

Thoreau, Henry David, 1817-1862

English

Thoreau's Reading in English Literature

by

Maurice J. Tallefson

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THESIS

Contents

	page
Introduction	1
I Thoreau's reading in English Literature .	10
II Early English Literature	12
III The Time of Chaucer	14
IV Literature of the Renaissance Period . . .	22
V Elizabethan Literature	24
VI Seventeenth Century Literature	46
VII Eighteenth Century Literature	67
VIII Nineteenth Century Literature	81
Conclusion	96
Bibliography	103

Introduction

In Walden Thoreau wrote, "Even the college-bred and so-called liberally educated men here and elsewhere have really little or no acquaintance with the English classics."¹ {Thoreau himself knew the English classics well, and he was also familiar with many of the works of obscure and little known English writers. But this knowledge and appreciation, although inspired at Harvard College, was primarily developed through his own initiative during such spare time as the prescribed studies allowed./ "An English youth, Henry Headley, pupil of Dr. Parr, and graduate of Oxford in 1786, had preceded Thoreau in this study of poets that had become obsolete; and it was perhaps Headley's volume 'Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry, with Remarks by the late Henry Headley,' published long after his death, that served Thoreau as a guide to Quarles and the Fletchers, Daniel, Drummond, Drayton, Habington, and Raleigh, . . . poets that few Americans had heard of in 1833."² A survey of Thoreau's reading reveals many other English writers than those

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1. Walden, p. 118. (Thoreau's Complete Works, 5 Vols., Houghton, Mifflin and Co., Boston, 1929).
 2. F. B. Sanborn, Familiar Letters of Thoreau, p. 65.

named by his biographer, Sanborn. The pages of his writings abound with allusions, references and quotations. (It is obvious that he read and enjoyed English poets and essayists long after he left Harvard.)

Throughout his life Thoreau had unusual opportunities for study and reading. Although his personal library was limited, he had almost unlimited access to desirable books. The Harvard Library at Cambridge and the Public Library at Boston were at his disposal, and his Journals reveal that he visited them often. Emerson, in his Journals, says that the president of Harvard College allowed him the freedom of the library and the privilege of drawing books. Thoreau lived with Emerson for two years and at all times had the unlimited use of his library. There were many other fine libraries in Concord, Alcott's perhaps being next in importance to Emerson's. Thoreau loved books, and neither his reserve nor his ascetic nature could keep him from them. He was torn between this need of books and the bother of getting them. He says: "When I have just been there on this errand [to secure books from the libraries of Cambridge and Boston], it seems too great a price to pay even for access to the works

of Homer or Chaucer or Linnaeus."³

Thoreau's reading of obscure English authors while at Harvard was in itself a revolt against academic procedure. In the broad sense of the word Thoreau was a scholar, but certainly an undisciplined one. His reading was never concentrated for long upon one writer or period. In 1840, three years after his graduation from college, he wrote in a letter to his sister: "Blessed is the man who can have his library at hand, and oft peruse the books without fear of a taskmaster! He is far enough from harmful idleness who can call in and dismiss these friends when he pleases."⁴ However, this lack of discipline did not often result in the perusal of worthless books, for his reading was not entirely without principle or method, but was founded on quite definite wants and ideals. "We do not learn much," he wrote, "from learned books, but from true, sincere, human books."⁵ For example, he disliked and never read novels because "they have so little real life and thought in them."⁶ Newspapers, for the same reason, irked him. "I do not know," he writes, "but it is

3. Winter, p. 318.

4. Letters, p. 31.

5. A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, p. 101.

6. Ibid., p. 72.

too much to read one newspaper a week."⁷ Yet, being alone one night, far from books, he sat "reading by the light of the fire the scraps of newspapers in which some party had wrapped their luncheon".⁸ Although Thoreau wrote for and read periodicals occasionally, he valued them little more than newspapers. In his Journal for 1853 he wrote: "What venerable cobweb is that which has hitherto escaped the broom, whose spider is invisible, but the 'North American Review'?"⁹

[It would be false to state that Thoreau's thinking and style of writing were primarily influenced by his reading in English literature, even though this contention has been made by early critics.] Although his interest in English literature was inspired early and continued throughout his life, it was not necessarily the greatest influence in his career. At Harvard College he became adept at reading Greek and formed a lasting appreciation for the classics, his favorites being "Homer, Aeschylus, Virgil, and the poets of the Greek Anthology."¹⁰ During his visit to Staten Island shortly after graduating from college he translated The Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus and portions of Pindar. His versions are today included

7. Miscellanies, p. 471.

8. A Week, p. 194.

9. Early Spring in Massachusetts, p. 203.

10. H. S. Salt, Henry Thoreau, p. 95.

in his Complete Works. Although he knew translations of the classics, his Journals reveal that he repeatedly read and preferred the originals, even to the last year of his life. "For what are the classics," he wrote, "but the noblest recorded thoughts of man?"¹¹ Certainly a reader of Thoreau cannot fail to be impressed by his sincere reverence for the ancient writers of Greece. When he is writing of them his very language transcends the ordinary, as when he speaks of "the elaborate beauty and finish, and the life-long literary labors of the ancients . . . -- works as refined, as solidly done, and as beautiful¹² as the morning itself."

The influence of Oriental literature on the life of Thoreau has only recently been evaluated. Arthur Christy, an instructor at Columbia University, published in 1932 a very thorough study called The Orient in American Transcendentalism, which treats primarily the influence of the East on Emerson, Thoreau and Alcott. Mr. Christy's book leaves little to be done in the study of Thoreau and Oriental literature, for it not only reveals his reading, but it evaluates the Oriental influence and conclusively shows that this reading, more than any other influence, dominated

11. Walden, p. 112.

12. Ibid., p. 115.

his life and philosophy. There is no record of Thoreau's having read in this field at Harvard College, but by 1841 he had built up an interest in what was to him a strange new philosophy. The fact that 1841 also marked the beginning of his two-year stay at Emerson's is important, for through Emerson Thoreau first became influenced by, and had access to, the Vedas, the Bhagavat Gita and many other Oriental classics mentioned in his Journals. During the remaining years of his life he read and accumulated many books on Oriental literature "with such zeal that he is said to have had the best library of such books in the country."¹³

There is a recently published story, entitled The Transmigration of the Seven Brahmins, which Thoreau translated from the French of Langlois' Hariyansa,¹⁴ and which is not included in his Complete Works. Many other indications of his intensive study of Oriental literatures and of the extent of their influence on his thinking are to be found in his writings.

A survey of Thoreau's reading reveals many interests other than those so far mentioned. His knowledge of natural science was both empirical and scientific.

13. H. S. Salt, op. cit., p. 95.

14. Arthur Christy, in The Orient in American Transcendentalism, mentions this work.

For the most part he made his own discoveries and conclusions and verified them by reference to authorities. These he found in error more often than himself. A survey of his Complete Works reveals a long list of references and texts which he undoubtedly knew well. Also, he was inclined to read books of travel and exploration for the purpose of discovering some new knowledge or interpretation of natural phenomena. However, although he refers fairly often to such works in connection with natural science, he occasionally makes a comment such as, " I read one or two shallow books of travel in the intervals of my work, till that employment made me ashamed of myself."¹⁵ Obviously he enjoyed such reading, yet a Puritanical sense of duty prevented him from admitting it, even to himself. Only a year before he died he wrote, "I also read the New York Tribune; but then I am reading Herodotus and Strabo, and Blodget's Climatology, and 'Six Years in the Desert of North America' as hard as I can to counterbalance it."¹⁶

Another and wholly different branch of reading to which Thoreau devoted a considerable portion of his time was that which concerned the early history of New England. He mentions often the records of

15. Walden, p. 111.

16. Letters, p. 379.

the Massachusetts and other state Historical Societies, the histories of the Jesuit missionaries, and the early New England chroniclers. These early writers held a fascination for him. In his Journal for 1855 he wrote: "What a strong and hearty, but reckless, hit-or-miss style had some of the early writers of New England, like Josselyn and William Wood, and others elsewhere in those days."¹⁷ The early history of Concord and its vicinity was an open book to him, and it was not learned by accredited references, but from old records, account books, land abstracts,-- in fact, from any unusual source he could uncover. Although Thoreau's reading in early New England historical materials, and his use of them, should make an interesting study, the subject has not been treated.

One might be led to believe, because of Thoreau's apparently close relationship to the Transcendentalists in Concord and because of his probable knowledge of other writers of his time, that he was well acquainted with contemporary American literature. This can be neither proved nor disproved from his writings. If he did read and know these writers well, he considered only a very few worthy of mention. Except for his published letters and a few quotations in A Week we have none of his opinions on this literature.

17. Walden, p. 111

His knowledge of the writings of Emerson, Alcott, Fuller, and Channing has been definitely established through other sources than his letters and works, and he himself writes of Whitman and reveals that he enjoyed his Leaves of Grass. But what of Hawthorne, Lowell, Whittier, Poe, Longfellow, Bryant and many others? He knew Hawthorne and had met Longfellow, and undoubtedly knew of them all, but the extent of his reading and his opinions is not known. It is strange, but not inexplicable, that the literature surrounding Thoreau should be least spoken of, for after all, his reading, like his life, was primarily guided by personal likes and dislikes.

Thoreau's reading, it can be seen, was broad and varied; yet the scope of this reading has not yet been fully presented. He was familiar also with some Italian, French, Spanish, German, and Swedish literature. His knowledge of these literatures will be revealed in connection with the detailed, chronological study of his reading in English literature.

Thoreau's Reading in English Literature

I

Thoreau's reading in English literature has never been completely surveyed and analyzed. His chief biographers, Salt and Sanborn, reveal his interest in it, and name a few of the writers he preferred, but in no way have they made a definite attempt to show its extent. It is the purpose here to reveal as accurately and as completely as possible what Thoreau read in English literature. For the most part this information was gained by making a complete survey of Thoreau's works. Some information, however, which could not be found in his Complete Works, has been taken from biographical and critical sources. In all cases, though, where a choice existed, Thoreau's own statements have been given precedence.

It would be almost impossible, because of the lack of sufficient evidence, to present this reading in accordance with the years in Thoreau's life; though such a procedure might prove more interesting. Instead, the authors he read have been arranged

chronologically, and have been grouped as accurately as possible into periods. The latter procedure is the most logical, for it reveals the extent of his reading in each period of English literature. However, whenever the date of Thoreau's reading of a certain literary work is known, that information is also included.

II

Early English Literature: 449-1350

Thoreau reveals a fair, but not extensive, knowledge of English literature before the time of Chaucer. In his Complete Works only two references appear which definitely reveal some of the literature read; however, some of his comments, which are found in a discussion of Chaucer, indicate a fairly broad knowledge of this period. For example, he says:

"He will know how to appreciate Chaucer best who has come down to him the natural way, through the meagre¹ pastures of Saxon and ante-Chaucerian poetry."

Since Thoreau admired and read Chaucer a great deal, it can perhaps be assumed that this procedure was his own.

In his Journal for 1861 (a year before his death), he wrote: "You can't read any genuine history, as that of . . . the Venerable Bede, without perceiving that our interest depends not on the subject, but on the man."² This is his only mention of the Venerable

1. A Week, p. 395.

2. Spring, p. 175.

Bede. Earlier, in A Week, he wrote, "We read in the history of the Saxons that Edwin of Northumbria 'caused stakes to be fixed in the highways where he had seen a clear spring.'³" This might be the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, for it is not probable that the Venerable Bede and the unknown author of the "history of the Saxons" are the same; moreover, there is a space of at least fifteen years between the two references, which would place the reading of the history during, or shortly after, his stay in college.

After the Venerable Bede, only Roger Bacon is mentioned, and then but incidentally in a discussion of Chaucer. "The fame of Roger Bacon," he wrote, "came down from the preceding century."⁴ It is impossible from this lone reference to judge his knowledge and reading of this early scientific experimenter. Yet, if the work was available, it would have been in accordance with Thoreau's nature and interests to read the Opus Majus.

3. A Week, p. 163.

4. Ibid., p. 396.

III

The Time of Chaucer: 1350-1450

Thoreau's great admiration for Chaucer is best expressed in the following excerpt from A Week:

"There is no wisdom that can take the place of humanity, and we find that in Chaucer. We can expand at last in his breadth, and we think that we could have been the man's acquaintance. He was worthy to be a citizen of England, while Petrarch and Boccaccio lived in Italy, and Tell and Tamerlane in Switzerland and in Asia, and Bruce in Scotland, and Wickliffe and Gower and Edward the Third and John of Gaunt and the Black Prince were his own countrymen as well as contemporaries; all stout and stirring names. The fame of Roger Bacon came down from the preceding century, and the name of Dante still possessed the influence of a living presence. On the whole, Chaucer impresses us as greater than his reputation and not a little like Homer and Shakespeare, for he would have held up his head in their company."¹

1. Ibid., p. 396.

No other single passage in Thoreau's writings reveals as much general knowledge of literary and historical figures as is contained in this paragraph. That he knew Chaucer well is self-evident. That he knew something of the general literary and historical relationship of this fine early poet is equally evident and important, for it is not easy without some reading and background to speak so spontaneously of a man and his age. Moreover, Thoreau was far from superficial in his writing and study and was not in the habit of commenting profoundly on unfamiliar subjects.

On another page of A Week Thoreau names some works of Chaucer. He writes: "But in justification of our praise, we must refer to his works themselves; to the prologue to the Canterbury Tales, the account of Gentilesse, the Flower and the Leaf, the stories of Griselda, Virginia, Ariadne, and Blanche the Duchesse, and much more of less distinguished merit."² There can be little doubt in this case that he read these works, for in other parts of his Complete Works he often refers to them and quotes parts of them.

The thought and beauty of Chaucer's poetry are often woven into Thoreau's descriptions. His boat,

2. Ibid., p. 399.

floating on the Concord river in the quiet of the evening, "was like that which Chaucer describes in his Dream."³ And at another time in describing his trip on the Merrimack he wrote: "Thus we 'sayled by thought and pleasaunce,' as Chaucer says."⁴ In his essay on Walking he again mentions Chaucer in connection with his daily life. He says: "I walk out into nature such as the old prophets and poets, Menu, Moses, Homer, Chaucer, walked in."⁵ Even his friend Mrs. Emerson did not escape a Chaucerian reference, for in a letter written to her in 1843 he said: "You have helped to keep my life 'on loft', as Chaucer says of Griselda, and in a better sense."⁶ There are many other similar allusions to Chaucer, and in no case do they reveal anything but respect and admiration.

In Thoreau's essay, The Landlord, he gives as much space to a quotation from Chaucer as he does at any one time to any other major English writer. It is as follows:

"The great poets have not been ungrateful to their landlords. Mine host of the Tabard Inn, in the

-
- 3. Ibid., p. 337.
 - 4. Ibid., p. 352.
 - 5. Excursions, p. 214.
 - 6. Letters, p. 76.

Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, was an honor to his profession:--

'A semely man our Hoste was, with alle,
 For to han been a marshal in an halle.
 A large man he was, with eyen stepe;
 A fairer burgeis was ther non in chepe:
 Bold of his speche, and wise, and well ytaught,
 And of manhood him lacked righte naught.
 Eke thereto was he right a merry man,
 And after souper plaien he began,
 And spoke of mirthe amonges other thinges,
 Whan that we hidden made our reckonings.'

"He is the true house-bond, and centre of the company,--of greater fellowship and practical social talent than any. He it is that proposes that each shall tell a tale to while away the time to Canterbury, and leads them himself, and concludes with his own tale:--

'Now, by my fader's soule that is ded;
 But ye be wery, smiteth of my hed:
 Hold up your handes withouten more speche.'⁷

The preceding selection is only one of several which might be cited to reveal a profound reading of Chaucer. Thoreau's reasons for liking him are

7. Excursions, p. 159.

similar to those that any scholar might give today.⁸
 "We admire Chaucer for his sturdy English wit,"
 he says. Although Thoreau's own writings are lacking in humor or wit, he admired it in others. On another page he says, "Chaucer had eminently the⁹
 habits of a literary man and a scholar." He admired the active, robust type of person who could strike a balance between scholarly activity and a physically active life. The following statement, however, reveals that in Chaucer which Thoreau undoubtedly valued most. "He was as simple as Wordsworth," he wrote, "in preferring his homely but vigorous Saxon tongue, when it was neglected by the court, and had not yet attained the dignity of a literature, and rendered a similar service to his country to that which Dante rendered to Italy."¹⁰ And then, to strengthen this explanation of Chaucer's use of the vernacular, he quotes from The Testament of Love:

"Let then clerkes enditen in Latin for they have the propertie of science, and the knowinge in that facultie, and lette Frenchmen in their Frenche also enditen their queinte termes, for it is kyndely to their mouthes, and let us shewe our

8. A Week, p. 397.

9. Ibid., p. 394.

10. Ibid., p. 394.

fantasies in soche wordes as we lerneden of our
¹¹
 dames tonge."

Thoreau was familiar also with other writers of this period in English literature, but in no way does his reading of them compare to his knowledge of Chaucer. Wyclif was mentioned by Thoreau in the quotation given above,¹² but he is not mentioned again in any other part of his works. Gower, however, is quoted at least twice, and referred to in several places. The following verse appears in A Week:

"And Idahel, as saith the boke,
 Firste made nette, fishes take.
 Of huntynge eke he fond the chace,
 Whiche nowe is knowe in many place;
 A tent of clothe, with corde and stake,
¹³
 He sette up first, and did it make."

Lydgate is quoted once and referred to but once. This quotation is found on the page with Gower's, and is as follows:

"Jason first sayled, in story it is tolde,
 Toward Colchos, to wynne the flees of golde,
 Ceres the Goddess fond first the tilthe of lande;

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11. Ibid., p. 395.
 12. Page 14.
 13. A Week, p. 57.

Also, Aristens fond first the usage
 Of mylke, and cruddis, and of honey swote;
 Peryodes, for grete avauntage,
 From flyntes smote fuyre, daryng in the roote."¹⁴

The lone reference to Lydgate tells as much as is necessary. It is one of the few cases where Thoreau confines himself to a strictly critical opinion. He wrote that "Lydgate's 'Story of Thebes', intended for a Canterbury tale, is a specimen of most unprogressive, unmusical verse."¹⁵

Thoreau's reading of the early French poet and chronicler, Froissart, is as important as any reading except that of Chaucer in this period. His biographer Salt tells us, "He loved to study Froissart and the old fashioned chronicles,"¹⁶ and Thoreau himself in A Yankee in Canada, speaking of Quebec, wrote that he "thought it would be a good place to read Froissart's Chronicles. It was such a reminiscence of the Middle Ages as Scott's novels."¹⁷

It is well to mention here the possibility that Thoreau read Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. In his essay on Carlyle¹⁸ he mentions Dante in connection

14. Ibid., p. 57.

15. Spring, p. 282.

16. H. S. Salt, op. cit., p. 96.

17. Excursions, p. 23.

18. Miscellanies, p. 351.

with other great writers, and in another volume he writes of "the mystic lore of the wilderness which¹⁹ Spenser and Dante had just begun to read." Only one reference to Petrarch and Boccaccio can be found, and it tells us only that "Petrarch and Boccaccio²⁰ lived in Italy." This is interesting, but is certainly not the type of evidence upon which conclusions can be drawn.

19. Maine Woods, p. 253.

20. A Week, p. 396.

IV

Literature of the Renaissance Period: 1450-1558

A careful survey of Thoreau's Complete Works fails to reveal or indicate a knowledge of the literature of the Renaissance period in English literature. Yet it is exactly what might be expected, for, with a few exceptions, there is little in this period that would interest Thoreau. It was not a Renaissance period as far as England was concerned, for England's flowering age came almost a century later. Moreover, it is doubtful if Thoreau had access to the works of many writers of this pre-Shakespearian age. The histories of English literature which were current in his time cover this period very sketchily. A good example of these histories, and one which Thoreau might have used, is Thomas Arnold's A Manual of English Literature. Thoreau's failure, then, to read the literature of this period should not be to his discredit, but should be taken as indicative of the time in which he lived.

There is one allusion, however, which, if

interpreted literally, might be taken to indicate a knowledge, and possible reading, of Sir Thomas More's Utopia. In speaking of a philosophy he says, "But it is thought Utopian."¹ The use of this term, however, is very seldom indicative of a knowledge of More's work, for the adjective Utopian has its own meaning and place in a vocabulary.

Thoreau knew at least one book of the Italian Renaissance--the Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini. In Walden he writes: "Benvenuto Cellini tells us in his Memoirs, that, after a certain terrible dream or vision which he had during his confinement in the castle of St. Angelo a resplendent light appeared over the shadow of his head at morning and evening, whether he was in Italy or France, and it was particularly conspicuous when the grass was moist with dew."²

It is also interesting to find that Thoreau knew and probably read Rabelais. He speaks of him once in a description of a native of Cape Cod: "His style of conversation was coarse and plain enough to have suited Rabelais. He would have made a good Panurge, or rather, he was a sober Silenus and we were the boys Chromis and Mansilus."³

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1. Walden, p. 121.
 2. Walden, p. 224.
 3. Cape Cod, p. 91.

V

The Elizabethan Literature: 1558-1625

It is natural that Thoreau should reveal a more extensive reading in the Elizabethan period than in any preceding it, for the Elizabethan is the first truly productive age in English literature. However, it will be seen later that it was really the post-Elizabethan period that interested him most. In all, Thoreau was familiar with some fifteen English writers of the Elizabethan period, and perhaps with others whom he fails to mention. With a few exceptions they are presented in the following pages in their chronological order.

In Walden he wrote: "I should be proud to have for the motto of my cabin these lines of Spenser which one of my visitors inscribed on a yellow walnut leaf for a card:--

"Arrived there, the little house they fill,
 Ne looke for intertainment where none was;
 Rest is their feast, and all things at their will:
 The noblest mind the best contentment has."¹

1. Walden, p. 158.

In A Week he has as a chapter head the following lines from Spenser:

"The Boteman strayt

Held on his course with stayed stedfastnesse,

Ne never shroucke, ne never sought to boyt

His tryed armes for toyelsome wearinesse;

But with his oares did sweepe the watry wildernessee."²

Thoreau's appreciation of Spenser must be judged from these two excerpts, for in no place does he mention the poet critically, as he does Chaucer and others. However, it cannot be expected that he should give his opinion freely on all writers, for he was not a typical scholar or critic. Nevertheless, we can be quite certain that he had a fair reading knowledge of Spenser and almost as certain that he admired him.

It is not easy to decide whether or not Thoreau read Sidney's Arcadia, for his references are limited and vague. In one place he wrote: "I have not read of any Arcadian life which surpasses the actual luxury and serenity of these New England dwellings."³ This might be taken to include all reading of an Arcadian sort, or it might allude to Sidney's work. As in the case of Utopian, the word Arcadian might be taken to have the import of an adjective only. Again, in

2. A Week, p. 356.

3. Ibid., p. 256.

Walden, he writes: "In Arcadia, when I was there I did not see any hammering stone."⁴ This reference to Arcadia is too general to have much value as evidence.

In 1841 Margaret Fuller, in a letter to Thoreau in which she had criticized and rejected some poems, wrote: "Let me know whether you go to the lonely hut, and write to me about Shakespeare, if you read him there. I have many thoughts about him, which I have never yet been led to express."⁵ It is probable that some time before, Thoreau had discussed Shakespeare with this interesting friend, for he had known Shakespeare and Margaret Fuller some time before this date. In his Journal for 1840 he says: "The Greeks had no transcendent geniuses like Milton and Shakespeare, whose merit alone posterity could fully appreciate";⁶ and before 1840, during his college years and after, he must have read and enjoyed some of the plays and sonnets.

There are only two occasions in Thoreau's writings when he uses expressions from Shakespeare. In Walden he quotes the familiar line, "The evil that men do lives after them,"⁷ and in his Journal for

4. Walden, p. 63.

5. F. B. Sanborn, Henry Thoreau, p. 172.

6. Winter, p. 279.

7. Walden, p. 75.

1852 he writes: "This suggests the propriety of Shakespeare's expression 'the region cloud', region meaning these upper regions relatively to the earth."⁸ Although this does not necessarily indicate a meagre reading, it is of little assistance in determining its extent.

Thoreau was always intensely interested in the lives of the writers he read, and often it seems that this interest overshadowed his respect for their works. His comment in the Journal for 1857 on the lack of knowledge concerning Shakespeare's life is interesting: "Shakespeare has left us his fancies and imaginings, but the truth of his life, with its becoming circumstances, we know nothing about. The writer is reported, the liver not at all. Shakespeare's house! how hollow it is! No man can conceive of Shakespeare in that house. We want the basis of fact, of an actual life, to complete our Shakespeare as much as a statue wants its pedestal. A poet's life, with this broad actual basis, would be as superior to Shakespeare's, as a lichen, with its base or thallus,⁹ is superior, in the order of being, to a fungus."

Thoreau's criticism is not always consistent, and at times it is obscure, as if he wrote but a

8. Summer, p. 80.

9. Autumn, p. 161.

part of an opinion and completed it mentally. Undoubtedly some recent Oriental philosophy upon which he was brooding caused him to write that "Homer and Shakespeare and Marvell and Wordsworth are but the rustling of leaves and crackling of twigs in the forest, and there is not yet the sound of any bird,"¹⁰ for in another place he tells us that "Beside the vast and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat Gita, even our Shakespeare seems sometimes youthfully green and practical merely."¹¹ Not only Oriental philosophy, but even experiences of daily life he valued above Shakespeare. "The Iliad and Shakespeare," he writes, "are tame to him, who hears the rude but homely incidents of the road from every traveler."¹²

In 1861 Thomas Cholmondeley, who was one of Thoreau's few intimate friends, wrote to him from Shrewsbury, England, saying in the conclusion to his letter: "We have been lately astonished by a foreign Hamlet, a supposed impossibility; but Mr. Fletcher does real wonders. No doubt he will visit America, and then you may see the best actor in the world. He has carried out Goethe's idea of Hamlet as given in the 'Wilhelm Meister!,' showing him forth as a

10. A Week, p. 328.

11. Ibid., p. 149.

12. Excursions, p. 158.

fair-haired and fat man."¹³ From that date on Thoreau was ill, and a year later he died, so it is doubtful that he ever saw a presentation of a Shakespearian play, for neither in his letters nor in his works does he tell us of having attended a Shakespearian, or any other dramatic production.

It is most interesting to find that Sir Walter Raleigh is quoted and mentioned oftener than any other writer that Thoreau read in the Elizabethan Period. Although Ben Jonson and Shakespeare are spoken of quite frequently, Sir Walter Raleigh was unquestionably his favorite, even though he did not consider him as remarkable a genius as the two dramatists. "He seems to have been fitted by his genius for short flights of impulsive poetry, but not for the sustained loftiness of Shakespeare or Milton,"¹⁴ he wrote in his Journal for 1842. And in his first published work, A Week, he says: "Sir Walter Raleigh might well be studied, if only for the excellence of his style, for he is remarkable in the midst of so many masters."¹⁵

Thoreau names some of Raleigh's works in his Journal for the year 1842. "He was the author of

13. Letters, p. 382.

14. Winter, p. 145.

15. A Week, p. 106.

'Maxims of State', 'The Cabinet Council', and 'The Soul's Errand',¹⁶ he wrote. And some years later, in The Last Days of John Brown,¹⁷ Thoreau mentions Raleigh's History of the World. Also, in addition to these works, there are occasional references to Raleigh's miscellaneous poetry.

In his essay Paradise (To Be) Regained, to clarify his opinions on the power of love, Thoreau quotes Raleigh. "The souls of men loving and fearing God," says Raleigh, "receive influence from that divine light itself, whereof the sun's clarity, and that of the stars, is by Plato called but a shadow. Lumen est umbra Dei, Deus est Lumen Luminis. Light is the shadow of God's brightness, who is the light of light."¹⁸ The essay in which this quotation is included was written in 1842, at the time when his enthusiasm for Raleigh was first being manifested. Later, in 1859, in an address delivered in Concord in commemoration of John Brown he said: "The well known verses called 'The Soul's Errand', supposed, by some, to have been written by Sir Walter Raleigh when he was expecting to be executed the following day, are at least worthy of such an origin, and are¹⁹ equally applicable to the present case." The

16. Winter, p. 145.

17. Miscellanies, p. 447.

18. Ibid., p. 304.

19. Ibid., p. 452.

verses were evidently quoted, but the editors of his Complete Works have failed to include them. Nevertheless, the preceding passage reveals the same interest in Raleigh that is so spontaneously expressed in his early life.

In Thoreau's well-written essay Night and Moonlight, which is not as romantic as might be expected from the title, he quotes the following from Raleigh: "The stars are instruments of far greater use than to give an obscure light, and for men to gaze on after sunset."²⁰ His development of this theme, however, is meagre, for he digresses soon after this quotation, and fails to tell us what he or Raleigh considered the "greater use" of the stars to be. However, in Walden, in a discussion of man and physical labor, he more aptly quotes from Raleigh:

"From thence our kind hard-hearted is, enduring
pain and care,
 Approving that our bodies of a stony nature are."²¹

Thoreau's fondness for the prose and poetry of Raleigh did not prevent him from recognizing and criticizing certain weaknesses. In his Journal entry for March 16, 1842, he devotes a page and a half to comments on Raleigh, and among other things says that

20. Excursions, p. 329.

21. Walden, p. 6.

"Raleigh's maxims are not true and important, but yet are expressed with a certain magnanimity which was natural to the man, as if this selfish policy could easily afford to give place in him to a more²² human and generous one."

His criticism of Raleigh, though, is best expressed in the following passage:

"Sir Walter Raleigh's faults are those of a courtier and a soldier. In his counsels and aphorisms we see not unfrequently the haste and rashness of a boy. His philosophy was not wide nor deep, but continually giving way to the generosity of his nature. What he touches he adorns by his greater humanity and native nobleness, but he touches not the true and original . . . He was not wise nor a seer in any sense, but rather one of nature's nobility, the most generous nature which can be spared to linger in the purlieus of the court . . . His was a singularly perverted genius, with a great inclination to originality and freedom, and yet who never steered his own course. Of so fair and susceptible a nature, rather than broad or deep, that he lingered to slake his thirst at the nearest and even somewhat turbid wells of truth and beauty. His homage to the less fair or noble left

22. Spring, p. 146.

no space for homage to the all fair."²³

Although Thoreau quotes Ben Jonson often, and shows a familiarity with his works, he does not reveal his critical opinion of him as he does of Shakespeare and Raleigh. His only comment that might at all be termed critical is found in A Week, where he writes: "Men have a respect for scholarship and learning greatly out of proportion to the use they commonly serve. We are amused to read how Ben Jonson engaged that the dull masks with which the Royal family and nobility were to be entertained should be 'grounded upon antiquity and solid learning.' Can there be any greater reproach than in idle learning? Learn²⁴ to split wood at least." This passage might be interpreted in several ways, none of which would be conclusive. However, it does reveal a knowledge of Jonson's life, and suggests at least a dislike of his passion for "solid learning". This criticism, if it is such, does not apply to any particular work or passage, for Thoreau quotes from Jonson without comment.

Thoreau's entry in his Journal for March 4, 1841 opens and closes with a quotation from Jonson, and probably, in substance, reflects a recent reading of

23. Winter, p. 145.

24. A Week, p. 108.

his biography, or perhaps of his critical work, Timber. This entry is comparatively short, and, because of its interesting content and possible relation to Jonson, is given here in full:

"March 4, 1841. Ben Jonson says in his epigrams, 'He makes himself a thoroughfare of vice.' This is true, for by vice the substance of a man is not changed, but all his pores and cavities and avenues are profaned by being made the thoroughfares of vice. The searching devil courses through and through him. His flesh and blood and bones are cheapened. He is all trivial, a place where three highways of sin meet. So is another the thoroughfare of virtue, and virtue circulates through all his aisles like wind, and he is hallowed.

"We reprove each other unconsciously by our own behavior. Our very carriage and demeanor in the streets should be a reprimand that will go to the conscience of every beholder. An infusion of love from a great soul gives a color to our faults which will discover them as lunar caustic detects impurities in water. The best will not seem to go contrary to others; but as if they could afford to travel the same way, they go a parallel but higher course: Jonson says,--

'That to the vulgar canst thyself apply,
Treading a better path, not contrary.'²⁵

In his essay on Walking we find Thoreau revising Jonson to suit his own taste. He writes: "Ben Jonson exclaims,--

'How near to good is what is fair!'

So I would say,--

How near to good is what is wild!"²⁶

That wild things are good we cannot deny, but to say of an owl that its "dismal scream is truly Ben Jonsonian,"²⁷ although unique, is hardly to be taken as a reference to Jonson's goodness. Another quotation from Jonson appears at about the time Thoreau is supposed to have been jailed for non-payment of taxes:

"Who 'er raised

For wealth he has not, he is taxed, not praised."²⁸

There are other writers in this period of English literature whom Thoreau might have read, but these men, for the most part, are only briefly quoted or referred to in some way. This is not much evidence upon which to base a judgment of his reading, but it

25. Spring, p. 55.

26. Excursions, p. 329.

27. Walden, p. 138.

28. Winter, p. 357.

at least serves as a clew to the possibility of his having known their works, and perhaps something of their background. In making an investigation of a writer's reading in a certain field of literature, we cannot expect to find mention of all that he has read. It must be assumed, or otherwise he would be different from most men, that Thoreau read some works without considering them or their authors worthy of note. Furthermore, it is possible, and quite probable, that the substance or philosophy of many unmentioned works is reflected in his writings, but in such form as to hide the original sources. It is quite true that we comment on that which pleases us most and least, and this truth is reflected in the writings of Thoreau. Perhaps at some time, through a survey of the records at the libraries in Boston and Cambridge and elsewhere, many books will be uncovered which he read but never mentioned.

In his Excursions, Thoreau wrote: "We do not learn by inference and deduction and the application of mathematics to philosophy, but by direct intercourse and sympathy. It is with science as with ethics, . . . we cannot know truth by contrivance and method; the Baconian is as false as any other, and with all the helps of machinery and the arts, the

most scientific will still be the healthiest and
 friendliest man."²⁹ Thoreau's conception of the
 Baconian method and philosophy is suggested in
 this statement, and his opinion of it is given
 frankly. Some reading and knowledge of Francis
 Bacon must have preceded this thought, but it is
 almost impossible to determine its exact nature or
 extent, for there are no other references or allusions.
 Bacon's importance and his relation to his age are
 revealed in such histories of English literature as
 Thoreau might have referred to or studied. It is
 doubtful if he could have read as widely in this
 literary period as he did without having had at least
 a slight knowledge of Bacon's essays and his philosophical
 writings.

Francis Beaumont is only referred to. In A Week
 Thoreau wrote: "That would be a rare praise, if it
 were true, which was addressed to Francis Beaumont,--
 'Spectators sate part in your tragedies!'"³⁰ What
 he knew of Beaumont's "tragedies", we cannot say.
 In general, he read little from the dramas of this
 or any other period in English literature. However,
 he does quote from John Fletcher. In his Journal for
 1853 he wrote: "So often to the luxurious and hazy

29. Excursions, p. 131.

30. A Week, p. 69.

summer in our minds, when, like Fletcher's 'Martyrs in Heaven', we,

'estranged from all misery

As far as Heaven and Earth discoasted lie,

Swelter in quiet waves of immortality,'

some great chagrin succeeds, some chilling cloud
³¹
 comes over."

Of Michael Drayton, Thoreau has but one observation. "Old Drayton," he wrote, "thought that a man that lived here, and would be a poet, for instance, should have in him certain 'brave, translunary things', and a 'fine madness' should possess his brain. Certainly it were as well, that he might be
³²
 up to the occasion." His knowledge of Drayton's poetic conceptions must certainly have been derived from a reading of his poetry. His biographer Salt refers to his reading Drayton, and also, in connection with him, mentions the poet Daniel; however, no reference to Daniel occurs in any of Thoreau's writings.

Thoreau often pondered on the inequality of man's economic status. In Walden, he analyzes the cause of the farmer's lack of wealth, and to establish and sum up a logical series of contentions he quotes the poet Chapman. "This is the reason", he writes,

31. Summer, p. 246.

32. A Week, p. 69.

"he is poor; and for a similar reason we are all poor in respect to a thousand savage comforts, though surrounded by luxuries. As Chapman sings,---

'The false society of men---

---for earthly greatness

All heavenly comforts rarefies to air.'"³³

Although Thoreau does not mention them, it is probable that he knew of and had read Chapman's translations of Homer, for in one place he reveals that he had read several translations of Homer, and he names Pope's as being one of them.

The poet Dekker is quoted briefly in a discussion of government and legislation. Invariably, in any discussion, Thoreau resorted to the thought or statement of some literary figure, so that his argument or contention might bear more weight. "The man," he wrote, "who thrusts his manners upon me does as if he were to insist on introducing me to his cabinet of curiosities, when I wished to see himself. It was not in this sense that the poet Decker called Christ 'the first true gentleman that ever breathed.' I repeat that in this sense the most splendid court in Christendom is provincial, having authority to consult about Transalpine interests only, and not the affairs of Rome. A praetor or proconsul would

33. Walden, p. 36.

suffice to settle the questions which absorb the attention of the English Parliament and the American Congress."³⁴

Of all the poets in this period, it seems that John Donne should have received as much attention as any, yet Thoreau quotes only one line of his poetry as a chapter head in A Week. But this cannot be taken as a criterion of his reading, although it does show a knowledge of Donne. The following line is quoted:

"Summer's robe grows

Dusky, and like an oft-dyed garment shows."³⁵

Thoreau's Journal entry for March 16, 1852, includes a revealing paragraph on his reading. He had spent the day in the Harvard College Library, seeking books on Canadian exploration and history. However, he wandered into the English literature section to browse and read at random. The following reveals, in Thoreau's original style, the impression he received:

"I saw that while we are clearing the forest in our westward progress, we are accumulating a forest of books in our rear, as wild and unexplored as any of nature's primitive wildernesses. The

34. Miscellanies, p. 478.

35. A Week, p. 356.

volumes of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries which lie so near on the shelf are rarely opened, are effectually forgotten, and not implied by our literature and newspapers. When I looked into Purchas's *Pilgrims*, it affected me like looking into an impassable swamp, ten feet deep with sphagnum, where the monarchs of the forest covered with mosses and stretched along the ground were making haste to become peat. Those old books suggested a certain fertility, an Ohio soil, as if they were making humus for new literatures to spring in. I heard the bellowing of bull-frogs and the hum of mosquitoes reverberating through the thick embossed covers when I had closed the books. ³⁶Decayed literature makes the richest of all soils."

The reference to Samuel Purchas's *Pilgrims* is very general. Thoreau "looked into" this volume, and as a result mentions it in his *Journal*. Undoubtedly he glanced at many other volumes from the "fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries", but he failed to name them. It is possible also, that he drew out one or two works to be read at leisure. An entry such as this is tantalizing to the person who would know what Thoreau read.

36. Spring, p. 148.

In a mystical passage in Walden Thoreau mentions an obscure English poet of this period whom he had read. Thomas Goffe (1591-1629), who wrote The Careless Shepherdess and other similar works, was as little known in Thoreau's time as he is today. The passage which reveals Goffe is important mainly for its revelation of Thoreau's mystic philosophy. God is the subject---not the all powerful being of the Old Testament, but the rational God of nature. "I have occasional visits," he wrote, "in the long winter evenings, when the snow falls fast and the wind howls in the wood, from an old settler and original proprietor, who is reported to have dug Walden Pond, and stoned it, and fringed it with pine woods; who tells me stories of old time and of new eternity; and between us we manage to pass a cheerful evening with social mirth and pleasant views of things, even without apples or cider,--a most wise and humorous friend, whom I love much, who keeps himself more secret than ever did Goffe or Whalley; and though he is thought to be dead, none can show where he is buried."

In this period there are a few writers other than English that Thoreau read. He quotes Du Bartas, discusses Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered, and alludes to Cervantes' Don Quixote.

37. Walden, p. 152.

Undoubtedly Thoreau became acquainted with Du Bartas through his study of Milton, for he was familiar not only with Milton's works, but also with his background. In his essay Night and Moonlight he wrote: "No wonder that there have been astrologers, that some have conceived that they were personally related to particular stars. Dubartas, as translated by Sylvester, says he'll

'not believe that the great architect
 With all these fires the heavenly arches decked
 Only for show, and with these glistering shields,
 T'awake poor shepherds, watching in the fields.'
 He'll 'not believe that the least flower which
 pranks

Our garden borders, or our common banks,
 And the least stone, that in her warning lap
 Our mother earth doth covetously wrap.
 Hath some peculiar virtue of its own,
 And that the glorious stars of heav'n have none.'"³⁸

In A Week Thoreau mentions Tasso, and reveals a knowledge of his long poem Jerusalem Delivered. The following excerpt reveals some reading:

"If it is not a tragical life we live, then I know not what to call it. Such a story as that of

38. Excursions, p. 328.

Jesus Christ,--the history of Jerusalem, say, being a part of the Universal History. The naked, the embalmed, unburied dead of Jerusalem amid its desolate hills--think of it. In Tasso's poem I trust some things are sweetly buried. Consider the snappish tenacity with which they preach Christianity still. What are time and space to Christianity, eighteen hundred years, and a new world?--that the humble life of a Jewish peasant should have force to make a New York bishop so bigoted. Forty-four lamps, the gift of kings, now burning in a place called the Holy Sepulchre: a church-bell ringing; some unaffected tears shed by a pilgrim on Mount Calvary within a week.

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, when I forget thee, may my right hand forget her cunning.'

'By the waters of Babylon there we
sat down, and we wept when we remembered Zion.'³⁹

Thoreau refers once to Cervantes, and in another place mentions the character Sancho Panza. He evidently had read some, and perhaps all, of Don Quixote, for he writes: "It appears to me that the wisest philosophers I know are as foolish as Sancho Panza dreaming of his island . . . He girds himself for

39. A Week, p. 67.

his enterprise with fasting and prayer, and then, instead of pressing forward like a light-armed soldier, with the fewest possible hindrances, he at once hooks on to some immovable institution, and begins to sing and scratch gravel towards his objects But if the philosopher is as foolish as Sancho Panza, he is also as wise, and nothing so truly makes a thing so or so as thinking it so."⁴⁰

The following reference to Cervantes is included in a quotation from Carlyle, and therefore cannot be called Thoreau's own observation. However, it reveals that he was aware of the Spanish writer's important position in world literature. He quotes Carlyle as saying: "Nor is the noblest the most peculiar for working by prescribed laws; Sophocles, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and, in Richter's own age, Goethe, how little did they innovate on the given forms of composition, how much in the spirit they⁴¹ breathed into them."

40. Spring, p. 306.

41. Miscellanies, p. 338.

VI

Seventeenth Century Literature: 1625-1700

It is obvious that a strict division of Thoreau's reading in English literature into periods results in overlapping, and often places in definite groups writers that properly belong in two consecutive periods, or in a separate transition period. For instance, such men as Drayton, Chapman, Jonson, Dekker, and Donne, who were covered in the preceding discussion, belong almost as much to the Seventeenth Century period in English Literature. There is really no abrupt demarcation and it is only for the sake of clarity and logical division that groupings such as this are presented.

Thomas Arnold's chronological system of division is used here, principally because his book is comparable to the histories of English literature with which Thoreau might have been familiar. However, such divisions as Arnold makes do not always correspond to those of capable present-day literary historians. For the most part, though, this outline

arranged by Matthew Arnold's father will be found reliable.

Thoreau, according to his biographers Salt and Sanborn, read considerably in the post-Elizabethan period of English literature. Their statements to this effect must be accepted, for the actual evidence which exists in his Complete Works, although fairly sufficient, is not as complete and revealing as might be expected. But after all, most of this reading was done at college, before he had begun to make daily Journal entries, and before his career as a writer had seriously commenced. Undoubtedly if he had kept a Journal while attending school he would have had more to say about the poets and religious writers of the Seventeenth Century period, for the later Journal entries reveal a continuation of the reading.

In 1861, in a letter to Daniel Ricketson, Thoreau tells us that Alcott, then superintendent of schools, received from the children "an unexpected present of a fine edition of 'Pilgrim's Progress' and Herbert's poems, which, of course, overcame all parties."¹ Thoreau knew Herbert's poetry, and could appreciate Alcott's gift. Salt reveals this appreciation of Herbert, and Thoreau himself quotes

1. Letters, p. 376.

the following lines from him in A Week:

"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky,
The dew shall weep they fall to-night,
For thou must die."²

No other important mention of Herbert, except that included in a discussion of Quarles, occurs in his writings.

A poem of Thomas Carew is included in Walden, but no comment on him or his poetry exists in that or any other published work of Thoreau. This lone poem, however, is complete, and although it is presented without criticism, his quoting it in full reveals some appreciation. Certainly it can be assumed that many other of Carew's poems had been read and appreciated, for the one printed in Walden is evidently included only because of its pertinent relation to the chapter which follows it. Inasmuch as this poem is the only one by Thomas Carew quoted, it is given here in full:

COMPLEMENTAL VERSES

The Pretensions of Poverty

Thou dost presume too much, poor needy wretch
To claim a station in the firmament

2. A Week, p. 335.

Because they humble cottage, or thy tub,
 Nurses some lazy or pedantic virtue
 In the cheap sunshine or by shady springs,
 With roots and pot-herbs; where thy right hand,
 Tearing those humane passions from the mind
 Upon whose stocks fair blooming virtues flourish,
 Degradeth nature, and benumbeth sense,
 And Gorgon-like, turns active men to stone.
 We not require the dull society
 Of our necessitated temperance,
 Or that unnatural stupidity
 That knows nor joy nor sorrow; nor your forc'd
 Above the active. This low abject brood,
 That fix their seats in mediocrity,
 Become your servile minds; but we advance
 Such virtues only as admit excess,
 Brave, bounteous acts, regal magnificence,
 All-seeing prudence, magnanimity
 That knows no bound, and that heroic virtue
 For which antiquity hath left no name
 But patterns only, such as Hercules,
 Achilles, Theseus, back to thy loath'd cell;
 And when thou seest the new enlightened sphere,
 Study to know but what those worthies were.³

T. Carew

3. Walden, p. 89.

It is not strange that Thoreau saw fit to include this verse in Walden. Contained in its lines are many thoughts comparable to the philosophy of Walden. The reflections on society, ignorance, stupidity, and the joy of "cheap sunshine" and "shady spring" are meat which Thoreau digested.

In a letter to Mrs. Emerson in 1843, Thoreau tells her of some recent reading. If it were not for this statement, little would be known of his reading of Quarles' poetry, for in his regular works there appears only a quotation--and that without comment. In this letter he also mentions Herbert and Shakespeare, and in the case of Herbert he seems to indicate a deeper, more profound knowledge than he at any other time actually reveals. "I have been reading lately," he writes, "what of Quarles's poetry I could get. He was a contemporary of Herbert, and a kindred spirit. I think you would like him. It is rare to find one who was so much of a poet and so little of an artist. He wrote long poems, almost epics for length, about Jonah, Esther, Job, Samson, and Solomon, interspersed with meditations after a quite original plan,--Shepherd's Oracles, Comedies, Romances, Fancies, and Meditations,--the

quintessence of meditations,--and Enchiridions of Meditation all divine,--and what he calls his Morning Muse; besides prose works as curious as the rest. He was an unwearied Christian, and a reformer of some old school withal. Hopelessly quaint, as if he lived all alone and knew nobody but his wife, who appears to have revered him. He never doubts his genius; it is only he and his God in all the world. He uses language sometimes as greatly as Shakespeare; and though there is not much straight grain in him, there is plenty of tough, crooked timber. In an age when Herbert is revived, Quarles surely ought not to be forgotten.⁴"

If only Thoreau had been as outspoken about his reading of Cowley, Drummond, Habington and others, there would be little difficulty in judging the extent of his knowledge of this period in English literature. His mention of Herbert suggests a knowledge which undoubtedly could have been presented as completely as is this information about Quarles' works. There were probably any number of writers in this and other periods that were read widely enough to be discussed at length. But only a quotation or a

4. Letters, p. 112.

casual reference exists by which his reading of them can be estimated.

Besides discussing Quarles' poetry, Thoreau quotes him in A Week. The two lines are taken from Quarles' Christ's Invitation to the Soul:

"Come, come, my lovely fair, and let us try
⁵
 Those rural delicacies."

Thoreau's reading of Drummond, Habington, and Cowley must be judged from the remarks of his biographers. In Thoreau's Complete Works there are many quotations which are unacknowledged, and which are not readily identifiable except by a specialist in the period to which they belong. It is quite probable that one of the above poets may have been quoted, and it is reasonable to say that Salt and Sanborn may have recognized them among the various quotations. However, these biographers relied primarily upon first-hand information. Sanborn knew Thoreau, and undoubtedly was acquainted with many of his Concord friends. But this in no way establishes the veracity of Sanborn's statements regarding Thoreau's reading, for even first-hand information is often unconsciously exaggerated or distorted. However, according to Sanborn, Thoreau is supposed to have read and enjoyed the poet Habington, who influenced Cowley, and also

5. A Week, p. 12.

is said to have read the Scotch poet Drummond. Neither of these is mentioned by Thoreau in his writings, though something from them might be included among the many unacknowledged quotations.

Salt tells us that Thoreau read Cowley, and he writes, "Those who are interested in seeking for literary prototypes may perhaps, in this case, find one in Abraham Cowley, a member of that school of gnomic poets with which Thoreau was so familiar, and moreover, a zealous lover of the peace and solitude of nature."⁶

The only quotation from Robert Herrick is found in Thoreau's essay Wild Apples. In no other place is this poet mentioned or obviously quoted, though Thoreau probably was as familiar with him as with many of his contemporaries.

The following is quoted:

"Wassalle the trees that they may beare
You many a plum and many a peare;
For more or less fruits they will bring
As you so give them wassailing."⁷

Thoreau read and studied Milton at Harvard College, and the respect that he gained for him there was re-

6. H. S. Salt, op. cit., p. 186.

7. Excursions, p. 298.

tained throughout his life. Sanborn says, "Early in 1837 Thoreau wrote an elaborate paper, though of no great length, on Milton's 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso', with many quotations."⁸ This essay is not included in his Complete Works, but portions of it are included in Sanborn's biography. The thought, however, is pompous, and void of any comment or criticism comparable to that of later years. It reveals an apparently sincere enthusiasm which includes a religious fervor not to be found in his Complete Works. Although in this early essay the adolescent approach to a great writer can be discerned, it is upon this foundation that he built a thorough understanding of the works of the blind poet.

Sanborn says also: "He had read all that was best in English and in Greek poetry, but was more familiar with the poets of Milton's time and earlier, than with those more recent, except his own townsmen and companions. He valued Milton above Shakespeare, and had a special love for Aeschylus."⁹ Salt corroborates this statement, saying: "Among poets the old English writers were most to his liking; he read and appreciated old ballad writers, Chaucer, Spenser, Ossian, Herbert, Cowley, Quarles, and above all others,

8. F. B. Sanborn, op. cit., p. 156.

9. Ibid., p. 155.

Milton, whose 'Lycidas' was often on his lips."¹⁰
 Yet, in spite of this indubitable appreciation of Milton, Thoreau, outside of his college essay, has little to say about him. Occasionally he brings the poet's name, or one of his works, into a description or discussion, but never in a way that directly concerns the thought or appreciation of the work. For example, in a discussion of early Massachusetts history, after dwelling on an event of an early date, he remarks that in reality it had not been long since that time, for "it happened since Milton wrote Paradise Lost."¹¹

Another excerpt from Thoreau's works, which includes one of the few references to Milton, is equally important for its revelation of Thoreau's impression of a library. "When I stand in a library," he wrote, "where is all the recorded wit of the world, but none of the recording, a mere accumulated, and not truly cumulative treasure; where immortal works stand side by side with anthologies which did not survive their month, and cobweb and mildew have already spread from these to the binding of those; and happily I am reminded of what poetry is,--I perceive that Shakespeare and Milton did not foresee into what

10. H. S. Salt, op. cit., p. 96.

11. A Week, p. 345.

company they were to fall. Alas! that so soon the
work of a true poet should be swept into such a
dust-hole!"¹²

In Cape Cod Thoreau includes his only quotation from Milton. He and his companion at Cape Cod were peeking through a knot hole into an old deserted building on the coast. At first the darkness hindered their sight, but soon "we obtained the long wished for insight. Though we thought at first that it was a hopeless case, after several minutes' steady exercise of the divine faculty, our prospects began to brighten, and we were ready to exclaim with the blind bard of 'Paradise Lost and Regained',--

'Hail, holy light! offspring of Heaven first born,
Or of the eternal coeternal beam
May I express thee unblamed?'"¹³

In Walden Thoreau reveals his reading of the poet D'Avenant, who was influenced by Hobbes, and who is supposed to have been England's first poet laureate. D'Avenant's Gondibert, however, is not the most inspiring of poetry. At least Thoreau did not think it so, for he found it conducive to sleep. "I . . . had just lost myself," he wrote, "over Davenant's 'Gondibert', that winter that I labored with a
lethargy."¹⁴ Suddenly, however, the bells rang fire;

12. Ibid., p. 363.

13. Cape Cod, p. 77.

14. Walden, p. 285

and for a while the excitement of the blaze and the crowd cured the feeling of lethargy. But, "we finally retreated without doing any mischief,--returned to sleep and 'Gondibert'. But as for 'Gondibert', I would except that passage in the preface about wit being soul's powder,--'but most of mankind are strangers¹⁵ to wit, as Indians are to powder.'"

Dryden is mentioned but once in Thoreau's writings. It is difficult to venture an opinion on his reading of this poet and dramatist, for although the poetry might not have appealed to him, it is possible that he read it in spite of his dislike, for so he often read. In A Week he wrote: "What a contrast between the stern and desolate poetry of Ossian, and that of Chaucer, and even of Shakespeare and Milton,¹⁶ much more of Dryden, and Pope, and Gray!"

Thoreau chose to quote Marvell in his address delivered in Concord, in 1859, in commemoration of John Brown. This is the only time he quotes or mentions Marvell, and consequently it is the only time he reveals an appreciation of him. Thoreau said: "Only what is true, and strong, and solemnly earnest will recommend itself to our mood at this time. Almost any noble verse may be read, either as his elegy

15. Ibid., p. 287.

16. Ibid., p. 391.

or eulogy, or be made the test of an oration on him. Indeed, such are now discovered to be the parts of a universal liturgy, applicable to those rare cases of heroes and martyrs for which ritual of no church has provided. This is the formula established on high,--their burial service,--to which every great genius has contributed its stanza or line. As Marvell wrote:--

'When the sword glitters o'er the judge's head,
And fear has cowed churchmen silenced,
Then is the poet's time; 'tis then he draws
And single fights forsaken virtue's cause;
He, when the wheel of empire whirlleth back
And though the world's disjointed axle crack,
Sings still of ancient rights and better times,
Seeks suffering good, arraigns successful crimes.'¹⁷

Thoreau's reading in this period was not limited to the poets. He was familiar with some religious philosophers, and with other prose writers. His observation on John Aubrey's Brief Lives is interesting for its revelation of other prose writers of this period who were probably familiar to him, and who, as in the case of Thomas Fuller, were probably read often. "Aubrey," he wrote, "relates of Thomas Fuller that his was 'a very working head, inasmuch

17. Miscellanies, p. 451.

that, walking and meditating before dinner, he would eat up a penny loaf, not knowing that he did it. His natural memory was very great, to which he added the art of memory. He would repeat to you forwards and backwards all the signs from Ludgate to Charing cross.' He says of Mr. John Hales, that 'he loved Canarie', and was buried 'under an altar monument of black marble---with a too long epitaph;' of Edmund Halley, that he 'at sixteen could make a dial and then, he said, he thought himself a brave fellow;' of William Holder, who wrote a book upon his curing one Popham who was deaf and dumb, 'he was beholding to no author; did only consult with nature.' For the most part, an author consults only with all who have written before him upon a subject, and his book is but the advice of so many.¹⁸

Thomas Fuller is mentioned in a few instances in Thoreau's writings, and he is quoted twice, both times in A Week. He writes: "The very dust takes shape and confirms some story which we had read. As Fuller said, commenting on the zeal of Camden, 'A broken urn is a whole evidence; or an old gate still surviving out of which the city is run out.'¹⁹"

Later he writes: "What Fuller says of masters of

18. A Week, p. 112.

19. Ibid., p. 265.

colleges is universally applicable, that ' a little alloy of dullness in a master of a college makes him fitter to manage secular affairs.'²⁰"

Ralph Cudworth, the Cambridge Platonist, evidently influenced somewhat Thoreau's thought. His Moral Good or Evil, or Natural Ethics is probably the work which Thoreau refers to in his Journal entry for June 24, 1840. He writes: "When I read Cudworth I find I can tolerate all, atomists, pneumatologists, atheists, and theists, Plato, Aristotle, Leucippus, Demacritus, and Pythagoras. It is the attitude of these men more than any communication, which charms me. It is so rare to find a man musing. But between them and their commentations there is an endless dispute Any sincere thought is irresistible. It lifts us to the zenith, whither the smallest bubble rises as surely as the largest.

"Dr. Cudworth does not consider that the belief in a deity is as great a heresy as exists. Epicurus held that the gods were 'of human form, yet were so thin and subtile as that, comparatively without terrestrial bodies, they might be called incorporeal; they having not so much carnem as quasi-carnem, nor snaguinem as quasi-sanguinem, a certain kind of aerial

20. Ibid., p. 414.

or ethereal flesh and blood.' This which Cudworth pronounces 'romantical', is plainly as good doctrine as his own, as if any sincere thought were not the best sort of truth."²¹

In this same year, 1840, a few days after the above entry, Thoreau mentions two obscure figures of this period and reveals that he has been reading, perhaps at the time, something of their writings. "What are Godfrey and Gonsolve," he writes, "unless we breathe a life into them, and reenact their exploits as a prelude to our own? The past is only so heroic as we see it; it is the canvas on which our conception of heroism is painted, the dim prospectus of our future field. We are dreaming of what we are to do."²²

There is no doubt that Thoreau read Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. During the period of the nineteenth century in which he lived almost any home was likely to have a huge family Bible and an elaborate edition of Pilgrim's Progress on the parlor table. As a child he undoubtedly looked wonderingly at the vivid illustrations, and at a later time he probably read portions of it. However, there is little in his printed writings that reveals his

21. Summer, p. 222.

22. Ibid., p. 313.

understanding, or his critical interpretation, of the famous allegory. In one place he writes: "It would be well if all our lives were a divine tragedy even, instead of this trivial comedy or farce. Dante, Bunyan, and others appear to have been exercised in their minds more than we: they were subjected to a kind of culture such as our district schools and colleges do not contemplate."²³

In A Week, in a chapter devoted principally to a discussion of the New Testament and Christianity, there is also a revealing reference to Pilgrim's Progress. Thoreau wrote: "The New Testament is an invaluable book, though I confess to having been slightly prejudiced against it in my early days by the church and the Sabbath school, so that it seemed, before I read it to be the yellowest book in the catalogue. Yet I early escaped from their meshes. It was hard to get the commentaries out of one's head and taste its true flavor. I think that Pilgrim's Progress is the best sermon which has been preached from this text; almost all other sermons that I have heard, or heard of, have been but poor imitations²⁴ of this."

His opinion of the New Testament makes in itself

23. Excursions, p. 241.

24. A Week, p. 72.

a subject for analysis and comment which may be legitimately included in a discussion of his reading of English literature. Thoreau writes: "It would be a poor story to be prejudiced against the Life of Christ because this book has been edited by Christians. In fact: I love this book rarely, though it is a sort of castle in the air to me, which I am permitted to dream. Having come to it so recently and freshly, it has the greater charm, so that I cannot find any to talk with about it . . . The reading which I love best is the scriptures of the several nations, though it happens that I am better acquainted with those of the Hindoos, the Chinese, and the Persians, than of the Hebrews, which I have come to last. Give me one of these²⁵ bibles, and you have silenced me for a while."

Thoreau loved and understood the ambitious, the skilled, and the lazy fishermen who often visited Walden pond. He himself was a disciple of old Walton, and often at the dark hour of midnight floated idly over the pond, casting his line into the mist that was as dense as the water itself. The very essence of Walton's philosophy is reflected in his attitude toward the sport, which combined scientific activity and meditative thought. When Thoreau compared an

25. Ibid., p. 72.

angler to Walton, he usually intended it as a compliment. "I can just remember," he writes, "an old brown-coated man who was the Walton of this stream."²⁶ In another place he tells us, "He who has not hooked the red chiven is not yet a complete angler."²⁷ There is little doubt that Thoreau had read Izaak Walton's Complete Angler.

Although Thoreau does not mention Samuel Pepys in his writings, he does mention a contemporary, though lesser, diarist. John Evelyn, a country gentleman skilled in the mysteries of planting and landscape-gardening, is the author of a Diary, first published in 1813, which, among other matters, contains an interesting account of the great fire of London, of which he was an eye witness. But the gardening, not the fire, interested Thoreau. In A Week he writes: "We are apt to be pleased with such books as Evelyn's Sylva, Actearium, and Kalendarium Hortense, but they imply a relaxed nerve in a reader. Gardening is civil and social, but it wants the vigor and freedom of the forest and outlaw . . . A highly cultivated man,--all whose bones can be bent! whose heaven-born virtues are but good manners!"²⁸ The unusual expressions which Evelyn used interested

27. Ibid., p. 28.

28. Ibid., p. 55.

Thoreau. He writes: "Evelyn says of the oaks, which he calls 'these robust sons of the earth', 'Tis reported that the very shade of this tree is so wholesome that the sleeping or lying under it becomes a present remedy to paralytics, and recovers those whom the mistaken malign influence of the walnut-tree has smitten.' . . . Evelyn has collected the fine exaggerations of antiquity respecting the virtues and habits of trees, and added some himself."²⁹ Later he refers again to some unusual expressions used by Evelyn. He writes: "He well says, 'a sobbing rain'. Evelyn's love of his subject teaches him to use many expressive words . . . He speaks of pines 'pearling out into gums'. He talks of modifying the air as well as the soil about plants, making 'the remedy as well regional as topical.' . . . He speaks of a 'dewil sperge or brush' to be used instead of a watering-pot which 'gluts' the earth. He calls the kitchen-garden the 'Olitory garden', In a dedication of his 'Kalendarium Hortense' to Cowley, he inserts two or three good sentences or quotations, viz., 'as the philosopher in Seneca desired only bread and herbs to dispute felicity with Jupiter.' So of Cowley's simple, retired life. 'Who would not, like you, cacher sa vie?'. 'delivered from the gilded

29. Summer, p. 78.

impertinences of life.'"³⁰ Thoreau quotes and refers to Evelyn in Walden and in other writings. Evelyn's style and subject matter pleased him, and for that reason, undoubtedly, Thoreau refers to him so often.

John Locke is mentioned in relation to Carlyle. He writes: "There is no writing of Latin with Carlyle; but as Chaucer, with all reverence to Homer, and Virgil, and Messieurs the Normans, sung his poetry in the homely Saxon tongue, and Locke has at least the merit of having done philosophy into English, so Carlyle has done a different philosophy still further into English."³¹

30. Ibid., p. 81.

31. Miscellanies, p. 328.

VII

Eighteenth Century Literature: 1700-1800

Thoreau's reading in eighteenth century English literature is poorly representative of that period. With a few exceptions, he reveals those authors whom we might expect him to read--writers whose interests were comparable to his own. His comments on the men of this period, however, are not especially spontaneous or enthusiastic. In many cases his allusions are mere acknowledgements which reveal only that he was quite aware of certain authors and their works. In all, he was probably acquainted with far more works than his writings reveal.

Thoreau probably knew Daniel Defoe only through Robinson Crusoe, which he read, perhaps, very early in life. Prose of the type written by Swift and Defoe was not to his liking. In A Week he writes of "a little flaxen-headed boy, with some tradition, or small edition, of Robinson Crusoe in his head."¹ In another place, in the same work, he tells us, "Joseph Wolff, the missionary, distributed copies of Robinson Crusoe, translated into Arabic, among

1. A Week, p. 307.

the Arabs, and they made a great sensation. 'Robinson Crusoe's adventures and wisdom,' says he, 'were read by Mohametans in the market-places of Sanaa, Hadyeda, and Loheya, and admired and believed!' On reading the book, the Arabians exclaimed, 'Oh, that² Robinson Crusoe must have been a great prophet!'"

Thoreau briefly mentions Pope in his writings, but he fails to indicate clearly his opinion of him. Of course, he knew well his translation of Homer, and recognized its merits. "I am convinced," he writes, "that if all men were to live as simply as I then did, thieving and robbery would be unknown. These take place only in communities where some have got more than is sufficient while others have not enough. The Pope's Homers would soon get properly distributed."³

But later, in a discussion of style, Thoreau refers to Pope, and indicates some familiarity with his style and thought. "Who cares," he writes, "what a man's style is, so it is intelligible,--as intelligible as his thought. Literally and really, the style is no more than the stylus, the pen he writes with; and it is not worth scraping and polishing, and gilding, unless it will write his thoughts the better

2. Ibid., p. 60.

3. Walden, p. 191.

for it. It is something for use, and not to look at. The question for us is, not whether Pope had a fine style, wrote with a peacock's feather, but whether he uttered useful thoughts."⁴

Ambrose Phillips, who, because of his Six Pastorals, was so severely ridiculed by Pope and Gay, is mentioned by Thoreau. In the essay Wild Apples, he writes: "Our poets have as yet a better right to sing of cider than of wine: but it behooves them to sing better than English Phillips did, else they will do us no credit to their muse."⁵ Perhaps Thoreau discovered this volume of Phillips's during one of his leisurely trips through the Harvard Library.

Samuel Johnson is referred to but twice in the writings of Thoreau. In A Week he writes: "That is a superfluous wonder, which Dr. Johnson expresses at the assertion of Sir Thomas Browne that 'his life has been a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not history but a piece of poetry, and would sound like a fable.'"⁶ This reveals some reading, at least. The following seems to show that Johnson's Rasselas was a familiar work. "At length, like Rasselas, and other inhabitants of happy valleys, we

4. Miscellanies, p. 330.

5. Excursions, p. 298.

6. A Week, p. 69.

resolved to scale the blue wall which bounded the western horizon, though not without misgivings that thereafter no visible fairyland would exist for us."⁷ It would be interesting to know Thoreau's critical opinion of Dr. Johnson. Perhaps he did read Boswell's well-known biography.

Cowper is referred to only in Thoreau's correspondence. In a letter to Harrison Blake in 1855 he writes about Daniel Ricketson, saying: "He loves Cowper's Task better than anything else; and thereafter perhaps, Thompson, Gray, and even Howitt."⁸ A year later, in a letter to Daniel Ricketson himself, he writes: "You have done well to write a lecture on Cowper."⁹ This is the extent of Thoreau's mention of Cowper. It reveals a knowledge, of course, but in no way gives a definite critical opinion. However, his friendship with the wealthy Mr. Ricketson led to many hours of conversation, and it is quite probable that some of that time was spent in discussing Cowper.

Thoreau's appreciation for Thompson is expressed in the following statement: "There is as great an interval between the thrasher and the wood-thrush as between Thompson's 'Seasons' and Homer."¹⁰ He loved

7. Excursions, p. 135.

8. Letters, p. 259.

9. Ibid., p. 275.

10. Summer, p. 137.

both the thrasher and the wood-thrush, and admired the two poets for their respective worth. Thoreau quotes Thompson but once, in his essay Autumnal Tints. He writes: "Europeans coming to America are surprised by the brilliancy of our autumnal foliage. There is no account of such a phenomenon in English poetry, because the trees acquire but few bright colors there. The most that Thompson says on this subject in his 'Autumn' is contained in the lines,---

'But see the fading many-colored woods
Shade deepening over shade, the country round
Imbrown; a drowded umbrage, dusk and dun,
Of every hue, from wan declining green
To sooty dark;'

and in the line in which he speaks of

11

'Autumn beaming o'er yellow woods.'

That Thoreau read Thomas Gray is revealed only through two allusions to his famous Elegy. Gray himself is not mentioned, and no opinion of his work is given. In a description of a hamlet grave-yard in Maine, Thoreau writes of "a few graves even, surrounded by a wooden paling, where already the rude forefathers of a hamlet lie, and a thousand years hence, perchance, some poet will write his 'Elegy

11. Excursions, p. 249.

in a Country Churchyard.'¹² In his Journal for 1859 he writes: "Consider the infinite promise of a man, so that the sight of his roof at a distance suggests an idyl or a pastoral, or of his grave, an Elegy in a Country Churchyard."¹³

Thoreau refers to Burns as he does to Gray. Not once does he make a comment which reveals an appreciation of him. Burns was not widely read at Thoreau's time, and it is doubtful if he knew him very well. In his essay on Carlyle he writes: "Notwithstanding the very genuine, admirable, and loyal tributes to Burns, Schiller, Goethe, and others Carlyle is not a critic of poetry."¹⁴ Later he writes of the "stream of inspiration which . . . is in Shakespeare, Orpheus, in Burns, Arethuse," and tells us that we would not have Carlyle "write always as in the chapter on Burns."¹⁵ It is strange that all his mention of Burns is to be found in this essay. It almost seems that his knowledge of Burns was limited to what he had learned from Carlyle. But it must be remembered that Thoreau wrote this essay during the latter half of his years at Harvard College. In another place he again mentions Burns, this time along with other renowned men. He writes: "Mahomet, Dante, Cromwell,

12. Maine Woods, p. 19.

13. Excursions, p. 61.

14. Miscellanies, p. 340.

15. Ibid., p. 330.

Voltaire, Johnson, Burns, Goethe, Richter, Schiller,
 Mirabeau, . . . could any of these have been spared?"¹⁶

Thoreau was as susceptible to the supposed translations of Ossian as any other literary man of his time. Macpherson's translation was read by many, and taken by most at its face value. Altogether, Thoreau devotes more space to Macpherson's work than he does to any other writer except Chaucer. His opinions, observations, and interpretations are sincere and often unusually profound. His comments on Ossian in A Week might be lifted bodily to form a complete and rather long essay, and in his other works the scattered comments might be blended into a second essay of almost equal length. Thoreau's sincere appreciation certainly would have been severely shaken had he for a moment suspected the authenticity of this eccentric, weakly founded literary hoax. The following paragraphs are typical of his discussion:

"The genuine remains of Ossian, or those ancient poems which bear his name, though of less fame and extent, are, in many respects, of the same stamp with the Iliad itself. He asserts the dignity of the bard no less than Homer, and in his era, we hear of no other priest than he. It will not avail to call him a heathen, because he personifies the sun and

16. Ibid., p. 351.

addresses it; and what if his heroes did worship the ghosts of their fathers, 'their thin, airy, and insubstantial forms'? We worship but the ghosts of our fathers in more substantial form. We cannot but respect the vigorous faith of those heathen, who sternly believed somewhat, and are inclined to say to the critics, who are offended by their superstitious rites, Don't interrupt these men's prayers. As if we knew more about life and a God, than the heathen and ancients! Does English theology contain the recent discoveries?

"Ossian reminds us of the most refined and rudest eras, of Homer, Pindar, Isaiah, and the American Indian. In his poetry, as in Homer's, only the simplest and most enduring features of humanity are seen, such essential parts of a man as Stonehenge exhibits of a temple; we see the circles of stone, and the upright shaft alone. The phenomena of life acquire almost an unreal and gigantic size seen through his mists. Like all older and grander poetry, it is distinguished by the few elements in the lives of its heroes. They stand on the heath, between the stars and the earth, shrunk to the bones and sinews. The earth is a boundless plain for their deeds. They lead such a simple, dry, and everlasting life, as hardly needs depart with the flesh, but

is transmitted entire from age to age. There are but few objects to distract their sight, and their life is as unincumbered as the course of the stars they gaze at

'The wrathful kings, on cairns apart,
Look forward from behind their shields,
And mark the wandering stars,
That brilliant westward move.'¹⁷

In another place, in full faith, he tells us that "Chaucer's is the first name after that misty¹⁸ weather in which Ossian lived."

Thoreau quotes considerably from Ossian, and invariably precedes or follows the excerpt with some critical or philosophical comment. For example, in his essay Life Without Principle, he writes: "Nations! What are nations? Tartars and Huns, and Chinamen! Like insects, they swarm. The historian strives in vain to make them memorable. It is for want of men that there are so many men. It is individuals that populate the world. Any man thinking may say with the Spirit of Lodin,--

'I look down from my height on nations,
And they become ashes before me;--
Calm is my dwelling in the clouds;
Pleasant are the great fields of my rest.'¹⁹

17. A Week, p. 366.

18. Ibid., p. 393.

19. Miscellanies, p. 473.

In another essay, Night and Moonlight, he quotes Ossian for the conclusion, and it cannot be said that the selection lacks fitness or power. He writes:

"When Ossian, in his address to the sun, exclaims,--

'Where has darkness its dwelling?

Where is the cavernous home of the stars,

When thou quickly followest their steps,

Pursuing them like a hunter in the sky,--

Thou climbing the lofty hills,

They descending on barren mountains?'

who does not in his thought accompany the stars to their 'cavernous home', 'descending' with them 'on
20
barren mountains'?"

Thoreau refers once to Gilbert White, a naturalist writer of this period, who was noted for his unique Naturalist's Calendar. He writes: "I am pleased to find that in Gilbert White's day, at least, the laborers in that part of England where he lived enjoyed certain rights of common in the royal forests, so called, where they cut their turf and other fuel, etc., though no large wood, and obtained materials for broom-making, etc., when other labor failed. It
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is no longer so, according to the editor."

William Gilpin, who wrote a series of books on

20. Excursions, p. 332.

21. Spring, p. 215.

the picturesque, is often referred to in Thoreau's works. Thoreau's use of and reference to the works of Gilpin is very clearly analyzed in Mr. W. D. Templeman's article "Thoreau, Moralist of the Picturesque", which appeared in a recent issue of the ²²
Publications of the Modern Language Association.
 However, some mention of the works of this writer is appropriate here. In a letter to Daniel Ricketson written in 1855 he lists all the books of Gilpin which he has read or with which he is somewhat familiar. The following is taken from this letter: "On my way through Boston I inquired for Gilpin's works at Little, Brown & Co.'s, Munroe's, Ticknor's, and Burnham's. They have not got them. They told me at Little, Brown & Co.'s that his works (not complete), in twelve vols., 8vo, were imported and sold in this country five or six years ago for about fifteen dollars. Their terms for importing are ten per cent on the cost. I copied from the 'London Catalogue of Books, 1846-51', at their shop, the following list of Gilpin's works:--

Gilpin (Wm.),	Dialogues on Various Subjects
_____	Essays on Picturesque Subjects
_____	Exposition of the New Testament
_____	Forest Scenery, by Sir T. D. Lauder

22. W. D. Templeman, "Thoreau, Moralist of the Picturesque", P. M. L. A., XLVII, 864-889.

_____	Lectures on the Catechism
_____	Lives of the Reformers
_____	Sermons Illustrative and Practical
_____	Sermons to Country Congregations
_____	Tour in Cambridge
_____	Tour of the River Wye

Gilpin (W. S.?) Hints on Landscape Gardening

"Beside these, I remember to have read one volume on Prints; his Southern Tour; Lakes of Cumberland; Highlands of Scotland and West of England."²³

In Cape Cod Thoreau quotes Gilpin in a description of the Atlantic. "Today," he writes, "it was the Purple Sea, an epithet which I should not before have accepted. There were distinct patches of the color of a purple grape with the bloom rubbed off. But first and last the sea is of all colors. Well writes Gilpin concerning 'the brilliant hues which are continually playing on the surface of a quiet ocean,' and this was not too turbulent at a distance from the shore. 'Beautiful,' says he, 'no doubt in a high degree are those glimmering tints which often invest the tops of mountains; but they are mere coruscations compared with these marine colors, which are continually varying and shifting into each other in all the vivid splendor of the rainbow, though the

23. Letters, p. 263.

space often of several leagues.'"²⁴

Three other English writers of this period are casually referred to. William Paley, who is remembered for his Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy,²⁵ is mentioned in Thoreau's essay on Civil Disobedience; Adam Smith, the political economist, is referred to²⁶ in Walden; and in a letter dated 1857, the well-known²⁷ historian, Gibbon, is recommended to a reader. These writers are mentioned but once each in Thoreau's Complete Works.

Three French writers of this period are also referred to or named by Thoreau. Voltaire is mentioned among others in his essay on Carlyle. It is his only reference to this powerful philosopher. He writes: "Mahomet, Dante, Cromwell, Voltaire, Johnson, Burns, Goethe, Richter, Schiller, Mirabeau,--²⁸ could any of these have been spared?" It seems, however, that his acquaintance with most of the above writers was obtained secondhand through Carlyle.

It would be a revelation to know for certain the extent of Thoreau's reading of Rousseau, for the two differed radically and yet held much in common. However, he refers to Rousseau but once, and in no way

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- 24. Cape Cod, p. 119.
 - 25. Miscellanies, p. 361.
 - 26. Walden, p. 57.
 - 27. Letters, p. 301.
 - 28. Miscellanies, p. 351.

indicates any definite reading. He writes: "Read Linnaeus at once, and come down from him as far as you please . . . I doubt if his "Philosophia Botanica", which Rousseau, Sprengel, and other praised so highly, has ever been translated into English."²⁹ (The Swedish naturalist, Linnaeus, is referred to time and again throughout Thoreau's works.)

Thoreau quotes Chateaubriand once in his Complete Works, but offers no comment or criticism. The quotation, which appears in A Week, is given here.

"Chateaubriand said: 'There are two things which grow stronger in the breast of man, in proportion as he advances in years,--the love of country and religion. Let them be never so much forgotten in youth, they sooner or later present themselves to us arrayed in all their charms, and excite in the recesses of our hearts an attachment justly due to their beauty.' It may be so. But even this infirmity of noble minds works the gradual decay of youthful hope and faith. It is the allowed infidelity of age. There is a saying of the Wolofs, 'He who was born first has the greatest number of old clothes'; consequently M. Chateaubriand has more old clothes than³⁰ I have."

29. Winter, p. 400.

30. A Week, p. 137.

VIII

Nineteenth Century Literature: 1800-1862

Many of the outstanding writers of the Nineteenth Century period were living and writing during Thoreau's adult life. As a result, his criticisms and comments have the same pertinency as the comments of a modern critic upon his own contemporaries. Other writers who belong in the early part of this period, although not alive during Thoreau's active years, still exerted a strong, almost contemporary influence, as do Thomas Hardy and Arnold Bennett today. Although Thoreau's reading in this period, as revealed by his writings, seems quite limited, it is probable that in actuality he read far more.

Sir Walter Scott's Lady of the Lake and perhaps one or two of his novels were probably read early in Thoreau's life. In his Journal for 1851, he writes: "As in the case of King James and Roderick Dhu, you can say,--

'Come one, come all, this rock shall fly
From its firm base, as soon as I.'¹"

1. Autumn, p. 254.

In A Yankee in Canada, in a description of Quebec, he writes: "It was such a reminiscence of the Middle Ages as Scott's novels,"² and in A Week he writes that it is "no wonder that the Mythology and Arabian Nights, and Shakespeare, and Scott's novels entertain us, . . . for we are poets and fablers and dramatists and novelists ourselves."³ This seems to be in direct contradiction to his statement, "I never read a novel." Perhaps the statement was a disguised resolution, made in later years, after many novels had already been read.

Wordsworth is given scant attention in comparison with what we should expect him to receive. In his essay Walking he tells a story about Wordsworth which might have been taken from De Quincey's Reminiscences. He says that "when a traveler asked Wordsworth's servant to show him his master's study, she answered, 'Here is his library, but his study is out of doors.'⁴" An impression received from reading Wordsworth's poetry is recorded in Thoreau's Journal entry for June 14, 1840. The complete entry for the day is as follows:

"June 14, 1840.

'In glory and in joy,

2. Excursions, p. 23.

3. A Week, p. 231.

4. Excursions, p. 210.

Behind his plough, upon the mountain side.'

(Wordsworth)

I seemed to see the woods wave on a hundred mountains, as I read these lines, and the distant rustling of their leaves reached my ear."⁵

At another time, while on a walking trip, Thoreau remarks that during inclement weather, "We read Virgil and Wordsworth in our tent, with new pleasure there, while waiting for clearer atmosphere, nor did the weather prevent our appreciating the simple truth and beauty of Peter Bell:--

'And he had lain beside his asses,
On lofty Cheviot hills:

'And he had trudged through Yorkshire dales,
Among the rocks and winding scars;
Where deep and low the hamlets lie
Beneath their little patch of sky
And little lot of stars.'⁶"

Thoreau probably did have a deep appreciation and understanding of Wordsworth, but for some inexplicable reason he failed to devote much time to comment on his poetry.

Coleridge, the poet, is hardly mentioned at all, but Coleridge the philosopher, the interpreter of

5. Summer, p. 129.

6. Excursions, p. 143.

Kant, is mentioned a few times in Thoreau's works. The influence of transcendentalist thought on Thoreau is never more clearly brought out than when he discusses Coleridge or Carlyle. Kant, however, is never named or referred to in any way, yet his philosophical conceptions were at work on Thoreau through these two contemporary writers. Try as he might, through Oriental and natural philosophy, Thoreau could never sidestep the central theme of transcendentalism. However, his allusions to Coleridge are vague, and lack critical sharpness. He criticises or praises without clearly defining the idea he is considering. In Night and Moonlight he writes:

"I think it was Dr. Chalmers who said, criticising Coleridge, that for his part he wanted ideas which he could see all round, and not such as he must look at away up in the heavens. Such a man, one would say, would never look at the moon, because she never turns her other side to us. The light which comes from ideas which have their orbit as distant from the earth and which is no less cheering and enlightening to the benighted traveler than that of the moon and stars, is naturally reproached or nicknamed as moonshine by such. They are moonshine, are they? Well, then, do your night traveling when there is no moon to light you; but I will be thankful for the light that reached

me from the star of least magnitude. Stars are lesser or greater only as they appear to us so. I will be thankful that I see so much as one side of a celestial idea, one side of the rainbow and the sunset sky."⁷

This might be a denunciation of the Coleridgean conception of Kant, and of the theory of space and form, and the projection of this thought into life and reason. At least, consciously or unconsciously, Thoreau had delved into conceptions of form and ideas.

In his Journal for 1841, Thoreau quotes from a less profound Coleridge. He writes: "Coleridge, speaking of the love of God, says, 'He that loves, may be sure he was loved first.' The love wherewith we are loved is already declared, and afloat in the atmosphere, and our love is only the inlet of it. It is an inexhaustible harvest, always ripe and ready for the sickle We need make no beggarly demand for it, but pay the price, and depart."⁸ In another entry, a few days later, he again quotes Coleridge. He writes: "Coleridge says of the 'ideas spoken out everywhere in the Old and New Testaments,' that they 'resemble the fixed stars which appear of the same size to the naked or the armed eye, the magnitude of which the telescope may rather seem to

7. Ibid., p. 324.

8. Winter, p. 201.

diminish than to increase.'"⁹ However, Thoreau did not value too highly Coleridge's theology, for in a letter of advice to a reader he writes: "I think you must read Coleridge again, and further, skipping all his theology, ie., if you value precise definitions and a discriminating use of language."¹⁰ Perhaps the effect of Coleridge's thought is best summed up in these few words, which, if they refer to his prose and the reflection of Kant, mean much: "Flight of imagination! Coleridgean thoughts! So a man is said to rise in his thoughts ever to fresh woods and pastures new."¹¹

Tennyson was first gaining recognition when Thoreau wrote A Week, yet, surprisingly, he is quoted, but without comment, in that volume. The quotation is taken from his Lady of Shalott, which appeared in 1832, and which was evidently popular in America. These lines are the chapter head for Tuesday:

"On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And through the fields the road runs by
To many towered Camelot."¹²

9. Ibid., p. 238.

10. Letters, p. 301.

11. Autumn, p. 456.

12. A Week, p. 188.

Along with Locke, Dugald Stewart and Dr. Thomas Brown are mentioned as being poor apologies for "mental philosophy". These writers were recommended to his sister's friend, in a letter written to Helen in 1838. This was Thoreau's last year in college, and it is quite probable that he had recently read and studied the philosophers himself. He writes: "One of your young ladies wishes to study mental philosophy, hey? Well, tell her that she has the very best text book that I know of in her possession already. If she do not believe it, then she should have bespoken another better in another world, and not have expected to find one at 'Little and Wilkins'. But if she wishes to know how poor an apology for a mental philosophy men have tacked together, synthetically or analytically, these latter days,--how they have squeezed the infinite mind into a compass that would not nonplus a surveyor of Eastern Lands making Imagination and Memory to lie still in their respective apartments like ink-stand and wafers in a lady's escritoire, . . . why let her read Locke, or Stewart, or Brown. The fact is, mental philosophy is very like Poverty, which, you know, begins at home; and indeed, when it goes abroad, it is poverty itself."

William Howitt, who at the time of Thoreau was

13. Letters, p. 26.

exceedingly popular, is mentioned casually in one of his Journal entries for 1853. He writes: "Apparently I read Cato and Varro from the same motives that Virgil did, and as I read the Almanac, the 'N. E. Farmer', or 'Cultivator', or Howitt's 'Seasons'." ¹⁴

In 1857, in a letter to a Mr. B. B. Wiler at Chicago, Thoreau advises him in his reading, and includes De Quincey, who seems to have interested him. He writes: "I should say, read Goethe's autobiography, by all means, also Gibbon's, Haydon the painter's, and our Franklin of course; perhaps also Alfieri's Benvenuto Cellini's, and De Quincey's 'Confessions of an Opium Eater', since you like biography. . . . By the way, read De Quincey's Reminiscences of Coleridge and Wordsworth." ¹⁵ A few years earlier, in a Journal entry, he relates the following incident: "I told Stacy the other day that there was another volume of De Quincey's 'Essays', wanting to see it in his library. 'I know it,' says he, 'but I shan't buy any more of them, for nobody reads them.' I asked what book in his library was most read. He said, 'The Wide, Wide World'." ¹⁶ But Thoreau evidently read much from De Quincey, despite the fact that he

14. Winter, p. 370.

15. Letters, p. 301.

16. Spring, p. 204.

very sparingly refers to him in his writings. De Quincey's life, however, was not pleasing to Thoreau, for he says, "This is not a noble method of learning, to be educated by evitable suffering, like De Quincey,¹⁷ for instance."

Lowell and Thoreau's biographers make much of Thoreau's statement that in Ruskin "there is too much for me and the Hottentots." This has too often been taken as a general statement of Thoreau's opinion of Ruskin, whereas in fact, as far as his written comments are concerned, considerable genuine enthusiasm is revealed. Moreover, as the following excerpt will show, this statement refers to only one work. In a letter, written in 1857 to his intimate friend Harrison Blake, he wrote: "Have you ever read Ruskin's books? If not, I would recommend you to try the second and third volumes (not parts) of his *Modern Painters*. I am now reading the fourth, and have read most of his books lately. They are singularly good and encouraging, though not without crudeness and bigotry. The themes in the volumes referred to are Infinity, Beauty, Imagination, Love of Nature, etc., all treated in a very living manner. I am rather surprised by them. It is remarkable that these things should be said with reference to painting chiefly, rather

17. Autumn, p. 255.

than literature. The "Seven Lamps of Architecture", too, is made of good stuff, but, as I remember, there is too much about art in it for me and the Hottentots. We want to know about matters and things in general. Our house is as yet a hut."¹⁸ This, certainly, reveals much reading, and cannot at all be considered a disparaging criticism. At about the same date as this letter, in a Journal entry, Thoreau reveals another opinion. He writes: "I have just read Ruskin's 'Modern Painters'. I am disappointed in not finding it a more out-of-door book. . . . He does not describe nature as nature, but as Turner painted her."¹⁹ This criticism is just, and in no way indicates that he does not value Ruskin in spite of such an obvious fault. "After reading Ruskin on the love of nature," he writes later, "I think, 'Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring!'"²⁰

A study of Thoreau's reading and interpretation of Carlyle would make a separate paper, much too long for inclusion here. Thoreau was very enthusiastic about Carlyle's thought during his college years and for a while after, and at some time during these years he wrote his long and somewhat eulogistic essay, which is included in his Complete Works. This essay

18. Letters, p. 319.

19. Autumn, p. 76.

20. Ibid., p. 180.

cannot be truthfully taken as the criterion of his judgment, for it does not express the mature, somewhat hardened judgment of philosophic writers that Thoreau reveals in later life. However, it is regrettable that the "later life", although imbued with philosophic conceptions, is entirely void of any criticism relating to Carlyle. This coincides with his mental, or philosophical, break with Emerson--a break not in friendship, but in intellectual agreement. Emerson, in his Journal, mentions the difficulty he had in understanding Thoreau's reticence, and is at a loss to account for it. Thoreau, for his part, is entirely silent on the matter. Perhaps the silence, and the lack of any criticism of Carlyle, has significance. A careful study might explain much. So far, neither Carpenter, Christy, nor anyone else has satisfactorily explained this break in thought.

The last entry of consequence relating to Carlyle appears in the Journal entry for March 18, 1842. It appears, on the surface, to be a dismissal of his works. At least, as far as his writings reveal, it proves to be such. The entire entry is given here:

"March 18, 1842. Whatever book or sentence will bear to be read twice, we may be sure was thought twice. I say, this thinking of Carlyle, who writes

pictures or first impressions merely, which consequently will only bear a first reading. As if any transient, any new mood of the best man deserved to detain the world long. I should call his writing essentially dramatic, excellent acting, entertaining especially to those who see rather than those who hear, not to be repeated, more than a joke, how shall he think who hears it. He never consults the oracle, but thinks to utter oracles himself. There is nothing in his book for which he is not and does not feel responsible. He does not retire behind the truth he utters, but stands in the foreground. I wish he would just think, and tell me what he thinks, appear to me in the attitude of a man with his ear inclined, who comes as silently and meekly as the morning star, which is unconscious of the dawn it heralds; leading the way up the steep as though alone and unobserved in its observing, without looking behind.²¹"

Goethe is referred to by Thoreau, usually in connection with Carlyle. In his essay he relates that "Carlyle corresponded with Goethe,"²² and in several places he compares the two writers. However, it is doubtful if Thoreau was an extensive reader of the German writer, for he says once, "I

21. Spring, p. 165.

22. Miscellanies, p. 317.

am not much acquainted with the works of Goethe."²³

His impressions were primarily gained through his study of Carlyle. Some works, however, were read.

In A Week he writes: "Goethe's whole education and life were those of the artist. He lacks the unconsciousness of the poet. In his autobiography he

describes accurately the life of the author of Wilhelm Meister."²⁴ In another place he says that "In

his 'Italian Travels' Goethe jogs along at a snail's pace."²⁵

Although he apparently valued Goethe highly, he could not refrain from making the following criticism, which is one he applied to other writers, and which in this case is applied to Goethe. He writes:

"Even Goethe wanted that universality of genius which could have appreciated the philosophy of India."²⁶

Walter Savage Landor is also mentioned in connection with Carlyle. Thoreau writes: "Carlyle has not the simple Homeric health of Wordsworth, nor the deliberate philosophic turn of Coleridge, nor the scholastic taste of Landor."²⁷

Thoreau's essay Paradise (To Be) Regained,²⁸ which is in its nature typical of Carlyle, was in-

23. A Week, p. 347.

24. Ibid., p. 348.

25. Ibid., p. 347.

26. Ibid., p. 149.

27. Miscellanies, p. 343.

28. Ibid., p. 280.

spired by J. A. Etzler, who at the time was known for his essay The Paradise within the Reach of all Men, without Labor, by Powers of Nature and Machinery. An Address to all Intelligent Men. This was part one, evidently, of a series of lecture-essays, and it was published in London in 1842. At no other time is Etzler mentioned or referred to.

29

Charles Darwin is referred to in a few places, usually in explanation of natural phenomena, but inasmuch as his major works had not yet appeared, it is obvious that his thoughts could in no way disturb Thoreau. If his books had appeared, it seems probable that Thoreau would have been one of the first to comprehend them. Certainly he was far more broad-minded than many of his so-called liberal contemporaries.

Thomas Cholmondeley is the last English author to be mentioned in this final period of English literature available to Thoreau. He was only a minor writer, and, if it were not for his close relationship to Thoreau, would hardly deserve mention here. But he was Thoreau's only intimate English friend, and in that capacity he should be remembered. It was Cholmondeley who sent to Thoreau the fine collection of Oriental books which receive so much mention in his Complete Works, and it was this same man who defended

29. Darwin is mentioned as follows: Walden, p. 14; Cape Cod, p. 122; Summer, p. 61; Excursions, p. 226.

many of the ideas which Thoreau gleaned from them. Cholmondeley visited Thoreau twice, and remained each time for a considerable stay. They were inseparable, and only Blake can be said to have been closer as a friend. The Englishman and Thoreau corresponded often, but only Cholmondeley's letters are printed as yet. Thoreau's are still laid away somewhere in the house on the English estate, which, incidentally, is still in the same family.

Cholmondeley was born in 1823, graduated from Oriel College at the usual age, and departed for New Zealand, where he lived for a short while. His only mentioned book, Ultima Thule, is based on New Zealand life. He returned to England to take up residence on the family estate. While in America, he met and greatly admired young Channing, and he held deep respect for Alcott. He died two years after Thoreau, in 1864.

The relationship between these two unusual persons has never been revealed. It is possible that a careful study of Cholmondeley might reveal the source of much of Thoreau's thought. But Thoreau was as reticent about his friends as he was about his innermost self, and was content to veil their opinions as well as his own, giving credit to neither.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages Thoreau's reading in English literature has been presented as completely as a careful reading of his Complete Works and the works of his biographers and critics would allow. Some reading that Thoreau did not directly mention was suggested in some way or another by his writings, but because of a lack of sufficient evidence such reading has not been included in this thesis. A complete record of Thoreau's reading in English literature would be an impossibility. It has been the aim in this work to approach, by careful analysis of available sources, such a record. The reading was presented systematically according to definite periods in English literature. The extent of his reading in each period, as a result, is readily discernible. However, before his reading in the various periods of English literature is compared, it must be remembered that the number of authors and the amount of available reading matter in each period vary greatly. Therefore, in order to determine which periods he read most thoroughly, the extent of his reading in any period must be compared with the total available reading material of that period. The result of such a comparison

is given in the following list, which places the periods in the order of their importance:

Periods in English literature represented most by Thoreau's reading:

Seventeenth Century Literature.

Nineteenth Century Literature.

The Time of Chaucer.

Periods in English literature represented fairly well by Thoreau's reading:

Elizabethan Literature.

Eighteenth Century Literature.

Periods in English literature represented least by Thoreau's reading:

Literature of the Renaissance Period.

Early English Literature.

The above comparison, however, is not as revealing as it might seem at first glance. It is based entirely upon the extent of his reading, without thought as to his preferences for individual authors, and without consideration of his preference for certain types of literature. A summary of his reading in English literature would not be complete if the authors and types of literature he preferred were ignored.

A careful inspection of all of Thoreau's reading

in English literature reveals certain writers whom he definitely preferred. To comment on and criticism of these writers he devotes much space. Truly, he shows more enthusiasm for these select few than he does for all of the others. He quotes them often, and sets them up as models for comparison in his criticisms of lesser writers. It is difficult to name these writers in the order of Thoreau's appreciation of them. However, in the following list, such a comparison is attempted:

English authors read and appreciated most by
Thoreau:

Chaucer
Raleigh
Quarles
Macpherson
Evelyn
Gilpin
Coleridge
Jonson
Carlyle
Milton

In previous pages Thoreau's enthusiasm for the above writers was clearly revealed. Chaucer is unquestionably his favorite, and Raleigh certainly must come next in the list. Thoreau's letter to Mrs. Emerson left little unsaid about Quarles. Yet Macpherson's Ossian in itself was probably preferred to any one of Quarles' works. Thoreau's love of natural science

accounts for his great appreciation of the two rather obscure writers placed next in the list. Evelyn and Gilpin seem out of place in such company, yet Thoreau himself might have placed them higher. The prose of Coleridge seems to have had a powerful influence upon Thoreau's life. It would be proper, perhaps, to place the name Kant in parentheses opposite that of Coleridge. Thoreau reveals much reading of Jonson, and quotes him often, but in no place offers any critical comment. Although his inclusion in the group is the most doubtful, there is none other important enough to take his place.

Carlyle and Milton, it should be noted, influenced Thoreau mainly in his early life. Yet, they are important. They serve almost as a foundation to his later reading in English literature. Perhaps, if Thoreau had traveled the strict academic path of literary appreciation, they, with Shakespeare, would have headed the group.

In his Complete Works Thoreau reveals quite definitely the types of literature he preferred. Poetry of a quiet, philosophic vein was to his liking. Although averse to the general run of religious poetry, he enjoyed the writings of Quarles. Mystic poetry, such as Macpherson's Ossian, fascinated him, and caused him to overlook deficiencies which ordinarily

would have incurred severe criticism. Yet he preferred, above all poetry, the solidly done verse of Chaucer. In A Week Thoreau devotes many pages to a discussion of his preferences in poetry. The poetry of Greek antiquity seems to have been his model for judgment on all other poetry.

Thoreau read much in the field of English prose, and in the strictly literary works preferred the philosophic or the religious philosophic types. Also he read enthusiastically works in the field of natural science and books which describe nature. Coleridge is an excellent example of the former type, while Gilpin and Evelyn are the outstanding examples of the latter.

The novel and the drama are the two types of literature which Thoreau neglected in his reading. He is very outspoken about his dislike of the novel, and his failure to mention or comment on the English dramas is in itself an indication of a dislike of this type.

Although Thoreau's reading was fairly independent in comparison with that of other literary men of his time, it was nevertheless definitely influenced and guided. His very early reading was guided in the usual way at Harvard College, and his interest in the post-Elizabethan literature came about primarily

through his reading of Headly's volume Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry. His reading during the next few years was guided by Emerson, Alcott, and others of the Transcendentalist group. From then on, although he read independently in English literature, his greatest interest lay in the field of Oriental literature. The Oriental influence altered somewhat his interpretation of the English classics, and caused him to seek new thought in the works of lesser English writers. His love of nature also greatly affected his reading, and caused him to seek out unusual and obscure authors.

Thoreau had an exceptional interest in the lives of the English writers he read. Often his interest in an author's works was increased or ruined by his knowledge of the author's life. He regretted the lack of knowledge about Shakespeare's life, was disgusted with the life of De Quincey, and gloried in the full life of Raleigh. For Thoreau, a work did not live unless its author lived with it.

Thoreau's reading in English literature, though, was only a part of a wide, unorganized program of reading. There were other fields of literature and thought which greatly overshadowed any that the English had to offer. Yet, his reading in English literature

was wide, and its influence on him was great. Perhaps he was not quite sincere when he wrote, "English literature, from the days of the minstrels to the Lake poets,--Chaucer, and Spenser and Milton, and Even Shakespeare, included, breathes no quite fresh and in this sense, wild strain. It is essentially tame and civilized literature, reflecting Greece and Rome."¹

1. Excursions, p. 231.

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