he elaborates:

What is it to be admitted to a museum, to see a myriad of particular things, compared with being shown some star's surface, some hard matter in its home! I stand in awe of my body, this matter to which I am bound has become so strange to me. I fear not spirits, ghosts, of which I am one,—that my body might,—but I fear bodies, I tremble to meet them. What is this Titan that has possession of me? Talk of mysteries!—Think of our life in nature,—daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it,—rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks; the solid earth! the actual world! the common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? where are we? (p. 71).

This passage has been given more critical attention than any other part of The Maine Woods. It is filled with broken epithets, exclamatory statements, and philosophical questions. Although frenzied and

emotionally charged, I believe that it contains a summation of the underlying concerns explored in "Ktaadn" and The Maine Woods--What is truth? and how do we come to know truth? Inherent in this passage are fundamental epistemological problems concerning the reality of matter and spirit and the sources and grounds of knowledge that are not easily explained by a Romantic aesthetic or mystical experience.

Ironically Thoreau uses the language of mystics, i.e. "I stand in awe of my body, this matter to which I am bound has become so strange to me. I fear not spirits, ghosts, of which I am one,—that my body might,—but I fear bodies, I tremble to meet them" (p. 71). In terms of "Ktaadn's" meaning it is most significant that this separation of body and soul does not provide a mystical revelation of spirit. Instead, it provides a revelation of matter. In effect, as his spirit leaves his body his body becomes the object. Thoreau senses a duality of mind and matter, and experiences the extremes of both--primera materia and mystical consciousness. But his awe and reverence are directed towards matter and the body. He finds that apprehension of truth begins not with the intellect or spirit but in physical fact, the "actual world," and experience.

By virtue of the italicized words alone, in the conclusion of this key passage, Thoreau is stressing the material and sensuous aspects of existence--i.e. "the solid earth! the actual world! the common sense! Contact! Contact!" Of course Thoreau's desire for contact with the earth is not peculiar to this work. More unusual and more significant, however, is Thoreau's use of "common sense." The Oxford English Dictionary lists three meanings of the phrase that could apply in Thoreau's passage. These are: 1. "An 'internal sense' which was

regarded as the common body or centre of the five senses." 2. "The endowment of natural intelligence possessed by rational beings, . . . the plain wisdom which is every man's inheritance." 3. "Philos. The faculty of primary truths; 'the complement of those cognitions or convictions which we receive from nature: which all men therefore possess in common; and by which they test the truth of knowledge, and the morality of actions.'" Common sense philosophy is founded on the idea that our "common sense" assures us of certain first truths, such as that there is an external world and that our minds are incorporeal-- truths which cannot be made evident by deductive proofs. In "Thoreau's Philosophical Apprenticeship," Kwiat discusses Thoreau's reading of both Locke and the Scottish common sense philosophers while at Harvard, and the impact that reading had on his thinking. Kwiat sees "Thoreau as breaking away from the tyranny of the earth-creeping quality of the Scottish common-sense school and arriving at a more complete acceptance of the intuitive principles of Transcendentalism" ¹¹

Kwiat, however, studies Thoreau only up until the time the Transcendental manifesto appeared in the Dial in 1840. Yet Thoreau was never completely comfortable with Emersonian idealism. In fact Thoreau's delight in the physical experience of nature is a primary difference between Thoreau and his mentor. Apparently Thoreau is looking to common sense philosophy in "Ktaadn" because it recognizes that man must begin from solid material reality and experience, and because it tolerates his desire for the dual experience of the physical world and spiritual illumination.

Nevertheless, common sense philosophy does not gloss the problem of Thoreau's fragmented vision which sees a separation of body and

soul and man and nature. Such a vision is contrary to the general notion of mysticism as an experience of union of the soul with God and nature. What then does Thoreau's experience mean for him? Does it get him any closer to his idea of Truth, or is it a moment of failure in his search? Thoreau's climb of Katahdin is part of his attempt to understand creation and his relation to it. Implicit in an understanding of Katahdin is a sense of communion with the mountain not alienation from it; and traditional mystical experience provides that. Nevertheless, the alienation Thoreau experiences provides him with a personal vision which is ultimately more meaningful, albeit discomfoting. Intially, he is awed by the power and mystery of creation that he apprehends on Katahdin. He sees Katahdin as separate from man and the rest of Maine's wilderness. Thoreau finds that there is a side of nature that is indifferent to humankind, and perhaps even hostile. By comparison to the magnificence of the mountain, man is limited and almost insignificant. Most importantly, Katahdin destroys any anthropocentric perspective Thoreau might have held of the world. On Katahdin he confronts nature without a trace of man. If nature exists without man and is therefore independent of man, what then is man's place in the scheme of things? Finally he asks: "Who are we? where are we?" (p. 71). Throughout the remainder of The Maine Woods Thoreau is concerned with the answers to those questions and the ways in which man can hope to find those answers.

Thoreau's summary of the return from Katahdin is very brief. On one hand, this points out the transciency of his state of consciousness on Katahdin. But on the other hand, a few key passages indicate that his way of looking at the world has indeed changed. These passages will be examined in the next chapter, as they are more

closely involved with his concerns in "Chesuncook." In "Ktaadn" Thoreau focuses on man's apprehension of that which is other than man--the true wilderness and the unknowable side of nature. This is something that he can intuit but cannot see or understand. Thoreau's experience involves the innate reverence man holds for the mystery and power of creation and his own being. Although his contact with Katahdin has the force of a mystical experience, it does not leave him with a sense of oneness with the world. The incompleteness of his vision creates a necessity for a return to the Maine woods.

The process of education in "Ktaadn" becomes the pattern for "Chesuncook" and "Allegash." In "Ktaadn" the narrator sets out on a journey with Romantic assumptions about the sublimity of mountains and civilized man's presumptions about the importance of man in nature. Thoreau, through this persona, sets the narrator up for his ultimate disillusionment. Throughout The Maine Woods there is a pattern of continuous observation and occasional mystical moments, and within each section there is a progression from the traveler's initial expectations, a climactic experience, and a resulting change in point of view. Furthermore, throughout The Maine Woods light and mist are symbolic of states of knowledge and consciousness. If it is coincidence that Thoreau begins each journey in rain and fog, it is also symbolic--for the knowledge and insight gained on each trip enable Thoreau to see better his surroundings and his relation to them by the end of the trip. In the next two sections of The Maine Woods Thoreau focuses on other means of apprehending truth and man's relationship to nature and to man. In "Ktaadn" Thoreau occasionally suggests the importance of man's ability to create meaning, significance, and his own place in a

tender and hostile world. This particular capability is explored more fully in "Chesuncook," the next section of The Maine Woods.

Chapter IV

"Chesuncook"

Of the three sections of The Maine Woods, "Chesuncook" has been given the least critical attention. In one of the few discussions of Thoreau's second Maine essay, John F. Jacques describes it as the least artistic part of The Maine Woods.¹ Nevertheless, the external evidence suggests that for the purposes of his Maine book, Thoreau was most satisfied with "Chesuncook." When he was preparing the Maine material for publication as a unit, this section received only minimal changes. Actually revision and perfection of "Chesuncook" had taken place long before The Maine Woods was finalized.

Thoreau made his trip to Chesuncook Lake in September 1853. In December of that year he wrote to Francis Underwood, who was attempting to gather literary material for a projected magazine, that he was sending him "a complete article of fifty-seven pages."² Carl Bode, editor of Thoreau's correspondence, speculates that the article was an early version of "Chesuncook;" but if it was, it was a much shorter version. The version that was finally published was not completed until after Thoreau's last trip to Maine and after the first draft of "Allegash." Thus in writing "Chesuncook" and "Allegash" Thoreau broke away from the actual chronology of his trips. For the question of artistic or biographical conception of The Maine Woods, it is most significant that in

a letter to his publisher accompanying the first package of "Chesuncook," "Thoreau made his earliest suggestion that the Maine narratives would be gathered as a book He also requested that the proofs be sent to him 'on account of Indian names, &c.'"³ Thus, the textual history indicates that Thoreau began to see a direction for a book of his Maine excursions while he was working on "Chesuncook," and that he composed "Chesuncook" with this longer work in mind. In this chapter I attempt to show that "Chesuncook" is central to an organic unity in The Maine Woods--not only because The Maine Woods began to take shape as Thoreau was writing "Chesuncook," but because "Chesuncook" is pivotal to the themes of the book. "Chesuncook" develops out of the "Ktaadn" experience and affects his experience in "Allegash."

"Chesuncook" is in no way less artistic than "Ktaadn;" it is simply different in tone. Like "Ktaadn," "Chesuncook" has a turning point that results from a transcendental experience that is intrinsic to the artist's perception of the world and that affects the way he views nature and man.

It could be said that "Chesuncook" begins in the conclusion of "Ktaadn." It is there that Thoreau first formulates ideas that become major concerns in "Chesuncook." Throughout "Ktaadn" Thoreau develops a sense of the absolute wildness of the Maine forest. In "Ktaadn's" conclusion he says:

It is even more grim and wild than you had anticipated, a damp and intricate wilderness, in the spring everywhere wet and miry. The aspect of the country indeed is universally stern and savage, excepting the distant views of forest from hills, and lake prospects, which are mild and civilizing in a degree (p. 80).

The psychological relief from the dense and intricate forest provided by "open intervals and glades" and lakes is explored aesthetically and symbolically in "Chesuncook." What do these vistas mean to civilized man? If the wilderness and its effects on man can be considered a theme of "Ktaadn," the influence of man on the wilderness can be considered equally a theme of "Chesuncook."

Another major concern in "Chesuncook" is also posed in "Ktaadn's" conclusion. "Who shall describe the inexpressible tenderness and immortal life of the grim forest . . .?" Thoreau asks (p. 81). Throughout "Chesuncook" Thoreau argues that the only one who understands and thus can describe the untamed forest is the poet, who "loves the pine" and seeks the truth. And in turn, the forest is necessary for the sustenance of the poet.

There are not only stately pines, but fragile flowers, like the ochrises commonly described as too delicate for cultivation, which derive their nutriment from the crudest moss of peat. They remind us that, not only for strength, but for beauty, the poet must from time to time travel the logger's path and the Indian's trail, to drink at some new and more bracing fountain of the Muses, far in the recesses of the wilderness (p. 156).

Thoreau comes to Chesuncook as a poet—"as reporter or chaplain to the hunters" (p. 99)—to interpret the spiritual meaning of the forest. What underlies the poet's sensitivity, and what brings about his understanding of nature is a primary issue in "Chesuncook."

The lessons of "Ktaadn" clearly affect his perspective in "Chesuncook." As soon as Thoreau reaches the Maine woods on his second trip, a change in his attitude towards nature is discernible. He

notes that he had "hardly got out of the streets of Bangor before [he] began to be exhilarated by the sight of wild fir and spruce tops, and those other primitive evergreens, peering through the mist in the horizon" (p. 86). Since "Ktaadn," he seems to have acquired an interest in the details of forest life and so relates with care the variety of flora and fauna he finds:

We saw large flocks of pigeons, and several times came within a rod or two of partridges in the road The mountain ash was very handsome, as also the wayfarers tree, or hobble bush The Canada thistle . . . was the prevailing weed all the way to the lake, the roadside in many places and fields not long cleared being densely filled with it as with a crop to the exclusion of everything else. There were very few flowers, even allowing for the lateness of the season There were many late buttercups, however, and two fire-weeds, erechites and epilobium . . . (p. 87).

Later Thoreau is even more specific, using both common and scientific names and noting prevalence of plants here in comparison with that in Concord. On several occasions Thoreau mentions that his botanical interests take preference over hunting. In "Ktaadn," on the other hand, there is very little discussion of flora or fauna, except in the conclusion. It is as if his experience on Katahdin, when he senses a lesser importance in himself and mankind, brings new importance to other forms of life.

Ostensibly Thoreau's second trip to Maine is to be a moose hunt. Yet it soon becomes clear that Thoreau now has new interest in animal life as in plant life. At the beginning of "Chesuncook" Thoreau sees a pair of moose horns serving as a guide post, and he remarks: "After the experience which I shall relate, I trust that I shall have a better excuse for killing a moose, than that I may hang my hat on his horns" (p. 88). This comment obviously serves as foreshadowing. Yet more

often Thoreau discusses moose—their whereabouts, appearance, and habits—with curiosity, to build suspense around his anticipation of actually seeing one. At the climax, when he finally does, Thoreau describes the physical attributes of a dead and bleeding moose with great accuracy. Through this point Thoreau observes nature with intellectual interest and curiosity. But later, at the turning point in the narrative, Thoreau's interest in nature intensifies and deepens to affection and sympathy.

In a similar fashion, Thoreau exhibits a developing interest in the Indian and his ways. At the beginning of "Ktaadn," he describes the Indian guides as "dull" and "greasy-looking" and is glad when they do not show up for the trip. By "Chesuncook," however, Thoreau seeks an opportunity to study an Indian and becomes a careful observer of his Indian guide, Joe Aitteon. Although Thoreau is disappointed in Aitteon because he lacks the skills of a hunter and a woodsman and because he has acquired the ways of the white man, at the end of the trip he chooses to spend the night in a smelly Indian camp in preference to the more civilized lumberers' camp. Thus it can be said that Thoreau's interest in all undomesticated life—plants, animals, and men—is greater from the beginning of "Chesuncook" than in "Ktaadn." Furthermore, in "Chesuncook," as in "Ktaadn," Thoreau has a unique experience which affects all that happens to him thereafter. This experience ultimately gives him the deepest sympathy for all life, symbolized by the moose, the pine, and the Indian. As in "Ktaadn," an understanding of the nature of his experience is a key to the meaning of the essay.

The steamer trip at the beginning of "Chesuncook" serves as a prelude to Thoreau's experiences on his second Maine excursion. Since this

episode was actually part of Thoreau's Katahdin trip, it is important to consider why Thoreau included it in "Chesuncook" and what relation it has to the rest of the essay.⁴ Most obviously, there are literal parallels between the steamer and the "Chesuncook" trip. Water and moonlight serve as a background throughout the essay. Less obviously, though more importantly, water and moonlight are part of a symbolic cluster basic to the primary themes in "Chesuncook." Water from streams, lakes, rivers and the sea form a veritable network in "Chesuncook." In fact "Chesuncook," as Thoreau notes, is an Indian word meaning "a place where many streams empty in" (p. 321). The symbolic link of water with moonlight throughout the essay is closely related to the "chesuncook" concept. As Thoreau and his companions paddle quietly along the lake's shores, they hear only the ripple of water or occasional sounds in the forest, and see only the water glistening in the moonlight and trees silhouetted against the sky. In modern terms, this reduction of stimuli creates an environment that is conducive to thought and meditation. Thoreau's mind is free to wander much in the way the water flows. Thoreau discusses the peculiar effects of moonlight in a number of writings. In his Journal he says that in the moonlight "I am less conscious than in the sun, my instincts have more influence," and that "moonlight is more favorable to meditation than sunlight."⁵ The essay "Night and Moonlight" is entirely devoted to this matter. As becomes clear in the climax of "Chesuncook," water and moonlight, introduced in the beginning episode, function in the Romantic tradition as stimuli for and symbols of the imagination. In terms of artistic integrity, it is significant that motifs suggesting the imaginative process are introduced in the beginning episode, and

significant that the resulting vision of the unity of all life is inherently a product of his imaginative powers.

The succeeding narrative relates the process of tracking down moose. By day they look for signs of moose. In the late afternoon they look for a spot to camp and collect wood for the evening fire. After nightfall they hunt for moose along the lakes. While Thoreau says that he "had not come a-hunting, and felt some compunctions about accompanying the hunters, [he] wished to see a moose near at hand, and was not sorry to learn how the Indian managed to kill one" (p. 99). Again Thoreau is seeking actual experience and contact with physical reality--in this case with moose. He gets pleasure in discerning signs of moose--finding numerous tracks near the "pokelogsans," listening for a response to the moose call, and seeing a pair of moose horns along the shore. The first time he sees moose he says, "They made me think of great frightened rabbits, with their long ears and half inquisitive half frightened looks; true denizens of the forest" (p. 110). At that moment the Indian guide, Joe Aitteon, shoots. But the moose get away and the party must track them down. Still early in the afternoon, they find one, dead and swollen with water. Here Thoreau gives the physical dimensions of the moose in great detail, because he "did not wish to be obliged to say merely that the moose was very large" (p. 113). He watches the skinning of the moose and sees "that still warm and palpitating body pierced with a knife, . . . the warm milk stream from the rent udder, and the ghastly naked red carcass appearing from its seemly robe . . ." (p. 115). Yet later that afternoon, when they roast the moose, he is able to enjoy its taste and describes it as being "like tender beef, with perhaps more flavor; sometimes like veal" (p. 117). The decided change in Thoreau's perspective on the

moose killing comes later, after dark, when he is being rowed along by Aitteon in the moonlight.

The passage describing that experience is critical to the meaning of the entire "Chesuncook" section. Thus it is presented here in full:

After supper, the moon having risen, we proceeded to hunt a mile up this stream, first carrying about the falls. We made a picturesque sight wending single-file along the shore, climbing over rocks and logs. Joe, who brought up the rear, twirling his canoe in his hands as if it were a feather, in places where it was difficult to get along without a burden. We launched the canoe again from the ledge over which the stream fell, but after half a mile of still water suitable for hunting, it became rapid again, and we were compelled to make our way along the shore, while Joe endeavored to get up in the birch alone, though it was still very difficult for him to pick his way amid the rocks in the night. We on the shore found the worst of walking, a perfect chaos of fallen and drifted trees, and of bushes projecting far over the water, and now and then we made our way across the mouth of a small tributary on a kind of net-work of alders. So we went tumbling on in the dark, being on the shady side, effectually scaring all the moose and bears that might be thereabouts. At length we came to a standstill, and Joe went forward to reconnoitre, but he reported that it was still a continuous rapid as far as he went, or half a mile, with no prospect of improvements, as if it were coming down from a mountain. So we turned about, hunting back to the camp through the still water. It was a splendid moonlight night, and I, getting sleepy as it grew late, for I had nothing to do, found it difficult to realize where I was. This was much more unfrequented than the main stream, lumbering operations being no longer carried on in this quarter. It was only three or four rods wide, but the firs and spruce through which it trickled seemed yet taller by contrast. Being in this dreamy state, which the moonlight enhanced, I did not clearly discern the shore, but seemed, most of the time, to be floating through ornamental grounds, for I associated the fir tops with such scenes--very high up some Broadway, and beneath or between their tops I thought I saw an endless succession of porticoes and columns, cornices and facades, verandas and churches. I did not merely fancy this, but in my drowsy state such was the illusion. I fairly lost myself in sleep several times, still dreaming of that architecture and the nobility that dwelt behind and might issue from it; but all at once I would be aroused and brought

back to a sense of my actual position, by the sound of Joe's birch horn in the midst of all this silence calling the moose - ugh, ugh oo, oo, oo oo oo oo, and I prepared to hear a furious moose come rushing and crashing through the forest, and see him burst out on to the little strip of meadow by our side (p. 117-118).

For one thing, Thoreau is telling us something about his state of consciousness at this point. He says: "I, getting sleepy as it grew late, for I had nothing to do, found it difficult to realize where I was I fairly lost myself in sleep several times, still dreaming." Thoreau is in a half-way region of consciousness, fluctuating between sleep and wakefulness. The exterior scenery begins to blend with the illusions produced by the workings of his mind. In this passage Thoreau illustrates the effects of the interplay of consciousness and unconsciousness. By the time Thoreau was writing "Chesuncook," dreams and the drowsy state were clearly associated with poetic creations. The two most celebrated poems on the imagination in the English language are products of this association. In the note accompanying "Kubla Khan," Coleridge claims that the entire poem was a product of a dream. In Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" the poet in a drowsy state is carried away by his imagination, "viewless wings of Poesy," to quite another world. Yet, should there be any doubts about what Thoreau's dream state is, Thoreau couples it with all the appropriate symbols of the imagination. Moonlight, the most frequent symbol of the imagination, is mentioned three times in this passage. Thoreau in fact says that his consciousness is affected by the moonlight, i.e. "this drowsy state which the moonlight enhanced" (p. 118).

In addition to an emphasis on the dream state, there are other concepts associated with the imaginative process in this passage.

Floating down a tributary "more unfrequented than the main stream" evokes the concept of the imagination as the streaming of thought into unexplored areas of the mind. As he drifts along, he envisions that the pines towering above are "porticoes and columns, cornices and facades, verandas and churches"--all products of man's creative ability. The juxtaposition of natural phenomena and man's creations illustrates the interrelation between nature and the imaginative process. In the nineteenth century all these images and ideas were commonly associated with the imagination. So the real issue is not whether Thoreau is illustrating the imaginative process, but what is the significance of the imagination at this point in The Maine Woods, and what does the imagination mean to the narrator and to man.

Some answers are given in the pages immediately following this dream fragment, when Thoreau's discussion turns to a concern for man's killing of the moose and man's use of the pine. The illusions of his imagination while on the moonlit lake suggest in symbolic form the worth of his experience. Trees in the foreground of his vision become man-made structures in his imagination, suggesting man's use of the pine. He dreams of "the nobility that dwelt behind" this architecture and prepares "to hear a furious moose come rushing and crashing through the forest," suggesting man's offense against the moose. Thus this imaginative experience is a moral turning point and the climax of "Chesuncook." Imagination then is but a means to truth. It provides the narrator with an insight into man's proper relation to nature. The effect of this experience, though not as dramatic, is certainly as significant as his experience in "Ktaadn." It changes his perception of the moose and the pine, and ultimately his attitude towards man.

Although Thoreau witnesses hunting and shooting of animals by inept hunters and the appalling slaughter of the moose, it is not until after the dream fragment that he becomes fully aware of the implications of the hunt. Then Thoreau objects to "this hunting of the moose merely for the satisfaction of killing him--not even for the sake of his hide, without making any extraordinary exertion or running any risk yourself . . ." (p. 119). "It is," he says, "too much like going out by night to some woodside pasture and shooting your neighbor's horses. These are God's own horses, poor timid creatures . . ." (p. 119). In Walden's "Higher Laws," written sometime after his second trip to Maine, Thoreau discusses hunting as "one of the best parts of [one's] education" and as one's "first introduction to the forest, and the most original part of himself . . ." ⁶ But he adds that "no humane being, past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature." Man, he says, "goes thither at first as a hunter and fisher, until at last, if he has the seeds of a better life in him, . . . leaves the gun and fish-pole behind." ⁷ "Chesuncook" records the critical experience when a man leaves the gun behind. For Thoreau this act is a precursor of poetic thought--and not a common matter. "For one that comes with a pencil to sketch or sing," he says, "a thousand come with axe or rifle [I] was reminded that our life should be lived as tenderly and daintily as one would pluck a flower" (p. 120). At this point the two themes come together. Both the imagination and a love and sympathy for nature are shown to be essential to poetic experience and expression.

Simply by coming along on the moose hunt Thoreau feels that he has been an accomplice in the killing, and says, "nature looked sternly upon me on account of the murder of the moose" (p. 120-1). The murder of a

a beast as a crime against nature is not an uncommon theme in folklore or literature, especially in Romantic literature. In works such as Moby Dick or "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" the whale or the albatross take on mythic proportions. In "Chesuncook," however, the moose remain "frightened rabbits." But Thoreau extends this theme beyond a concern for man's senseless destruction of animal life to a condemnation of man's destruction of the pine. To Thoreau "the pine is no more lumber than man is, and to be made into boards and houses is no more its truest use than the truest use of a man is to be cut down and made into manure" (p. 121). In a sense this is a twentieth century idea. To editor James Russell Lowell, however, this challenge to the chain of being was either inconceivable or heretical--so much so that he removed a key sentence about the pine ("It is immortal as I am, and perchance will go to as high a heaven, there to tower above me still") from the first publication of "Chesuncook" in Atlantic Monthly. Thoreau's response to the expurgation was vehement. He called the omission a "mean and cowardly act." "The editor," he wrote, "has . . . no more right to omit a sentiment than to insert one, or put words into my mouth. I do not ask anybody to adopt my opinions, but I do expect that when they ask for them to print, they will print them, or obtain my consent to their alteration or omission."⁸ By removing that sentence, Lowell had in fact tampered with a primary theme in the essay. The white pine in "Chesuncook" becomes a symbol of man's disregard for "lower" forms of life. Thoreau's love of the pine, much as the mariner's love of "slimy creatures," affects his attitude towards mankind. The ability to sympathize with all forms of life brings the narrator in both works to appreciate his fellow man. The

idea of a common bond in all nature and a love for all living things is crucial to the developments in the rest of The Maine Woods.

A major change in the narrator's attitude is evidenced on the return trip when he chooses to stay at an Indian camp, which "was close and dirty and had an ill smell," in preference to the nearby lumberers' camp (p. 133). After his experiences with moose this choice is remarkable, for

refuse pieces of moose lay about the ground in different stages of decay, and some pieces also in the fire, half buried and sizzling in the ashes, as black and dirty as an old shoe Also a tremendous rib-piece was roasting before the fire, being impaled on an upright stake forced in and out between the ribs. There was a moose-hide stretched and curing on poles like ours, and quite a pile of cured skins close by. They had killed twenty-two moose within two months, but, as they could use but very little of the meat, they left the carcasses on the ground. Altogether it was about as savage a sight as was ever witnessed . . . (p. 135).

There is a growing interest in Indians in The Maine Woods, but this incident marks a real turning point.

At the Indian camp, for the first time in The Maine Woods, Thoreau is able to experience Indian life in the wilderness. He takes pleasure in observing their ways and in taking part in the community of their primitive camp. After dark, Thoreau and the Indians lie around the fire talking until midnight. They swap tales--Thoreau giving an account of Indian history and the Indians telling stories of their ancestors. They sing songs, and eventually fall asleep by the fire. The campfire-- shadows flickering on the faces of the red men and moose smoking over the fire--creates a background for this savage scene. Moreover, the fire provides a psychological warmth for two white men and four Indians. In the "Housewarming" chapter of Walden, Thoreau clearly associates the

fireplace with friendship and hospitality. In the Journal he observes that "men go to a fire for entertainment . . ." and that "eagerly men will run to a fire, in warm or in cold weather."⁹ In "Chesuncook" the campfire creates a feeling of personal involvement hitherto unexperienced in The Maine Woods. Companionship becomes a central theme in the final section of The Maine Woods.

Of even greater consequence, at this point, is Thoreau's recognition that the Indian has something unique to offer civilized man. Thoreau is interested in the way an Indian builds a camp, the way he smokes meat, and the way he dries moose. But primarily he is interested in the Indian's language, and they spend a good part of the evening discussing the meanings and origins of Indian words. Just before the Indian camp episode Thoreau praises the log structure at the lumberers' camp as "so primitive that you could at once refer to its source" (p. 126). Thoreau admires the Indian's language for the same reason. In his Journal Thoreau writes that in the Indian's language "there is some of the wild wood and its bristling branches still left," and that their language "reveals another, and wholly new life to us. Look at the word 'canoe,' and see what a story it tells of outdoor life" ¹⁰ From the beginning of The Maine Woods Thoreau shows an interest in Indian words. In fact on the first page of "Ktaadn" he explains two Indian words, "Ktaadn" and "no-see'ums." From the Indian camp episode, however, the Indian's language becomes a major concern.

For thematic and structural implications, it is important to note that portions of the material used in the Indian camp episode came from a Journal entry that records Thoreau's visit to an Indian camp in Concord, three years before the "Chesuncook" trip. ¹¹ The Concord material is

primarily of a factual nature, as is other information that Thoreau includes from De Bry's Collection of Voyages, Father Raseles's Dictionary of the Abenaki Language, and Eliot's Indian Bible. All these additions are significant in terms of the direction Thoreau would be taking in "Allegash"--particularly regarding his focus on the Indian's language. The specificity of scientific words and facts and the poetic quality of the Indian's language and his understanding of nature are illustrative, to Thoreau, of two kinds of knowledge and two ways in which man perceives his world.

In "Chesuncook" Thoreau is interested in Indians as primitive men, and as they are different from those who are more civilized. At the end of the trip, Thoreau and his cousin stop in Oldtown and call on Governor Neptune. Robert Sayre, in Thoreau and the American Indian, says that here Thoreau "produces a three page sketch which is mostly free of cliches of savagism," and that "Neptune is a kind of character simply not to be found in nineteenth century white literature."¹² Yet Neptune is appreciated mostly as an old Indian, as a chief of a disappearing race. Thoreau finds him in bed, "legs dangling from the bedside," and attended by various squaws, who must help the eighty-nine year old man out with his stories. Even though he is old, Thoreau finds Neptune's features "decidedly and refreshingly different from those of any of the upstart Native American party," "who cultivate the vices rather than the virtues of the white man" (p. 147). Thoreau delights in Neptune because he represents the Indian of the past. His concern is that the "Indian has but a feeble hold on his bow now," and that his way of life is vanishing (p. 146). Not until "Allegash" does Thoreau actually reveal an understanding of an Indian for more than the ideal

he represents. Nevertheless, the Indian camp section is the high point of the "Chesuncook" trip for Thoreau and marks the change in his attitude towards Indians.

In The Maine Woods Thoreau's appreciation of Indians develops out of his earlier experience in "Ktaadn" and "Chesuncook." The sympathy and understanding Thoreau gains in "Chesuncook" ultimately relates to the peculiar "Esemplastic" power of the imagination, to use Coleridge's term. On Katahdin's summit Thoreau is confronted with "a vast aggregation of loose rocks" and an "unfinished" part of the globe. Returning from Katahdin Thoreau passes through burnt lands which are "exceedingly wild and desolate" and "like some pasture run to waste." Thoreau is nearly oppressed by the chaos of the wilderness in "Ktaadn." Over and over again the untamed forest is described as savage and primitive. But in "Chesuncook" the forest takes on a picturesque beauty. Instead of a vast and drear wilderness, Thoreau "fancies" the forest as "ornamental grounds, with farmhouses in the rear. The canoe and yellow birch, beech, maple and elm are Saxon and Norman; but the spruce and fir, and pines generally, are Indian" (p. 108). In "Chesuncook" Thoreau shows that man creates for himself a place in the wilderness. Significantly, at the beginning of the key passage dealing with the imagination, Thoreau says, "We on the shore found the worst of walking, a perfect chaos of fallen and drifted trees, and bushes projecting far over the water . . ." (p. 117). His imaginative faculties, stimulated by the moonlight and placid waters, soon enable him to see these trees and bushes as "an endless succession of porticoes and columns, cornices and facades, verandas and churches" (p. 118). Thus he is able to reconstruct his world and find an order and meaning in the apparent chaos, and

perceive gardens and a Broadway out of the wilderness. Yet it should not be forgotten that for Thoreau poetic perception is primarily important as a means of apprehending truth. The "Ktaadn" experience is important because it has a humbling effect which serves to destroy many of the persona's preconceptions about man's place in nature. But after "Ktaadn" he is left with an incomplete vision, with questions, and with a sense of separateness between himself and nature and his mind and body. In the setting of the lakes, there is a reconciliation of those opposites. The narrator finds a sacredness in all life and regains the Romantic sense of the unity of man and nature. In "Chesuncook" Thoreau once again shows that man comes closest to the spirit of all things and the essence of life when he comes to understand the wilderness.

Only the poet can interpret and communicate the true meaning of the wilderness. And it is inspiration and creative thought that separate the poet from lumbermen and hunters. In the summary of "Chesuncook," however, Thoreau reveals a basic dilemma of the poet. The poet comes to the wilderness for inspiration and sustenance; yet "by his mere presence, almost, he changes the nature of the trees as no other creature does" (p. 151). How then can one know the wilderness if by his presence he alters it? Moreover, an even greater tension underlies civilized man's desire to experience the wild. While the "poet must, from time to time, travel the logger's path and the Indian's trail, to drink at some new and more bracing fountain of the Muses, far in the recesses of the wilderness" (p. 156), it is still a relief, says Thoreau, "to get back to our smooth but still varied landscape" (p. 155). "For a permanent residence . . . there [is] no comparison between this and the wilderness, necessary as the latter is

for a resource and a background . . ." (p. 155). Man is drawn to the wild, but needs civilization and society. Surely, a complete man must be part of both nature and society--but is that possible, and how? Thoreau explores the answers to those questions in "The Allegash and East Branch," the final section of The Maine Woods.

Chapter V

"The Allegash and East Branch"

Thus far I have tried to illustrate how a sense of place affects meaning in The Maine Woods. To summarize: In "Ktaadn," on the mountain's rocky, cloud covered summit Thoreau senses a chaos in nature. He leaves confused and alienated. When he returns to Maine he travels through the placid waters of Chesuncook Lake and experiences another side of Maine's woods, with boundaries and vistas. In "Chesuncook" Thoreau rediscovers order and meaning in nature. "The Allegash and East Branch," which recounts his last trip into the Maine woods, is longer and structurally more diffuse than either "Ktaadn" or "Chesuncook." But here again Thoreau basically follows the path of the trip, and the terrain reflects the challenges he faces, physically and psychologically.

In "The Allegash and East Branch" Thoreau, his Concord neighbor Edward Hoar, and his Indian guide Joe Polis travel through lakes, swamps and the rocky rapids of the Penobscot River. At night and, at Polis' insistence, on Sundays they make a camp, build a fire, and pitch a rudimentary tent. In "Allegash" Thoreau realizes how challenging survival in the wilderness is. Yet the time spent at camp, when he has a chance to look at his surroundings more closely, to reflect on his day's adventures and to enjoy the company of his fellow travelers, is just as much a part of his trip. As with "Ktaadn" and "Chesuncook," the title "The Allegash and East Branch" is indicative of the narrative's central

themes. In the "Appendix" to The Maine Woods Thoreau lists the Indian meaning of the work "Penobscot" (East Branch) as "Rocky River," and "Allagash" as "bark camp"--a name the Indians gave to this lake "from the fact of their keeping a hunting-camp there." Both experiences along the rocky water and at camp--the challenges of the wilds of nature and the pleasures of society--are crucial to the meaning of the final section of Thoreau's Maine book. Throughout The Maine Woods Thoreau is concerned with the value of wilderness experience for civilized man--its effect on thought and inner being. From the "Ktaadn" beginning it is clear that Thoreau seeks a revitalization in the wilderness, but finds the wild threatening. Thus while The Maine Woods is a book about the wilderness, Thoreau does not ignore man's opposing need for order and meaning. In "Allegash" Thoreau seeks a resolution to this dilemma.

The most meaningful part of Thoreau's last Maine trip was his experience with his Indian guide, Joe Polis. From comments to his friends and statements in his letters and Journal, it is evident that his association with Polis was as significant to Thoreau as his "Ktaadn" experience had been years earlier. Nevertheless, an account of the trip was never published during Thoreau's lifetime. Thoreau, who was always reticent about putting his friends' names in print, was afraid of offending Polis, whom he greatly respected. In a letter to James Russell Lowell, January 23, 1858, Thoreau wrote: "The more fatal objection to printing my last Maine-wood experience, is that my Indian guide, whose words I report very faithfully,--and they are the most interesting part of the story--knows how to read and takes a newspaper, so that I could not face him again."¹ Indisputably, Joe Polis is the subject of "Allegash." Thoreau studies him meticulously: he records his speech, his manners, his superstitions, and his knowledge about life in the

forest. He is the focal point of almost every episode in this section. Furthermore, the final meaning of "Allegash" evolves out of the interaction and growing friendship between Thoreau and Polis.

Critics see Thoreau's attention to his Indian guide in "Allegash" as the culmination of Thoreau's lifelong interest in Indians. During Thoreau's lifetime, his friends often compared him to "the Indian." Hawthorne spoke of him as "a young man with much of wild original nature remaining in him" and as "inclined to live a sort of Indian life among civilized man."² Moreover, Indians and Indian life have an important place in all Thoreau's writing except Cape Cod and An Excursion to Canada. In A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers Indian mythology and history provide a coherent thread in Thoreau's first and rather rambling book. In Walden "savages" are exemplars of the simplified life, and in the Journal there are numerous entries about Indians. But the greatest evidence of Thoreau's enormous fascination with primitive man are the eleven volumes, totalling 2,800 pages of notes, he compiled on Indians from September 1850 to April 1861.³ Nevertheless, Thoreau's last trip to Maine, recounted in "The Allegash and East Branch," was his first and only extended, meaningful contact with a member of a race he had studied so long in the writings of others.

The definitive study of Thoreau's interest in Indians is Robert Sayre's Thoreau and the American Indians. In this book Sayre says that The Maine Woods, because it spans eleven years, illustrates Thoreau's progress from nineteenth century prejudices and misconceptions about Indians to a point where he could portray his Indian guide as a complex, interesting individual. Savagism, the nineteenth century idea of Indians and primitive men, promulgated both negative and positive

myths. The definition of savagism offered by Sayre provides a means of comparing Thoreau's early attitudes in "Ktaadn" with the more informed and objective view of Polis in "Allegash." According to savagism:

The Indian is a hunter. He has the virtues of a hunter, like fortitude and self-reliance, but also the vices, like cruelty and cunning. After his successes in hunting, he is generous and hospitable to strangers, but when he is destitute, he is untrustworthy. He has not learned the farmers' skill of planting and saving for the morrow. Nor does he have a sense of private property and ownership of land. The Indian no more owns the land he hurries over in his hunts than do the animals he chases. He has not improved it.⁴

In "Ktaadn" Thoreau reveals similar prejudices. The Indian's history, he says, "is the history of his extinction" (p. 6). The Indian houses he sees have a "shabby, forlorn, and cheerless look, being all back side and wood shed, not homesteads, even Indian homesteads, but instead of home or abroad-steads, for their life is domi aut militiae, at home or at war, or now rather venatas, that is, a hunting, and most of the latter" (p. 7). The two Indians, who agree to be his guides, appear to him "sluggish" and "dull and greasy-looking" (p. 9). When they fail to show up, it merely confirms his prejudices. Meeting them again on the return trip he says: "There is, in fact, a remarkable and unexpected resemblance between the degraded savage and the lowest classes in a great city In the progress of degradation, the distinction of races is soon lost" (p. 78). Towards the end of "Ktaadn" Thoreau evokes the "dim and misty" figure of the primitive Indian. Here it is the Indian of the past, uncorrupted by modern civilization, who appeals to his imagination. In "Chesuncook" Thoreau finds the Indian, Joe Aitteon, a good enough guide, but is disappointed in the compromises he has made between Indian and white traditions. As discussed in the

previous chapter, Thoreau's reactions towards the Indians he meets later on the trip, at the Indian camp and in town, reveal a significant change in his attitudes.

After "Chesuncook" Thoreau is more than ever interested in Indians, yet as he begins his last Maine trip he still has the typical white man's attitude of superiority. On the carriage, he describes Polis as having a "stolid expression." He adds that "he really never said anything on such occasions. He merely stirred up, like a wild beast, and passively muttered some insignificant response" (p. 162). On the other hand, the white hunter, also on the carriage, is praised, not only as a hunter, but for "his gentlemanly dress and faultless toilet" and for his "intellectual face" and "quiet manners." In fact, says Thoreau, he "might have passed for a divinity student" (p. 162). In other words, Thoreau sees the white hunter as a refined woodsman, who admirably combines civilized attributes with wilderness skill. Ironically, at the end of this trip, it is Polis whom Thoreau most admires for his ability to integrate a successful life in civilized society with a love and understanding of nature.

Only after two weeks with Joe Polis does Thoreau finally understand his guide as a man and not just as "the Indian." Polis, he learns, owns land, values education, and can tactfully deal with white men. Thoreau portrays Polis as knowledgeable, self-sufficient, fun-loving, and obliging to his employers. Yet he also points out Polis' faults. He shows that Polis is superstitious, eats too much sugar, leaves his boots out in the rain, and complains of his discomforts like an "Irishman." During the journey Polis also changes his attitude and behavior towards Thoreau. Perhaps in the beginning, Polis, who almost certainly resents the white man's authority, acts sullen and distant in defense of his

own integrity. But, for whatever reason, Polis enjoys himself more after Thoreau comes to appreciate his superior wilderness skills. It has been said that Thoreau's characterization of Polis is the most complex native American in nineteenth century literature--comparable to Twain's portrayal of Jim in Huckleberry Finn. If for no other reason than its characterization of Polis, "The Allegash and East Branch" would be worth critical study.

According to recent critics, Thoreau's growing understanding of Indians in The Maine Woods is the primary unifying element in an otherwise unintegrated work. Important as this perspective is, it is a point of view that values the book for its place in Thoreau's developing ideas and not as a creative work. In studying The Maine Woods as more than a record of his travels to Maine, it is important to ask why Thoreau was interested in Indians and why Indians were important in his Maine essays. Of course there are many reasons; yet there are significant differences in his focus on Indians in The Maine Woods and elsewhere. Thoreau's discussions of Indians in his other writings, particularly the "Indian Notebooks," pertain to Indian mythology, customs, and history. Yet practically none of the material from the eleven volumes of "Indian Notebooks" found its way into The Maine Woods. The very omission of Indian material, which he had been collecting for eleven years, from the most Indian of all his published works, suggests that his focus in "Allegash" and The Maine Woods is unique. In "Allegash," as in "Ktaadn" and "Chesuncook," Thoreau is trying to understand the wilderness, man's place in it, and the effect wilderness experience has on his ability to discover those things. What role do Indians have in Thoreau's endeavor?

When Thoreau returned from his "Allegash" trip, he wrote a most revealing letter to his friend Harrison Blake. He tells Blake that his journey was "quite profitable, chiefly from associating with an intelligent Indian." While the whole letter sheds light on the meaning of his trip, the following passage is particularly pertinent to Joe Polis:

Having returned, I flatter myself that the world appears in some respects a little larger, and not, as usual, smaller and shallower, for having extended my range. I have made a short excursion into the new world which the Indian dwells in, or is. He begins where we leave off. It is worth the while to detect new faculties in man,—he is so much the more devine; and anything that fairly excites our admiration expands us. The Indian, who can find his way so wonderfully in the woods, possesses so much intelligence which the white man does not,—and it increases my own capacity, as well as faith, to observe it. I rejoice to find that intelligence flows in other channels than I knew. It redeems for me portions of what seemed brutish before.⁵

Throughout "Allegash," Thoreau is particularly interested in his guide's knowledge of the woods, and his unique ability to find his way in the forest.

Soon after the journey begins we see that Thoreau expects more from his guide than safe passage through the wilderness. He wants to learn as much as he can from Polis and suggests that Polis tell him all he knows and in turn Thoreau will tell Polis all he knows. Initially they identify birds and exchange definitions of words. It is interesting that the only two words Thoreau mentions Polis asking about are "intelligent" and "reality"—two concepts that are central to Thoreau's exploration in The Maine Woods are knowing and truth. Later that night something even more significant happens. Thoreau awakens and sees an "elliptical ring of light," a piece of phosphorescent wood, glowing in the dark. He is exceedingly moved by this phenomena, so much so that

many critics consider this event the high point of his trip. Its significance, however, is in what it symbolizes to Thoreau. Light is commonly symbolic of knowledge, and, as we have seen, is used to symbolize degrees of knowing in both "Ktaadn" and "Chesuncook." In this instance the light seen in the forest night suggests something about the Indian's special knowledge of the wilderness. Thoreau explains:

I let science slide, and rejoiced in that light as if it had been a fellow creature. I saw that it was excellent, and was very glad to know that it was so cheap. A scientific explanation, as it is called, would have been altogether out of place there. That is for pale daylight. Science with its retorts would have put me to sleep; it was the opportunity to be ignorant that I improved. It suggested to me that the woods were not tenantless, but choke-full of honest spirits as good as myself any day,--not an empty chamber, in which chemistry was left to work alone, but an inhabited house,--and for a few moments I enjoyed fellowship with them. Your so-called wise man goes trying to persuade himself that there is no entity there but himself and his traps, but it is a great deal easier to believe the truth. It suggested, too, that the same experience always gives birth to the same sort of belief or religion Long enough I had heard of irrelevant things; now at length I was glad to make acquaintance with the light that dwells in rotten wood. Where has all your knowledge gone to? It evaporates completely, for it has no depth (p. 181-2).

That passage illustrates the tremendous value Thoreau attributes to knowledge through revelation and personal experience, as opposed to impersonal scientific explanations. "Nature," he says, "must have made a thousand revelations to [Indians] which are still secrets to us" (p. 181). He covets their wisdom.

Thoreau makes much of this incident and it serves as a turning point in his attention to Polis. Thereafter Thoreau is more interested than ever in Polis' "sources of information"--particularly how he finds his way through the forest without a map or a compass. The very next morning he asks Polis how he guides himself in the woods. "O," Polis says, "I

can tell good many ways Sometimes I lookum side hill great difference between the north and south, see where sun has shone most. So trees,--the large limbs bend toward south. Sometimes I lookum locks-[rocks]" (p. 184). Thoreau pursues the matter, but gets only vague, mysterious answers. When he finally pins Polis down, Polis replies simply, "Great difference between me and white man" (p. 185). Thoreau then offers his own explanation:

It appeared as if the sources of information were so various that he did not give a distinct, conscious attention to any one, and so could not readily refer to any when questioned about it, but he found his way very much as an animal does. Perhaps what is commonly called instinct in the animal, in this case is merely a sharpened and educated sense. Often, when an Indian says, "I don't know," in regard to the route he is to take, he does not mean what a white man would by those words, for his Indian instinct may tell him still as much as the most confident white man knows. He does not carry things in his head, nor remember the route exactly, like a white man, but relies on himself at the moment. Not having experienced the need of the other sort of knowledge, all labelled and arranged, he has not acquired it (p. 185).

Throughout "Allegash" Thoreau attempts to understand Polis by comparing himself with his guide. While their most obvious differences are due to language and manners, more fundamental differences are in their attitudes towards the wilderness. For Thoreau the wilderness is a source of spiritual sustenance; for Polis it is a means of physical survival. In fact, it is by his forest expertise that Polis is able to acquire large amounts of property. Polis' knowledge is practical and comes from direct involvement with the forest. He can make teas from all kinds of plants. He can make a candle or a pipe from birch bark. And he has his own secret for repairing a canoe. Thoreau's knowledge of flora and fauna, however, is limited mostly to identifications. To some extent, Polis is better able to trace a path in the wilderness simply

because, from experience and familiarity, he can recognize more signs or clues to direction. Yet curiously Polis cannot point out anything in particular and seems to take in everything at once. Thoreau, on the other hand, must rely on his surveying skills, a map, and a compass. Even then he gets lost in the swamp. Amazed at Polis' intuitive sense, Thoreau says:

Often on bare rocky carries the trail was so indistinct that I completely lost it, but when I walked behind him I observed that he could keep it almost like a hound, and barely hesitated, or, if he paused a moment on a bare rock, his eye immediately detected some sign which would have escaped me. Frequently we found no path at all at these places, and were unaccountably delayed. He would only say it was "ver strange" (p. 276-7).

In spite of Thoreau's admiration, he appears to be waiting for Polis to make a mistake. When Polis claims that he can call a musquash (i.e. muskrat), Thoreau, although intrigued at "the Indian's" display of wildness, sounds pleased to see that Polis has overstated his talents. On the other hand, Thoreau is always certain to point to his own successes. In such instances it becomes evident that Thoreau is characterizing his persona as well as Joe Polis. This persona is the educated traveler, who prides himself on his surveying skills and botanical knowledge and is skeptical or critical of his guide's intuitive approach to exploration. Through such a narrator the reader is not only able to observe an Indian at home in the forest, but is also able to see inadequacies in a systematic and schooled study of nature. While Thoreau quickly points to the failures of Polis' method, he must eventually reconsider the advantages of his own approach. Since Thoreau and Polis both take pride in their own knowledge of the forest and their skill on such expeditions, competition ensues. Through competitiveness and the very real trials of their

journey, Thoreau's attitudes and affections change. In the end he gains new understanding of himself and Polis, and of man's relation to the wilderness and to man.

As in "Ktaadn" and "Chesuncook," the steps that lead to that understanding are crucial to the meaning of "Allegash" and ultimately to the meaning of the book. Thoreau comes to the Maine woods to get away from man as much as to enjoy the pleasures of the forest. He is amused at Polis' curiosity in the few settlements they do pass, for he has little interest in meeting up with the society he has chosen to avoid by his excursion to the backwoods. He comments:

Polis had evidently more curiosity respecting the few settlers in those woods than we. If nothing was said, he took it for granted that we wanted to go straight to the next log-hut But we laughed, and said that we had had enough of houses for the present, and had come here partly to avoid them (p. 234).

Ironically, Thoreau's initiation ultimately involves facing the possibility of being separated from humanity and the difficulty of surviving in the woods alone.

The first time, Thoreau and Hoar are separated from Polis when Polis decides to go ahead along the carry with his canoe. Thoreau and Hoar are to follow his path, carry part of their supplies at a time, and return for the rest. Soon, however, they become confused by the numerous logging paths and find it impossible to discern their guide's trail among the moss and fallen trees. As they continue, they find themselves in a regular swamp, and it is almost dark by the time they meet Polis again. Polis is "surprised that [they] should have taken what he called a 'tow' . . . road, instead of a carry path,--that [they] had not followed his tracks,--said it was 'strange,' and evidently

thought little of [their] woodcraft" (p. 217). This time Thoreau seems to take a bit of pleasure in his experience and says, "I would not have missed that walk for a good deal" (p. 221). Although, at this point, Thoreau simply enjoys the excitement of an adventure, he is also witness to Polis' remarkable skill in following a path. Surely it is significant that soon after, for the first time, Thoreau calls Polis more respectfully by his name instead of the rather derogatory term "the Indian."

Thoreau's full initiation takes place when he temporarily loses his friend Edward Hoar near the end of the trip. When they get to the East Branch of the Penobscot, the river is too difficult to manage as a group. Again Thoreau and Hoar must carry their supplies along the shore while Polis alone navigates the canoe through the white water. Polis goes downstream a bit and then stops and waits for them to catch up, while Thoreau and Hoar struggle with their baggage along the overgrown paths and rocky banks. With the roar of the water they cannot tell who is ahead or behind. Occasionally Thoreau and Hoar can look down at the river and see Polis on the rapids, but only to see him suddenly drift out of sight. At one point Polis calls up for help. Thoreau stops, but Hoar goes on. To Thoreau's surprise Hoar disappears out of sight--"as if he had sunk into the earth" (p. 258). Thoreau shouts and searches for his friend. He says:

For half an hour I anticipated and believed only the worst. I thought what I should do the next day, if I did not find him, what I could do in such a wilderness, and how his relatives would feel, if I should return without him. I felt that if he were really lost away from the river there, it would be a desperate undertaking to find him; and where were they who could help you? What would it be to raise the country, where there were only two or three camps, twenty or thirty miles apart, and no road, and perhaps nobody home? (p. 259)

By the time it is dark Polis insists that they give up the search. He argues: "No use, can't do anything in the dark; come morning, then we find'em. No harm,--he make'em camp" (p. 260). Thoreau spends the night fluctuating between anxiety and comparative ease respecting his lost friend. Early the next morning they find Hoar, but the effect of the previous day's experience is evident. "It would have been like looking for a needle in a hay-mow, to search for him in these woods," says Thoreau. Hoar "had been considering how long he could live on berries alone" (p. 263). Only after this experience does Thoreau fully understand man's dependence upon his fellow man in an indifferent and sometimes hostile wilderness.

While Thoreau is truly initiated by this experience, he contemplates the problem of man alone in the wilderness several times along the way. Even trees, he notes, "are of a social habit, growing in 'veins,' 'clumps,' 'groups,' or 'communities' . . . or else they form extensive forests by themselves" (p. 210). He imagines that a lone squirrel they see "must have a solitary time in that dark evergreen forest, where there is so little life, seventy five miles from a road" (p. 218). The most striking evidence of this need for society appears in his story of a hermit living by the dam in the woods, "who spent his time tossing a bullet from one hand to the other for want of employment This sort of tit-for-tat intercourse between his two hands, bandying to and fro a leaden subject, seems to be his symbol for society." Thus, in spite of Thoreau's desire to leave man and the amenities of civilization behind on his sojourn, he has an underlying awareness of man's basic need for these things. Nevertheless, it takes his experience with the possibility of losing his friend in the forest for him to completely accept the truth.

Polis, however, underwent a similar initiation long ago. Near the end of the trip he relates his own story, how as a boy of ten he was compelled to creep along, half starving, through snow and ice, day after day, until he and his two companions finally reached a house and obtained food and supplies. From the beginning of "Allegash," Polis exhibits an understanding of the dual nature of the forest. He wants to go along with Thoreau and Hoar to get some moose, for the wilderness is his source of livelihood. Yet almost simultaneously he expresses a desire to go into the woods in hope of finding a relative, who had gone into the forest a year or two before and had not been seen since. Polis' concern at that point casts a forewarning of the fate that man might meet on his adventures there. Polis never romanticizes the value of the forest. He understands its gifts and its dangers, and he is proud of his ability to survive there alone. His carving on the tree--"July 26, 1853, We alone Joseph Polis start for Oldtown right away"--is an icon of that pride. Thoreau's experience on the carry with Polis is significant in two respects: Thoreau learns the potential threat of a wilderness that also provides spiritual sustenance, and he gains a full appreciation of the knowledge and skill of his Indian guide.

When this happens the tension finally breaks, and the relationship between the Indian and the two white men changes. Polis, in particular, begins to enjoy himself and to play and tease. The next morning they are paddling along a lake, trying to find its outlet. Thoreau thinks it is in one direction and Polis thinks it is in the other. So Polis, in fun, bets Thoreau fourpence that his direction is right. As it ends up, Thoreau is correct, but Polis doesn't seem to mind. Two days before the end of their trip, they come to a fall, where they have to carry their

canoe and supplies about three-fourths of a mile. After one load, Polis says, "I take canoe and you take the rest, suppose you can keep along with me?" (p. 285). Thoreau agrees and the whole thing turns into lighthearted fun. Thoreau describes it thus:

As his load, the canoe, would be much the heaviest and bulkiest, though the simplest, I thought that I ought to be able to do it, and said I would try. So I proceeded to gather up the gun, axe, paddle, kettle, frying-pan, plates, dippers, carpets, &c., and while I was thus engaged he threw me his cow-hide boots. "What, are these in the bargain?" I asked. "O yer," he said; but before I could make a bundle of my load I saw him disappearing over a hill with the canoe on his head; so hastily scraping the various articles together, I started on the run, and immediately went by him in the bushes, but I had no sooner left him out of sight in a rocky hollow, than the greasy plates, dippers, &c., took to themselves wings, and while I was employed in gathering them up again, he went by me; but hastily pressing the sooty kettle to my side, I started once more, and passing him again, I saw him no more on the carry When he made his appearance, puffing and panting like myself, in answer to inquiries where he had been, he said, "Locks (rocks) cut'em feet," and laughing added, "O, me love to play sometimes." He said that he and his companions when they came to carries several miles long used to try who would get over first; each perhaps with a canoe on his head (p. 286).

In asking Thoreau to participate in his Indian game, Polis pays him a very high compliment. Soon after, Polis compliments Thoreau again--this time on his paddling and tells Thoreau that he paddles "just like anybody" and gives him an Indian name signifying great paddler.

Although Thoreau never praises Polis to his face in the narrative, "The Allegash and East Branch" as a whole is the highest compliment Thoreau could have paid to his guide. Polis, pictured in the beginning as "the Indian," becomes a likeable, admirable, and fully developed personality by the end of the essay. Thoreau could have portrayed Polis with sympathy from the outset; instead he illustrates the growing friendship and understanding between a white man and an Indian who experience

the difficulties of wilderness exploration together. When they reach Oldtown at the end of their trip, Polis invites Thoreau and Hoar into his house. The relationship between Thoreau and his guide has come a long way from that in "Ktaadn," where Thoreau makes a point of mentioning that the Indians did not invite them in, and even from the beginning of "Allegash," when Polis answers "out of that strange remoteness in which the Indian ever dwells to the white man" (p. 158). In Polis' house they borrow his razor, see his wife (although they are not introduced to her), and find his home neat and roomy, with a map on the wall and a clock opposite it. While they are there, Polis' son comes in with papers directed to "Joseph Polis." Polis, we surely see, is not an Indian of savagism, nor is he an Indian of the past like Governor Neptune. Polis combines the best of both the past and the present, without the vices of either. Thoreau ends the essay saying, "this is the last I saw of Joe Polis." That statement clearly indicates that to Thoreau Polis is no longer a representative "the Indian," or "Polis" his guide, but a man--Joe Polis. In Polis, Thoreau finds a man with the qualities he most admires: Polis has an Indian's mystical relationship to the forest and practical skills to survive its treacheries; but he has also adopted the essential values of Anglo-Saxon civilization--education, pride in property, and responsibility to family and community. He enjoys the advantages of both worlds and is happy in either. When asked if he was not glad to get home again, Polis replies, "It makes no difference to me where I am " (p. 296). "The secret of successful sauntering," says Thoreau, "is to be equally at home everywhere."⁶

Throughout The Maine Woods there is a tension between wilderness and civilization. In the beginning, Thoreau comes to the Maine woods to discover the true nature of the wilderness; that is, nature untouched by man. But he is alienated from the hard matter and inhuman nature he finds on Katahdin's summit. In "Ktaadn" Thoreau leaves the Maine woods confused about the meaning of nature and indeed the meaning of man. "Who are we? Where are we?" he asks. In "Chesuncook," the lakes have a civilizing effect, and he rediscovers a meaning and unity in nature. Here, where the forest seems evermore sacred, it is civilized man that he is alienated from, for most men, he discovers, appreciate the forest only for the material wealth it provides. In "Allegash" there is a culmination of this tension between man and nature. For the first time Thoreau faces real danger. Their course down the Penobscot is treacherous, and, if anything should happen to them, they are far from any settlements where they might get help. How long can man exist without man? Is it possible for man to enjoy the benefits of both nature and society? His experiences in "Allegash" and particularly his contact with Joe Polis show the possibilities of man's involvement with nature and man.

On his last trip to Maine, Thoreau finally meets an Indian who has a mystical relation to the forest. Through Polis Thoreau illustrates yet another "channel" of knowledge. Nevertheless, in "Allegash" there is more emphasis than in either "Ktaadn" or "Chesuncook" on quite a different sort of knowledge--that which results from intense scrutiny and systematic recording of fact. "Allegash" is full of references to information recorded by the natural scientist, the historian, the geographer, and the lexicographer. Thoreau's inclusion of the "Appendix" to The Maine Woods, which provides all the factual information he acquired

from his trips and readings he thought would be useful to anyone exploring the Maine wilderness, illustrates how essential he felt that kind of knowledge to be. It has been said many times that Thoreau moved from a transcendental to a scientific bias in his lifetime, and The Maine Woods is considered evidence of that. Yet, as we have seen, "Ktaadn" and "Chesuncook" are very much concerned with the effect of wilderness experience on poetic thought. Moreover, not even in "Allegash" did Thoreau abandon his youthful interest in transcendental experience. The poetic explanation he gives to his discovery of phosphorescent wood and the aura of mystery he invests in Polis' knowledge of the forest is evidence of that. A more viable explanation is that Thoreau, who was always seeking the truth, appreciated the value of both intuitive and systematic knowledge. He found that one source of knowledge to the exclusion of another--whether poetic or scientific--was insufficient for truth and understanding. Close observation alerted his senses and a knowledge of the past broadened his perspective. His Journal entry on March 5, 1853--"The fact is I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot"--could stand as an epilogue to The Maine Woods.

Yet it is perhaps most important to observe that throughout The Maine Woods Thoreau shows how much more meaningful facts become after personal experience. Much of what Thoreau finds on his Maine trips he had read about before; but seeing and experiencing what he had read about--whether it is moose, a mountain, Indians, or phosphorescent wood--is infinitely more interesting and exciting to him than the cold facts. In Joe Polis Thoreau finds further proof that there is no substitute for experience. It is obvious that Polis' skills as a woodsman and

his understanding of the forest come as much from experience as from intuition. In "Allegash" Thoreau says that "the same experience always gives birth to the same sort of belief or religion" (p. 181).

Experience is paramount. By treating each of the Maine trips separately, Thoreau illustrates the importance of each experience, the effect of place on that experience, and the unique discoveries made there. The most fundamental message of "Allegash" and The Maine Woods is the positive influence of exploration and personal experience on man's thought and understanding.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters I discuss several themes that are developed in The Maine Woods and that serve to unify the three sections of the book. Of these, Thoreau's Indian theme has received the most notice. A progression in The Maine Woods from conventional attitudes and prejudices about Indians in the first section to the more informed, relatively unbiased, sympathetic picture of a particular Indian in the third section is important in terms of social and intellectual history as well as Thoreau scholarship. Yet knowledge about Indians is just one of several things that results from the Maine trips. Although the Indian Joe Polis is the primary concern in "The Allegash and East Branch," it is the mountain in "Ktaadn," and the pine and moose in "Chesuncook." Thus it is inaccurate to say, as some critics have, that "the Indian" is the major theme or that it is "the unifying element" in The Maine Woods.

From the outset to the conclusion, Thoreau's primary concern is the meaning of wilderness for civilized man. Like the Indian theme, the theme of the wild pervades Thoreau's writing. This theme embodies his concern for man's vitality, individuality, and self-sufficiency. But nowhere else does Thoreau fully explore the reality of the wilderness--the raw matter, the chaos, the otherness. In The Maine Woods wilderness is a reality; by comparison Walden is pastoral writing

and his essay "Walking" is a rhetorical statement. Thoreau is continually drawn to untamed nature for inspiration and for what it can tell him about himself and his place in nature. On each Maine trip Thoreau gladly leaves civilization and temporarily rejects its people and towns. His sojourns in the Maine woods are exciting and revitalizing, but they are never quite what he anticipates. As a wilderness quest each section of The Maine Woods follows the same pattern: there is always a departure from civilization, an exploration of the wilderness, and a return to civilization with a new perspective. I believe that wilderness quest is the most important element in the unity and structure of the book.

Patterns and structure in the three sections of The Maine Woods are discussed in the previous chapters of this study. By following the narrator's changing attitudes from the beginning of "Ktaadn" to the end of "Allegash," it becomes evident that there is also a relationship between the sections, which unifies the work and, as a whole, makes a larger statement about man and nature. The narrator begins his journey to Katahdin fully expecting to enjoy some kind of spiritual illumination on the mountain--for the most basic tenet of Romanticism is that man finds spiritual truth and self-revelation by a return to nature. Since Katahdin is the "highest land," it should yield the highest truth. But that does not happen and Thoreau does not experience a Romantic communion with nature. The fact is that Katahdin is quite different from the kind of places explored by Old World Romantics; it is also quite different from the idyllic setting of Walden. Katahdin is vast, drear, barren, and rocky; it has nothing to comfort man; and it will not submit to Romantic notions about unity in nature. Nevertheless,

Thoreau finds it preferable to depict the reality of the granite mountain and the harsh, grim side of nature. While it is an unsettling experience, a return trip to Maine provides him with an opportunity to portray the other side of the forest. In the second Maine narrative, Thoreau presents the antithesis of "Ktaadn." Here he portrays the gentle side of nature and the peace and beauty of lakes midst the pines. In "Chesuncook" Thoreau rediscovers the interrelationship of man and nature and comes close to achieving the vision of unity that he found while living at Walden Pond. In "Chesuncook" he no longer finds the wilderness threatening, instead he finds that man is a threat to the wilderness. "Chesuncook" balances the "Ktaadn" section philosophically and leaves the reader with a more complete picture of the many sides of nature and man. Yet "Chesuncook" too poses some very important questions about man's relationship to the wilderness: Can civilized man survive in the wilderness without destroying it? Does civilization preclude man's understanding of the wild? As much as possible, "Allegash" provides a resolution to the dilemmas of "Ktaadn" and "Chesuncook." In "Allegash" wilderness exploration is challenging, and Thoreau realizes that civilized man cannot be self-sufficient there for long. Man's sojourn in the forest fosters an understanding of self and nature, yet man ultimately needs human companionship and home. Thoreau ends The Maine Woods with Joe Polis and Polis' affirmation of both wilderness and civilization. The unique perspective of each section, therefore, does not fragment The Maine Woods, but reveals a development in Thoreau's wilderness education. The arrangement of the book makes a statement about man and nature, which need not be explained by comparison with Thoreau's other work.

A second thematic thread in The Maine Woods, which is interrelated with the wilderness theme, is the matter of how man comes to have a sympathetic appreciation and understanding of nature. Throughout The Maine Woods Thoreau investigates the various ways that man perceives his world. In "Ktaadn" Thoreau demonstrates that man must first confront reality. Man's preconceptions or myths about nature may be true, but these notions are never as meaningful as individual experience. Man who explores his world finds a personal vision. According to "Ktaadn" then, the first step towards knowledge is exploration and experience. "What is it to be admitted to a museum," says Thoreau, "compared with some star's surface, some hard matter in its home!" (p. 71). Nevertheless, Thoreau shows that wilderness experience alone does not enable man to comprehend his spiritual relation to the forest. The "degraded" Indian guides in "Ktaadn" show no reverence towards the forest nor towards Pomola, who guards the mountain. In "Chesuncook" the hunters kill indiscriminately for sport and the lumberers cut down trees without any regret for the damage to the beauty and vitality of the forest. In spite of the fact that these Indians, hunters, and lumberers are most familiar with the Maine woods, they have no sympathy for it. There is something beyond immediate experience that enables certain men to have a spiritual relationship to the forest.

All of the recurring motifs in The Maine Woods point to that concern-- how does man apprehend spiritual truth. The way these motifs are used ultimately reveals the value Thoreau places on certain kinds of knowing. References to factual information of the sort found in the works of scientists, geographers, and historians are frequent. But it is important to note that such information is almost always cited in

juxtaposition with moments of spiritual illumination. Immediately after his mystical experience on the mountain, Thoreau quotes the Geographical Surveyor of Maine's report on the physical features of Katahdin, and just prior to his imaginative reflection on man's killing of animals, Thoreau includes a detailed passage on the anatomical features of the moose. In "Allegash," after he discovers phosphorescent wood, he clearly states the value of personal insight over scientific fact. "I let science slide," he says, "and rejoiced in that light as if it had been a fellow creature" (p. 181). At these climatic points, the narrator's moments of spiritual illumination are symbolized by light. In "Ktaadn" it is the glimpse of sunlight through clouds and mist, in "Chesuncook" it is the moonlight on the lakes, and in "Allegash" it is the glow of phosphorescent wood in the night. Although there are a number of other motifs and metaphors relating to the acquisition of knowledge, light is one of the few, if not only, true symbols used in The Maine Woods. This singularity indicates the importance Thoreau places on moments of illumination and felt knowledge. All means of perception are explored in The Maine Woods, yet by symbol and dramatic perspective Thoreau demonstrates that transcendental or poetic experiences ultimately make the difference in man's understanding of himself and nature.

Perhaps it is not necessary to repeat that wilderness quest and poetic discovery is the structural pattern in each section of The Maine Woods; nevertheless, it is critical to point out that there is an artistic and symbolic connection between these two thematic concerns and the travel mode itself. The most basic symbolic implication of the travel mode is that man's quest leads to discovery and knowledge. If The Maine Woods is a symbolic expression of Thoreau's Maine experiences, we can logically conclude that the presentation of his material as three

journeys is significant. A return to the Maine woods for new adventures suggests that Thoreau was not entirely satisfied with what he discovered on his first and second trips and that he believed that there was more to learn by coming again. In other words, the structure of The Maine Woods suggests that a single experience does not always result in an apprehension of the whole truth. Furthermore, the passage of time between each section, which Thoreau makes clear, illustrates the slow deliberate process in man's search for meaning. Time and place affect man's ability to apprehend truth. We know that Thoreau walked the woods of Concord time and time again—always looking, recording what he saw, and hoping for an insight into the spiritual facts of his daily outings. The very structure Thoreau gave to The Maine Woods illustrates the value he found in repeating worthwhile ventures.

In The Maine Woods, Thoreau successfully renders the progress of man's quest for spiritual fact and the resulting growth towards knowledge and understanding of his place in the world. Patterns, motifs, symbols, themes, and the metaphor of travel in The Maine Woods merge to reveal inner meaning; in the strictest sense, The Maine Woods has organic form. It evolves—"it shapes as it develops," to use Coleridge's phrase. Thoreau did not impose an artificial structure or aesthetic on his Maine material, which probably would have determined that he integrate the journeys into a more acceptable literary form. Three travel narratives, however, are ultimately more satisfactory for expressing the themes of the work. From Thoreau's letters and working drafts, we know that The Maine Woods was not written simply as three individual essays, and then collected as a book. "Ktaadn" was published soon after Thoreau's first trip to Maine, but "Chesuncook" was not published until five years

after his trip to Chesuncook Lake. Not until after Thoreau's last trip to Maine, five years after the Chesuncook trip, did Thoreau finish "Chesuncook." During the time that he was working on "Chesuncook" he also wrote the major part of the "Allegash" section, and during that period he mentioned a book devoted to his Maine material. The Maine Woods was not an afterthought, but a form he found satisfactory for the themes of his Maine material. Thoreau worked on The Maine Woods up until the end of his life, so it may be that he was never able to perfect the work as he would have liked. Nevertheless, the work we have today is artistically unified, and if it is not satisfactory, its failures lie elsewhere.

Most critics appreciate The Maine Woods as nature writing. As Fannie Hardy Eckstorm says, The Maine Woods "brings us . . . the moods and music of the forest, . . . of campfires flickering across rippling rapids; the voice of red squirrels, . . . and the melancholy laughter of the loon."¹ By mid-nineteenth century, most Americans had little knowledge of the remote areas and backwoods of their country. Whereas wildness in Old World Romantic literature was almost always exotic, Thoreau depicts the reality of the American wilderness. Wilderness in The Maine Woods is immediate and vital. Thoreau begins "Ktaadn" and each section of The Maine Woods with precise details of the journey and surrounding scenery. But when place and experience begin to have meaning for Thoreau, the writing becomes metaphorical and the experience becomes symbolic. In Thoreau's first mention of the "Ktaadn" essay, in a letter to Emerson, he comments that "it contains many facts and some poetry."² Perhaps it is this blend of fact and poetry throughout The Maine Woods that confuses readers. Although Walden and most of Thoreau's work have

this blend, it is different in his Maine book. In The Maine Woods there are long passages of factual and narrative material, and the moments of poetic inspiration come only at brief and climatic intervals. While this method of interspersing poetry with fact may not be as artistically successful as a consistent integration of the two, it does reflect what Thoreau knew to be true—that the rewards of man's quest for truth are brief and far between. In his Journal he expresses it thus: "I do not know that knowledge amounts to anything more definite than a novel or grand surprise, or a sudden revelation of the insufficiency of all that we had called knowledge before It is the lighting up of the mist by the sun."³

Illustrations of various states of consciousness in English or American literature are not unusual, and a number of analogies could be pointed out between Thoreau's Maine essays and other Romantic works. Mystical elements have been noted in the poetry of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, to name a few. The imagination, central to the Romantic aesthetic, is explored most notably in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale." Attention to the Indian's mystical relation to the forest appears in Cooper's novels. However, to my knowledge, Thoreau is alone in investigating in a single work the variety of ways that man apprehends truth. His catholic approach allows him to compare all of man's sources of knowledge and eventually reveal the potentials of consciousness. The Maine Woods is an attempt to come to terms with the question of science versus poetry. In this work Thoreau illustrates that man's understanding of nature is a blend of scientific fact and poetic inspiration. Ultimately, however, Thoreau shows that transcendental consciousness is the most meaningful of man's

experiences. "A man has not seen a thing," says Thoreau, "who has not felt it."⁴ Epistemological concerns are fundamental to Transcendental literature, yet nowhere else is the subject investigated as thoroughly as in The Maine Woods. The Maine Woods, I believe, is unique in its literary examination of the nature and grounds of knowledge.

I have argued that The Maine Woods is unified in form and idea, that it contains vital nature writing, and that it has unique and important epistemological concerns. Why then has it failed to receive critical recognition? I suggest that the weakest point in The Maine Woods, in terms of artistic effect, is a lack of consistency in the narrative voice. In general, the narrator is a Romantic traveler, whose perspective changes in relation to the lessons learned on each trip. At significant points in each section it is apparent that Thoreau sets up his persona for a dramatic experience relative to the climax of the journey. At other times, however, the narrative is basically expository, relatively straightforward, and close to Thoreau's own voice. Thus there is no single voice that the reader can identify as the narrator. In Walden, though it may be difficult to separate the persona from Thoreau, the narrative voice is consistent. He is a Chanticleer, and that attitude pervades the work. Of course it is merely conjecture to say that if the persona were more fully developed in The Maine Woods critics would have looked at this work more closely, in spite of its travel structure. Nevertheless, I believe that it is a work with unity and complexities and worthy of further study.

Notes

Chapter I

¹Henry David Thoreau, The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau, ed. Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen (Boston, 1906; rpt. New York: Dover, 1962), II, p. 406.

²Joseph Wood Krutch, Henry David Thoreau (n.p.: William Sloane, 1948), p. 171.

³[Franklin B. Sanborn], rev. of The Maine Woods, Commonwealth, 10 June, 1864, p. 1.

⁴[Sanborn], rev. of Cape Cod, Commonwealth, 25 March 1865, p. 1.

⁵Albert Keiser, "Thoreau's Manuscripts on the Indians," JEGP, 27 (1928), 183-99.

⁶Rev. of The Maine Woods, New York Times, 6 June 1864, p. 2.

⁷Rev. of The Maine Woods, Continental Monthly, 6 (1864), 235-6.

⁸John C. Broderick, "American Reviews of Thoreau's Posthumous Books, 1863-1866," UTSE, 24 (1955), 125-39.

⁹F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 93.

¹⁰Krutch, p. 250.

¹¹Walter Harding, ed. Thoreau: A Century of Criticism (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1954).

¹²Harding, p. 107.

¹³Harding, p. 73-4.

¹⁴Sherman Paul, The Shores of America: Thoreau's Inward Exploration (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958), p. 357.

¹⁵Paul, p. 361.

¹⁶Thoreau, The Maine Woods, ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 71. All further references to this work will be cited by page numbers only.

¹⁷John G. Blair and Augustus Trowbridge, "Thoreau on Katahdin," American Quarterly, 12 (1960), 508.

¹⁸James McIntosh, Thoreau as Romantic Naturalist: His Shifting Stance Toward Nature (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 179.

¹⁹Robert Sayre, Thoreau and the American Indians (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 172.

²⁰Sayre, p. xiii.

²¹Bette S. Weidman, "Thoreau and Indians," Thoreau Journal Quarterly, 5, No. 4, (1973), 6.

²²D. M. Murray, "Thoreau's Indians and His Developing Art of Characterization," ESQ, 21, No. 4 (1975), 227.

²³Murray, p. 227.

Chapter II

¹Thoreau, Journal, V, p. 424.

²Harding, "The Influence of Thoreau's Lecturing Upon His Writing," Bulletin of The New York Public Library, 60 (1956), 74-80.

³Joseph J. Moldenhauer, "Textual Introduction," The Maine Woods, p. 378.

⁴Robert C. Cosbey, "Thoreau at Work: The Writing of 'Ktaadn,'" Bulletin of The New York Public Library, 65 (1961), 22.

⁵Cosbey, pp. 22-3.

⁶McIntosh, p. 189.

⁷Moldenhauer, p. 357.

⁸Moldenhauer, p. 363-4.

⁹Sayre, p. 118.

¹⁰Sayre, p. 121.

¹¹Moldenhauer, p. 355.

¹²J. Lyndon Shanley, The Making of Walden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

¹³Krutch, p. 277.

¹⁴Paul, p. 355.

¹⁵Sanborn, Henry D. Thoreau (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1882), p. 298.

¹⁶Thoreau, The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau, ed. Walter Harding and Carl Bode (New York: New York University Press, 1958), p. 224.

¹⁷Thoreau, Correspondence, p. 223.

¹⁸Thoreau, Correspondence, p. 515.

¹⁹Thoreau, Walden, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 352.

²⁰John Aldrich Christie, Thoreau as World Traveler (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 24.

²¹Thoreau, Walden, p. 111.

Chapter III

¹Sanborn, The Life of Henry David Thoreau (Boston, 1917 ; rpt. Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1968), p. 142.

²Sanborn, p. 148.

³William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1925), p. 380-1.

⁴James, p. 380.

⁵Frederick Garber, Thoreau's Redemptive Imagination (New York: New York University Press, 1977), p. 84.

⁶Cosbey, p. 26.

⁷Ethel Seybold, Thoreau: The Quest and The Classics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), p. 58-9.

⁸For discussion of the influences of Burnet's Sacred Theory see Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory, (New York, 1959; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1963).

⁹Lyell's theory of the evolution of the earth prepared the way for Darwin's theory of evolution. Although Darwin's Origin of the Species was not published until 1859, Thoreau had read his other works and Lyell's as well by the time he wrote "Ktaadn." Thoreau then was almost assuredly aware of evolutionary theories.

¹⁰Two works frequently used by Thoreau, J. Lempriere's Classical Dictionary and Alexander Ross' Mystagogus Poeticus, or the Muses Interpreter, provide basic information regarding parallels between his allusions.

¹¹J. J. Kwiat, "Thoreau's Philosophical Apprenticeship," New England Quarterly, 18 (1945), p. 67.

Chapter IV

¹John Frederick Jacques, "The Discovery of 'Ktaadn': A Study of Thoreau's The Maine Woods," diss. Columbia University, 1971.

²Thoreau, Correspondence, p. 308.

³Moldenhauer, p. 361.

⁴Moldenhauer, p. 379.

⁵Thoreau, Journal, V, p. 278; and Journal II, p. 372.

⁶Thoreau, Walden, p. 212.

⁷Thoreau, Walden, p. 213.

⁸Thoreau, Correspondence, p. 515.

⁹Thoreau, Journal, II, p. 30.

¹⁰Thoreau, Journal, X, p. 494; and Journal, X, p. 295.

¹¹Moldenhauer, p. 379.

¹²Sayre, p. 172.

Chapter V

¹Thoreau, Correspondence, p. 504.

²Nathaniel Hawthorne, The American Notebooks, ed. Randall Stewart (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1932), p. 166.

³Sayre, p. 110.

⁴Sayre, p. 4.

⁵Thoreau, Correspondence, p. 491.

⁶Thoreau, "Walking" in his Excursions (Boston, 1863; rpt. Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1975), p. 160.

Chapter VI

¹Fannie Hardy Eckstorm, "Thoreau's 'Maine Woods'," Thoreau: A Century of Criticism, ed. Walter Harding (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1954), p. 104.

²Thoreau, Correspondence, p. 204.

³Thoreau, Journal, II, p. 168.

⁴Thoreau, Journal, XIII, p. 160.

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