RE-WALKING THOREAU AND ASIA: 'LIGHT FROM THE EAST' FOR 'A VERY YANKEE SORT OF ORIENTAL'

David Scott
Department of History, Brunel University

Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) is well known as the author of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) and *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854). He is also known for his curiosity about Asia, what Versluis dubbed his "sauntering eastwards."[1] Thoreau's curiosity about Asia was part of a wider Transcendentalist engagement with the East, recognized in John Orr's 1882 comment that "Transcendentalism imported its bit of Oriental sky, and called men to admire the constellations it contained."[2] Thoreau in turn had a "saucy Orientalism."[3] As he put it in "Walking," his 1862 essay for *Atlantic Monthly*: "'*Ex oriente lux,*' that is, 'from the East light.'"[4] Similarly, in *A Week,* Thoreau beckoned to the "American reader, who can . . . see over that strip of the Atlantic coast to Asia and the Pacific . . . to the Himmaleh Mountains" and hold that "in every one's youthful dreams philosophy is still vaguely but inseparably, and with singular truth, associated with the East."[5] Within his *Journal* (and *A Week*) he saw "an orientalism in the most restless [American] pioneer, and the farthest west is but the farthest east," where "*Ex oriente lux* may still be the motto of scholars, for the Western world has not yet derived from the East all the light which it is destined to receive thence."[6] Thoreau's own steps had taken him, if not physically then at least mentally, across the Pacific to Asia, where in his *Journal* (1842) he wondered: "was not Asia mapped in my brain before it was in any geography?"[7]

However, during the 1840s and 1850s, 'what' sort of light did Thoreau derive from Asia, and from 'where' in Asia? Moreover, what of Stevenson's 1880 comment, "it was his [Thoreau's] ambition to be an oriental philosopher; but he was always a very Yankee sort of oriental?"[8] The present article seeks to show that there needs to be an adjustment downwards of some overrated associations concerning Buddhist influences, an ongoing highlighting of 'particular' Hindu elements, an adjustment upwards of some underrated Persian and Chinese elements, and an anchorage in his particular American 'Yankee' horizons.[9]

Thoreau has often been considered something of a Buddhist. As early as 1890, Caldwell talked about how in Thoreau's "profession and practice of Buddhism . . . it is possible to trace a vein of Buddhism all through his life and writings. . . . [H]is Buddhism is plainly visible."[10] A century later Fields could still class Thoreau as one of the "Restless Pioneers" of American Buddhism.[11]

In part this was because of what Fields considered to be Thoreau's translation, from French, of anonymous extracts from the *Lotus Sūtra.* These appeared in *The Dial* in January 1844 as "The Preachings of the Buddha." Here, Fields reflected the identification first hesitantly made by Cooke (1885) and subsequently more firmly

Philosophy East & West Volume 57, Number 1 January 2007 14–39
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(AutoPDF U8 9/10/06 10:51) UHP (7"×10") Optima J-1622 Philosophy East & West, 57:1 PMU: A(A) 21/09/2006 pp. 14–39 1622_57-1_02 (p. 14)

repeated by Christy (1932), Mueller (1977), Harding and Meyer (1980), Versluis (1993), Batchelor (1994), Snodgrass (2003), and currently on the Internet (2003).[12] However, this identification has been challenged by Piez, reviving Cooke's original "corrections" of 1885, that "the extracts made from 'The White Lotus of the Good Law' were made by Miss E. P. Peabody and translated from Burnouf."[13] This would explain why Thoreau made no references in his *Journal* and in his own published writings to the *Lotus Sūtra*—an otherwise glaring omission if he had gone to the trouble of translating it into English in the *Dial,* and a noticeable difference from the Chinese materials and *The Laws of Manu* that he presented in the *Dial* and that he then frequently invoked in his writings. Tweed, in his recent 2000 edition of *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844–1912,* accepted Piaz' identification of the *Lotus Sūtra* extracts as having been translated by Peabody rather than Thoreau, but still considered that Thoreau's "importance remains undiminished . . . to the story of the American encounter with Buddhism. . . . Abundant evidence of his personal engagement with Buddhism—for example in Walden and A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers—assures Thoreau a place of prominence."[14] However, such "abundant evidence" in *A Week* and *Walden* of Thoreau's "personal engagement with Buddhism" is lacking on closer inspection.

Tweed offered no other examples of such "abundant evidence" but may have had in mind the well-known plea by Thoreau in *A Week,* and subsequently cited by others:

> I trust that some may be as near and dear to Buddha, or Christ, or Swedenborg, who are without the pale of their churches. It is necessary not to be Christian to appreciate the beauty and significance of the life of Christ. I know that some will have hard thoughts of me, when they hear their Christ named beside my Buddha, yet I am sure that I am willing they should love their Christ more than my Buddha, for the love is the main thing, and I like him too. . . . Why need Christians be still intolerant?[15]

However, while Thoreau's phrase "my Buddha" shows some openness to the figure of the Buddha, what actually underpins this particular passage is the primacy of an open, tolerant "love" outside the "pale of their churches" that transcended (all) formal religious credal badges (Christian, Buddhist, or otherwise). Consequently, Weiss, at the time (1865), considered that it was not so much from a particular identity with Buddhism that Thoreau was speaking in this passage; rather,

> it is in the interests of holiness that he speaks slightingly of Scripture and its holy men. "Keep your Christ," he says; "but let me have my Buddha, and leave me alone with him." He catches up this Buddha for a chance of defence against the conventional Christ of Democrats, slaveholders, sharpers in trade and in society, literal theologians, and overpious laymen.[16]

Such concern for general toleration, rather than a particular identification with Buddhism, is a similar reason for Thoreau's passing *Journal* statement, circa 1850:

> I do not prefer one religion or philosophy to another—I have no sympathy with the bigotry & ignorance which make transient & partial & puerile distinctions between one

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> man's faith or form of faith & another's—as christians & heathen—I pray to be delivered from narrowness partiality exaggeration—bigotry. To the philosopher all sects all nations are alike. I like Brahma—Hare Buddha—the Great spirit as well as God.[17]

Elsewhere, Thoreau's references to Buddhism were sparse and tangential. A passing remark comes in *Walden* that "I went so far as to slaughter a woodchuck which ravaged my bean-field—effect his transmigration, as a Tatar would say," a reference gleaned from popular travel reports circulating on Central Asia.[18] No further references to Buddhism and the Buddha appear in *A Week* and *Walden.* A passing play on words in a letter to Emerson that "I have been seeing men during these days, and trying experiments upon trees; have inserted three or four hundred buds (quite a Buddhist, one might say)" does not alter this sparseness of notice.[19] In noticeable contrast to such meager mentions of Buddhism are the substantive and frequent mentions by Thoreau of wisdom from other areas of Asia, namely India (Hinduism), Persia (Sufism), and China (Confucianism).

One explanation for such a contrast is that Buddhism was not as yet quite well known enough in Thoreau's 1840s. Salisbury's "Memoir on the History of Buddhism,"—"the first scholarly article on Buddhism" in America—appeared in 1849 in the first volume of the *Journal of the American Oriental Society (JAOS),* but too late to feed into Thoreau's *A Week.*[20] The first proper profile in America of the Buddha came with Bennett's "Life of Gaudama: A Translation from the Burmese," which appeared in *JAOS* in 1853, but again probably too late to affect *Walden,* which was being sent to the printers for publication in 1854. Versluis suggested that Thoreau's advocacy in *Walden* of eating only once a day came from Thoreau's reading of Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism* (London, 1853).[21] This linkage is a little remote in itself, and is not matched anywhere in *Walden* by any explicit references by Thoreau to Hardy's *Manual.* If he did read it, it was perhaps one of the forty-four volumes, a "nest of Indian books" that Thoreau's *Journal* records him as receiving from his friend Cholmondeley on November 30, 1855, the year after the publication of *Walden.*[22] An interesting historical counterfactual would be to consider Thoreau's likely response *if* such Buddhist materials had appeared a decade earlier, able thereby to be worked into his experiences and reflections in *A Week* and *Walden.* That is a different story, though.

A final, often cited, material is Weiss' 1862 obituary comment that "his [Thoreau's] countenance has not a line upon it expressive of ambition or discontent; the affectional emotions had not fretted at it. He went about like a priest of Buddha who expects to arrive soon at the summit of a life of contemplation."[23] However, on closer inspection, this judgment by Weiss does not necessarily show Thoreau as knowingly following Buddhist literature or Buddhist ideas. Instead it points to a general demeanor, which Weiss from his own perspective in 1862 then thought was comparable to Buddhist equanimity, thereby maybe indicating more about Weiss than about Thoreau.[24] By the 1860s Buddhism was becoming better known and perhaps retrospectively associated with Thoreau by others like Weiss and then Caldwell, despite Thoreau's own references actually showing greater interests elsewhere

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in Asia. Thoreau's clear interest in yogic discipline may also, for others, have blurred the line between Buddhism and Hinduism.[25]

It was the latter avenue, of "Hindu bards and Gods," which was seen in 1836 by fellow Transcendentalist Orestes Brownson as the focus of the emerging American interest in Oriental thought from India.[26] Thoreau's awareness and readiness to use Hindu materials is well recognized.[27] He seems to have had a sense of deep, ancient wisdom coming from India, as expressed, for example, in *Walden,* where "the oldest . . . Hindoo philosopher raised a corner of the veil . . . and I gaze upon as fresh a glory as he did, since it was I in him that was then so bold, and it is he in me that now reviews the vision."[28] Such mutual identity across time is a theme encountered elsewhere, as shall be seen. One feature at play was Thoreau's readiness to use Hindu materials out of their immediate context for his own purposes. This was illustrated in "Walking" (1862) where the Hindu 'myth' was retold of how "the Hindus dreamed that the earth rested on an elephant, and the elephant on a tortoise," which then led to his mention that "a fossil tortoise has lately been discovered in Asia large enough to support an elephant" and the admission "I confess that I am partial to these wild fancies, which transcend the order of time and development."[29] However, the same myth was used rather differently in *Life without Principle* (1863) as a metaphor for "hollow and ineffectual" ordinary conversation, where "no man stood on truth. They were merely banded together, as usual, one leaning, and all together on nothing; as the Hindoos made the world rest on an elephant."[30] It is well known that Thoreau particularly esteemed *The Laws of Manu* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* but further comments on these can be made.

Thoreau's *Journal* in 1841 (31 May, 6–7 August, 9 August, 30 August, 1 September, and 2 September) shows the impact of the *Laws of Manu* on him, sentiments also appearing in *A Week*:

> It [the *Laws of Manu*] seems to have been uttered from some eastern summit, with a sober morning prescience . . . and is as superior to criticism as the Himmaleh Mountains [*Journal* 1:316] . . . with that rare kind of wisdom which . . . comes to us as refined as the porcelain. . . . [I]t is true for the widest horizon . . . as it proceeds from, so it addresses, what is deepest and most abiding in man.[31]

From such 'interior' depths, Thoreau then anchored this Hindu text for his American audience by using 'exterior' motifs from nature, whereby:

> It belongs to the noontide of the day, the midsummer of the year, and after the snows have melted, and the waters evaporated in the spring, still its truth speaks freshly to our experience. It helps the sun to shine, and his rays fall on its page to illustrate it. It spends the mornings and the evenings, and makes such an impression on us overnight as to awaken us before dawn, and its influence lingers around us like a fragrance late into the day. It conveys a new gloss to the meadows and the depths of the wood, and its spirit, like a more subtile ether, sweeps along with the prevailing winds of a country. . . . [H]eld up to the sky, which is the only impartial and incorruptible ordeal, they are of a piece with its depth and serenity. . . . [T]hey will have a place and significance as long as there is a sky to test them by.[32]

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What is striking throughout this extended eulogy is the sustained intertwining of nature with the text, reflecting Thoreau's own 'Yankee' leaning to Nature as well as the incoming Indian material.

Another sign of Thoreau's active yet selective use of materials in *A Week* was his comment that "the wisest conservatism is that of the Hindoos. 'Immemorial custom is transcendent law' says Menu" [*Journal* 1:313]—the opening verse from Thoreau's earlier *Dial* selections.[33] However, this did not mean that Thoreau supported Brahminic caste supremacy, as legitimized in the *Laws of Manu.* Instead, he could feel, "thank God, no Hindoo tyranny prevailed at the framing of the world, but we are freemen of the universe, and not sentenced to any caste."[34] Consequently, in his ninety-verse selections of "The Laws of Menu" for the *Dial* in January 1843, Thoreau had not presented its detailed parts on caste and gender restrictions, but had focused on its wider spiritual and ethical areas. This contrasts with the much more critical review carried out by Whelpley of "The Laws of Menu" in *The American Whig Review* for May 1845.

A second Hindu source that particularly struck Thoreau, as it did Emerson, was the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* "The Song of the Lord" (i.e., Krishna), of which a copy had reached Emerson at Concord in 1845. Thoreau considered the Gītā to be "wonderfully sustained and developed" and indeed "the best I think" of the various Hindu scriptures that he was aware of.[35] The *Gītā*'s impact on the Transcendentalists has been well noted in academic analysis.[36] Suffice it to reemphasize three nuances. First, although no extracts from the *Gītā* were presented in the *Dial,* substantial extracts appeared in Thoreau's *Journal* during June–July 1846 (2:253–2:258) and then publicly in *A Week,* "Monday," following his comment that "the reader is nowhere raised and sustained in a higher, purer, or rarer region of thought than in the Bhagvat-Geeta."[37] Second comes the often-cited passage from *Walden*:

> It appears that the sweltering inhabitants of Charleston and New Orleans, of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta, drink at my well. In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagvat-Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! There I meet the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the root of a tree with his crust and water jug. . . . The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.[38]

As with the *Laws of Manu,* what is also worth noting is how the external world of nature (and indeed of trade in ice water to India) was woven into Asian religiosity.[39]

Last was his selectivity, citing *Gītā* strands on selfless detached action (*karma* yoga) and yogic training of the mind and body (*dhyāna* yoga) rather than its strong devotional *(bhakti)* material on Krishna.

Thoreau's interest in yogic discipline underpinned his selective use of Hindu literature, the thrust of Patri's analysis of him as a "Yankee Yogi."[40] This was not

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so much the more stringent shores of severe Hindu asceticism, of which Thoreau was aware,[41] but instead the more meditative observational side of yoga that he was drawn to, which in an Indian setting was considered the practical application of Sāṁkhya metaphysics in the Sāṁkhya-Yoga *darshana,* "school," whose *Sāṁkhya-kārikā* text was cited by Thoreau in *A Week* and in *Walden.*[42] This explains Caldwell's early comment in 1890 that the Walden episode of 1845–1847 was for Thoreau "an attempt to put into practice somewhat of the Hindu [i.e., *Sāṁkhya*] philosophy."[43]

Thoreau's *Journal* was replete with acknowledgments of the practice of contemplation: "the Hindoos . . . possess in a wonderful degree the faculty of contemplation" (1849); "the contemplation of the Indian sages" (1849); "their religious books describe the first inquisitive & contemplative access to God" (1850); and "their method is pure wisdom or contemplation" (1850).[44] Such a practical experiential focus lies behind Thoreau's famous personal admission, inserted between textual allusions pointing to Nature:

> "Free in this world as the birds in the air, disengaged from every kind of chains, those who have practiced the *yoga* gather in Brahma the certain fruit of their works." Rude and careless as I am, I would fain practice the yoga faithfully. "The yogi, absorbed in Contemplation, contributes in his degree to creation: he breathes a divine perfume, he hears wonderful things. Divine forms traverse him without tearing him, and, united to the nature, which is proper to him, he goes, he acts as animating original matter." To some extent, and at rare intervals, even I am a yogi.[45]

Thoreau's friend Moniker Conway used similar words about Thoreau, whereby "like the pious Yogi, so long motionless whilst gazing on the sun that knotty plants encircled his neck and the cast snake-skin his loins, and the birds built their nests on his shoulders, this poet and naturalist [Thoreau], by equal consecration, became a part of field and forest."[46] These yogic elements deserve reemphasis, partly to avoid the subsequent understandable but slightly misleading identification with Buddhism, and partly in terms of their thematic overlaps with Taoism. It is also a way of distinguishing Thoreau from Emerson, where Versluis had already considered that Emerson's more intellectual use of Oriental motifs "correspond[s] to the *jñāna yoga,* or path of gnosis," and as such was different in orientation from Thoreau's practices, which correspond more to the *dhyāna-yoga* or path of internal contemplation-mediation-observation.[47] Through such discipline Thoreau could thereby go beyond just observing Nature from the outside and could also internally integrate it.

Within this corpus of Hindu material remain two areas of omission by Thoreau. First, there are no specific references in terms of genre or text to the Upanishads, those pinnacles of early philosophy and inward exploration in Hinduism. Some aspects of them were becoming known in Western circles. In 1798 Henry Colebrooke presented translations of selected passages from the *Aitareya, Brihadāraṇyaka,* and other Upanishads.[48] While Thoreau seems to have ignored that particular material, nevertheless in *Walden* and *A Week* he selected Nature-evoking verses from Colebrooke's 1837 translation of the Vedic *Sānkhya-kārikā.*[49] Rammo-

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hun Roy presented English translations, albeit at his own expense in Calcutta, from the *Kena* and *Īshā Upanishads* in 1816 (noticed in the Boston *North American Review* of 1818) as well as the *Muṇḍaka* and *Kaṭha Upanishads* in 1819, but Thoreau nowhere refers to these particular translations.[50] Upanishad teachings appear in Roy's *Translation of Several Principal Books, Passages and Texts of the Veds* (1832), which Thoreau had cited in passing in *Walden,* though without particular focus on the "Upanishads" as such.[51] Thoreau received a copy of Roer's translation (1853) of the *Māṇḍūkya* and other Upanishads in 1855, from his friend Cholmondely, but too late for *Walden,* which had already appeared in 1854. A fuller sense of the Upanishads in the West had to await Muller's systematic translation for *Sacred Books of the East* in 1879.

A second aspect of Hinduism that Thoreau ignored was Shiva. This may be explained partly through a general lack of translated Shaivite texts in the West, for the first such text seems to have only come in America in 1873 with *The Index* translation ("Heathen poetry") of Sivavakkiyar's verses.[52] Thoreau would probably have found Shiva too disquieting a figure anyhow—as the *mahā-yogi,* "great yogi," on the one hand and the dark destroyer and scandalous master of Tantric eroticism and antinomian tendencies on the other!

A final area of interest is whether Thoreau had any direct contacts with Hindus. The general assumption has been that he did not. However, there is a curious moment in *A Week* when Thoreau approached some "lock-men's houses":

> You fear that the gentlest knock may seem rude to the Oriental dreamers. The door is opened, perchance, by some Yankee-Hindoo woman, whose small-voiced but sincere hospitality, out of the bottomless depths of a quiet nature, has travelled quite round to the opposite side, and fears only to obtrude its kindness. You step over the white-scoured floor to the bright "dresser" lightly, as if afraid to disturb the devotions of the household—for Oriental dynasties appear to have passed away since the dinner-table was last spread here. . . . "Perhaps you would like some molasses and ginger," suggests the faint noon voice. Sometimes there sits the brother who follows the sea, their representative man, who knows only how far it is to the nearest port, no more distances, all the rest is sea and distant capes.[53]

Who was this "Yankee-Hindoo" woman evoking "Oriental dynasties"; what sort of opportunities and situations did that perhaps point to?

A flourishing maritime clipper trade had developed between India and New England by the early nineteenth century, used by Thoreau for his poem "The Friend," with its "profounder mystery."[54] Indeed, Thoreau recalled how "from an old ruined fort on Staten Island, I have loved to watch all day some vessel . . . whose keel shall plough its waves, and bear me to the Indies."[55] Often it was "missionaries and ice" on the outbound journey from Boston—an ice trade that Thoreau himself was involved in at Walden.[56] At Salem, young Asians were in turn to be found working on the "India" wharves at the Crowninshield and Derby shipyards. The year 1851 saw six Asian Indians marching in the Fourth of July parade in Salem under the banner of the "East India Marine Society," a Society set up in 1799 at East India Square

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by American seafarers.[57] Thoreau could, then, have actually encountered Hindus in New England, thereby explaining his intriguing reference in *A Week* to the "Oriental . . . Hindoo woman."

India was also the site for syncretistic and esoteric encounters between Islamic and Hindu mystics, evoked in turn by Thoreau. In *Walden,* he could ask:

> Why level downward to our dullest perception always, and praise that as common sense? . . . [T]he verses of Kabir [ca. 1440–1518] have four different senses; illusion, spirit, intellect, and the exoteric doctrine of the Vedas; but in this part of the world [New England] it is considered a ground for complaint if a man's writings admit of more than one interpretation.[58]

Elsewhere, Thoreau referred to an eighteenth-century Mughal poet from Delhi, where "I had more than ever come within the influence of those books which circulate round the world. . . . Says the poet Mir Camar Uddin Mast, 'Being seated, to run through the region of the spiritual world; I have had this advantage in books. To be intoxicated by a single glass of wine; I have experienced this pleasure when I have drunk the liquor of the esoteric doctrines.'"[59]

Such esoteric materials from northern India point in turn toward Persia, the hearth of Mughal court language, its poetry, and its varied Sufi orders. In that vein, Thoreau had mused about both "Persia, and Hindostan, the lands of contemplation."[60] The Persian dimension in Thoreau is often rather overlooked and yet one that is quite substantive. Patri's dismissal of such Persian (and Chinese) strands as being a "digression" for scholars from Thoreau's Indian horizons is unfair given their sustained citations and use by Thoreau.[61]

Part of Thoreau's Persian horizons took in Zoroaster, the ancient prophet from Eastern Iran / Central Asia but subsequently associated with Persia. Thoreau named Zoroaster one of "our [spiritual] astronomers" and talked of introducing Zoroaster into a great universal "literary club."[62] Such horizons could stretch time itself, so that "the life of a wise man is most of all extemporaneous, for he lives out of an eternity which includes all time. The cunning mind travels further back than Zoroaster each instant, and comes back down to the present with its revelation."[63] Thoreau used Zoroaster to put contemporaneous exclusivist Christianity into humbler perspectives:

> With wisdom we shall learn liberality. The solitary hired man on a farm in the outskirts of Concord, who has had his second birth and peculiar religious experience, and is driven as he believes into the silent gravity and exclusiveness by his faith, may think it is not true; but Zoroaster, thousands of years ago, travelled the same road and had the same experience; but he, being wise, knew it to be universal, and treated his neighbors accordingly, and is even said to have invented and established worship among men. Let him humbly commune with Zoroaster then, and through the liberalizing influence of all the worthies, with Jesus Christ himself, and let "our church" go by the board.[64]

Such advice by Thoreau recalls Emerson's *Divinity School Address* in 1838, which had discomfited church worthies with its free-spiritedness and its critique of institutional Christianity, as indeed could Thoreau's own "Sunday" section in *A Week.*

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Thoreau's sense of Zoroaster, however, was somewhat indirect. In part it came through classical Greek sources like Strabo, but also through the "Chaldean Oracles" attributed to Zoroaster that Emerson had presented in the *Dial* in April 1844. This was referred to in *A Week* as "these sublime sentences, as the Chaldaean oracles of Zoroaster," which in "Walking" he considered as pointing to states of "higher knowledge."[65] While Thoreau hoped for the day that "the Vaticans shall be filled with Vedas [India] and Zendavestas [Persia]," and noted the "noble sentiment of the Zend-Avesta . . . made near and audible to us," he did not make use of Antequetil Duperron's *Zend Avesta: Ouvrage de Zoroastre,* which had appeared in 1771.[66] Thoreau's Persian horizons lay mostly elsewhere.

This was not really through Islamic culture as such, where (to use Said's *Orientalism* framework) projections of "exotica and decadence" may be at play in Thoreau.[67] Muhammad and the Qur'an were generally ignored by Thoreau.[68] Instead, Thoreau's Persian inspirations were primarily through the matrix of Sufism, the esoteric mystical side of Islam.

Sufi egalitarianism and interfaith pluralism was one feature that Thoreau thought well of:

> Wolff, travelling in the deserts of Bokhara, says, "Another party of derveeshes came to me and observed, 'The time will come when there shall be no difference between rich and poor, between high and low, when property will be in common, even wives and children.'" But forever I ask of such, What then? The derveeshes in the deserts of Bokhara and the reformers in Marlboro' Chapel sing the same song.[69]

More important than travelogues was Persian poetry. This was generally accorded high status in Transcendentalist circles, as in Emerson's 1844 essay "The Poet," with Thoreau noting how "poetry is the mysticism of mankind."[70] Consequently, Thoreau could lament "the narrowness of his European culture and the exclusiveness of his reading. None of her children has done justice to the poets and philosophers of Persia."[71] Such soaring Sufi verses pointed toward direct experiential contemplative transformation, expressions, and focus that were of direct interest to Thoreau, as well as to Emerson.[72]

Hafiz (d. 1389) was one Sufi master who attracted Thoreau's attention.[73] Thus, Thoreau could mention how "'yesterday, at dawn,' says Hafiz, 'God delivered me from all worldly affliction; and amidst the gloom of night presented me with the water of immortality.'"[74] Hafiz' poetry had also attracted Emerson's interest, as in his presentation of verses "From the Persian of Hafiz" (1847) and extracts in "The Liberty Bell" (1851).

A more sustained Sufi interest came for Thoreau, as also for Emerson, with Saadi of Shiraz (d. ca. 1291), with extracts "From the Gulistan [Rose Garden] of Saadi" appearing in "Ethical Scriptures" in the *Dial* in January 1844.[75] Thoreau first mentioned Saadi in his *Journal* on March 23, 1842, with some mentions in *A Week.* One example was in passing, where "in the life of Sadi by Dowlat Shah occurs this sentence: 'The eagle of the immaterial soul of Shaikh Sadi shook from his plumage the dust of his body.'"[76] Elsewhere Thoreau recounted how "Sadi tells who may

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travel; among others, 'A common mechanic, who can earn a subsistence by the industry of his hand, and shall not have to stake his reputation for every morsel of bread, as philosophers have said.' He may travel who can subsist on the wild fruits and game of the most cultivated country."[77]

Thoreau also evoked Saadi in *Walden,* where Saadi had been the first exemplar of his "Wise Old Man."[78] In that vein, Thoreau advised:

> Endeavour to become one of the worthies of the world. I read in the Gulistan, or the Flower Garden, of Sheik Sadi of Shiraz, that: "they asked a wise man, saying: Of the many celebrated trees which the Most High God has created lofty and umbrageous, they call none azad, or free, excepting the cypress, which bears no fruit; what mystery is there in this? He replied, Each has its appropriate produce, and appointed season, during the continuance of which it is fresh and blooming, and during their absence dry and withered; to neither of which states is the cypress exposed, being always flourishing; and of this nature are the azads, or religious independents.—Fix not thy heart on that which is transitory; for the Dijlah, or Tigris, will continue to flow through Bagdad after the race of caliphs is extinct: if thy hand has plenty, be liberal as the date tree; but if it affords nothing to give away, be an azad, or free man, like the cypress."[79]

This section, from Saadi's chapter on "Rules for Conduct in Life," was the passage from Thoreau that Burroughs subsequently chose to conclude his own 1882 profile of Thoreau.[80] As with the *Laws of Manu* and the *Gītā,* Thoreau was happy to use nature imagery as deeper pointers.

An extended treatment, "Assimilating Saadi," emerges from Thoreau's *Journal.*[81] Thoreau started from a more pluralist interfaith perspective where "a certain elevation makes all men of one religion. It is always some base alloy that creates the distinction of sects. Thought greets thought over the widest gulfs of time with unerring freemasonry." Within that universal pluralist fraternity came the following sequence: "I know, for instance, that Sadi entertained once identically the same thought that I do, and thereafter I can find no essential difference between Sadi and myself. He is not Persian, he is not ancient, he is not strange to me." Thoreau's readiness to go across time and identity can be commented on, as seen already in his treatment of Zoroaster and of Hindu wisdom. In turn came Thoreau's "by the identity of his thoughts with mine he [Saadi] still survives. It makes no odds what atoms serve us," which evokes Sufi expression (e.g., Rumi) and Whitman's subsequent verses in "A Persian Lesson" (1891), which started with "the greybeard Sufi" and moved on to talk of how "it is the central urge in every atom, (often unconscious) . . . to return to its divine origins."[82] Saadi was to become the continuing vehicle there for Thoreau's own 'stream of consciousness', so that "by sympathy with Sadi I have embowelled him. In his thought I have a sample of *him,* a slice from his core, which makes it unimportant where certain bones which the thinker once employed may lie; but I could not have got this without being equally entitled to it with himself. . . . Methinks I can be as intimate with the essence of an ancient worthy as, so to speak, he was with himself."

Indian yogic exploration and Persian mystical verses were not the only Oriental strands to appear in Thoreau. In *Walden* he considered that "the ancient philoso-

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phers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward."[83] Amidst these Asian interests came Thoreau's own emphasis on practicality, where he immediately goes on to say: "to be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically."[84] In his search for a practical philosophy that could be followed in the world, certain aspects of China, a sometimes-neglected area, caught Thoreau's attention.[85]

Admittedly Thoreau could merely refer in passing to "a wornout China."[86] He could also just focus on economic links where "if your trade is with the Celestial Empire [China] some small counting house on the coast, in some Salem harbor, will be fixture enough."[87] Indeed, for Thoreau, such trade could bring some dubious luxuries as in "a modern drawing-room, with its ... sun-shades, and a hundred other oriental things ... invented for the ... effeminate natives of the Celestial Empire [China]."[88] However, China's ancient Confucian sense of the balanced 'Mean', its cultured reserve of the literati and 'virtue' was sympathetically noticed by Thoreau, as it had been in the preceding century by Enlightenment figures like Voltaire and Leibniz. One sign of this was Thoreau's presentation in the *Dial* of the "Sayings of Confucius" and the "Chinese Four Books."[89] From there he went on to use Chinese material actively yet selectively.

Confucius appears at times in *Walden* as a name that Thoreau could just generally use, as when "my thoughts have left no track, and I cannot find the path again. What was it that I was thinking of? It was a very hazy day." Faced with his meandering thoughts, Thoreau then wrote "I will just try these three sentences of Confutsee [Confucius]; they may fetch that state about again."[90] However, more specific use could be made elsewhere, as in his citing of how "Confucius said [*Analects* 2.17], 'To know that we know what we know, and that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge.'"[91] Such verses from Confucius were used by Thoreau to show that "this is the only way, we say; but there are as many ways as there can be drawn radii from one centre," that is, a pluralist notion of truth.

Thoreau focused on the ethical side of the Confucian tradition when he correctly recognized that "I do not remember anything which Confucius has said directly respecting man's 'origin, purpose, and destiny.' He was more practical than that. He is full of wisdom applied to human relations,—to the private life,—the family,—government."[92] Friendship, virtue, social harmony, and rectitude were aspects of the Chinese materials that Thoreau warmed to. Partly this was with regard to individual behavior.[93] However, his Yankee individualism can be seen in his political appropriation of suitable Chinese themes, as in his assertion, albeit rather vague, in *Civil Disobedience* (1849) that "the Chinese philosopher was wise enough to regard the individual as the basis of the Empire."[94] Confucian ethics could be brought into general background play, as in "Walking," where Thoreau noted that "Confucius said [*Analects* 8.13] 'If a state is governed by the principles of reason, poverty and misery are subjects of shame; if a state is not governed by the principles

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of reason, riches and honors are the subjects of shame.'"[95] Such criteria were the spur for the *Analects* to advise "do not enter a state that pursues dangerous courses . . . when the Way prevails under heaven, then show yourself; when it does not prevail, then hide"—which for Thoreau led to the immediate conclusion in his following line, "I can afford to refuse allegiance to Massachusetts, and her right to my property and life."[96] Other verses from the Confucian *Analects* (i.e., 12.19) could be brought into play with regard to the role of the government and the individual, as in his call in *Walden,* "you who govern public affairs, what need have you to employ punishments? 'Love virtue, and the people will be virtuous. The virtues of a superior man are like the wind; the virtues of a common man are like the grass; the grass, when the wind passes over it, bends.'"[97]

While Confucianism was not primarily concerned with nature, Thoreau used such strands there that he could in *Walden;* for example:

> Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. . . . They say that characters were engraven on the bathing tub of King Tching Thang to this effect: "Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again." I can understand that. Morning brings back the heroic ages.[98]

Elsewhere came a play on words between Thoreau's sensitivity to outward nature and the demeanor of the Chinese sage:

> Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage [!]. Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. Turn the old; return to them. Things do not change; we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. . . . If I were confined to a corner of a garret all my days, like a spider, the world would be just as large to me while I had my thoughts about me. The philosopher said [*Analects* 9.25]: "From an army of three divisions one can take away its general, and put it in disorder; from the man the most abject and vulgar one cannot take away his thought." Do not seek so anxiously to be developed, to subject yourself to many influences to be played on; it is all dissipation. Humility like darkness reveals the heavenly lights.[99]

In effect, what Thoreau did was to combine elements of inner yogic exploration with the outward projection and demeanor of the Chinese sage.

Confucius' successor Mencius was also presented by Thoreau as part of the "Ethical Scriptures" in the *Dial* for October 1843.[100] Subsequently, Mencius was cited by Thoreau in *A Week*: "Mencius says: 'If one loses a fowl or a dog, he knows well how to seek them again; if one loses the sentiments of his heart, he does not know how to seek them again'"—the cue for Thoreau to make the point that "the duties of practical philosophy consist only in seeking after those sentiments of the heart which we have lost; that is all."[101] Confucian practicality and Mencius' humanism were features close to Thoreau's own heart.

A more sustained use of Mencius by Thoreau is apparent in *Walden,* with Thoreau advocating higher subtle states, musing "we are conscious of an animal in us, which awakens in proportion as our higher nature slumbers" before citing "'that in which men differ from brute beasts,' says Mencius, 'is a thing very inconsiderable;

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the common herd lose it very soon; superior men preserve it carefully.'"[102] Thoreau focused elsewhere in *Walden* at some length on Mencius' sense of optimism and the reasonableness of the human potential, together with signs of appreciation of Nature, where "a single gentle rain makes the grass many shades greener. So our prospects brighten on the influx of better thoughts." Consequently, he went on to cite Mencius that "a return to goodness produced each day in the tranquil and beneficent breath of the morning, causes that in respect to the love of virtue and the hatred of vice, one approaches a little the primitive nature of man, as the sprouts of the forest which has been felled."[103] From such "morning" use, Thoreau went on to cite Mencius further for the end of the day, concerning "the germs of virtue" able to be generated through "the innate faculty of reason. Are those the true and natural sentiments of man?"[104] At this point the inward natural potential of the individual in the midst of nature comes back into view with Thoreau looking over Walden Pond.

Amid mentions of elements related to Chinese Confucianism, Thoreau was silent about Taoism. However, Thoreau's silent sage, the sage of Nature, observing and being filled by the quiet yet strong presence of nature, has undoubted thematic overlaps with Taoism. His first essay, *Natural History of Massachusetts* (1842), had Thoreau asserting, "Nature is mythical and mystical always."[105] Consequently, in *Walden,* "there can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of Nature and has his senses still."[106] Herman Hesse's "Elder Brother," the enigmatic Taoist recluse at the "Bamboo Grove," has parallels with Thoreau's own Walden sojourn, where Thoreau described himself as a "hermit."[107] Field's comment comes to mind that "one might say that Thoreau was pre-Buddhist in much the same way that the Chinese Taoists were," not so much, though, as to make a historical link between Buddhism and Thoreau but rather to point to Taoism ("nature-mysticism" par excellence) in its own right as the closer parallel to Thoreau.[108]

Taoist literature had probably not come Thoreau's way, with no signs of Thoreau being aware of the French (Pauthier in 1837–1838, Julien in 1842) and German (von Planckner and von Strausse in 1844) translations of the *Tao te Ching,* with neither Lao Tzu nor Chuang Tzu referred to anywhere by Thoreau. The first English translation, by Legge, only came out in 1891 in the *Sacred Books of the East* series. Chuang Tzu was to be translated still later. Thoreau was aware of the term *Tao* as 'Way', but in a general Confucian sense of 'virtue' rather than that of Taoist nature-mysticism.[109] Nevertheless, Thoreau and Taoism remains "a rich field for a special comparative study of its own."[110]

In that vein, Thoreau's concluding chapter in *Walden* could ask, "why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."[111] Instead, Thoreau's music was one where

> Sometimes, in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise to noon, rapt in revery, amidst the pines and hickories and sumachs, while the birds sang or flitted noiseless through the house until by sun falling in at my west window, or the noise of some traveler's wagon on the distant highway, I was

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> reminded of the lapse of time. I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any of the work of the hands would have been. They were not time subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance. I realized what the Orientals mean by contemplation.[112]

While seated in the midst of a New England woods, Thoreau could feel at one with the wider world, and in particular the currents of Asia. As he put it, "for the most part it is as solitary where I live as on the prairies. It is as much Asia or Africa as New England."[113]

However, there was more to Thoreau and Asia than just world-renouncing contemplation in a remote grove. After all, Stevenson's 1880 judgment of Thoreau was that "he was always a very Yankee sort of oriental."[114] Oriental wisdom was complementing, not replacing, aspects of Western tradition. Orestes Brownson's equation in 1836 of the "East" with the spiritual and mystical and the "West" with the material has some similarity to Thoreau's talk, in *A Week,* of "the difference between the Oriental and the Occidental. The former has nothing to do in this world; the latter is full of activity. . . . [T]here is a struggle between the Oriental and the Occidental in every nation."[115] Similarly, as his *Journal* proposed in 1846, "the east furnishes the religion of the wise and contemplative man—as the west of him that is mixed in [worldly] affairs."[116]

In the related religious sphere, Thoreau asserted that "Christianity is more personal and moral. The religion of the Brahmens is more philosophical."[117] This was why Thoreau held that

> Christianity, on the other hand, is humane, practical, and, in a large sense, radical. So many years and ages of the gods those Eastern sages sat contemplating Brahm, uttering in silence the mystic "Om," being absorbed into the essence of the Supreme Being, never going out of themselves, but subsiding farther and deeper within; so infinitely wise, yet infinitely stagnant; until, at last, in that same Asia, but in the western part of it, appeared a youth [Jesus], wholly unforetold by them,—not being absorbed into Brahm, but bringing Brahm down to earth and to mankind; in whom Brahm had awakened from his long sleep, and exerted himself, and the day began,—a new avatar. The Brahman had never thought to be a brother of mankind as well as a child of God.[118]

Consequently, in his "Walking" essay phrase, cited earlier, a significant comparison further emerges from Thoreau where he says "to use an obsolete Latin word, I might say *Ex oriente lux; ex occidente* FRUX. From the East light; from the West fruit."[119]

Nevertheless, Thoreau could use strands of Asian 'involvement', such as the outward Confucian ethic, Sufi egalitarianism, and (as with Gandhi) the *Gītā* paradigm of detached selfless action. In "Walking," a clear sense of this thrust from Asia and America is present in his argument that

> The man who takes the liberty to live is superior to all the laws both of heaven and earth, by virtue of his relation to the Law-maker. "That is active duty," says the Vishnu Purana, "which is not for our bondage; that is knowledge which is for our liberation; all other duty is good only unto weariness; all other knowledge, is only the cleverness of an artist."[120]

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The year 1849 saw the publication of Thoreau's *A Week* as well as his essay "On Civil Disobedience," an essay that was to encourage Gandhi in his own nonviolent struggles at the end of the century.[121] In 1854 came Thoreau's *Walden* and his lecture "Slavery in Massachusetts" (subsequently published in *Liberator*), followed by his involvement in the growing controversy over slavery in Massachusetts and his strong personal support for the abolitionist activist John Brown over the next few years.

Thoreau's sensitivity to environmental concerns was another outward concern, but one with deep spiritual resonance and further East-West nuances. Here Emerson's obituary comment (1862) on Thoreau comes to mind: "so much knowledge of Nature's secret and genius few others possessed, none in a more large and religious synthesis."[122] Stevenson (1880) considered that at Walden Thoreau had chosen to "devote himself to oriental philosophers, the study of nature, and the work of self-improvement."[123] Meanwhile, Burroughs (1882) thought "Thoreau was, probably, the wildest civilized man this country has produced, adding to the shyness of the hermit and woodsman the wildness of the poet, and to the wildness of the poet the greater ferity and elusiveness of the mystic."[124] Thoreau himself had associated such strands, as in his *Journal* entry in 1853 that "the fact is I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot."[125]

In such a vein of 'deep ecology', Thoreau could hold, in *A Week,* that "men nowhere [currently], east or west, live yet a *natural* life, round which the vine clings, and which the elm willingly shadows. Man would desecrate it by his touch, and so the beauty of the world remains veiled to him. He needs not only to be spiritualized, but *naturalized,* on the soil of earth."[126] Thoreau's sensitivity to nature could take him into the pre-Christian West of Greek mythology, where "the great god Pan is not dead, ... [P]erhaps of all the gods of New England and of ancient Greece, I am most constant at his shrine."[127] Yet it could also take him East to India, where "nothing ... is more gentle than Nature."[128] This was why Christy saw how a "common denominator of all that Thoreau took from the Hindus, Chinese and Persians was a mystical love for Nature."[129] Whereas Emerson's essay "Nature" (1836) was still something of an 'external' view, Thoreau's more personal exploration in *A Week* and *Walden* was an 'internal' view, living in and by nature, in the midst of a range of supportive Asian ideas and methods.

Thus, while Moncure Conway's personal recollection of Thoreau was that "the Oriental books were his daily bread" at Concord, Thoreau's use of Oriental wisdom went beyond book knowledge.[130] Admittedly, Thoreau was often dependent on translations of Oriental texts made by European scholars. However, in *Walden* Thoreau was also ultimately skeptical: should one be "confined to books ... no matter how well selected ... compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen? Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer? Read your fate, see what is before you, and walk on into futurity"—a futurity that in *A Week* had earlier been described as "the tempting but unexplored Pacific Ocean of Futurity" pointing to Asian shores.[131] At Walden he had indeed explored and walked along such Asian paths. Thoreau's vision here overlaps with much of classical Asian spirituality vis-à-

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vis the secondary nature of books and the primary nature of experience, an awakening to the world as it really is, to see things as they truly are, to observe the still, quiet 'moment'. As such, this vision points forward to Thoreau's subsequent adoption by Western Zen groups.[132] Asian texts were themselves secondary, where in Thoreau's eyes "the Vedas and their Angas are not so ancient as serene contemplation."[133]

Within the Indian setting, though, there was plenty of emphasis on primary practical exploration over secondary scholastic explanation. Consequently, in *A Week* Thoreau considered that Goethe, despite his use of Oriental literature, had not fully understood the "philosophy of India," which was centered for Thoreau on "contemplation ... the genius of those sages."[134] Indeed, he considered that "Western philosophers have not conceived of the significance of contemplation in their [i.e., India's] senses," with reference to "the spiritual discipline to which the Brahmans subjected themselves, and the wonderful power of abstraction to which they attained through such methods."[135] Following his Walden sojourn, he could say, "I realized what the Orientals mean by contemplation."[136] This view of Asian wisdom was then ultimately an intensely, if still practical, spiritual vision. It was in the light of his Walden experiences and reflections that Thoreau recognized Walt Whitman's emerging poetry (*Leaves of Grass,* 1855) as being "wonderfully like the Orientals."[137]

This judgment of the value of Asian spirituality was one reason why he decried Western materialism. As West went East in the form of the forcible American opening up of Japan to trade by the Perry mission to Japan in 1852–1853, Thoreau criticized this commercial imperialism: "the whole enterprise of this nation, which is not an upward, but a westward one, toward Oregon, California, Japan, etc is totally devoid of interest to me.... [N]o they may go to their manifest destiny, which I trust is not mine ... what end do they propose to themselves beyond Japan?"[138] As East came West, in the form of Chinese workers along the Pacific coast, Thoreau in the last year of his life could lament, in *Life without Principle,* the American materialistic (as distinct from naturalistic) profit drives manifested during the 1850s: "the [gold] rush to California ... [,] is this the ground on which Orientals and Occidentals meet[?] ... [A] grain of gold will gild a great surface, but not so much a grain of wisdom."[139] Thoreau's own ground of encounter had been a very different one, where the inward dimension and a focus on the practical exploration of Oriental wisdom was *Ex Oriente lux* for a very Yankee sort of Oriental!

Here, though, a final further shift in Thoreau's horizon can be suggested. In America, categorizations distinguishing between perceived polarities of 'West' and 'East' can be seen in Thoreau, in other related contemporary American figures like Emerson, and in subsequent nineteenth-century American figures like Whitman and Fenollosa, and so on into the twentieth century.[140] However, there is also apparent in Thoreau's own inward journeys a process whereby such 'East' and 'West' stereotypes of action-inaction, material-spiritual, strong-passive, et cetera were perhaps eventually seen as but initial limiting (bookish?) categorizations in turn ultimately to be transcended. This also perhaps explains how Versluis saw that "by 1855 Thoreau's interest in the east was waning"; "the fiery public enthusiasm ... was not

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nearly so evident" in his later years, when his interest was more in "the wild and in the natural."[141] Such a later direction was beyond fitting into the formal categories of East and West—the moment, as it were, in the concrete, though a process in many ways akin to the focus of Zen Buddhism. Thus, on the one hand, he could record in his *Journal,* on November 30, 1855, that he had received Cholmondeley's gift from Britain of forty-four volumes of "Indian" books, while, on the other hand, earlier that month in "Walking in a Mist" he had already recorded the following:

> My thoughts are concentrated; I am all compact. The solitude is real, too, for the weather keeps other men at home. This mist is like a roof and walls over and around, and I walk with a domestic feeling. The sound of a wagon going over an unseen bridge is louder than ever, and so of other sounds. I am *compelled* to look at near objects. All things have a soothing effect; the very clouds and mists brood over me. My power of observation and contemplation is much increased. My attention does not wander. The world and my life are simplified. What now of Europe [and America] and Asia?[142]

Given such a pondering vis-à-vis the West and Asia (the 'East'), 'what now', for Thoreau in 1855 and afterwards, and indeed for others, of such categories?

Notes

For the works authored by Henry David Thoreau, the following abbreviations are used in the text and Notes:

Journal	*Journal.* 8 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981–2002. (Covering the period 1837–1854.)
Familiar Letters	*Familiar Letters of Henry David Thoreau.* Edited by F. Sanborn. Boston: Mifflin Company, 1894.
Walden	*Walden; or, Life in the Woods.* Edited with commentary by W. Harding. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995. (Based on Thoreau's stay at Walden Pond in 1845–1847 and his subsequent reflections.)
"Walking"	"Walking." *Atlantic Monthly* 9 (June 1862): 657–674.
A Week	*A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers.* Edited by C. Hovde. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. (Based on Thoreau's travels to these places in 1839 and his subsequent reflections.)

1 – A. Versluis, "Thoreau Sauntering Eastward," in *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 79–99.

2 – J. Orr, "The Transcendentalism of New England," *International Review* 13 (October 1882): 381–398. See also the following general studies: A. Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism* (New York: Columbia University

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Press, 1932); C. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought* (Westport: Greenwood, 1981), pp. 45–84, 123–140; Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions.*

3 – A. Hodder, *Thoreau's Ecstatic Witness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 174; see generally "The Artist of Kouroo," pp. 174–217, for Thoreau's Oriental pursuits.

4 – "Walking," pp. 662, 664.

5 – *A Week,* pp. 294, 142, 143.

6 – *Journal* 1 : 427, "transcribed 1842," and in *A Week,* p. 150; *Journal* 3 : 11, "after January 1849," and in *A Week,* p. 143.

7 – *Journal* 1 : 387 (also 1 : 427, 1 : 419), entry for 23 March 1842; mentioned in J. Christie, *Thoreau as World Traveler* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 128.

8 – R. L. Stevenson, "Henry David Thoreau: His Character and Opinions," *Cornhill Magazine,* June 1880; later republished in Stevenson, *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882; reprint, London: Chatto and Windus, 1912), pp. 89–117, at p. 94.

9 – *Walden,* p. 56.

10 – J. Caldwell, "Ten Volumes of Thoreau," *New Englander and Yale Review* 55 (November 1890): 404–425, at pp. 408–409. Unfortunately he also comes out with clouding phrases like "it is not important to determine whether Thoreau believed in Nirvana or not" (p. 409).

11 – R. Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America,* 3rd ed. (Boston: Shambala, 1992), chap. 4, "The Restless Pioneers," pp. 61–64 (on Thoreau).

12 – G. Cooke, "The Dial: An Historical and Biographical Introduction, with a List of the Contributors," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 19 (1885): 225–265, and repeated by him as "probably" Thoreau, in *An Historical and Biographical Introduction to Accompany the Dial,* 2 vols. (Cleveland: Rowfant Club, 1902), 1 : 134; R. Mueller, "A significant Buddhist Translation by Thoreau," *Thoreau Society Bulletin* (Winter 1977): 1–2; W. Harding and M. Meyer, *The New Thoreau Handbook* (New York: New York University Press, 1980), p. 36; Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions,* pp. 81, 94, 190, 226–227; S. Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture* (London: Aquarian, 1994), pp. 242–243; J. Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), p. 341. For Internet examples, see "Henry David Thoreau's (Brief) Translation of the Lotus Sutra," www.buddhistinformation.com/henry_david_thoreau.htm, and "Thoreau's Translation of the Lotus Sutra," www.buddhajones.com/Commentary/ThoreauLotusSutra.html.

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13 – G. Cooke, "Corrections," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 19 (1885): 322–323; W. Piez, "Anonymous Was a Women—Again," *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* 3 (1993): 10–11. Cooke's "correction" was already noticed and accepted by K. van Anglen, *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau: Translations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 159 n. 1.

14 – T. Tweed, *The American Encounter With Buddhism, 1844–1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. xvii.

15 – *A Week,* pp. 67–68; cited as evidence in the 1890s by Caldwell in "Ten Volumes of Thoreau," p. 408, and in the 1990s by Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake,* p. 63.

16 – J. Weiss, in *The Christian Examiner,* July 1865; cited in Hodder, *Thoreau's Ecstatic Witness,* p. 16.

17 – *Journal* 3 : 62, "After April 26, 1850."

18 – *Walden,* chap. 1, p. 56, from Huc's *Recollection of a Journey Through Tartary, Thibet and China* (1852), as discussed in Christie, *Thoreau as World Traveler,* pp. 143–144.

19 – To Emerson, 14 September 1843, in *Familiar Letters,* p. 128.

20 – T. Tweed, "Opening the Tomb of the Buddha: Buddhism and the Early Years of the American Oriental Society," *Newsletter of the American Oriental Society* 21 (May 1996); reproduced in http://www.umich.edu/~aos/news21.htm#Newsletter.

21 – Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions,* p. 90.

22 – Cholmondeley to Thoreau, 3 October 1855, in F. Sanborn, "Thoreau and His English Friend Thomas Cholmondeley," *Atlantic Monthly* 72, December 1893, pp. 741–756, at p. 745.

23 – J. Weiss (1862), as cited in S. Jones, *Pertaining to Thoreau* (Detroit: E. Hill, 1901), pp. 133–134.

24 – For a profile of Weiss, see Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions,* pp. 248–254.

25 – For a similar initial entanglement between Hinduism and Buddhism, see Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Emerson, in a letter to Elizabeth Hoar on 17 July 1845, misidentified the Hindu *Bhagavad-Gītā* as a Buddhist text.

26 – O. Brownson, "New Views of Christianity, Society, and the Church" (1836), extracted in P. Miller, ed., *The Transcendentalists: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 115–123, at p. 120; for a profile of Brownson, see Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religion,* pp. 248–254.

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27 – For example, S. Sarma, "A Short Study of the Oriental Influence upon Henry David Thoreau with Special Reference to His Walden," *Jahrbuch fur Amerikastudien* 1 (1956): 76–92; W. Stein, "The Hindu Matrix of Walden," *Comparative Literature* 22 (1970): 303–318; D. Hoch, "Thoreau's Use of the Hindoos," *Thoreau Society Bulletin* 114 (1971): 1–2; E. Raghavan and B. Wood, "Thoreau's Hindu Quotations in 'A Week,'" *American Literature* 51 (1979): 94–98; R. Dhawan, *Henry D. Thoreau: A Study in Indian Influence* (Delhi: DK Publishers, 1985); A. Hodder, "'Ex Oriente Lux': Thoreau's Ecstasies and the Hindu Texts," *Harvard Theological Review* 86 (1993): 403–438; Hodder, *Thoreau's Ecstatic Witness,* pp. 181–191, 199–217. See also Stein, "A Bibliography of Hindu and Buddhist Literature Available to Thoreau through 1854," *Emerson Society Quarterly* 47 (2) (1967): 52–56.

28 – *Walden,* p. 96.

29 – "Walking," p. 668.

30 – Thoreau, "Life without Principle," *Atlantic Monthly* 12 (September 1863): 484–495, at p. 490; first delivered in 1854, with final revisions just before his death in 1861.

31 – *A Week,* pp. 149–150.

32 – *A Week,* pp. 150–151.

33 – *A Week,* p. 135.

34 – *A Week,* p. 148, and in *Journal* 1 : 328, 428.

35 – *A Week,* p. 147; to B. Wiley, 12 December 1856, in *Familiar Letters,* p. 351.

36 – For example, E. Sharpe, *The Universal Gita: Western Images of the Bhagavadgita* (London: Duckworth, 1985), pp. 26–31 (for Thoreau), pp. 22–26 (for Emerson).

37 – *Journal* 2 : 253–2 : 258, entry for June–July 1846; *A Week,* p. 137 (for quote), and pp. 138–140 (for extracts including verses on the meditating yogi and on religious pluralism).

38 – *Walden,* pp. 289–290; from *Journal* 2 : 371, "Winter 1846–1847."

39 – Raghavan and Wood, "Thoreau's Hindu Quotations in 'A Week,'" p. 98. Also Stein, "Thoreau's Walden and the Bhagvad Gita," *Topic* 6 (1963): 38–55, and B. Miller, "Why Did Henry David Thoreau Take the *Bhagavad-Gita* to Walden Pond?" *Parabola* 12 (1) (1986): 58–63.

40 – U. Patri, "Thoreau as a Yankee Yogi," in *Hindu Scriptures and American Transcendentalists* (Delhi: Intellectual Publishing House, 1987), pp. 98–135.

41 – "I have heard of Bramins sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun; or hanging suspended . . . or looking at the heavens over their shoulders . . . or dwelling, chained for life, at the foot of a tree . . . or standing on one leg on the tops of pillars" (*Walden,* p. 2).

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42 – F. MacShane, "Walden and Yoga," *New England Quarterly* 37 (1964): 322–342; Stein, "The Yoga of Walden," *Literature East and West* 13 (1969): 1–26; Stein, "The Yoga of 'Reading' [chap. 3] in Walden," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 13 (1971): 481–495; Stein, "The Yoga of 'Sounds' [chap. 4] in Walden," *Literature East and West* 16 (1972): 111–135; D. Hoch, "Walden: Yoga and Creation," in R. DeMott and S. Marovitz, eds., *Artful Thunder* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1975), pp. 85–102.

43 – Caldwell, "Ten volumes of Thoreau," p. 409.

44 – *Journal* 3:21, "After September 11, 1849"; 3:10, "After January 1849"; 3:61, "After April 26, 1850"; 3:49, "After 1 April 1850."

45 – To Blake, 20 November 1849, in *Familiar Letters,* pp. 210–211.

46 – Cited in Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism,* p. 202; Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake,* p. 64.

47 – Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions,* p. 69.

48 – H. Colebrooke, "On the Vedas, or Sacred Writings of the Hindus," *Asiatic Researches* 8 (1798): 369–476.

49 – *Walden,* p. 86, "The Vedas say 'All intelligence awake with the morning,'" *A Week,* p. 382; quoting "As a dancer, having exhibited herself to the spectator, desists from the dance, so does Nature desist, having manifested herself to soul," taken from *The Sānkhya-kārikā*, trans. H. Colebrooke and H. Wilson (1837).

50 – "Theology of Hindoos as Taught by Ram Mohun Roy," *North American Review* 6 (March 1818): 386–393, including some generalized lines from the *Īsha* and *Kena Upanishads.*

51 – "'[A] command over our passions, and over the external senses of the body, and good acts, are declared by the Ved to be indispensable in the mind's approximation to God.' Yet the spirit can for the time pervade and control very member and function of the body, and transmute what in form is the grossest sensuality into purity and devotion" (*Walden,* p. 214).

52 – Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions,* p. 212.

53 – *A Week,* p. 242.

54 – *Journal* 2:94, "1842–1844."

55 – *A Week,* pp. 239, 294.

56 – *Walden,* pp. 284–289.

57 – S. Bean, *Yankee India: American Commercial and Cultural Encounters with India in the Age of Sail, 1784–1860* (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2001), including chap. 14, "Gruff Goods, Transcendentalists and the Bhagavad Gita," pp. 211–224.

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58 – *Walden,* p. 316.

59 – *Walden,* p. 96, and in *Journal* 3 : 21, "After September 11, 1849."

60 – *A Week,* p. 126, and in *Journal* 1 : 386, entry for 23 March 1842.

61 – Patri, *Hindu Scriptures and American Transcendentalism,* p. 3, with regard to how he saw Christy as having "digressed into Persian poetry, Sufism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism" vis-à-vis both Emerson and Thoreau.

62 – *A Week,* p. 386; *Journal* 1 : 189, entry for 14 October 1840.

63 – *A Week,* p. 312; earlier drafted for "Aulus Persius Flaccus," essay in *The Dial,* July 1840.

64 – *Walden,* pp. 104–105.

65 – *A Week,* p. 143; "Walking," p. 671.

66 – *Walden,* p. 100; *Journal* 1 : 52, entry for 22 August 1838.

67 – E. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995). *Exotica* may be reflected in Thoreau's willow trees, with their "Oriental character, reminding us of trim Persian gardens, of Haroun Alraschid, and the artificial lakes of the East" (*A Week,* p. 55). *Decadence* is perhaps reflected in Thoreau's denunciation of "a modern drawing-room, with its divans, and ottomans, and . . . a hundred other oriental things, which we are taking west with us, invented for the ladies of the harem" (*Walden,* p. 34).

68 – A clue to this institutional distrust can be found in an early "Literary Notebook," where Thoreau records (from Volney's travelogue) Bedouin comments criticizing the external "5 pillars" rituals of Islam—for example, "what necessity is there for us to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, if God be present here," cited and discussed in Christie, *Thoreau as World Traveler,* pp. 226–227; *Journal,* entry for 31 January 1852 (on veiling); *Journal,* entry for 12 February 1851 (on Mecca pilgrimages as being rather pretentious).

69 – *A Week,* p. 127, referring to Wolff's *Narrative of a Mission to Bokhara* (1845), a travel source discussed in Christie, *Thoreau as World Traveler,* pp. 132–135. Elsewhere, in *A Week,* p. 305, Thoreau asked "hast thou not heard of a Sufi, who was hammering some nails into the sole of his sandal; an officer of cavalry took him by the sleeve, saying, Come along and shoe my horse."

70 – *A Week,* p. 328.

71 – *A Week,* p. 142.

72 – J. Yohannan, "The Influence of Persian Poetry upon Emerson's Work," *American Literature* 14 (1943): 25–41.

73 – General profile in *Intoxication, Earthly and Heavenly: Seven Studies on the Poet Hafiz of Shiraz,* ed. M. Glunz and J. Burgel (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1991).

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74 – *A Week,* p. 388.

75 – General profile in J. Yohannan, *The Poet Sa'di* (Washington: University Press of America, 1987). Also see Emerson's poem "Saadi" in *The Dial,* October 1842; "Saadi," *Atlantic Monthly,* July 1864; and his preface to Gladwin's 1865 translation of Saadi, *The Gulistan or Rose Garden.*

76 – *A Week,* p. 388.

77 – *A Week,* p. 304.

78 – J. Steadman, "The motif of the Wise Old Man in Walden," *Modern Language Notes* 75 (1960): 201–204, at p. 202 n. 3.

79 – *Walden,* pp. 75–76.

80 – J. Burroughs, "Henry David Thoreau," *The Century* 24 (July 1882): 368–380, at p. 379.

81 – *Journal* 5 : 289–290, entry for 8 August 1852.

82 – W. Whitman, "A Persian Lesson," *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose,* ed. J. Kaplan (New York: the Library of America, 1982), pp. 650–651. Also, M. Farzan, "Whitman and Sufism: Towards 'A Persian Lesson,'" *American Literature* 47 (1976): 572–582, for technical details.

83 – *Walden,* p. 12.

84 – Ibid.

85 – Christy's *The Orient in American Transcendentalism* had a brief appendix (pp. 317–322) on Confucian texts, amidst extended focus on Thoreau's India settings. A similar pattern was present in Versluis' 1993 stressing and elaborating of what he perceived as Hindu and Buddhist elements in Thoreau while merely noting Confucian elements.

86 – *Walden,* p. 313.

87 – *Walden,* p. 17.

88 – *Walden,* p. 34.

89 – Thoreau, "Sayings of Confucius," *The Dial* 3 (April 1843): 493–494, and "Chinese Four Books," *The Dial* 4 (October 1843): 205–210. Also Mueller, "Thoreau's Selections from Chinese Four Books for the Dial," *Thoreau Journal Quarterly* 4 (1972): 1–8. L. Cady, "Thoreau's Quotations from the Confucian Books in Walden," *American Literature* 33 (1961): 20–32, sees an extra individualistic thrust given to them by Thoreau. Also H. Tan, "Confucius at Walden Pond: Thoreau's Unpublished Confucian Translation," *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1993): 275–303.

90 – *Walden,* pp. 219–220; from *Journal* 2 : 380, "1847–1848"—though, frustratingly, Thoreau did not give the three aide-memoire sentences used by him from Confucius!

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91 – *Walden,* p. 9.

92 – To Wiley, 12 December 1856, in *Familiar Letters,* p. 350.

93 – For example, *Week,* pp. 271, 281–282, citing Confucius on "friendship"; *Walden,* p. 131, "Virtue does not remain as an abandoned orphan; it must of necessity have neighbors" (from *Analect*s 4.25); *Walden,* pp. 211–212, for Confucian food aesthetics (from *The Great Learning* 7).

94 – Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience* (1849); reprinted in *Essays and Other Writings of Henry Thoreau,* ed. W. Dircks (London: Walter Scott, 1895), pp. 86–106, 106.

95 – Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience,* p. 99.

96 – Confucius, *Analects of Confucius,* trans. A. Waley (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938), 8.13, p. 135; Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience,* p. 99.

97 – *Walden,* p. 168.

98 – *Walden,* p. 85; from Confucius, *The Great Learning,* chap. 1, "Commentary of the Philosopher Tsang."

99 – *Walden,* p. 319.

100 – Thoreau, "Chinese Four Books," in *The Dial,* October 1843: "the most valuable contribution we have yet seen from the Chinese literature . . . the Memoirs of Mencius in two books" (p. 205).

101 – *A Week,* p. 264.

102 – *Walden,* p. 214; probably taken from M. Pauthier, *Confucius et Mencius*. Traduit du Chinois' (1841) of which Thoreau had a copy.

103 – *Walden,* p. 214; probably taken from M. Pauthier, *Confucius et Mencius*.

104 – *Walden,* pp. 306–307.

105 – Thoreau, "Natural History of Massachusetts," *The Dial* 3 (July 1842); reprinted in C. Bode ed., *The Portable Thoreau* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), pp. 31–56, at p. 51.

106 – *Walden,* p. 128; from *Journal* 2 : 159, entry for 14 July 1845.

107 – H. Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), pp. 126–132; *Walden,* chap. 12, for the "Hermit" (Thoreau) disturbed by the "Poet" (Channing).

108 – Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake,* p. 62.

109 – Thoreau, "Chinese Four Books," extracts 14–21—"The Taou," for example: "sincerity is the taou or way of heaven. To aim at it is the way of man"; "*Taou* is not far removed from man. If men suppose that it lies in something remote, then what they think of is not *Taou*"; "Menicius said, to be benevolent is man. When man and benevolence are united they are called *Taou.*"

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110 – Cady, "Thoreau's Quotations from the Confucian Books in Walden," p. 32. See comparisons in D. Chen, "Thoreau and Taoism," in C. Narasimhaiah, ed., *Asian Responses to American Literature* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972), pp. 400–415; K. Kim, "On Chuang Tzu and Thoreau," *Literature East and West* 17 (1973): 275–281; J. Emerson, "Thoreau's Construction of Taoism," *Thoreau Journal Quarterly* 12 (April 1980): 5–14; A. Cheng, "A Comparative Study of Thoreau's and Taoist Concepts of Nature," in R. Schneider, ed., *Thoreau's Sense of Place* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), pp. 207–220.

111 – *Walden,* p. 317.

112 – *Walden,* pp. 108–109.

113 – *Walden,* p. 127.

114 – Stevenson, "Henry David Thoreau: His Character and Opinions," p. 94.

115 – Brownson, "New Views of Christianity, Society, and the Church," pp. 115–116; Thoreau, *A Week,* p. 141.

116 – *Journal* 2 : 252, entry for 20 June 1846.

117 – Ibid.

118 – *A Week,* pp. 136–137.

119 – "Walking," p. 664.

120 – "Walking," p. 671.

121 – G. Hendrick, "The Influence of Thoreau's 'Civil Disobedience' on Gandhi's *'Satyagraha',*" *New England Quarterly* 24 (1956): 462–471.

122 – Emerson, "Thoreau," *Atlantic Monthly* 10 (July 1862): 239–249, at p. 245.

123 – Stevenson, "Henry David Thoreau: His Character and Opinions," p. 96.

124 – Burroughs, "Henry David Thoreau," p. 371.

125 – *Journal* 5 : 469, entry for 5 March 1853.

126 – *A Week,* p. 379; first line from *Journal* 1 : 459, entry for ? August 1843.

127 – *A Week,* p. 65.

128 – *A Week,* pp. 382–383; from Colebrooke and Wilson, *The Sānkhya-kārikā.*

129 – Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism,* p. 199.

130 – M. Conway, *Autobiography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), pp. 142–143. See Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions,* pp. 198–201, 281–293, for a profile of Conway, who had read Oriental literature with Emerson and Thoreau at Concord in 1853.

131 – *Walden,* p. 108; "Walking," p. 662; *A Week,* p. 294.

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132 – For example, James Ford's "Henry Thoreau Zen Sangha," at http://www.fusn .org/zen.html.

133 – *A Week,* p. 153; from *Journal* 1 : 428, "transcribed 1842."

134 – *A Week,* p. 143.

135 – *A Week,* pp. 137, 138.

136 – *Walden,* p. 109.

137 – To Blake, 7 December 1856, in *Familiar Letters,* p. 347.

138 – To Blake, 27 February 1853, in *Familiar Letters,* pp. 252–253.

139 – Thoreau, "Life without Principle," pp. 487–488; early version in *Journal* 4 : 317–318, entry for 1 February 1852.

140 – J. Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790–1890* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); inc. Emerson, "Indic Orientalism," pp. 142–174; Whitman, pp. 175–198, with Thoreau mentioned but in passing (by Emerson on p. 142 and by Whitman on p. 175).

141 – Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions,* pp. 95, 98.

142 – Thoreau, *Journal,* entry for 7 November 1855; in *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau,* 14 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906; reprinted 1949), 8 : 14.

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