



A Nietzschean Approach to Thoreau's *Walden*: The Appearance of the Self

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Abstract. This article proposes a study of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) in the light of Nietzsche's ideas of ubermensch, self, and the role of the artist to show that the quest of a 'romantic' artist like Thoreau as well as an 'anti-romantic' like Nietzsche, to use J. Hillis Miller's terms, is a quest of the discovery and creation of the self. It is argued that the mentioned writers' main concern is a glorified self with the ability to transcend conventional morality, rather than the appearance or disappearance of God. The disappearance of God seems to be the necessary condition for the birth of the (myth of) the Superman who sees a universe without God, and rather than finding it meaningless and empty, creates his own meaning and true self. The self recreates itself through art, and this desire acts as a propelling force in *Walden* and Nietzsche's writings where their art is the desire to survive and recognize the self, for art makes survival possible by converting the horror of a golden world into a pleasing realization of the capacities of the self. Nietzsche and Thoreau seem to be saying that life becomes meaningful only if one's true self or the will to live is realized and recreated; if one can achieve a higher state of consciousness.

Keywords: Nietzsche; Self; Thoreau; *Walden*; Will.

1. INTRODUCTION

The celebrated, radical, controversial and original thinker of the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), is known for being a hater of the majority of people, romanticism and idealism believed to prevent one from reaching self-satisfaction, reflection, recognition and glorification as well as the Enlightenment (that overemphasized morality and autonomous individuality) and such philosophical beliefs as the disappearance of God and (philosophical) evolution he brings up in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883). The this-worldly, anti-transcendental and anti-traditionalist focus of Nietzsche's philosophy with emphasis on extreme individualism, the supreme value and the true sense of life, attack on the existence of an objective world independent of any human apprehension of it, and the mutability of reality leave no doubt for the huge influence of such figures as Schopenhauer and Hegel the Hegelian transition from an undifferentiated stage to a higher one of consciousness to which I will shortly refer is noteworthy. It is, therefore, reckless to embark upon Nietzsche's ideas in the space of this article which is an attempt to study Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854) in the light of Nietzsche's ideas of ubermensch, self, and the role of the artist to show that the quest of a romantic artist like Thoreau as well as an anti-romantic like Nietzsche, is a quest of the discovery and creation of the self (not as something stable and fixed). But before dealing with the dialectic approach in *Walden* and *Thus Spake Zarathustra* where questions encourage the reader and the listener to reassess and rethink values they have lived with for years, it is noteworthy to make clear that the adjectives romantic and anti-romantic are used, in this study, according to J. Hillis Miller's use of the terms in his book *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* [Thomas De Quincey, Robert

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Browning, Emily Bronte, Matthew Arnold, and Gerard Manley Hopkins] (1963), that will be expanded upon below.

Henry David Thoreau born in 1817 in Concord, Massachusetts, was a transcendental abolitionist, and well-known for his "Civil Disobedience" (1849) as a protest and a huge influence on Mahatma Gandhi and his struggle for Indian Independence. *Walden* (1854), Thoreau's autobiographical narrative shows Thoreau's romantic vision, and quest that begins with nature living in the forest at Walden Pond, beginning in 1845, Thoreau sings: "I cannot come nearer to God and Heaven / Than I live to Walden even" (p. 150) to end in the self. The first-person narrator, by using a direct, rhythmic and vivid language and a conversational tone explores nature, man, pleasure, individual consciousness, spiritual (re)awakening and the unity of the creation in order to exalt individuality and celebrate the ability to create one's reality and happiness.

Thoreau was an admirer of Walt Whitman, and led and influenced by the famous transcendental writer Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). As Habib points out, according to Emerson, transcendentalists were "characterized by their withdrawal from society [...] and their passion for what is great and extraordinary" (2005, p. 461). Thoreau was also influenced by Emerson's belief that the reason the world lacked unity was "because man is disunited with himself" and "by altering ourselves, by transforming the spirit that moves within us, we will transform the world of nature, since the latter is moved and molded by spirit" (Rowe, 2003, p. 57). In a Hegelian sense, Emerson believed that "there seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms" and also believed that "every thought [was] a prison" and "the poet liberates by yielding a new thought" (Habib, 2005, pp. 457- 462). Zarathustra, the mouthpiece of Zoroaster in Nietzsche has come to teach the same.

Before any exploration of the notion of self in Nietzsche and Thoreau, the writers' views of God must be taken into consideration. It is argued that the mentioned writers' main concern is an emancipated, glorified self with the ability to transcend rather than the appearance or disappearance of God.

2. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF GOD

John F. Danby, in his book *Wordsworth: The Prelude and Other Poems* (1975), defines "mysticism" as "an awareness of the presence of God, or of the withdrawal of His presence" (1975, p. 40). For Sartre, Marx and Nietzsche, simply, there is no God, and their view differs from, as an example, Robert Frost's traditional view who believes in the philosophy of the "argument from design" as the "traditional proof of God's existence which claims that given the wonderful design of the creation, it must have had a creator" (Wolosky, 2008, p. 11). The disappearance of God mentioned by Nietzsche seems to imply a sense of freedom and joy with which things find the chance to be created or liberated from conventionality. Nietzsche's Hegelian announcement that "there are no Gods" (1954, p. 64) is "blank atheism" (Miller, 1963, p. 1) and "nihilis[t]" (Miller, 1963, p. 312). Habib also refers to Nietzsche's vision of humanity to be "atheist" (2008, p. 508). Nietzsche believed in no providence, and would associate God with the distant seas based on which he could encourage his audience to think about the importance of the here and now: "once people said God, when they looked upon distant seas; now, however, I have taught you to say: Superman." Zarathustra continues that "God is a conjecture; but I want your conjectures to reach no further than your creative will." Zarathustra asks "could you create a God? so be quiet then about all gods! But I daresay you could create the Superman" (2003, p. 63). To Harold Bloom, Zarathustra is "a person without a superego" (2005, p. 100) which implies that Zarathustra, as pure egoism ignores the superego or god. Thus, the disappearance of God paves the way for the birth of the self.

Nietzsche's disbelief in God or belief in the long distance between man and any spiritual force makes him anti-romantic in contrast with Thoreau as a believer in God. J. Hillis Miller believes that romantic artists always believe in God, and try to create a relationship between the two: "artist [i]s the creator or discoverer of [...] symbols which establish a new relation, across the gap, between man and God" (Miller, 1965, p. 13). However, what makes every writer a romantic writer is, from a Stevensonian point of view, that writers dedicate their writings to the exploration of the self and show that the notion of God seems related to the self that creates the world which implies the fact that the disappearance of God is the necessary ground for the discovery and creation of the self. That is why Nietzsche advises his readers to follow highest ideals in a universe where God has disappeared and man is left with the opportunity of limitless achievements. Thus, from J. Hillis Miller's view, Thoreau is a romantic writer, for he believes in God, and Nietzsche an anti-romantic one for his disbelief.

Nietzsche was a hater of Christianity and did not really approve of it. The reason was that he thought Christianity would make people passive and metamorphose them to slaves. He preferred the Renaissance man over the modern man since the Renaissance man had strived "to overcome Christian morality through the concept of virtue" (Nietzsche, as cited in Owen, 1997, p. 55). Peter Childs also states that Nietzsche "deemed ethical beliefs the instinct of the herd, because he thought convictions of this kind are always held by groups, made up of weak individuals who are only strong collectively" (2000, p. 60).

In the preface to his *Human, all too-human* (1878), Nietzsche refers to morality and his view of it: "Enough, I am still alive; a life has not been devised by morality [...] Here I am, beginning again, doing what I have always done, the old immoralist and birdcatcher, I am speaking immorally" (p. ii). According to Nietzsche, morality is not a "universal system of absolute truths and values, but [a] weapon in a power game where one group in the human world tries to constrain another" (Mansfield, 2000, p. 58). One may also be reminded of D. H. Lawrence's belief that an attempt to a "new morality" is justifiable as long as man is imprisoned: "if the status quo were paradise, it would indeed be a sin to taste the new apples; but since the status quo is much more a prison than paradise, we can go ahead" (1936, p. 526). Since Nietzsche saw God as man's creation, justification of human will and "a thought" (2003, p. 64), like Keats, he saw art as the necessary substitute for religion that claimed to base itself on truth rather than illusions. Nietzschean disappearance of God shows an empty world to be discovered, created and realized: In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche says "God is a conjecture: but I want your conjectures to be confined to the conceivable. Could you conceive a God? But this the will to truth should mean to you, that all things will be transformed into the humanly conceivable, the humanly perceivable, and the humanly perceptible!" He continues that "your own senses you shall consider to that end! And that which you have called world shall be recreated by you alone: your reason, your image, your will, your love it shall itself become! And verily, for your bliss" (2003, p. 64). According to Nietzsche, with the disappearance of God, one may come up with new creations.

Transcendentalists like Thoreau were neither consistent church goers nor hermits, and in *Walden*, Thoreau does not insist on using the word "God" though he believed in the existence of God. Campbell states that transcendentalists "worshipped [God] by trying to live in spiritual harmony with the great laws of nature" (2000, p. 866), and Thoreau defines "solitude" as "his nearness to God" (Paul, 1962, p. 107). As a romantic poet one who believes in God Thoreau "begin[s] with the sense that there is a hidden spiritual force in nature [and] the problem is to reach it" (Miller, 1965, p. 14), and as a transcendentalist, Thoreau "interpreted God as being a combination of humanity and the universe" (Campbell, 2000, p. 866). In *Walden*, Thoreau shows his understanding of God: "Chastity is the flowering of man; and what are called Genius, Heroism, Holiness, and the like, are but various fruits which succeed it. Man flows at once to God when the channel of purity is open" (1854, p. 170). Thoreau's view of God, in *Walden*, is a

spiritual force that is superior to animality as shown in part 11 "Higher Laws" where after he observes a woodchuck and wishes to devour it; he gives priority to spirituality which is the celebration of life in both man and beast. Nietzsche believed religion to be the cause of man's forgetting the will to life, and says "God has died: now we want, the Superman to live" (2003, p. 221). The disappearance of God seems to be the necessary condition for the birth of the (myth of) the Superman.

3. THE SUPERMAN

Matthew Arnold's "The Buried Life" is a good example of the conflict between one's true self and the social self. The notion of *Übermensch* (translated as overman or superman) taught by Zarathustra, is the desire to be true to one's self, to be different from the majority and to make sense of a Godless, indifferent universe. A poet tries to bring God back, and help the reader to recreate Him again however, Nietzsche eulogizer of Hitler instead of bringing God back, gives birth to the notion of the Superman who sees a universe without God, and rather than finding it meaningless and empty, creates his own meaning and true self, thus, Nietzsche's and Thoreau's main concern is the glorification of the self rather than the appearance or disappearance of God.

In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, "The Recurrence," Nietzsche says "the life one has now is the only life one has, and that one has it forever." He continues that "I come eternally again to this same life, in what is greatest and what is smallest, and teach again the eternal recurrence of all things" (1883, p. 104). The Superman is the one who embraces life, life's feast and the spiritual evolution of self-awareness wholeheartedly. He is "the meaning of the earth" (Nietzsche, 2003, p. 8), and it is worth noting that Thoreau explores man's evolutionary development in *Walden* that "calls for us to enter a new stage of conscious development" (Drake, 1962, p. 74). The disappearance of God equates with the miserable death of the ordinary man bound with chains of conventional perception. Collinson points out that the Superman is "a person who confronts all the possible terrors and wretchedness of life [that must be loved according to Thoreau in part 18 of *Walden*] and still joyously affirms it." According to Nietzsche "a voluntary exposure to suffering" is needed "in order to exercise the will to power that could overcome the kind of submissive mediocrity [Nietzsche] saw as characteristic of most people's lives" (1987, p. 121).

Nietzsche's Superman is a noble destroyer and creator, "the breaker, the lawbreaker; yet he is the creator [of the world]" (Kaufmann, 1954, p. 120). The Superman creates himself, and by creating realizes himself the result of which would be the creation of a better and higher world. The Superman "represents perhaps the archetypal instance of such self-awareness: awareness that one is fashioning the world in the image of one's own will" (Habib, 2005, p. 508) and not trying to live in the image of God in the transcendental sense of the term. It is noteworthy that Thoreau must think of, in part 7 of *Walden* ("The Bean-field"), the cultivation of a new generation of people. What can create reality and meaning is the will to power found in the *Übermensch* as "an effort to master all adversity and continually make a new and higher density for oneself" (Collinson, 1987, p. 121), and as an existentialist, Nietzsche was always a strong believer in the fact that we are makers of values, meaning and ideals, and from his point of view what counts is (the super) man's deed. The superman, in Thoreau's words, stands "in formal opposition to what are deemed the most sacred laws of society" and "maintain[s] himself through obedience to the laws of his being" (1854, p. 249). This would be impossible without the will to live that originates in the Superman.

4. THE WILL TO POWER

There certainly is no clear-cut definition for Nietzsche's the will to power. The will to power is not Darwin's 'survival (of the fittest)' or De Quincey's 'winnowing of the races' as he says in

his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, but “a physiological complex of drives and impulses” (Childs, 2000, p. 79), and the pleasure to reconcile Dionysian and Apollonian forces.

Nietzsche, in his *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871) which he dedicates to the well-known composer Richard Wagner, analyzes Greek Tragedy with emphasis on the Dionysian principle associated with passion, frenzy and chaos, and the Apollonian principle associated with order and restraint. He believes that the modern man has lost touch with the tragic myth and intuition found in the Dionysian principle of Greek tragedy. Accordingly the society and conventions become oppressive and suppress the Dionysian principle or capacity of man, and give birth to a passive social self that buries true self, freedom and self-realization. Nietzsche states that “under the charm of the Dionysian, not only does the bond between man and man come to be forged once more by the magic of the Dionysian rite, but nature itself, long alienated or subjugated, rises again to celebrate the reconciliation with her prodigal son, man [...] Now the slave emerges as a freeman” (1871, p. 23). According to Nietzsche “the human species was divided into those who mindlessly aped convention [reminiscent of these lines in *Walden*: “we worship not the Graces [...] but fashion [...] the head monkey at Paris puts on a traveller’s cap, and all the monkeys in America do the same” (p. 20)] and those who, because of some lionine interior power, reached towards a superhuman capacity that was the harbinger of a coming stage of development where the human species as we know it will be surpassed by a higher form” (Mansfield, 2000, p. 56).

Nietzsche believes where there is life, and in all living things, there is the will to power. As a characteristic of every living thing and the highest virtue and mode of being, the sublime will to power is the only power that gives joy and liberty, and determines one’s choice, action, identity and subjectivity. This is because the will to power or life lives according to one’s nature and passion. This does not imply that it is the pursuit of power but “the very essence of human existence, the source of all our strivings and of the cruelty that is a necessary [...] component of any life” (Collinson, 1987, p. 121). The will, Nietzsche suggests, is more in line with the demands of the heart rather than the orders of the reason.

According to Nietzsche, “the man who conquers himself shows greater power than he who conquers others” (Kaufmann, 1950, p. 219) which implies the fact that the will to power is, first, the power to master oneself and, then, the power to transcend the society and others. This self-mastery is very close, in meaning, to self-discovery, self-awareness and self-transformation which is the drive to overcome oneself, and for Nietzsche the “drive to overcome” is “a fundamental life-making source” (Butler, 1980, p. 514). Self-mastery or self-creation is doing away with a self that is filled up with social conventions; filled up with conventional truths; filled up with God. It is the desire and realization of the need to change that is important to both Nietzsche and Thoreau since truth is not something of ‘granite-like solidity’ but “a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation, and decoration, and which, after they have been in use for a long time,” Nietzsche seems to cry, “strike a people as firmly established, canonical, and binding; truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions” (1995, p. 146) implying that one can never reach reality through words or transcend language. Thoreau’s words in the “Economy” part of *Walden* are also worth quoting: “what everybody echoes or in silence passes by as true to-day may turn out to be falsehood to-morrow, mere smoke of opinion, which some had trusted for a cloud that would sprinkle fertilizing rain on their fields” (1854, p. 7).

D. H. Lawrence who believed in the constant state of change in the universe, says “there is no absolute good, there is nothing absolutely right. All things flow and change, and even change is not absolute” (Lawrence, as cited in Childs, 2000, p. 65). Nietzsche also believes “a good and evil that would be everlasting that does not exist! Of itself it must overcome itself again and

again" (2003, p. 88). According to Nietzsche a snake has to shed skin or perish which implies that evolution in Nietzsche is change and transformation. In part 9 of *Walden*, Thoreau refers to change as a miracle and believes that all change is within man, and passion is the courage to change and see freely: "things do not change; we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts [as creations of the will]. God will see that you do not want society" (1854, p. 253). Thoreau's faith in the self, rather than the society, is his real goal in *Walden*: gaining knowledge of the self, since "the volatile truth of our words should continually betray the inadequacy of the residual statements. Their truth is instantly translated; its literal movement alone remains. The words which express our faith and piety are not definite" (1854, pp. 250-51). Thoreau, in line with Nietzsche, believes that by knowing the self one comes near to the intersection of truths, and is no longer subject to certain binding conventions.

5. SELF: DISCOVERY AND CREATION

Thoreau is hopeful that *Walden* as a literary work of art helps the reader with self-understanding and better ways of living. Thoreau lays emphasis on the discovery of a continent called self with these words in the concluding part of *Walden*: "Explore thyself" (p. 249). The idea that man must realize and create meaning, life and the self is underlying in both Thoreau and Nietzsche who even goes farther to say that man's self burns with the desire to "create beyond itself" (2003, p. 25). It was a transcendentalist belief that humans could create a heaven on earth by realizing the self and locating the rules of life within rather than without. It is time, Thoreau believes, "for the whole human race to awaken, and assume a consciousness it has rarely shown yet, and seize its opportunity to live" (Drake, 1962, p. 72). It is not impossible to "elevate one's life by conscious effort and to lead the life one imagines. But this can only be done if one consciously imagines the ideal life, then creates it" (Campbell, 2000, p. 863). The awakening in *Walden* is the ability to embrace life and live according to one's will and power.

Nietzsche sees "creation" as "the great salvation from suffering and the lightener of life" (2003, p. 64) which suggests the need for humans to create both the world (reality) and themselves: "you could recreate yourselves: and may this be your best creation" (2003, p. 64). He also addresses his readers with these words: "you still want to create a world before which you can kneel: thus it is your ultimate hope and intoxication" (2003, p. 86). The self desired by Nietzsche is one not clouded by conventions; it is a self that can realize that "there is no God" and "will affirm existence and will embrace and welcome its every pain as well as its joy" (Collinson, 1987, p. 121). And even if all this seems a dream, Nietzsche encourages his readers to dream on, for life itself is a dream as Shakespeare would suggest in his *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or a conjecture as Zarathustra says in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

Nietzsche advocates isolation a significant theme in *Walden* for it is what is needed for growth and self-realization. His idea about "the unwise" is that "they are like a river upon which a boat floats along" (2003, p. 86), and believes that "man is something that must be overcome" (2003, p. 7). And about the nature of living things, he continues that "whatever cannot obey itself will be commanded" (2003, p. 87). Conventions and thoughts imprison people, and inhibit thinkers from "following the truth into all hide-outs" (Nietzsche, as cited in Kaufmann, 1950, p. 59). Conventions and ideological state apparatuses like religion and state as shaping forces interpellate, paralyze, exert power on and control people, and do not let one rise above himself and transcend the society. Thus, "the better the state is established, the fainter the humanity" (Kaufmann, 1954, p. 50). The decline of civil laws in *Walden* seems to be the Nietzschean transcendence of the society, for to realize one's individuality one has to reject the seemingly sacrosanct laws of the society. Stone quotes from one of Nietzsche's letters: "struggling against habituation, uncertain of one's independent course, amid frequent vacillations of the heart, and even of the conscience, often comfortless, but always pursuing the eternal goal of the true, the beautiful, the good" (1988, p. 308). "Habit," according to Nietzsche, makes one "forget about

[...] repressed elements” (Habib, 2005, p. 517) and this seems to be the beginning of an alienation process; alienation from the self.

Thoreau was not antisocial, and instead showed great faith in humankind and wanted to see people progress by going back to a simpler ‘life’ which was like “the water in the river” (1854, p. 256). The fashion scene in part 1 (“Economy”) shows men in a sleepy state, and Thoreau wishes to wake up his sleeping neighbors. In part 2, Thoreau wants his neighbors to stop living like ants and pay more attention to their natural instincts. The quest for perfection and approaching wholeness in both Nietzsche and Thoreau requires transcending social conventions, as well as the necessary act of reconciliation of instinct and reason. Nietzsche believes “he who is of the masses wants to live for free; but we others, to whom life has given itself, we are always thinking about what we can best give in return [return in Nietzsche does not mean going back but ascend]!” and what life promises us, that promise we shall keep to life” (2003, p. 153).

The majority of people hated by Nietzsche Thoreau shows, occupy a false position, for they are not aware of the present. Since most of the people are asleep, they can neither enjoy the present moment nor understand and appreciate life. Nietzsche emphasizes the here and now; one needs “to experience life to the full, to make the most of every moment [...] every person ought to strive to fulfill their potential or simply to become what they are, and so should live as if they wanted each moment to come back again” (Childs, 2000, p. 60).

Nietzschean laughter is “laughter of a powerful man, with its strong undercurrent of joy” (Gunter, 1968, p. 505) and this laughter does not signify being content, but rather it means growth and development. Nietzschean laughter, therefore, differs from Bergsonian laughter that is socially corrective, for it is self-assertive and self-overcoming, and disrupts and undermines the restrictive effect of the dominant ideology. According to Nietzsche one should be the source of both pain and laughter and, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, refers to the fact that man “experiences a deep inner joy in dream-contemplation; on the other hand, to be at all able to dream with this inner joy in contemplation, he must have completely lost sight of the waking reality and its ominous obtrusiveness” (1995, p. 10). Nietzschean laughter is a sign of freedom and implies being subject to the power of self only; however, it is constantly threatened by the obtrusive and repressive state that fills people with conventional morality and prevents them from reaching self-realization.

6. THE STATE

According to Nietzsche, state is conventional morality and “prevents man from realizing himself.” State is “the archenemy of non-conformity, self-realization, and the single one’s remarking of his own nature” (Kaufmann, 1950, pp. 139-144). The limiting conventions of the society are what appear in *Walden* as the “dead dry life” from which one must emerge in order to enjoy “perfect summer life.” However, Thoreau believes that humans cannot enjoy life, for they are slaves to the conventional belief that life is not changeable, and think that “we can change our clothes only” (1854, p. 256). Nietzsche, interestingly, “in the first of his untimely Meditations, assaults the philistines of his day for being smug and self-satisfied, for believing that all seeking is at an end” (Stone, 1988, p. 292).

Thoreau believes that “the society is commonly too cheap” (1854, p. 105) and refers to, as Nietzsche would do, the dehumanizing effect of industrialization and utilitarianism. In part 10 (“Baker Farm”), Thoreau refers to the dreary and unimaginative life of John Field and his family as part of the masses preferring to hold on to their old ways of living, and celebrates the man, in part 18 (“Conclusion”), who “does not keep pace with his companions,” since “he hears a different drummer.” So “let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. It is not important that he should mature as soon as an apple-tree or an oak” (1854, p. 251). To Thoreau the society was “the sun of all anxieties and constraints and failures he wished

to leave behind" (Paul, 1962, p. 101) which is why he feels ecstatic about the joy of a strong sun in part 17 of *Walden*.

7. NATURE

The significance of nature in Thoreau is that self-realization can only be achieved in relation to nature: "man can find himself by exploring nature because of this clarification of his relations; man knows himself only through relations to things outside himself" (Drake, 1962, p. 74). According to Emerson "a higher gift of nature [to man in communion with her] is the love of beauty" (Habib, 2005, p.456). Thoreau invites his reader to listen to his instincts, to look inside and know himself through communicating with nature. Man's mind can be cultivated and developed when one is in communication with the world outside; thus, knowing nature definitely leads to self-knowledge because it is a reflection of it. The turn, in Thoreau, from nature to self is the Nietzschean turn from a godless world to a world with a different god called self.

Despite the fact that Thoreau knows nature to be God's creation, nature soon becomes 'other' from which Thoreau wishes to withdraw; the vast and strange nature must be lost god must disappear for the self to be found or created. These words from *Walden* are noteworthy: "and not till we are completely lost, or turned around for a man needs only to be turned round once with his eyes shut in this world to be lost do we appreciate the vastness and strangeness of Nature." Thoreau believes, "every man has to learn the points of compass again as often as he awakes, whether from sleep or any abstraction. Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations" (1854, p. 133). The journey is one from nature to the world within; from god to self; from one state of consciousness to another.

It is important that the cycle of seasons in Thoreau's organic life at Walden must end in spring. The winter of solitude and self-reflection gives way to the spring of rebirth, self-discovery, self-realization, renewal and reawakening in *Walden* which shows how hopeful Thoreau is. Miller's words are noteworthy and related: "a human life is a dynamic process which moves through various phases, while returning often to earlier ones, in the search for a full comprehension of its "organizing principles." He continues that "only through development can the nature of those principles be gradually revealed, for they cannot be completely expressed in any single form" (1965, p. 16).

The pure Walden pond never called God by Thoreau outside Concord is where, as Thoreau describes in part 2, each morning he bathes in, and which for him is a religious exercise filling him with a zest for life. Thoreau says "a lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is the earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature" (1854, p. 145). Thoreau's exploration of the pond mirrors his exploration of the self. In part 9 ("The Ponds"), Thoreau describes the pond as follows: "the water is so transparent that the bottom can easily be discerned at the depth" (p. 138). Drake also notes that the pond is "only as deep as one's self, depending on the extent of its service to the imagination; for nature provides the only trustworthy measurement of man" (1962, p. 90).

Paul states that "it was the purpose of *Walden* to find bottom, to affirm reality; and the reality Thoreau discovered in the soul and in the whole economy of Nature he found at the bottom of the pond" (1959, p. 168). The green weed that Thoreau finds at the bottom of the pond symbolizes his organic life and shows that the pond symbolizes his real self or the self he

desires to recreate. Thoreau compares time with a stream where he goes fishing in and drinks at, and while he drinks he sees “the sandy bottom and detect[s] how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains” and he “would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars” (1854, p. 76). The chimney rising to the heaven is also Thoreau’s self or soul burning with the desire to rise above the ground.

Thoreau believes people cannot elevate their instincts because they have become masses in factories, and devotes *Walden* to the exploration of one’s potentialities and how deliberate one may live. Nietzsche also lays emphasis on man’s subjective way of seeing and potentiality to be a human being. F. R. Leavis believes that the function of art is “psyche’s potential for wholeness” (Butler, 1980, p. 515) which may mean reconciliation (of body and spirit) as Nietzsche denies any crude dualism of body [which Thoreau believes must be developed as the mind] and spirit [...] The life of the spirit and the life of the body are aspects of a single life” (Kaufmann, 1950, p. 192). Nietzsche in aphorism 121 of *The Gay Science* (1882) says “we have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live with the acceptance of bodies” (Kaufmann, 1974, p. 83). What seems important in both Thoreau and Nietzsche is the realization of one’s potentiality and consciousness. Owen states that Nietzsche’s “sovereign individual” is the one who “actualizes [the] capacity” that enables man “to creatively posit goals” and “obey without the necessity of threats” (1997, p. 37). Nietzsche’s “sovereign individual” seems to be an artist who realizes man’s potentiality and fills the emptiness of the apparent godless world which is the only one and, accordingly, renders the “real world [...] merely a lie” (Nietzsche, as cited in Collinson, 1987, p. 120).

8. ART AND ARTIST

Reality dissolves into such works of art as *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and *Walden* by such artists as Nietzsche and Thoreau who fulfill resolution and make sense of the world through art. According to D. H. Lawrence the true artist is the one who “substitutes a finer morality for a grosser. And as soon as you see a finer morality, the grosser becomes relatively immoral” (1936, p. 525). Stephen in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man* (1916) seems an excellent Nietzschean superman when he cries, in line with Satan in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) who cries that he is willing to reign in hell rather than serve in heaven, that he “will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it calls itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use silence, exile, and cunning” (p. 519). Stephen burns with the desire to recreate and reshape himself and this is what makes him the artist who, in Miller’s words, “in the absence of a given world must create his own.” Pivotal to romanticism is the fact that “the isolated individual, through poetry, can accomplish the “unheard of work,” that is, create through his own efforts a marvelous harmony of words which will integrate man, nature and God” (Miller, 1965, p. 14).

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche says “art is not merely an imitation of the reality of nature, but in fact a metaphysical supplement to the reality of nature, placed beside it for the purpose of conquest” (1995, p. 89). The Nietzschean artist liberates human beings from the prison of conventional morality, and is “the man who goes out into the empty space between man and God and takes the enormous risk of attempting to create in that vacancy a new fabric of connections between man and the divine power.” Miller continues that “the romantic artist is a maker or discoverer of the radically new, rather than the imitator of what is already known. In the new world the arts are, as Shelley said, the mediators between earth and heaven and the new archetype of human nature is neither the prophet receiving revelation, nor the prince obeying or disobeying divine law” (1965, pp. 13-14). From Nietzsche’s point of view, the new poet is the poet of the earth, and he believes that “the worst sin is the sin against the earth” (2003, p. 8).

Art has the power to create a utopian fictional space where the mission of self-discovery becomes possible. From Thoreau's point of view God is not separate from the artist: "the artist of the world, like Thoreau and like Goethe whom he had in mind, labored "with the idea inwardly" and its correspondence, its flowing, was the leaf" (Paul, 1959, p. 173). In Thoreau and Nietzsche faith in God who is "only the president of the day" (1854, p. 254), is replaced with faith in self and art; thus, disappearance of god is needed for the self to recreate itself through art. This desire acts as a propelling force in *Walden* and Nietzsche's writings where their art is the desire to survive to know and understand the self, for art makes survival possible by converting the horror of a golden world into a pleasing realization of the capacities of the self.

9. CONCLUSION

Thoreau as a romantic writer who believes in God, and Nietzsche as an anti-romantic who does not, do have many things in common which proves the fact that self-discovery is an artist's major concern in an artistic production. Both Nietzsche and Thoreau illuminate, give energy to and encourage their readers to transcend opposition by believing in the will and power of the self, for "force, will, energy and power circulate in indeed define the universe, unable not to produce dramatic and violent conflicts and impacts" (Mansfield, 2000, p. 57). Thoreau, in the "Conclusion" part of *Walden*, rejects conformity to the demands of others, and states that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him or," Thoreau believes, "the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favour in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings." Elsewhere Thoreau says "if a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away" (250, p. 251).

Nietzsche believes that morality has been invented by the weak to whom the higher will is something strange and alien. In the same line with Thoreau, Nietzsche sees morality as an obstacle, and they both challenge conventional morality and all the restriction it imposes upon the majority of people. Nietzsche and Thoreau seem to be saying that life becomes meaningful only if one's true self or the will to live is realized and discovered. This may be possible if the artist can make art the utopian ground where one can create a self that replaces the ex-created god(s) that prevent higher achievements; where the horror of a godless world gives place to the joy of a god-like self. Nietzsche and Thoreau are romantic poets in the sense that their major concern is the self, and they desire to awaken people as potential absolute selves, and celebrate the appearance of the true self as an agent of conquest, rebellion, and glorification.

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