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An Ecocritical Study of Henry David Thoreau

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**图书在版编目(CIP)数据**

诗意栖居：亨利·大卫·梭罗的生态批评 = Poetic Dwelling: An Ecocritical Study of Henry David Thoreau: 英文 / 陈茂林著. —杭州：浙江大学出版社，2009.7

(外国文学研究丛书)

ISBN 978-7-308-06941-0

I. 诗… II. 陈… III. 梭罗, H. D. (1817—1862) —文学研究—英文 IV. I712.064

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2009)第 121866 号

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责任编辑 张颖琪

封面设计 吴慧莉

出版发行 浙江大学出版社

(杭州天目山路 148 号 邮政编码 310028)

(网址: <http://www.zjupress.com>)

排 版 杭州中大图文设计有限公司

印 刷 浙江中恒世纪印务有限公司

开 本 710mm×960mm 1/16

印 张 14

字 数 367 千

版 印 次 2009 年 7 月第 1 版 2009 年 7 月第 1 次印刷

书 号 ISBN 978-7-308-06941-0

定 价 30.00 元

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浙江大学出版社发行部邮购电话 (0571)88925591

## 序

本书主要采用解构主义对中心和权威颠覆和消解的批评策略和新批评的细读技巧,挖掘、阐释美国作家亨利·大卫·梭罗的主要作品《在康科德与梅里马克河上的一周》、《瓦尔登湖》、《缅因森林》、《科德角》、《论公民的不服从》、《马萨诸塞州的奴隶制》、《没有原则的生活》、《为约翰·布朗请命》、《约翰·布朗的殉难》、《约翰·布朗的最后日子》、《马萨诸塞的自然史》、《冬季散步》、《心灵散步》、《梭罗日记》中体现的生态意蕴。本书还借助心理学批评、传记批评、福柯的权力与话语理论,系统、全面地分析、诠释梭罗生态思想的成因及内涵。

梭罗不仅是一位伟大的自然作家,同时也是一位关注社会和人类的精神生态建构的哲学家。他的自然生态、社会生态和精神生态思想,归纳概括起来,是一种充满生态智慧的生活方式——诗意生存,用德国存在主义哲学家海德格尔的话说,是“诗意栖居”的生活方式。海德格尔认为,“栖居”既是人类在大地上生存的方式,又是人类生存的真正目的和归宿。作为人的真正存在的“诗意栖居”包含三层内涵:“保护”、“自由”与“和谐”。本书认为,梭罗的自然生态、社会生态和精神生态思想,分别涉及人与自然的和谐、文明与自然的均衡发展、人的物质和精神生活的平衡,是一个有机的整体。它们既互相独立,又有着内在的联系:精神生态思想是关键,自然生态思想是根本。要实现人与自然、文明与自然的和谐发展,必须首先建设人的精神生态,恢复人的物质和精神生活的平衡状态,治疗人的“精神”疾病。只有这样,人的物质追求和精神生活才能保持和谐,社会、文明与自然才能和谐发展,才能消灭人类中心主义宇宙观,最终消除生态危机。

梭罗的影响早已超越了文学界,超越了时代和国度。他丰富的生态思想不仅具有独特的审美意义,同时具有重要的现实意义和哲学意义,是馈赠当今生态危机时代人们的一笔珍贵的精神财富,也是唤醒在自身发展过程中必须面对

人与自然相互关系问题的地球人生态意识的长鸣的警钟；同时，为生态文明时代构建生态哲学和生态伦理学提供了宝贵的思想资源。

陈茂林博士对国内外现有文献和研究成果进行了系统的梳理与准确的概括，对梭罗主要作品有较深刻的理解和把握。他运用处于当前国际学界前沿的生态批评理论，首次系统、全面地分析、阐释了梭罗的自然生态、社会生态和精神生态思想，提出了独到的见解，弥补了迄今为止梭罗研究中的不足；他还梳理论述了生态批评的定义，探讨了生态批评的理论基础及批评方法，强调了生态批评建设人的精神生态的理论诉求，丰富了生态批评理论研究。同样重要的是，作者在分析与论述梭罗作品时较为恰当地运用了一些文学理论如解构主义、心理学批评、传记批评、权力与话语理论等透视梭罗的生态思想，为生态批评研究提供了一个富有说服力的个案，增加了本书的理论内涵，其研究在国内当属领先。

陈茂林博士于 2004 年以优秀的成绩考入南开大学，攻读英美文学方向博士学位，专心学问，2007 年夏获文学博士学位。作为国内较早介绍、探讨生态批评的青年学者之一，陈茂林博士谦虚朴实、积极向上、专心英美文学研究，近年已有多篇学术论文发表。衷心希望陈茂林博士继续努力，为外国文学研究作出更大的贡献。

严啟刚

加拿大阿尔伯塔大学文学博士  
四川外语学院教授，博士生导师

## 导 言

20 世纪 60 年代以来,生态系统危机四伏,大地母亲千疮百孔。生态灾难、环境污染、资源枯竭、臭氧空洞、全球变暖、人口爆炸、酸雨、土壤沙漠化等严重威胁着人类的生存,使全人类面临严峻的生存困境。文学具有独特的审美功能和人学功能,文学研究理应触及人的精神和灵魂。从生态文学批评的视角研究人类生存困境不但可行,而且理所应当。美国生态批评家劳伦斯·布伊尔教授第二部生态文学专著的标题就是“为处于危险的世界而写”。他指出,生态文学应致力于唤醒读者的生态意识,使其重新认识人类的生存现状,关怀处于危险的地球。英国生态批评先驱约翰生·贝特教授主张生态文学应探讨生态危机的社会原因,研究人类文明“究竟从哪里开始走错了路”。中国生态批评家、苏州大学鲁枢元教授认为,生态文学应致力于解救地球的生态困境,修补地球“精神圈”;厦门大学王诺教授认为,生态文学应致力于文明批判,探寻生态危机的社会根源。于是,国内外文学研究者迅速掀起了一股生态批评浪潮。这股绿色批评浪潮发端于美国,并迅速波及欧洲乃至全球,生态文学研究迅速成为文学界的显学。生态文学批评的一个重要方面就是重新解读经典文学作品,挖掘其蕴含的生态思想,为缓解生态危机,构建和谐社会,建设生态文明,实现可持续发展提供重要的文化参照和理论启示。

美国作家梭罗是一位值得深入研究的生态文学家。伦理学家利奥波德称梭罗为“美国物候学之父”;菲利浦称他为“植物生态学家和自然保护主义者”;生态思想史家沃斯特称他为“生态思想史上最伟大的先驱之一”,并认为他“是一位在思想上大大超越我们这个时代的自然哲学家”。1995 年,哈佛大学英文系生态批评家、梭罗研究专家布伊尔教授称梭罗为“美国最优秀、最有影响的自然作家”,指出文学界对梭罗生态思想研究的消极迟钝,同时预言梭罗的生态思想研究将成为今后梭罗研究的新方向。

然而,通过分析我们发现,近年来国内外文学界对梭罗生态思想的研究还比较欠缺,主要表现在:一是研究不够全面。目前研究大都集中在《瓦尔登湖》,梭罗的其他作品未得到足够重视,少有人探讨梭罗生态思想的来源。二是研究不够深入。目前研究主要局限于梭罗的自然观,少有学者探讨其社会生态和精神生态思想。三是研究不够系统。目前尚无学者把梭罗的全部作品作为一个整体进行综合研究,未见国内系统、整体、全面研究梭罗生态思想的著述。因此,对梭罗生态思想的研究还不充分,还存在着很大的研究空间。从生态批评的视角对梭罗的作品进行全面、系统、深入研究,对其生态智慧进行归纳概括从而为深陷生存困境的当代人提供启示和借鉴是一个富有终极关怀意义的新课题。该书正是基于这样的背景在生态文学研究领域所做的积极尝试。

本书把美国作家亨利·大卫·梭罗(1817—1862)放在生态批评的理论框架中,联系目前生态危机日益严重的现实语境,系统、整体、全面地透视、阐释其作品中体现的生态思想。生态批评是在全球性生态危机日益严重的语境下、在风起云涌的环境保护运动的感召下,文学批评界掀起的一股“绿色”批评浪潮。它是研究文学、自然、文化之相互关系的批评,其目的在于通过文学批评来重新审视文化,进行文化反思、文化批判,揭露、解构、颠覆导致环境恶化和生态危机的思想根源——人类中心主义,唤醒人类的生态意识,从而确立一种新的宇宙观,实现人与自然的和谐发展。跨学科性、宽泛性、开放性和复杂性是生态批评的基本特征。生态批评不仅关注自然,还关注人类社会,批判科技万能、经济增长至上的理念误区,倡导社会、文明与自然的和谐发展。生态批评不仅要倡导回归物质的自然,更要倡导回归人性的自然,批判物欲膨胀人生观,建设人的精神生态,还人性以自然状态,实现人的物质追求与精神追求的平衡。精神生态与自然生态的良性互动是生态批评倡导的生态乌托邦。

20世纪60年代以来,随着全球环境危机的日益严重和环保运动的迅速兴起,美国掀起了研究梭罗自然思想的热潮,“绿色梭罗”的形象逐渐复活,梭罗也被公认为美国最优秀、最有影响的自然作家和环境主义的先驱。世纪之交美国的梭罗研究呈现出新的面貌,出现了一批研究梭罗自然思想的著作。在对国内外梭罗自然思想研究进行回顾和梳理的基础上,本书认为,梭罗是一位具有丰富生态思想,观照自然、关注社会,强调精神生态建设、主张精神生态与自然生态良性互动的作家和哲学家。

本书主要采用解构主义对中心和权威颠覆和消解的批评策略,挖掘、阐释梭罗的主要作品《在康科德与梅里马克河上的一周》、《瓦尔登湖》、《缅因森

林》、《科德角》、《论公民的不服从》、《马萨诸塞州的奴隶制》、《没有原则的生活》、《为约翰·布朗请命》、《约翰·布朗的殉难》、《约翰·布朗的最后日子》、《马萨诸塞的自然史》、《冬季散步》、《心灵散步》、《梭罗日记》中体现的生态意蕴。本书还借助心理学批评、传记批评、福柯的权力与话语理论，系统、全面地分析、诠释梭罗生态思想的成因及内涵。

本书认为，梭罗的童年生境——康科德镇的自然环境、其热爱自然的父母对子女进行的自然教育等，对梭罗的自然生态思想产生了重要影响；康科德镇的激进传统和反抗意识，与重视自由、平等、民主、个性的美国价值观一起，对梭罗的社会生态思想产生了重要影响；超验主义思潮对精神的重视、对回归自然的提倡以及主张通过回归自然而获得知识、真理、智慧和精神完善的思想对梭罗的自然生态和精神生态思想产生了重要影响；印第安文化是梭罗生态思想的又一重要来源。印第安人认为，地球是大地之母，地球上所有的东西都是有生命的、神圣的并具有内在价值。印第安文化强调整体观，认为地球上的所有创造物之间相互联系、相互依赖，反对把人类与自然界割裂开来的二元对立思想。所有这些思想都对梭罗的自然观和生活方式产生了重要影响；梭罗终生迷恋东方文化，中国文化天人合一的宇宙观，对人的精神的整体性、个人修养以及人与自然和谐相处的强调，儒家“贫而乐”的人生态度和主张通过个人的内修和完善而达到天下大治的社会观对梭罗的自然、社会和精神生态思想产生了重要影响。古印度文化的万物有灵论、众生平等观、对物质需求的轻视及对精神完满的重视、对回归自然的提倡等对梭罗的生态思想产生了重要影响。以上五个方面既相对独立，又相互联系，共同构成梭罗独立、多元、复杂、丰富的自然生态、社会生态和精神生态思想的来源。

在自然生态方面，通过展示大自然的内在价值，描写大自然的多样性与主体性，梭罗批判了西方文明的人类中心主义宇宙观，颠覆、解构了人与自然的二元对立，对人与自然的关系进行了重构，提出了大自然是人类之母、人类是大自然的一部分、人与自然和谐交融的自然生态思想。

在社会生态方面，梭罗强烈谴责了人类社会的等级制——奴隶制，表明了反对战争——地球生态圈的毁灭性威胁——的强烈的反对立场，批判了科学方法和技术主义的局限性。通过批判工业文明的负面作用和坚持文明必须植根于自然的思想，梭罗颠覆、消解了文明与自然的二元对立，提出了社会、文明与自然和谐发展的社会生态思想。

在精神生态方面，梭罗批判了物欲膨胀人生观导致的人的精神世界的衰

萎,例如人的“物化”、异化和美德、判断力及正义感的丧失等。他主张把人的物质需求降低到最低限度,强调建设人的精神生态,试图纠正人们重物质而轻精神的人生误区,从而使人们的物质生活与精神生活达到和谐;同时,触及了精神生态与自然生态的良性互动问题,这正是生态批评所追求的生态乌托邦境界。这是梭罗的生态思想对生态批评理论的启示,同时也证明了梭罗的生态思想的超前性。

梭罗不仅是一位伟大的自然作家,同时也是一位关注社会和人类的精神生态建构的哲学家。他的自然生态、社会生态和精神生态思想,归纳概括起来,是一种充满生态智慧的生活方式——诗意生存,用德国存在主义哲学家海德格尔的话说,是“诗意栖居”的生活方式。海德格尔认为,“栖居”既是人类在大地上生存的方式,又是人类生存的真正目的和归宿。作为人的真正存在的“诗意栖居”包含三层内涵:“保护”、“自由”与“和谐”。本书认为,梭罗的自然生态、社会生态和精神生态思想,分别涉及人与自然的和谐、文明与自然的均衡发展、人的物质和精神生活的平衡,是一个有机的整体。它们既互相独立,又有着内在的联系:精神生态思想是关键,自然生态思想是根本;要实现人与自然、文明与自然的和谐发展,必须首先建设人的精神生态,恢复人的物质和精神生活的平衡状态,治疗人的“精神”疾病。只有这样,人的物质追求和精神生活才能保持和谐,社会、文明与自然才能和谐发展,才能消灭人类中心主义宇宙观,最终消除生态危机。

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## Abstract

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Taking ecocriticism as its theoretical framework, and setting the outstanding American writer Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) in the context of ecological crisis, this book analyzes and interprets the ecological implications embodied in his works systematically, holistically, and comprehensively. Ecocriticism is a “green” critical current emerging in the literary field out of the worsening global ecological crisis, under the influence of the upsurge of environmental preservation movements. It is the study of the relationship among literature, nature and culture. By mirroring culture and human civilization from the perspective of literary criticism, and exposing, deconstructing, and subverting the ideological source of ecological crisis—anthropocentrism, ecocriticism aims to establish a new ecological outlook, and realize the harmonious development between nature and human. Interdisciplinarity, broadness, openness, and complexity are the basic features of ecocriticism. Showing solicitude and concern not only for nature but also over human society, ecocriticism criticizes the misconception of the omnipotence of science and technology and the “exalted” status of economic growth, and advocates the balanced and harmonious development between society, civilization, and nature. Possessing unique aesthetic tastes, being a discipline about humanity, literature has its unique and effective social function; as a matter of course, literary studies should not only touch upon but also probe into human’s spirit and soul. Therefore, ecocriticism should advocate returning not only to the physical nature but also to the original nature of humanity, criticize the life outlook dominated by the swelling avarice for materialism, and promote the harmony between people’s physical and spiritual life. The virtuous interaction between spiritual and natural ecology is the eco-topia advocated by ecocriticism.

Since the 1960s, with the worsening of the ecological crisis and the surge of the worldwide environmental concern, American academic circles have started a new upsurge in Thoreau studies, and the “green Thoreau” image has gradually revived. Today Thoreau has been almost universally acknowledged as America’s best and most influential nature writer as well as the first American environmentalist saint. The turn

of the new century saw new aspects in Thoreau studies, and a group of monographs on Thoreau's outlook on nature have been published. Based on review and analysis of Thoreau studies from the perspective of nature and ecology both at home and abroad, this book argues that, Thoreau is a writer and philosopher with rich ecological ideas, who reflects natural ecology, shows concern over social ecology, emphasizes the cultivation of people's spiritual ecology, and maintains the virtuous interaction between spiritual and natural ecology.

In terms of research methodology, the book mainly adopts the critical strategy of deconstructionism—its subverting and dismantling power over center and authority as its major method of investigation to explore and interpret the ecological implications embodied in Thoreau's works *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, *Walden*, *The Maine Woods*, *Cape Cod*, *Civil Disobedience*, *Slavery in Massachusetts*, *Life without Principle*, *A Plea for Captain John Brown*, *Martyrdom of John Brown*, *The Last Days of John Brown*, *Natural History of Massachusetts*, *A Winter Walk*, *Walking*, *The Selected Journals of Henry David Thoreau*. Besides, it also draws on such critical approaches as biographical criticism, psychological criticism, Foucault's theory of power and discourse to investigate and expound the origin and contents of Thoreau's ecological ideas.

This book believes that the origin of Thoreau's ecological ideas lies in the following five aspects. First, the natural environment of Thoreau's hometown Concord, and his parents' nature education on him have fostered Thoreau's permanent and intoxicant love for the natural world; secondly, the radical tradition and rebelling consciousness of Concord, together with the American values of the cult of freedom, equality, democracy, and individuality, have produced important effect on Thoreau's concern over social ecology; thirdly, American transcendentalism, which attaches great importance to spirits, advocates going back to nature, and seeking knowledge, truth, wisdom, and spiritual perfection by means of returning to nature, has exerted significant influence upon Thoreau's thinking on natural and spiritual ecology; fourthly, American Indian culture, which regards the earth as the Mother Creator of all entities in the world, maintains that everything on earth is alive and sacred and has intrinsic value, believes holism and the interrelatedness and interdependence among all living things, and opposes the Cartesian Dualism that cuts human from the natural world, is another important source of Thoreau's ecological ideas; and fifthly, Thoreau has been intoxicated with oriental culture all his life. The nature outlook regarding man as an integral part of nature, the emphasis on the wholeness of human's spirits, self-culture, and harmony between nature and man advocated by Chinese culture, the "poor-yet-cheerful" attitude

towards life, and the social outlook featured by the realization of order through the individual's introspection and spiritual attainment held by Confucianism, have influenced Thoreau's thinking on natural, social, and spiritual ecology. The Indian culture, which believes animism, the equality among all creatures, devaluates material aspiration and evaluates spiritual pursuit, and advocates returning to nature, has also affected Thoreau's ecological ideas. The above five factors, independent as well as interrelated, have altogether contributed to the formation of Thoreau's unique, multifaceted, complex, and rich ecological ideas on natural, social, and spiritual ecology.

In terms of natural ecology, by presenting nature's inherent value and depicting nature's multiplicity and subjectivity, Thoreau criticizes the anthropocentric world outlook, and subverts the dichotomy between man and nature. Re-constructing the relationship between nature and human, Thoreau puts forward his thinking on natural ecology that nature is the mother of humanity, human is a part of nature, and that man and nature should keep harmonious interactions with each other.

With regard to social ecology, Thoreau severely attacks the hierarchical domination of human society—the slavery system, expresses his strong opposition to war—the catastrophic threat to the ecosphere, and criticizes the limits of the scientific method and technocracy. By criticizing the negative effect of industrialization, and holding that civilization is certainly rooted in nature, Thoreau subverts the dichotomy between civilization and nature, and puts forward his thinking on social ecology that society and civilization should keep balanced development with nature.

In respect of spiritual ecology, Thoreau criticizes the shriveling of people's spirits stemming from their life outlook dominated by swelling avarice for materialism such as their "reification" and alienation, the loss of virtue, ability to judge things, and sense of justice. He advocates reducing human's material necessities to the lowest level and emphasizes the cultivation of people's spiritual ecology, attempting to redress people's misconception featured by evaluating matter and devaluating spirits, so as to achieve the harmony between people's physical and spiritual life. Moreover, Thoreau advocates the virtuous interaction between spiritual and natural ecology, which just accords with the eco-topia advocated by ecocriticism. This notion provides ecocriticism with beneficial inspiration, and proves the precedence of Thoreau's ecological ideas.

Thoreau is not only a great nature writer, but also a philosopher who shows solicitude for social ecology and the cultivation of spiritual ecology. His thinking on natural, social, and spiritual ecology is, in the final analysis, a kind of life style filled with ecological wisdom, or "poetic dwelling," in Martin Heidegger's words. According to Martin Heidegger, "dwelling" is both the way in which human lives on earth and the

true and ultimate objective of his life. Being the true end of man's existence on earth, "poetic dwelling" possesses three layers of connotation: "freedom," "preservation," and "harmony." Thoreau's ecological ideas on natural, social, and spiritual ecology, concerning respectively the harmony between nature and man, nature and civilization, and man's physical and spiritual life, are both independent and interconnected, with the harmony between nature and man being the ultimate end, and that between man's physical and spiritual life being the key. To achieve the harmony between nature and man, civilization and nature, first and foremost, it is necessary to cultivate people's spiritual ecology, to restore the balance between their physical and spiritual life, and to cure people of their spiritual diseases. Only in this way, can people's physical and spiritual life keep in harmony, society and civilization keep balanced development with nature, the anthropocentric world outlook be perished, and the ecological crisis be eventually settled.

Thoreau's reputation has not only gone beyond literary circles, but also transcended his time and country. His rich ecological thinking maintains not only aesthetic significance but also practical and philosophical significance. It is an invaluable spiritual gift presented to people living in the era of ecological crisis, and also an everlasting sounding alarm to arouse the ecological consciousness of the earthlings who must face the issue of the man/nature relationship in the process of their development. At the same time, it provides ideological resources for the construction of ecological philosophy and ethics in the era of ecological civilization.

**Key words:** Thoreau; ecocriticism; natural ecology; social ecology; spiritual ecology; poetic dwelling

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## Abbreviations

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This book uses the following abbreviations of Henry David Thoreau's works in the text, whose editions will appear in Works Cited:

- C (collection)* *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers; Walden, or, Life in the Woods; The Maine Woods; Cape Cod*
- P* *The Portable Thoreau (Natural History of Massachusetts, A Winter Walk, Walking, etc.)*
- PW* *Political Writings (Civil Disobedience, Life without Principle, Slavery in Massachusetts, A Plea for Captain John Brown, Martyrdom of John Brown, The Last Days of John Brown, etc.)*
- J* *The Selected Journals of Henry David Thoreau*

## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Introduction</b> .....   | 1  |
| <b>Chapter One A Survey of Ecocriticism</b> .....                       | 21 |
| 1.1 The Background of Ecocriticism.....                                 | 21 |
| 1.2 The Birth and Growth of Ecocriticism.....                           | 25 |
| 1.3 The Definition of Ecocriticism.....                                 | 28 |
| 1.4 The Theoretical Connotation of Ecocriticism.....                    | 30 |
| 1.4.1 The Theoretical Resources of Ecocriticism.....                    | 30 |
| 1.4.2 Summary of the Theoretical Connotation of Ecocriticism.....       | 44 |
| 1.5 The Critical Strategy and Critical Methodology of Ecocriticism..... | 46 |
| 1.6 The Significance of Ecocriticism.....                               | 51 |
| <b>Chapter Two The Origin of Thoreau's Ecological Ideas</b> .....       | 53 |
| 2.1 Concord—The Living Environment of Thoreau's Childhood.....          | 53 |
| 2.2 The Tradition of Concord and American Culture.....                  | 59 |
| 2.3 The Influence of American Transcendentalism.....                    | 62 |
| 2.4 The Influence of American Indian Culture.....                       | 65 |
| 2.5 The Influence of Oriental Culture.....                              | 68 |
| <b>Chapter Three Thoreau's Reflection on Natural Ecology</b> .....      | 74 |
| 3.1 Highlighting the Existence of Nature:                               |    |
| Depiction of Nature's Instrumental Value.....                           | 74 |
| 3.1.1 The Aesthetic Value of Nature.....                                | 74 |
| 3.1.2 The Recreational Value of Nature.....                             | 78 |
| 3.2 Dismantling the Dichotomy between Man and Nature:                   |    |
| Depiction of Nature's Inherent Value.....                               | 82 |
| 3.2.1 The Multiplicity of Nature.....                                   | 82 |
| 3.2.2 The Subjectivity of Nature.....                                   | 88 |

|                     |   |            |
|---------------------|---|------------|
| 3.3                 | Re-constructing the Relationship between Nature and Man:<br>Harmony between Them.....           | 97         |
| 3.3.1               | Nature as Mother of Humanity, and as an Interdependent<br>and Interconnected Organic Whole..... | 98         |
| 3.3.2               | Man as Part of Nature.....  | 104        |
| 3.3.3               | The Harmonious Interaction between Nature and Human.....  | 107        |
| <b>Chapter Four</b> | <b>Thoreau's Concern over Social Ecology.....</b>   | <b>117</b> |
| 4.1                 | Critique of the Hierarchical Domination of Society.....   | 118        |
| 4.1.1               | Critique of the Slavery System.....   | 118        |
| 4.1.2               | Thoreau's Anti-War Stance.....  | 126        |
| 4.2                 | Attitude towards Science: Combination of Science with Poetry.....                               | 130        |
| 4.2.1               | Critique of the Limitations of Science.....   | 130        |
| 4.2.2               | Attributing Poetic Color to Scientific Method.....  | 137        |
| 4.3                 | Balanced Development between Nature and Civilization.....                                       | 139        |
| <b>Chapter Five</b> | <b>Thoreau's Meditation upon Spiritual Ecology.....</b>   | <b>149</b> |
| 5.1                 | A Brief Discussion of the Terms of Spirit and Spiritual Ecology.....                            | 152        |
| 5.2                 | Critique of People's Swelling Avarice for Material Things.....                                  | 155        |
| 5.3                 | Cultivation of Spiritual Ecology.....   | 163        |
| 5.3.1               | Emphasis on Spiritual Aspiration.....   | 163        |
| 5.3.2               | Advocacy of Harmony between People's Physical<br>and Spiritual Life.....                        | 168        |
| 5.4                 | The Interaction between Spiritual and Natural Ecology.....                                      | 174        |
| 5.4.1               | Preserving Rather Than Devastating Nature.....  | 175        |
| 5.4.2               | Revering and Appreciating Rather Than Ignoring Nature.....                                      | 180        |
|                     | <b>Conclusion.....</b>  | <b>185</b> |
|                     | <b>Works Cited.....</b>   | <b>195</b> |
|                     | <b>Postscript.....</b>  | <b>204</b> |

## Introduction

This book is an ecocritical study of Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), the great representative American transcendentalist writer, who remained in obscurity not only in his lifetime but also for half a century after his death, but whose reputation and influence have been on the rise since the beginning of the twentieth century, with an attempt to examine and interpret the ecological implications embodied in his works systematically and comprehensively. This book argues that Thoreau is not only a writer who reflects the natural world, but also a writer who shows concern over human society as well as human's spiritual realm. His reflection on natural ecology, his concern for social ecology, and his meditation upon spiritual ecology, comparatively independent but interrelated and interwoven, function as an organic whole and work out together to form his systematic, holistic, and overall examination on the ecosphere.

The book tries to divide the whole ecosphere into three parts, the natural world, human society, and human's spirit. The reason why the book prefers the application of the three terms—natural, social, and spiritual ecology, lies in the following two aspects: Firstly, since this is an ecocritical study, it should keep consistency with other terms, like ecology, ecological ethics, ecological philosophy, ecofeminism, etc. And secondly, “[a]nalogous to the science of ecology, ecocriticism studies relationships between things” (Glotfelty and Fromm xx). Borrowing from ecology of its general principles: interconnectedness, interdependence, and interaction, ecocriticism is a literary school that studies the relationship and interaction between the physical world and human culture. Therefore, the book uses natural, social, and spiritual ecology not only to refer to the three respective realms, but also to indicate the interrelatedness, the interaction and interweaving between the three fields.<sup>①</sup>

<sup>①</sup> Lu Shuyuan, a professor from Suzhou University, as well as a leading scholar in the field of ecological research in literature and art in China, also divides the ecosphere into the three realms. For details, see his monographs: *Ecological Research in Literature and Art* (Xi'an: Shaanxi People's Publishing House, 2000) 146; and *The Space for Ecocriticism* (Shanghai: East China Normal UP, 2006) 93.