

外国语言文学学术文库

从生态视角看梭罗
——重读《瓦尔登湖》

*Henry David Thoreau and His Walden:
An Ecological Perspective*

◎蒋竹怡 周雪松 高洋 童慧雁 著



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总序

中国商务出版社最新推出了《外国语言文学学术文库》，借此机会，我发表一些个人的认识和感受。综观 21 世纪的外国语言文学研究，就语言学而言，在理论方面，形式语言学和功能语言学理论继续在对立和对话中发展，认知语言学和社会文化理论试图从不同的角度解释语言事实；在应用方面，语言学与多学科交叉，运用和借鉴包括数理逻辑、计算机科学、心理学、神经科学、认知科学、生态科学、经济学等各学科的研究成果和方法，不断凸显语言学作为领先科学的地位。就文学而言，英美文学研究受经济全球化浪潮和文化、意识形态多元化的冲击，文学及文论研究都关注文化多元化与全球化的关系，从而引发了关于文学现代性、后现代性和后殖民性的思考。文学和语言学的研究相互影响和交融日益明显：意识形态、批评话语、解构主义等文学理论和方法进入语言学；而文学研究也引入语言学研究的方法，如，话语分析、数据库方法等，反之亦然。我国的外国语言文学研究在全球化和中国入世以后与国际学术界的交流更加密切，互动更加频繁。

我衷心地希望，国内的外国语言文学研究能够克服“三张皮”现象，打通“汉语与外语”、“语言与文学”、“英语与其他外语”的隔阂，从事语言、文学、翻译、文化研究的学者相互学习，取长补短，推动外国语言文学学科的健康发展。

2 从生态视角看梭罗——重读《瓦尔登湖》

这套《外国语言文学学术文库》的设计体现了包容并蓄、博采众长、学科融通的思想，是一个开放和创新的学术平台，是发表研究成果的阵地，是各位学者的精神家园，入选文库的作品都经过精心挑选，出自学有专长的博士和中青年学者。我衷心地祝愿这朵“外国语言文学的幼苗”茁壮成长。

对外经济贸易大学英语学院
教授、博士生导师

王立非

2007年6月1日于北京望京花园

导 读

亨利·大卫·梭罗是美国文学史上最为重要的19世纪作家之一。他曾赢得各种不同的称誉：作家、哲人、思想家、道德学家、环保主义者、自然主义者。他是如今被最广泛阅读、阐释和研究的超验主义思想家，一度甚至超过了他的导师拉尔夫·瓦尔多·爱默生。他的作品和思想不仅影响了美国人，更对印度“非暴力不合作运动”领袖莫罕达斯·甘地、19世纪最伟大的作家之一列夫·托尔斯泰以及世界其他地方的革命者们产生了重大的影响。对于梭罗的精神，爱默生在梭罗葬礼上的挽词中做了精辟的概括——“梭罗的灵魂属于最高尚的社会”。

但是，大众和学术界一开始对梭罗作品却并不怎么感冒。梭罗生前和去世后的几十年里，他只被认为是一个次要的作家、爱默生的追随者，其作品也只是在“模仿爱默生”。到20世纪40年代左右，几位重要的美国学者，如F.O. 马西森，谢尔曼·保罗以及梭罗最为忠实的追随者、“梭罗协会”的创始人沃尔特·哈丁等重读了梭罗的作品并对梭罗进行了重铸，从根本上肯定了梭罗在美国文学史上不可动摇的地位和贡献。学术界对梭罗研究的热潮便由此兴起。许多重量级的学术刊物如《美国文学》、《新英格兰季刊》等都陆续出现了研究梭罗的文章。20世纪80年代的环保主义运动将梭罗及其作品的声誉推向了另一个高峰。他关于人和自然关

系的和谐思想使他被环境保护主义运动者奉为精神圣贤。

《瓦尔登湖》是梭罗最重要的作品（也几乎是大多数中国读者所熟知的唯一的梭罗作品），其原创性、哲理性、先导性毋庸置疑。1985年，《美国遗产》杂志评选出“塑造美国精神的10部著作”，其中《瓦尔登湖》名列首位。学术界更是对这部作品进行了多角度的研究，这种阐释和解读的多元化也从一个侧面证明了《瓦尔登湖》内容的深刻与丰富。

西方学者从不同的研究角度和立场解析了《瓦尔登湖》的多元意义，帮助我们听到了这部作品中发出的不同声音——哲学思想、生态意识、社会构想、经济蓝图、人生规划、美学意蕴等等。《瓦尔登湖》的哲学思想一直是备受关注的研究课题，这方面最有代表性的学者是哲学教授斯坦利·卡维尔。他在其专著《瓦尔登湖的意义》（1972）中分析了《瓦尔登湖》中对一些基本哲学问题的探索。另外，《瓦尔登湖》的作品形式也是评论家们感兴趣的话题，他们细致分析了作品篇章的内在结构、比例以及这些结构特征如何与作品主旨协调与呼应。而在环保主义盛行的今天，《瓦尔登湖》越来越多地被作为生态主义文学、田园作品之经典加以研读，并结出了累累硕果。西方学者从这一角度出发对《瓦尔登湖》的解读相当丰富，这一类的研究文章不仅具体、深入和逻辑性强，而且还对《瓦尔登湖》的生态意识进行了深入研究，以图挖掘其生态意识背后的深层含义。更有意思的是，《瓦尔登湖》甚至在经济学教授眼中也颇具研究价值，例如托马斯·D.伯奇就在《瓦尔登湖的经济构想》中分析和评价了《瓦尔登湖》中所体现的经济主张，并将这些主张和梭罗同时代的主流经济学家思想作了比较（比如亚当·斯密的经济思想）。

在中国，读者对梭罗的全部认识几乎都来自《瓦尔登湖》这部作品。1949年，徐迟最早将《瓦尔登湖》译介到中国。如今《瓦尔登湖》已成为备受中国出版商欢迎的外国作品，人们可以在中国的书店里找到十多个《瓦尔登湖》的中文译本。相较之下，梭罗的其他作品在中国则鲜为人知，这无疑限制了中国读者对梭罗的全面认识。20世纪90年代以来，随着全球化的日益加深，中国学者开始对西方文学理论中的“生态批评”产生了浓烈的兴趣，随之也带来了

学术界对梭罗进行研究的热情。利用 <http://www.edu.cnki.net> (中国知网) 进行搜索的结果显示, 从 1980 年到 2006 年间共有 13 篇关于《瓦尔登湖》的学术论文。就研究角度而言, 可将这些文章大致分类如下: 分析《瓦尔登湖》的生态哲学含义, 这类文章多数强调《瓦尔登湖》表现出了梭罗的自然观以及梭罗对个人精神提升的追求; 分析《瓦尔登湖》的哲学思想; 《瓦尔登湖》和东方或者中国传统思想的比较分析, 如梭罗如何创造性地误读他在《瓦尔登湖》中引用的东方经典等; 对《瓦尔登湖》的形式分析; 多角度阐释作品主题意义。

以上大致总结了国内对《瓦尔登湖》的研究状况。我们由此不难发现国内在此领域的研究仍有拓展和丰富的空间。梭罗作品是丰富的, 对其研究不应简单化、类型化和单一化。基于此, 本书从三个不同的角度对梭罗的《瓦尔登湖》及其所表现出来的矛盾双重性进行了较为深入的探讨, 希望能为国内的梭罗研究拓展视野、添砖加瓦。

随着环境保护主义思想的兴起和发展, 梭罗和他的作品中所闪现的思想日益受到现代人的关注和推崇。他的论著《论公民的不服从》为环境保护主义者提供了重要的理论依据。他在瓦尔登湖畔进行的生活试验在现代人的想象中简直是非凡的神话, 而记录这一生活试验的《瓦尔登湖》更是被奉为生态文学经典中的经典。梭罗早在 19 世纪提出的观点就已经预见到了 20 世纪出现的许多问题, 于是有人称他为“生态主义的预言家”。如今我们正面临着现代化发展和生态环境之间的巨大冲突, 因此更有必要探寻梭罗在《瓦尔登湖》中所表达的生态主义观点。“从生态主义视角透视梭罗的《瓦尔登湖》” 将从生态批评的角度来揭示梭罗关于自然的观念和人生哲学与现代生态哲学理论之暗合, 并以此显示《瓦尔登湖》作为生态批评主要理论来源的土地伦理及其深层的生态理论和意识。

国内对梭罗的理解相对单一化和简单化。与此相映照, 美国则有许多学者看到了梭罗的思想中的矛盾性和双重性。比如 1968 年, 吉尔·波特就在其著名论述《爱默生、梭罗和双重意识》中提到了梭罗的双重性, 认为他有着对于世俗欲念和精神渴求的双重关怀。

“论梭罗的双重性”一章将集中讨论梭罗在几个方面所表现出的双重性。本书将“双重性”定义为同一事物的两个不同方面，而梭罗的双重性首先体现在他对自然/文明这个二元对立持有双重的态度：一方面他是最为热忱的自然主义者，另一方面它对社会发展又十分关注。本书认为，梭罗对自然和文明的双重性关注植根于他所处的社会环境——是融合了自然和文明的双重社会理想导致了梭罗思想的双重倾向。另外，梭罗的其他观念也体现了他的双重性，如既主观地利用自然以促进自我精神提升，同时又以一个生态学家的眼光客观细致地观察自然。

“亨利·大卫·梭罗：《瓦尔登湖》中孤独的解构主义者”一章重点分析了梭罗思想中的超前性和先导性。虽然梭罗并不知晓几乎晚于他一个世纪才发端的解构主义思想，却在其作品中采用了与解构主义思想相似的策略，颠覆了当时社会的主流思想。他预示了工业化的虚伪和现代文明的荒谬，更积极地影响他人，希望他们也能和他一样觉醒。

蒋竹怡

2007年10月

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Introduction

Henry David Thoreau is the only one of the three great American authors of the nineteenth century who has few contemporary readers and yet becomes great in the following centuries. One of the most striking phenomena of American literary history has been the gradual growth of Thoreau's reputation. As the most ardent Thoreau follower Walter Harding points out, "Henry David Thoreau's reputation is unique. It has a pattern all of its own, filled with paradoxes and contradictions, and widely vacillating from decade to decade. In his own day he was generally dismissed as a minor writer who would soon be forgotten, yet in our day he is universally recognized as 'great'." (Joel 1) His works not only influence the American people, but also have significant impact on the leader of Indian nonviolent fight for freedom, Monhandas K. Gandhi; Count Leo Tolstoi, one of the greatest writers of last century; and other revolutionary peoples all around the world. In 1985, *Walden* was ranked the first among the "ten books forming American characters" according to the magazine of American Heritage. In 1989, Lawrence Buell, Powell M. Cabot, professors of American Literature, cooperated to write an essay entitled "The Thoreauvian Pilgrimage: The Structure of an American Cult", which highlights Thoreau's high position in American literary history. Their academic view epitomized the universal recognition of Thoreau in America.

For over a century, critics in America have taken various approaches to interpret Thoreau's works, yet it was not the case in the beginning. In the late 19th century after Thoreau's death, although there were two heights of his popularity and more volumes of his works were published, professors of literature at the college and university level showed strikingly little interest in Thoreau. "The first doctoral dissertation on Thoreau (unfortunately now lost)

had been done at the University of Michigan in 1899 by Ella Knapp, under the direction of Samuel Arthur Jones.”(Joel 8) The second, by Helen A. Snyder, appeared in Germany in 1913. The third, Raymond Adams’s *Henry Thoreau’s Literary Theories and Criticism* did not appear until 1928. Adams did much to arouse academic interest by issuing an occasional “Thoreau Newsletter” in the late 1930s. “F. O. Matthiessen’s seminal book *American Renaissance* (1941), for the first time taking Thoreau seriously as a literary artist, launched a whole series of studies of Thoreau’s artistry.”(Joel 8) After World War II, besides *The New England Quarterly* which had studied Thoreau for a long time, several other magazines like *Scientific Monthly*, *College English*, and *Modern Language* began to pay attention to him, too. Interest in Thoreau flourished with the growth of students’ dissent during the Vietnam War. More magazines like *The Journal of American Folklore*, *American Quarterly*, *College Composition and Communication*, *Science*, *PMLA*, *Ethics*, *South Atlantic Bulletin*, and *ELH* began to issue critical articles on Thoreau. In the 1980s, with the rise of the environmental movements, Thoreau’s reputation went to a climax. The authoritative *American Literature* and *The New England Quarterly* issued five and six critical studies respectively during the decade. Then in the 1990s, another important literary magazine *Nineteenth-Century Literature* published three articles studying Thoreau and ecology. The interest in Thoreau continues in the new century, and the criticism goes deeper and deeper.

As Thoreau’s masterpiece, *Walden* is now well established as an original, profound and also difficult work. It is as engaging as symbolic, philosophical and complex, which always urges its reader to think infinitely about the fundamental questions of life. Since Emerson’s famous funeral eulogy on Thoreau which exerted the greatest influence on Thoreau’s later reputation and on interpretations of *Walden*, (Robert 10) numerous critical and academic research works on *Walden* were turned out. These researches approach *Walden* from various perspectives and offer us multifaceted insights into this great work.

The vastness and diversity of the critical researches of *Walden* also make an all-inclusive and exhausted review of them impossible. But it is still

worthwhile to know how the western scholars approach and interpret *Walden* and how *Walden* is received and understood in the academic field of China. In this way, Chinese scholars and critics can have a broadened vision of the work and have a better understanding of this great work.

The complexity and meaningfulness of *Walden* can be proved by the fact that its interpretations by western (especially American) critics are so numerous and diversified. *Walden* is approached as a work of philosophy, ecological orientation, social document, economic design, a life style guide and an aesthetic literary text. Among these studies, some focus on one single aspect (aesthetic, language, structural, philosophical and so on) of the work and offer partial analyses, while some others combine different facets (formal and ideological) of the work to provide us holistic analyses.

It should be noted that Thoreau and *Walden* began to receive unprecedented welcome and interest since the 1940s. "By 1941, when F. O. Matthiessen published *The American Renaissance*, Thoreau was definitely regarded as one of the major nineteenth-century American authors." (Robert 12) Although Matthiessen did not devote as much space to Thoreau as to Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville and Whitman, he gave Thoreau very high praise—a brilliant, independent "native craftsman". The enthusiastic Thoreau follower Walter Harding initiated the Thoreau Society consisting of Thoreau fans and scholars alike in 1941. (Joel 9) And later in 1958 in *The Shores of America: Thoreau's Inward Exploration* Sherman Paul gave an outstanding and important reading of *Walden* and regarded it as a "fable of the renewal of life" and "the seed of the organic tradition in American art and culture, what he later called 'the green tradition'". (Robert 12)

Thoreau's philosophical ideas in *Walden* are of major importance to some scholars. The most prominent among them is Stanley Cavell, the writer of *The Senses of Walden* (1972). He "analyzes the multiple meanings to Thoreau of reading and writing and the relationship of reader, texts, writers, and worlds." (Robert 15) In the eyes of Cavell, a professor of philosophy, Thoreau's language has great philosophical significance and *Walden* concerns some of the basic philosophical questions. In answer to Cavell's interpretation of *Walden's* implication on facts and imagination, Walter Benn Michaels

argues that Thoreau “wants *Walden* both ‘bottomless’, as a symbol of the infinite, and with a ‘tight bottom’, accurately measured, as a basis of authority”(Robert 16) in “Walden’s False Bottoms”.

Walden’s form is a much frequented subject of many critics of Thoreau. And in quite a lot of this type of studies, the structure of *Walden* is fully analyzed together with thematic concerns of the work. Before F. O. Matthiessen, *Walden* was considered as full of beautiful and skillful manipulation of language and insightful thoughts but quite lack of completeness and formal structure. In reading *Walden*, “the reader is left finally with a sky full of individually brilliant stars, but with no astronomy to reveal how they relate to one another in order to form a meaningful whole”. (A. E. Elmore 18) Matthiessen was the first to find that *Walden* has its organic structure and later many other critics delved quite deep into the problem of the structure of *Walden*. A. E. Elmore holds in his “Symmetry out of Season: The Form of ‘Walden’” that *Walden* is of a two-part structure with the first 12 chapters forming the first major section and the following 6 chapters as the second section. The first section of chapters is related to the seasons of summer and autumn while the second section relates to winter and spring. And “the two-to-one ratio between the first section and the second forms a symmetrical pattern in *Walden* which is ideally suited to reflect and embody the theme of the work”, which is “the echoing of Thoreau’s philosophical method in his *Walden* experiment.”(A. E. Elmore 22) But as to the structure of *Walden*, opinions are so varied. In “Walden Pond as a Symbol”, Melvin E. Lyon seeks to explore the significance of the Walden Pond as the chief symbol of the work. It is argued that in pursuit of the romantic quest of rebirth Thoreau went to the Walden Pond to regain his natural self. Thus he had to identify himself with the basic rhythms of nature, the most important of which are the rhythms of the day and the year. In the cycles of the day and the year are the two symbols of rebirth which Thoreau wanted to identify with: morning and spring. Thoreau did not directly identify with these two symbols but with the Pond, which participated in these cycles. And the seasonal cycle provides the external structure principle for *Walden* while another internal structure exists in this work which involves a three-fold division: Thoreau’s moving from civilization to identify with the Pond,

identifying with the Pond and finally releasing from the identification.

Walden is also analyzed and evaluated as a piece of ecological writing, a pastoral. "Pastorals have always been a way of working out conflicts between nature and culture, simplicity and refinement, life and death." (Robert 16) In "‘Unchronicled Nations’: Agrarian Purpose and Thoreau’s Ecological Knowing", David M. Robinson focuses on the evidences given in the chapter "The Bean Field" in *Walden*. He points out that Thoreau had two purposes in mind in his experiment in *Walden*: one is "agrarian" which suggests that the agrarian life could be an alternative to the modern industrial life; the other is his ecological sense in which "he hoped to found more securely the vision of cosmic harmony." (David 326) But he recognized the divergence between an agrarian use of nature and an ecological knowing of it. In "The Bean Field", he found a solution of unifying the two. To Thoreau, agrarian life is at once a salvic social alternative for the modern way of life and an enslaving drudgery, thus he reformulated the nature of farm work by his ecological orientation: an "enlarged vision of the human interaction with the natural world"; human beings and the natural world are a single evolving entity. Physical labor is reformulated in that it is an integral part of the spiritual labor, which aims at a moral self elevation. In another quite innovative essay on *Walden*, the female ecologist and writer of *Woodswoman*, who twice in her life undertook similar solitary life in nature, Anne LaBastille provides an original account of a comparison of her own life in the woods and that of Thoreau’s. Based on the correspondences in their experiences, LaBatille presents the similarities and differences between herself and Thoreau. In the essay, the writer expressed her praise and respect to Thoreau because of his environmental and ecological orientation.

The social and economical thoughts in *Walden* are also studied by western scholars. In "The Economic Design of *Walden*", Thomas D. Birch and Fred Metting analyze and evaluate Thoreau’s economic propositions in *Walden* and compare Thoreau’s ideas with the mainstream economic ideas of his time. The purpose of the *Walden* economy is described as "to overcome, or at least to reduce, the problem of economic scarcity by minimizing the individual’s material wants and simplifying the means of satisfying them" (Thomas and Fred 588) Thoreau’s economic thoughts bear certain similarities with those of

the classical economic philosophers as Adam Smith; (1) the emphasis on abstinence (saving); (2) the emphasis on the “link between individual freedom and growth”; (3) the idea that “the pursuit of private self-interest ultimately promotes beneficent economic outcomes”; (4) the invisible hand theory. But there are also fundamental differences between Thoreau’s and the mainstream economic theories of his time: (1) while Thoreau thought that nature was infinite and abundant in supporting human beings’ spiritual growth, the predominant view of his time stressed the scarcity of natural resources; (2) Thoreau upheld the self-sufficient life mode against the view of political economy; (3) different theories of value: for Thoreau the measurement of wealth was “life” while others measured the value of wealth and progress in terms of the labor used in production.

Aside from the above perspectives, *Walden* is also interpreted from many other innovative frames. One case in point is Malini Schueller’s “Carnival Rhetoric and Extra-Vagance in Thoreau’s *Walden*”. This analysis contends Bakhtin’s view that language and idea are one could be appropriately used for interpreting *Walden*, because *Walden* engages in a “process of remaking language thus remaking the world”. (Schueller 33) “*Walden* works through a central paradox” in which Thoreau carnivalized the social instituted rhetoric and the authoritative ideology but finally established his own authority by creating a kind of carnival rhetoric. In the final chapters of *Walden*, Thoreau expressed that he wanted his language to be extra-vagant, which means “a language that will wander outside the bounds of socially instituted ways of thought.” But in upholding the “truth of which he has been convinced”, Thoreau also confessed his belief in one certain authoritative truth, which constituted his counter-ideology and a kind of “recognizable monological carnival rhetoric”.

Besides Thoreau’s works, critics in America have also devoted themselves to the understanding of Thoreau himself. As early as in 1933, James Playsted Wood in his “English and American Criticism of Thoreau” claimed Thoreau as “a naturalist, philosopher, moralist”. (James 733-46) He and other critics had already realized that James Russell Lowell’s statement of “imitating Emerson” was an innuendo. Therefore, from then on, Thoreau was regarded not only as a transcendentalist or Emerson’s follower, but also