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Building the Essential Self: an Architectural Close Reading of Walden

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Abstract

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Building the Essential Self: An Architectural Close Reading of *Walden*
Thesis directed by Professor Martin Bickman

The definition of Thoreau's conception of nature and its application to architecture maintain one aspect of realizing and defining what I refer to as the “essential self.” Several paradoxes are born in this application of Thoreau's conception of nature to architecture, each of which maintains the idea of unity existing among distinction.

*Walden* is a work of literary architecture structured to convey Thoreau's intent, which is for all people to discover and live according to their essential self. This idea is evidenced through a close reading of the book in its entirety and in the design and construction of Thoreau's pond-side house.

The integration of the metaphorical Aeolian harp shows how the relationship between flux and rigidity is a design which mirrors the form and function of the Aeolian harp and how it is employed to allow Thoreau's more rigid, mathematical, and scientific approaches to uphold the more free approaches to his poetics and philosophy.

In consideration of all of the above, the content and structure of *Walden* determine one another.
Acknowledgements

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CONTENTS

Introduction: Thoreau’s Conception of Nature and its Application to Architecture………………………………………………………………………………1

Chapter

I. Flux and Rigidity: Walden as Literary Architecture…………………………… …12

II. “The wind that blows Is all that any body knows”: Walden and the Aeolian Harp……………………………………………………………………………31

Conclusion: Thoreau’s Intersection of Nature, Literature, Architecture, & the Aeolian Harp……………………………………………………………………47

Bibliography……………………………………………………………………………52
FIGURES

Figure

INTRODUCTION

Thoreau’s Conception of Nature and its Application to Architecture

So I thought it might be interesting, for the length of a book, to consider the ordinary things in life, to notice them for once and treat them as if they were important, too. -Bill Bryson

At the most basic level architecture is building design, an artistic planning or rendering which constitutes some variety of shelter or enclosure. While this perception is not incorrect, it fails to acknowledge the primary facet of architecture: the interaction between us and the physical structure surrounding us, and the ways in which that physical structure is designed to interact with us. While architecture may seem a stiff, un-breathing form of art, then, it should be very much alive. This quality of architecture exists when we immerse ourselves within the structure, becoming aware of the ways that we interact with it and acknowledging how it was designed to interact with us.

Such is the perception of architecture communicated by Henry David Thoreau in his transcendental memoir, *Walden*. Thoreau recognizes and maintains this relationship by applying his conception of nature to the art of architecture. Scholarly recognition of this relationship and its application is not unique. What I seek to do here, then, is re-frame this relationship between nature and architecture with the argument that Thoreau’s conception of nature is an individual entity which may be applied with equal meaning to architecture. As an ontological relation, re-framing the relationship between nature and architecture in this way takes Thoreau’s spiritual view of nature and pares it down into a smaller, single unit which paradoxically maintains unity among distinction, a paradox rooted in the idea of the essential self.

Before this paradox can be approached, it is necessary to establish what the essential self is and to define Thoreau’s conception of nature. In arguing for a paradox rooted in the essential
self, I am arguing for a paradox which holds at its center the ideas of selfhood, personal experience, and the unconscious self. This idea of the essential self is seen directly in Thoreau’s experiment at Walden Pond. For Thoreau, the two years spent living at Walden were about escaping most men who, "through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them" (Thoreau 6) and, in their place, develop “a purely nonhuman nature [as] the site of spiritual renewal, the source of the necessary hard granitic core of truth and eternal, higher law" (Walls 23).

Thoreau’s peers are so lost in their “ignorance and mistake” that he cannot, in this sentence, even address what the “finer fruits” are; to get to these Thoreau must physically and rhetorically remove himself from their “facetious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life” so that he can discover the finer things for himself. These years at the pond, then, were about facing life as "an experiment to a great extent untried by [Thoreau]" so that he could live, experiment, and try for himself (Thoreau 9).

It is this idea which constitutes the meaning of the essential self; the essential self is "[exploring] your own higher latitudes... [and] new continents and worlds within you" (Thoreau 323) according to "the music which [you hear]" so as to live and experiment in your life and "endeavor to be what [you were] made" (Thoreau 326). As an idea involved in the active pursuit of “exploring,” the essential self is never any one “thing.” On the contrary, discovering the essential self is a constant, ever evolving process towards actively living. In Walden, then, Thoreau is not communicating a manifesto of how we are to live, but providing an example and an awakening of how to discover the “continents and worlds within [us]” so that we, like him,
can live with accordance to our individual essential self, a process which begins with the very reading of the book.

The idea of “higher latitudes” may be likened to the “spiritual,” by which I mean living, speaking, making, and doing according to our inner selves rather than dare “not say 'I think,' 'I am,' but [quote] some saint or sage” (Emerson 270); the importance and content of the spiritual relies upon ourselves rather than the words, actions, thinking, and doing of others. When this spirituality is achieved, we are able to ask ourselves questions about who we are and “seek to learn the world” so that we may come closer to “the magical origins of creation” (Hogan 19).

Thoreau's conception of nature, like the essential self and its associations with a higher world of “higher latitudes” of consciousness, is likewise something of a spiritual matter. In nature, Thoreau says, one may “learn what are the gross necessaries of life and what methods have been taken to obtain them” (11). Nature, then, is a life lived according to necessity. To be in, of, and a part of nature is “to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life...to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms” (Thoreau, 90-91).

“Lowest terms” here does not mean to live a low life or to live life at bottom, but to live life according to what is necessary for continued survival. Reaching a point of the “lowest terms” thus not only accomplishes what is necessary, but maintains that necessity at the level of simplicity.

This necessity and simplicity constitute one half of Thoreau’s conception of nature. The second half consists of alertness and awareness, states of being which Thoreau associates with “the seer.” Building off of the idea of necessity, Thoreau says that “With a little more deliberation in the choice of their pursuits, all men perhaps become essentially students and
observers” (99). Being active in our thinking and doing, and being a student, though, is not enough, for:

No method nor discipline can supersede the necessity of being forever on the alert.
What is a course of history, or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, 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 into futurity. (Thoreau 111)

Here a distinction is made wherein Thoreau’s concern is the difference between merely learning and actively doing something with that knowledge. “[Walking] into futurity” may well start with being a reader and student, however, to stop there means that those pursuits are not put into practice. It is only once this has been done that we can move away from observing and towards doing, an action which allows for an awareness of this knowledge as we physically “see what is before [us].” For this reason, it is reading that comes first in determining our fate, to be followed by the act of seeing and, ultimately, doing (the “walk into futurity”).

Thoreau addresses this earlier on with his statement that “[he] kept Homer’s Iliad on [his] table through the summer, though [he] looked as his page only now and then,” the reason being the “Incessant labor with [his] house… [which] made more study impossible” (99-100). While he does not say it directly, Thoreau’s intention of providing this example is to convey the idea that, as good and important as it may be to read such “books which circulate around the world,” it is of equal concern to either put that scholarship aside or put it to use and actively live and learn by doing (Thoreau 99).

It is for this reason that Thoreau felt “ashamed of [himself]” after having “read one or two shallow books of travel in the intervals of [his] work,” for what is the value in reading about
other places when he can be “[asking] where it was then that [he] lived”? (Thoreau 100). Like Emerson and his “American scholar,” then, Thoreau is one with the pragmatic sensibility that “We are constantly thinking about and articulating what we have lived through, and, conversely, we can become aware of our subliminal, subconscious mental workings when we see them resulting in physical actions” (Bickman 14).

With the state of alert and the being of “the seer” thus established, Thoreau’s conception of nature may be summarized as follows: nature is a spiritual idea tied to life, the quest to live life according to what is necessary for the essential self, the adherence to simplicity which the aforementioned necessity implies, and, above all, an awareness of those necessities and the simplicity by which they are maintained.

It is easy to see from this definition how architecture and Thoreau’s conception of nature may be brought into communication. Throughout the book—though predominately in "Economy"—Thoreau conveys an idea of architecture which mirrors those aspects of nature as it has been defined above. Among those qualities of architectural design which Thoreau values, then, are openness “without any obstruction between us and the celestial bodies” (Thoreau 28); “a taste for the beautiful...cultivated out of doors” (Thoreau 38); an inspiration or source which has “grown from within outward, out of the necessities and character of the indweller” (Thoreau 47); and “[curtains] which nature has provided,” better than any “single item [added] to the details of housekeeping” (Thoreau 67). While this short list is far from exhaustive, it does stress the importance Thoreau locates (1) within the ideas of natural beauty or nature-inspired beauty, (2) the externalization of inward being and necessity, and (3) the desire for simplicity and lack of ornamentation.
Many scholars have acknowledged these aspects in Thoreau’s discussions of architecture and have cited them in relationship to those discussions which Thoreau (more significantly) provides concerning nature. In arguments put forth by some of these scholars, this relationship between nature and the structure is indicative of historical and social trends. Other scholars, however, argue against these New Historicist interpretations and posit instead that Thoreau’s memoir is a parody. As much as these two analyses differ, the larger body of scholarship concerning Walden is overwhelmingly similar in the perception that Thoreau’s spiritual idea of nature infuses all aspects of life and reality.

As much as Thoreau may find it, then, that it would be “well perhaps if we were to spend more of our days and nights without any obstruction between us and celestial bodies” to achieve this exchange, it remains to be argued that yet another relationship exists between nature and the edifice: the application of nature onto architecture (Thoreau 28). To speak in architectural terms, this relationship begins from the foundation, the foundation of the self. Just as it is in nature, this foundation of the self is based on necessity. It is not, however, just the basic necessities—a roof for protection from rain, walls and insulation for protection from cold, &etc. It is a very personal necessity which stems from within, a foundation or “architectural beauty...[which] has gradually grown from within outward, out of the necessities of the indweller, who is the only builder,—out of some unconscious truthfulness, and nobleness, without ever a thought for the appearance” (Thoreau 47 emphasis added). This foundation, then, is the essential self which constitutes the foundation of our being.

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1 See W. Barksdale Maynard’s “Thoreau’s House at Walden”
2 See Jean Carvile Masteller & Richard N. Masteller’s “Rural Architecture in Andrew Jackson Downing and Henry David Thoreau: Pattern Book Parody in Walden”
Both aspects of Thoreau’s conception of nature—necessity and awareness—are present in this foundation. We cannot build a structure until we know what we need from that structure, and discovering what those needs are relies upon recognition of the self. In this way, it is the “Inner life [which] determines the form of [the] exterior shell… [with] necessity guiding the relationship” (Brown 8). As Emerson writes in “The Poet, “the shallowness of the doctrine of beauty…[is] that men seem to have lost the perception of the instant dependence of form upon soul” (447). Just as it is with nature, then, that function is dependent upon necessity, so it is with architecture that “form follows function.” And so it is with us, too, that we “should look within, [as] Thoreau cautioned, before turning to the outside world, for a thorough inquiry into the landscape of inner desire would help [us] attune [our] dreams to the realities of [our] lives” (D’Amore 73).

Thoreau captures this well in his own words when he says, "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them" (324). The imaginative “castles in the air” are a very recognition of who we are and what our needs are, and, as counterintuitive as it may seem, it is the exploration of our inner selves which is required before a turn to the outside is manifested by “the foundations [being put] under them.”

It should be noted that, here, such awareness is of a paradoxical nature. If a naturally beautiful work of architecture is to be born of an “unconscious truthfulness” it would appear that a state of alert was impossible. It is by attaining such a state of alert, however, that we become aware of what is necessary and honest to the foundation of ourselves. In this paradox "He can spare nothing; he can dispose of every thing," meaning that we cannot forfeit any portion of our
essential selves, yet we must simultaneously be able to recognize what that essential self is not (Emerson 634).

Once nature has been applied to the individual in this manner, it can then be applied to the structure as “a sort of crystallization around [us]... [reacting] on the builder” as we react upon it (Thoreau 85). In terms of the structure of the Walden house, the conceptual application of nature is rather straightforward. If “a taste for the beautiful is most cultivated out of doors, where there is no house and no housekeeper,” then it should not be surprising that Thoreau’s house should cultivate the very simplicity and necessity of the outdoors (Thoreau 38). That is to say that, in opposition to “Most men [who] appear never to have considered what a house is, and are actually though needlessly poor all their lives because they think that they must have such a one as their neighbors have,” Thoreau’s house is built out of the richness of necessity which nature has taught him (Thoreau 35). This means that rather than having one room for one specific task and another room for another, “All the attractions of a house were in one room; it was kitchen, chamber, parlor, and keeping-room; and whatever satisfaction parent or child, master or servant, derive from living in a house, [he] enjoyed it all” (Thoreau 242-243).

At this point we find yet another paradox between this attention given to the structure and the idea that truly beautiful architecture is built “without ever a thought for the appearance” (Thoreau 47). As was the case with that earlier instance, however—that involving the disparity between architecture coming from the unconscious while simultaneously requiring alertness—so it is in this instance that the attention to detailed aspects of the house reflect upon the necessity of both the house and the indweller, rendering the concern for appearance to be one based upon the essential self. Like American geographer D.W. Meinig, Thoreau contends that “seeing landscape
as aesthetic [means] the ‘subordination of any interest in the identity and function of specific features to a preoccupation with their artistic qualities’” (McGrath 153).

The attention which Thoreau gives to his house, on the contrary, comes out of the application of his conception of nature; Thoreau “[thinks] of natural beauty in terms of ornament, either as if nature is ornamented, or as if its forms were suited for adaptation to man-made ornament” (Davis 561). That attention or suitability, then, is based primarily off of necessity and simplicity, and it is in applying these factors to the details of the house that its appearance is paradoxically not a matter of concern.

This application of nature and its resultant appearance of beauty exist not only in the structure itself, but also within its confines. In *Walden*, this internalization of Thoreau’s conception of nature is seen most prominently during the winter season, and most notably in the form of fire. Forced to spend more time within doors, Thoreau keenly remarks:

> Should not every apartment in which man dwells be lofty enough to create some obscurity over-head, where flickering shadows may play at evening about the rafters? These forms are more agreeable to the fancy and imagination than fresco paintings or other the most expensive furniture. (242)

Here again we see not only a preference for that which is of nature, but for that which is not supplied by way of material gain. If one is to adhere to Thoreau’s conception of nature, then bringing that nature into a structure means maintaining a use and appreciation for that which is simple and economic over that which is complex and expensive; like the social thinker and economist Thorstein Veblen, Thoreau is of the mind that “The requirements of beauty...are for the most part best satisfied by inexpensive forms that straightforwardly suggest their purpose and operation” (Bush 284).
By way of fire Thoreau not only brings these natural forms into his home, then, but makes them a part of his home, and, by way of the fact that architecture reflects upon him as he reflects upon it, makes that fire a part of his being; as Thoreau says, “My house was not empty though I was gone. It was as if I had left a cheerful housekeeper behind. It was I and fire that lived there” (253).

With this very literal transference of nature both onto and into the home, Thoreau’s conception of nature and its relationship to architecture has come full circle. Re-framed in this manner, the relationship between nature and architecture not only becomes further simplified—for, “In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex”—but so too are the essential self and a certain paradox realized (Thoreau 324). This final paradox belongs not to one specific aspect, but to the argument as a whole. What that paradox is, then, is the idea that unity exists within or among distinction; it is "Oneness and otherness. It is impossible to speak, or to think, without embracing both" (Emerson 637).

In favoring a view which recognizes nature and architecture as two individual units which communicate with one another, I have not created an argument which points towards distinction or separation. On the contrary, when recognized in this manner, the relationship between nature and architecture is seen to harbor the essential self, and it is this realization which makes for unity among distinction. "Urged by an opposite necessity, the mind returns from the one, to that which is not one, but other or many; from cause to effect; and affirms the necessary existence of variety, the self-existence of both, as each is involved in the other" (Emerson 638). The one and the other here, then, are unity and distinction, each a “necessary existence” which functions with and “is involved in the other” in the adherence to the essential self.
The two more specific paradoxes addressed in this introduction also embody this idea of self-living and experimenting as equating to the meaning of the essential self. The first deals with the idea of beautiful architecture being born of unconsciousness while simultaneously calling for a state of alert or awareness. In the second, a paradox is revealed which concerns itself with the need to pay attention to the physicality of architecture while simultaneously dismissing any architecture built with a singular focus on appearance.

What breaks down the paradox in each instance is the essential self. Thoreau calls for an architecture which comes from the unconscious so that the architecture remains true to the needs of its indweller, and it is only by being aware of our needs that we can approach such an unconscious realization. Similarly, a truly beautiful work of architecture is beautiful because it was built out of the awareness of our necessity, and it is only by paying attention to the details which meet those necessities that a house which reflects more than aesthetic may be built.

Here, in the penultimate paradox, the essential self plays the same role as in each of these former instances. This argument does not create a distinction between nature and architecture, but locates within each a reliance on the essential self. If we are to adhere to Thoreau’s conception of nature, we must respond truthfully to what we require and desire. Once this truth of the essential self is recognized—first as a requirement for the self, second as a conception of nature—it may be applied with equal force to the realm of architecture.

In responding to the foundation of self, the concept of nature may be applied to architecture in such a way that—because of its awareness—unity is born out of distinction. For nature and architecture to succeed, then, and for unity to succeed among distinction, an awareness to and of the self must be at the heart of the matter; as Thoreau says, “No face which we can give to a matter will stead us so well at last as the truth. This alone wears well” (327).
CHAPTER I

Flux and Rigidity: *Walden* as Literary Architecture

I look for what needs to be done. After all, that’s how the universe designs itself.
–R. Buckminster Fuller, interview

With the acknowledgement of architecture as an art form which reacts upon us as we react upon it comes the understanding that architecture is made with intent and purpose; architecture is not only structures but is *structured*. As a medium created with equal stress on intent and purpose, literature is likewise an artistic structure. Beyond Aristotle's divisions of plot and the Freytag pyramid, literature is founded upon literary conventions which mirror architecture not only in terms of intent and purpose, but in terms of the creation of an overall structure. Following this argument, "structure" will be referred to with the definition of an artistic creation based on specific foundations (literary or otherwise) which are employed with the intent of developing a fixed shape and meaning.

In applying this idea of structure to Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, the book becomes a literary architectural structure which communicates Thoreau's desire for people to live according to their essential selves. This perspective of the book as literary architecture provides “a demonstration of how the writing embodies the vision of the book and vice versa” (Bickman 61) and adheres to Thoreau’s contention that “Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written” (101). The literary structure of *Walden*, then, functions as an "[answer to] his townsmen's questions... [and points] out how wrong were their assumptions about living and, as a result, how poor their lives were" (Shanley 74).

Thoreau’s desire in addressing how “wrong” his townsmen are is not to show them what is “correct,” but to provide an example of how to live with an adherence to their genuine, essential selves. This is expressed directly through Thoreau’s self-consciousness not only as a
writer, but as the author of this book. His intent is to “[speak] to the intellect and heart of mankind, to all in any age who can understand him” (Thoreau 102 emphasis retained). Part of why his townsmen require this “[exertion of] influence on mankind” (Thoreau 103) is because they have chosen to “vegetate and dissipate their faculties in what is called easy reading” (Thoreau 104). For Thoreau, this “easy reading” is a disengaged, shallow reading which provides a service, such as “[ciphering] in order to keep accounts,” or reading which sees the surface of words rather than the work’s true meaning, such as seeing the stars “astrologically, not astronomically” (Thoreau 104).

Walden, then, was written and designed with the intent of not only jostling his townsmen, but jostling us, his readers, out of a life in which we have “learned to read to serve a paltry convenience” (Thoreau 104); in purpose, intent, construction, and design, this book is meant to provide a provocation in which we are “goaded like oxen, as we are, into a trot” (Thoreau 108), wherein we come to recognize the “written word [as] the choicest of relics…[which cannot] only be read but actually breathed from all human lips” into being (Thoreau 102 my emphasis).

The focus and choice of breath here is both interesting and important, for breathing the written word into creation thus externalizes its sound and meaning; in realizing the depth and meaning of the written word, we can bring that word into being internally in our reading of it, and externally as we give with that word sound with the vibration of our breath.

The mapping or blueprint of Walden as a structure both with and of purpose, intent, construction, and design is evidenced through a close reading showing specifically how the book is a structure, and how individual sections of the text manifest the various pieces of that structure which constitute Walden. In this regard, my argument follows Stanley Cavell’s own
“hypothesis…that this book is perfectly complete,” where for myself, “complete” means that the book presents a finished work of literary architecture (3-4).

While this close reading focuses on the completed, published version of *Walden*, it is worthwhile to address the fact that this book truly was constructed; the *Walden* that maintains a pedestal among Transcendental literature is the result of a “construction…[which] involved deliberate rearrangement of the material” (Matthiessen 170), making Thoreau something of “an agent of change,” where “Before [when he was living at the pond], he told us what he thought; now [when he pulled out the manuscript years later] he will show us how he sees” (Walls 351). “*Walden* is the result of a gradual re-creation of [Thoreau’s] experience rather than simply a recounting of that experience as he had entered it in his journal when it happened…[and] Thoreau reshaped his material as the image of what he wanted to make become clearer” (Shanley 5). So it is with literature, then, that "If creation is a 'poem,' it cannot be meaningless or without form, though to understand its meaning or to recognize its structure may require careful study," and it is such a “careful study” which this close reading provides (Papa 77).

When studying the structure of this book, scholars generally focus on one of three means of ordering: "by topics, describing various qualities and aspects of [Thoreau's] life; by the cycle of the day, telling of the events and occupations of typical days; and by the cycle of the year, narrating the changes in [Thoreau's] surroundings and his doings that the progress of the season brought about" (Shanley 77).

While each of these topics of ordering are "absolutely proper to [Thoreau's] aim," close reading *Walden* as literary architecture provides a fourth means of structuring whereby *Walden* consists of three main pillars which present Thoreau's most direct, scientific, and observational writing (Shanley 77). This rigidity lies in opposition to the spaces of movement and flux wherein
Thoreau’s poetics and philosophy are found to exist. As a result, the rigid pillars are, in turn, surrounded by a negative space in which “the narrator assumes the roles of poet and mythmaker, recommitted to the world and seeking order behind the apparent chaos of experience” (Adams & Ross 9). Thoreau, then, is both artist and scientist in that “It [is] the artists' task, as much as the scientists’, to discover and interpret the truths of nature,” “The specific reality” of which, when “carefully observed... [leads] to an understanding of the ideal” (Novak 49, 83).

This structure functions to architecturally ground Thoreau's philosophy, in which "his writing and his living manifest each other" (Cavell 9); the philosophy which is interwoven throughout Walden is stabilized and organized by rigid pillars surrounding it, whereby Thoreau "found in precision...figurative material for his writing" (Burbick 21), so that his "castles in the air... [would have] the foundations under them" (Thoreau 324).

Representing the main foundation of the text are "Economy," "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," and "Conclusion," all of which root the book in Thoreau's meaning or intent of communicating that each person live as an individual "[stepping] to the music which he hears" (Thoreau 326); Thoreau’s idea is to show people one example of how to live a life of “only real actions...[which] produce real progress” and allow us to “Dig down to [our] own roots, and figure out how, radically, [we] must change [our] life” (Walls 169).

“The general outline” of the book, then, is structured around “Thoreau [explaining] socioeconomic truths (ch. 1) [and expressing] hope for a vision (ch. 2),” and in the final chapter “[affirming] the validity of the experiment and [justifying] the rhetorical methods necessary to convey the messages" (Adams & Ross 178). Certainly, as F.O. Matthiessen notes, the first chapter, “Economy,” “on how he solved his basic needs of food and shelter might stand by itself, but also carries naturally forward to the more poignant condensation of the same theme in
"Where I lived, and What I Lived for," which reaches its conclusion in the passage on wedging down to reality" (168).

While these ideas are either made evident or commented upon throughout the rest of the book, it is in these three chapters that Thoreau most directly states his objectives. In "Economy" this is done with some bite and subtlety, such as when Thoreau writes that it is of no use "to survey the world through a telescope or a microscope, and never with this natural eye" (Thoreau 51). While Thoreau is a man of science in that he observed and recorded the daily changes of the physical world and their patterns and, more significantly, surveyed and drew a scale map of Walden Pond, this subtle dismissal of the telescope and microscope conveys his distaste for a limited or filtered view of the world.

Both the telescope and the microscope allow the viewer to become aware of other worlds, but do not allow for an awareness of the world which exists immediately before “this natural eye”; Thoreau’s fear of science was that it “could cause mechanical descriptions of nature” (Burbick 25). The eyes of invention which make both the microscope and telescope possible do expose other worlds, but they do not expose the unconscious, which is precisely what Thoreau seeks to achieve with his own natural eye and an unlimited vision of the world before him.

In the second chapter, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," this same intent can be seen clearly in both the second half of the chapter title itself and in Thoreau’s proposition not “to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake [his] neighbors up” (Thoreau 84). Again, this is a statement directed at the readers and the action that we need to take. Thoreau’s intent with this book is not so much to lecture, but to make us alert of the potential to live in accordance with our essential selves, and to “brag” about his own experience of doing so.
This is further expressed in this same chapter with such statements as men "consenting to be deceived by shows...and [confirming] their daily life of routine and habit every where, which still is built on purely illusory foundations" (Thoreau 96). Thoreau makes it clear that not only are his neighbors asleep, but that they maintain a lack of consciousness willingly as part of “their daily routine and habit,” a way of living which has been carried on for some time since, Thoreau notes, it is “still” happening and “still” being “built” on the same falsehoods of life and existence. Thoreau’s intent in waking his neighbors, then, is to break them from this routine and show them how he, Thoreau, chose to set new foundations which allow him to live life according to his essential self and, from that, allow his unconscious to wake to the level of complete awareness, consciousness, and realization.

Once again are these same ideas conveyed in "Conclusion" with the stern preaching that man "Drive a nail home and cinch it" so that "Every nail driven [is] as another rivet in the machine of the universe, you carrying on the work" (Thoreau 330). When considering this statement adjacent to that explored above concerning the telescope and microscope, this call for us to build onto the “machine of the universe” is at first somewhat surprising. In the former statement Thoreau expresses distaste for the manmade, scientific eyes of telescopic and microscopic technology, yet here is encouraging his readers to contribute to the manmade machine of the universe. The difference lies in the fact that here it is you “carrying on the work.”

With the telescope and microscope we merely have to look through a lens to perceive the stars and microbes rather than using our own eye, while here it is our contribution to the manmade that makes this universal world possible. It is because of our work on and contribution towards this machine that the unconscious becomes conscious; by carrying on the work ourselves we become conscious of the universe and our essential selves in such a way that the
unconscious becomes expose. This is in opposition to a viewing of the universe with artificial eyes, which maintains our awareness on the surface level of everyday consciousness. In this sense, “Technology can redeem time and space from chaos and lead to a new relationship between man and nature that holds the promise of infinite angles of vision and a new form of history” (Burbick 25). Both the reader and observer, however, must not forget the microscope and telescope, for “the observer who so views nature must be both distanced from the scene and immersed in it with intense mobility at any point” (Burbick 25).

It is also in "Conclusion" that Thoreau's intent or purpose comes full circle, for it is here that Thoreau "completed his argument, and in it he returned to speaking directly to the condition of his readers just as he had done at the beginning" (Shanley 77). In positioning these sentiments both at the opening and closing chapters, Thoreau constructed his memoir with these sentiments as his frame; taken together, these three chapters create a bookends structure, in between which unfolds the experiment which Thoreau lived for two years at Walden Pond in realizing these desires and, in the process, creating a work of architecture “in which the means through which [the place composed] become as much the subject as the [place] being composed” (Smithson 99).

While these chapters are the largest pillars of Walden’s foundation, they are not the only means by which Walden is constructed and upheld. Just as the straightforward dialogue of intent in the three framing chapters allows for direct, firm statements, so too do Thoreau's scientific and factual statements—alongside his detailed record logs of first blooms, first snow melts, &etc.—make for sections of the book which are more firm and rigid. That is, those sections of the book which convey experience and experiment by way of science, facts, and records are direct and firm in a manner similar to the three framing chapters and, as a result, are sections which lead to the further structuring and support of the book as a piece of literary architecture.
This is seen immediately with "Economy," where Thoreau not only details his intent of writing, but the architecture and building of his house. So detailed are these sections that Thoreau has accounted for the cost of building down to the half cent, leaving no room for speculation (Thoreau 49). This, however, is not the only instance when such firm and exact workings are laid. In "Sounds," Thoreau describes in detail a location exactly "half a dozen rods from the pond" where, "Near the end of May, the sand-cherry, *Cerasus pumila*, adorned the sides of the path with its delicate flowers arranged in umbels cylindrically about its short stems" (Thoreau 113 italics retained).

Here, it is not only a location which is pinpointed, but a plant; the plant is not just a “sand-cherry,” but the Latin kingdom and phylum names of taxonomy. More than that, the plant does not just have flowers growing around the stem, but flowers which “[adorn]” the plant in just such a way that they are like little “umbels” placed “cylindrically” about; Thoreau does not just make an account of the plant, but takes note of its botany in terms of taxonomy and its aesthetic appearance in terms of precise details of its flowers and their placement.

Later, in "The Bean-Field," Thoreau provides another record of his money spending similar to that in "Economy," but this one listing his outgoes and income as someone experimenting more simply than "the expensive experiments of the gentlemen farmer" (Thoreau 162). Thoreau's surroundings are then detailed again in "The Pond," where he describes "The surrounding hills" (Thoreau 175) and their exact rise "to the height of forty to eighty feet, though on the south-east and east they attain to about one hundred and one hundred and fifty feet respectively, within a quarter and a third of a mile" (Thoreau 176). Thoreau's descriptions here are similar to those he provides about the Concord River in *A Week on the Concord and*
Merrimack Rivers, when he "describes the river according to its location in a space that is not pictorial, with foreground and background, but mapped" (Burbick 22).

This application of a blueprint rather than a visual sketch is also expressed in Thoreau’s “Reduced Plan” map of Walden Pond. Throughout the entirety of the text Thoreau creates a visual sketch of what the pond looks like, morning, noon, and night, and for all seasons of the year. The drawing of Thoreau’s surveying, then, functions not so much as an artistic presentation of the pond, but as a blueprint to Thoreau’s ideas. Walden is not about the grandeur of an average pond, but about the meaning and purpose we can find in something so ordinary and seemingly unspectacular. In similar fashion, the survey drawing is not about what Walden Pond looks like, but about providing a blueprint to Thoreau’s wanderings, both physically and mentally.

Moving further into the second half of the book this use of detailed, scientific analysis continues with "Brute Neighbors," where Thoreau notes his observations on the taxonomy of "The mice which haunted [his] house" (Thoreau 225), "the partridge, (Tetrao umbellus,), which...[would] brood past [his] windows" (Thoreau 226 italics retained), and both the wild and "winged [cats]" (Thoreau 232). Shortly after this there is in "House Warming" an account of masonry (Thoreau 241), a very thorough description of frozen bubbles "an eightieth to an eighth of an inch in diameter" (Thoreau 247), and another bit of record keeping, this time tracking the date (across numerous years) on which Walden Pond was completely frozen over (Thoreau 249). Pushing towards the end of the book is the surveying of Walden Pond, coupled with Thoreau's original "reduced plan" drawing of the results (Thoreau 285-287). Finally, in "Spring," Thoreau speaks to when the pond melts again with a log of exact dates for given years (Thoreau 303).

Coupled with the three framing pillars, all of the instances above (in addition to numerous others not noted here) fill out the structural frame of the book. Everything that is
written around this, then, is Thoreau's more poetical and philosophical reflections upon people living according to their essential selves. As writing which pertains more to the poet or philosopher, these sections of text are loftier and more fluid and, like “The poet,” Thoreau “always goes beyond the grid to questions of wider value” (Burbick 134).

In the absence of the scientific and factual, the writing obtains a sense of movement and flux. In this way, the framing pillars and segments of support not only create a frame for the book, but a foundation to stabilize and ground those segments of flux and movement; “without the grid [the reader] is lost in the labyrinth of subjectivity,” and so it is the “gird” of the foundational structure which guides and orders the philosophy (Burbick 134). In this sense, the juggle between philosophical flux and scientific rigidity creates a balance of opposites.

In keeping with the examples above and starting again at the beginning of the text, this idea of flux surrounding Thoreau's intent is also seen right off with "Economy." One part of this foundation pillar is Thoreau's recorded account of physically building his house at Walden Pond. The charts reproduced convey what went into the house, materially and monetarily. One part of what this foundation is supporting and grounding, then, is the philosophy behind why Thoreau was building and living there. From the side of science, fact, and survival, he was building to provide himself with shelter and warmth. From the side of intent and philosophy, he was building so that he may "[earn his] living by the labor of [his] hands only" (Thoreau 3) to live out the experiment that is his life, "to transact some private business with the fewest obstacles" (Thoreau 19-20).

By shifting from the direct and factual to the more abstract and philosophical, Thoreau has opened up a space where ideas are free to move and flow. It is by being surrounded by pillars
such as the architectural log book and the exact hoeing of beans, however, that these abstract ideas are kept rooted and given a foundation.

"The Pond in Winter" best exemplifies this balance of opposition, in which Thoreau's surveying of the pond provides “not only a vocation, but also figurative material for his writing” (Burbick 21); the surveying of Walden Pond is Thoreau’s “mechanical, scientific approach to nature in this period of reduced life," thus making the pond tangible, while the emotional investment Thoreau has in the pond represents the flux of his philosophy (Adams & Ross 188).

This is where the chapter starts, with Thoreau's feelings of awe in response to the magical nature of Walden Pond. So deep is Thoreau's passion for the pond that he is struck not only by the external beauty of the pond, but by the world which exists beneath its surface (frozen or otherwise). Not only does Thoreau "[wake] to an answered question, to Nature and daylight" (Thoreau 282), then, but so too does he admire the "fabulous fishes...so foreign to the streets, even to the woods, foreign as Arabia in [his] Concord life... [which] possess a quite dazzling and transcendent beauty" (Thoreau 284). For Thoreau, this “transcendent beauty” is something beyond the beauty of the everyday world, it is an otherworldly beauty that exists within some realm—the spiritual or subconscious—other than that which we experience on a regular basis.

This philosophical and "transcendent beauty" is buttressed by the mathematical, scientific surveying of the pond, whereby this philosophy is made firm and transformed into the rigidity of maps and numbers. At this point it is no longer about "dawning Nature, in whom all creatures live," but the physical labor and results of the surveying (Thoreau 282). Thoreau’s pun on surveying is, at first, in direct response to his surveying of Walden Pond. It can, however, also be speaking to surveying as viewing, just as Thoreau “[has] thus surveyed the country on every side within a dozen miles of where [he lived]” (Thoreau 81). In either case, the shimmering of the
fish is here replaced "with a cod-line and a stone weighing about a pound and half" (Thoreau 287) and "the window of ground glass" (Thoreau 283) with the exact depth to which that window peers. Precisely, "The greatest depth was exactly one hundred and two feet; to which may be added the five feet which it has risen since, making one hundred and seven" (Thoreau 287).

Closing out this report on surveying is another section of philosophy, framing this chapter with a bookends structure in which the central, rigid piece of surveying gives a foundation to the opening and concluding pieces of philosophy. At this second turn back into the philosophical, Thoreau associates the cross-section measurements of the pond with the ethics of men.

In terms of surveying, the cross-section simply communicates that "the line of greatest depth fell very near the line of least breadth" (Thoreau 290). When Thoreau ties this discovery to the realm of ethics, though, the rigidity of the surveying breaks down into a space of flux, in which Thoreau concludes that:

Such a rule of two diameters not only guides us towards the sun in the system and the heart in man, but draw lines through the length and breadth of the aggregate of a man's particular daily behaviors and of life into his coves and inlets, and where they intersect will be the height or depth of his character. (291)

What anchors this idea is the very surveying from which this philosophy was built; both the surveying of the pond and its location at the center of this chapter provide the rigid foundation which ground the surrounding, loftier ideas of the ethics and philosophy of man.

What this gives way to is a delicate balance between "flexible approaches to form [and] the absence of rigidly prescribed rules... [which] parallel the Romantic reaction against artistic rigidity and prescribed form" (Dillman 29-30). This is to say that, while form is not entirely abandoned, it is made to allow for the flexible to move around that which is the "rigidity and
prescribed form" of the book itself. This has been shown in the above pages analyzing the three major chapters which represent the pillars of the book, as well as the content of the remaining chapters which add individual struts of reinforcement. Around this is the negative space created by the structure, in which those less grounded and loftier ideas are free to flow without being completely lost.

As we move the analysis further into the book, we find that this balance between the flexible and rigid also exists in the writing itself, in the syntax and meaning of individual sentences. On this level, "Every word the writer uses will be written so as to acknowledge its own maturity, so as to let it speak for itself; and in a way that holds out its experience to us, allows us to experience it, and allows it to tell us all it knows" (Cavell 16). The same can be said, as we shall see, of the syntax constructed with those very words.

Approaching the text in this way makes evident two of the three factors which Stanley Cavell discusses in regards to his suggestion of accomplishing “heroic writing,” or “the writing of a nation’s scripture,” as a means of acquiring "serious speech," a speech which acknowledges that “there is such a thing as language…and [assumes] responsibility” for its function (Cavell 34). These factors are "that words and their orderings are meant by human beings, that they contain (or conceal) their beliefs, express (or deny) their convictions" and "that the saying of something when and as it is said is as significant as the meaning and ordering of the words said" (Cavell 33-34).

While Cavell does not provide specific examples of these factors in the language of Walden, we can see that, with the perception of the book as literary architecture, the first of these two factors equates to the lofty, spiritual language employed in those moments of awe, wonder, poetics, and philosophy. Contrarily, the second of these factors is evidenced in the concrete
language found among Thoreau’s science and numbers, in which, for example, the Latin kingdom and phylum of a bird’s name is as literal as it is significant to Thoreau’s meaning.

Richard Dillman approaches these factors with his discussion on the three different types of sentences used by Thoreau, all of which correspond with this idea of flexibility, shown in “the more poetic level of the Reason,” and rigidity, shown in and on “the understanding, the ‘common-sense’ level” (Bickman 72). When used together, these factors and sentences thus expose the literary architecture of the book on perhaps its most microscopic level.

Before discussing these sentences, however, it is important to note that the three types of sentences which Dillman defines and discusses are not the only syntactical structures used by Thoreau; in employing Dillman’s analysis I do not intend to over-simplify by saying that there are only three types of sentences used throughout the entirety of Walden. My intention, rather, is to apply Dillman’s analysis and examples to my own close reading of the text as a means of providing evidence for the argument that this text functions as what I have termed “literary architecture.”

Building off of Thoreau's education in psychological rhetoric and its curriculum based on the idea that "the subject matter should govern the manner of expression," Dillman locates distinct syntax within Walden which corresponds to the idea or meaning which Thoreau intends to communicate (Dillman 27-28). The first of these is "compressed sentences," which "are aphorisms that either sum up arguments or are themselves arguments" (Dillman 36). Two of the examples which Dillman provides for this type of sentence are, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation” (Thoreau 8) and “To be awake is to be alive” (Thoreau 90).³

³ These and the rest of the sentence examples provided from Walden in my application of Dillman’s argument come from Dillman himself. The citations for these examples, however, are in reference to the copy of Walden included in my Bibliography.
These two examples speak directly to Thoreau’s intent in both living at Walden and writing *Walden* to live according to his essential self and to provide an example for other people to do so themselves, respectively. As has already been established in this chapter, those parts of the text which speak to Thoreau’s intent or purpose are those which are more firm and direct. We can see this here, too, in both the shorter length of these sentences and the terseness with which they are spoken. In each example, the majority of words consist of one syllable, making the statements intentionally short, curt, and to the point. Rather than going on about the beauty of a life lived without “quiet desperation,” Thoreau limits that desperation to the mere three syllables that it is; here there is not a poetics to living a life of desperation or finding real living in being awake and alive, but a short, terse directive that presents the heart of the argument.

Due to the focus on arguments in these sentences, then, and the immediacy with which they are written, the compressed sentence can be likened to the rigid, framing structure of Thoreau’s writing. That is, Thoreau's use of compressed sentences represents (on the syntactical level) the rigidity which Thoreau's science, facts, and record keeping represent on the larger scale of individual chapters. Furthermore, like the organization of those chapters, these sentences are “Usually placed strategically” (Dillman 36).

The second sentence structure Dillman discusses shares a similar relationship to *Walden* as architectural literature, this being the cumulative sentence. Unlike the compressed sentence, the cumulative sentence is more open and reactional; it "creates the impression of alertness, of thinking while writing or speaking… [and] It suggests a lack of pretense, ‘an unstudied air’ (236), an organic approach to style, and ultimately a rejection of artificial ornamentation" (Dillman 37-38). To again use Dillman’s example, this can be seen in one of the many descriptions Thoreau gives of Walden Pond when he writes that:
We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and Titanic features, the sea-coast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and its decaying trees, the thunder cloud, and the rain which lasts weeks and produces freshets. (Thoreau 318)

The action is to “be refreshed,” and it is the description of the sight following this action which creates the feeling of refreshment, and it does so by building on the “inexhaustible vigor” of the pond. The sentence also builds on itself with the sublime excitement and movement conveyed through the alliteration of “vigor” and “vast,” “wrecks” and “wilderness.”

Because this sentence is so descriptive (and, as Dillman has noted, is used by Thoreau particularly for description), it has more movement to it than the weight of the compressed sentence. What the cumulative sentence implies, then, is a direct connection to the poetic and philosophical aspects of Walden which weave throughout (and are upheld by) the rigidity of the scientific and factual reflected in the compressed sentence.

Rhetorical sentences (specifically rhetorical questions) comprise the third sentence organization which Dillman discusses, in which this technique is used as a means of persuasion. Because of this tactic, these sentences "rarely occur in [Thoreau's] most descriptive chapters in which he attempts to involve his readers in the Walden experience rather than to persuade them directly to accept his unconventional views" (Dillman 38). This specific use of the rhetorical sentence reflects fully those chapters of philosophy in which Thoreau is not tied to the rigidness of his science and facts, but is concerned instead with opening both his mind and the minds of his readers.

To use Dillman’s sentence example one last time, we find this in Thoreau’s proclamation concerning “The success of great scholars and thinkers” and the rest of mankind, of whom
Thoreau asks, “But why do men degenerate ever? What makes families run out? What is the nature of the luxury which enervates and destroys nations? Are we sure that there is none of it in our own lives?” (15).

With these rhetorical questions Thoreau is moving away from what is factual and true and towards what is more philosophical; what exactly, for example, is Thoreau asking about families by saying that they “run out”? “Less suited to his descriptive objectives than to emphasizing important facts of his philosophy and challenging his readers,” the rhetorical sentence thus represents those moments of movement, give, and flux laid in opposition to those of stagnancy and rigidity (Dillman 38).

In maneuvering among these three types of sentences Thoreau creates on a miniature, linguistic scale a syntactical structure which corresponds to the larger structure of Walden as a whole, complete structure. The tie to the larger scale structure of Walden is represented in the way Thoreau "explores the implication of such a site [as Walden Pond and Walden the book] through language that alternates between real experience and idea, between soil and preconceptions" (Olsen 10); what “The narrative progression” of Walden reveals is “a synecdochic pattern that moves Thoreau's audience beyond themselves to larger, sometimes more spiritual themes” (Dillman 43).

This structure is also a part of the way readers digest the book. “As we read from moment to moment we are also seeking and creating overall patterns, connecting what we are now encountering with what we already know and with what we expect to follow” (Bickman 39); as we “[move] through and [experience] space,” specifically the space of the physical book, we “internalize and personalize the perceptions” (Olsen 22). The book itself, then, has been structured to communicate the author's intent, while the language of the book too has a structure.
Combined, language and structure "can be conceived in terms like that of Foucault's grid; whether spoken dialogue or written text, it forms in our mind out of a series of connected elements...built out of one's mental lexicon, using one's sense of the syntactical patterning of language" (Olsen 28). Thoreau, then, “concedes that the mind must structure perception before correct observation can occur” (Burbick 134). Even on this more microscopic scale of syntax and language, then, is the idea conveyed that what Thoreau is doing with Walden is not pushing for others to do what he did, but encouraging and exemplifying for his readers how they can make meaning out of their own "mental lexicons" and "syntactical patterning."

If this idea is carried further, it becomes clear that Walden Pond itself, as "a carefully constructed literary site," is "less Thoreau's home than his home page, a virtual space he designed to represent himself and to promote his business, even if it was only listening to what was in the wind" (Sattelmeyer 24). In this regard, the virtual space of Walden Pond as it is represented in Walden the book mirrors the real, physical space of Thoreau’s home at Walden Pond. Put another way, the literary architecture of the book matches the architecture of Thoreau’s living space at Walden Pond.

Thoreau's use of Walden as a site to explore his own experimentation around science, facts, records, poetics, and philosophy is developed in such a way to create a literary architecture which Thoreau also employed in his house at Walden Pond, rendering "The space of [this] text…a site, or a series of sites” (Olsen 28). Like the structure of the book, Thoreau's experience and experiment of living at Walden Pond were built upon the foundations of a house which would support and uphold the poetry and philosophy which Thoreau sought to conduct there as his main point of business, even, as Sattelmeyer says, if that did mean solely listening to the wind.
Indeed, in the wind Thoreau would find, like “a walk in the woods…not a rejection of civilization but a religious [or, I would argue, spiritual] exercise” (Schneider 49); Thoreau "was searching for a way to bridge the epistemological gap between the observer and the observed, between perceiver and the place" (Schneider 2), and he "wanted a house to embody a new self, so that building that house meant building that self, literally from the ground up” (Walls 190).

With this perspective of Walden as literary architecture we develop the balance between opposites in which Thoreau’s philosophy is represented by the “dark nights, when your thoughts had wandered to vast and cosmological themes and other spheres,” while the scientific and factual is the rooted, structured aspect of the text which functions as “this faint jerk, which came to interrupt your dreams and link you to Nature again” (Thoreau 175).
CHAPTER II

“The wind that blows Is all that any body knows”: Walden and the Aeolian Harp

He had mastered a definition of art akin to what Maritain has extracted from scholasticism: Recta ratio factibilium, the right ordering of the thing to be made, the right revelation of the material.

–F.O. Matthiessen

The most prominent metaphor of Henry David Thoreau's Walden is the namesake of book itself: Walden Pond. Thoreau points to this himself several times throughout the novel with such remarks as, “I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol” (287). This makes clear that "Thoreau used the specifics of place to embody deeper and more universal truths” and that “to grasp Thoreau means grasping where he was and how it became that way" (Walls 9). When approached from a different perspective, however, specifically from the perspective of Walden as a work of literary architecture, a second metaphor arises: the Aeolian harp.

To arrive at this metaphor we must first acknowledge the text as literary architecture, by which I mean a piece of literature which is built upon a specific, designed structure with the intent of conveying a particular shape and meaning, just as architecture is built with the intent of the inhabitant reacting upon (and interacting with) the structure in a very particular way. When perceived in this way, Walden takes on a three dimensionality in which the philosophical aspects of the text are seen to flow in and out of the more rigid, scientific, and factual aspects which give foundation to the entirety of the book. In its totality, this is akin to the way the Aeolian harp is designed for the air to flow through the rigid structure of the harp itself.

The Aeolian harp is further essential to this text because it is the main metaphor which brings us back into Thoreau’s ideas of the universal and spiritual; while Thoreau is more concerned with spirituality than religion, it is worth noting that, in similar regards, “In myth and
religion...wind and breath often play an essential part in the creation both of the universe and of man” (Abrams 34).

It is also important to note that this metaphor is submerged. Unlike Walden Pond, which Thoreau actively chose as the metaphor of his book, the Aeolian harp is a metaphor which exists beneath the surface of the text; adopting a different perspective of the text which sees Walden as literary architecture pushes Walden Pond aside and gives rise to the latent metaphor of the Aeolian harp. Indeed, while Thoreau did write a poem about the Aeolian harp and makes several references to this instrument in Walden, the direct usage of the word “Aeolian” appears only once in the text (Thoreau 131).

It is because of the blueprint or map of the Aeolian harp that "flux surrounds the observer [yet it] does not engulf him, because he has the map to guide and order the description" (Burbick 23). We see this with Thoreau’s “reduced plan” map of Walden Pond, the map which Thoreau himself drew after executing a full survey of the water. The map gives us a reliable visual to guide us into and around Thoreau’s first year living at the pond. It is this map which also roots the reader down to the chapter.

The chapter which provides the drawing and surveying, “The Pond in Winter,” opens with a detached sense of awe and magic. The section on surveying the pond ends with the mythology “about the bottom, or rather no bottom of this pond,” another idea, like this mythology, associated with the sense of detachment (Thoreau 285). In between these sections is the actual surveying of the pond itself. The exact numbers and measurements which Thoreau provides here are what ground and prevent us from getting lost in the detachment of awe, magic, and mythology.

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4 See “Rumors from an Aeolian Harp,” Henry David Thoreau: Collected Essays and Poems
It is in this in between space, too, that the map is provided; on the printed pages, the reproduction of the map is located after the awe that opens the chapter and before the mythology of the pond’s depth. Both the visualization and physical location of the map in the book, then, function just as the mathematical and scientific measurements do: the map “[guides] and [orders] the descriptions” of the pond, providing us with a guide to move out of the depths of philosophy and back into the text.

Here, the map serves as a metaphor for the Aeolian harp. Like the Aeolian harp, the map provides a rigidity around which the movement occurs, and it is this sense of rigidity that guides the reader out of those more abstract, philosophical, and poetic moments of flux. The Aeolian harp, in turn, is a metaphor for the book, whereby the structure of the book implements a rigid frame which roots us and guides us back through those moments when Thoreau’s philosophies convey us into his higher, loftier ideas. In other words, the structural aspects stay in place while movement occurs throughout, just as, for Thoreau, "Time is but the stream [he goes] a-fishing in," where "Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains" (Thoreau 98).

Like the stream, movement carries on in the spaces of flux, while the more rooted aspects of the book remain in place, just as eternity remains no matter how much or what amount of time moves or passes by; “Reality is fluid, changing, and ultimately mysterious,” while this higher sense of eternity remains everlasting and unmoving (Bickman 80). In some sense, then, it is about realizing all of time as that everlasting eternity; “The American’s awareness of change was strongly monitored by a necessity to stop it, making of each moment, as Emerson had said, a ‘concentrated eternity’” (Novak 93). This metaphor, then, both reaffirms Walden as a piece of literary architecture and as a textual exemplar of what Thoreau sought by living at Walden Pond, which was to live with an awareness of his essential self and his unconscious.
From this perspective, "Facts [are] larger than themselves; they [are] mythologic and significant, suggesting more abstract notions" (Dillman 75). Dillman elaborates on this perspective by pulling directly from Thoreau’s journal, in which “Thoreau tells us…” ‘Facts should only be as the frame to [his] pictures; they should be material to the mythology which [he] is writing…facts to tell who [he is], and where [he has] been or what [he has] thought' (3:99, 1851)” (Dillman 75). In Thoreau’s own writing, then, the philosophy is maintained and grounded within a frame which presents Thoreau’s “picture” of living according to the essential self so that he can lift the unconscious to the level of the conscious.

In my own writing, Thoreau’s work provides the frame within which I can dissect, rebuild, and present his picture within the scope of close reading. "It is not only the vocabulary of science we desire," then, but "a language of that different yield. A yield rich as the harvests of earth, a yield that returns to us our own sacredness, to a self-love and respect that will carry out to others," a yield which is communicated through the metaphor of the Aeolian harp (Hogan 60).

Thoreau himself alludes to this metaphor several times, most often in relationship to nature. Indeed, "in early 1851…Romantic themes and figures become more important" for Thoreau and he "begins to use the romantic metaphor of the Aeolian harp to express the action of divine spirit on harmonious earthly receptors (J 2:330, 450, 496-97)” (Adams & Ross 33). In some instances, Thoreau is part of the structure of the Aeolian harp, the object which the breeze moves around as he, on "So many autumn, ay, and winter days, spent [time] outside the town, trying to hear what was in the wind, to hear and carry it express," where “carry it express” is here a reference to the sentence itself (Thoreau 17).

At other times Thoreau is within the structure of the metaphorical Aeolian harp. When he is within his house, for instance, and "The winds which passed over...were such as sweep over
the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains, or celestial parts only, of terrestrial music" 
(Thoreau 85). It is not only Thoreau’s home which is an Aeolian harp, but so is nature itself. 
Before the sounds pass over Thoreau and are filtered over his home they are filtered by the 
mountains. By the time the sound reaches Thoreau it is not just “the broken strains” of music but 
the “celestial parts only.” The mountains, then, are the strings of nature’s Aeolian harp; they are 
the medium through which “terrestrial music” passes, filtering the sounds and keeping only that 
which is from or of a higher realm to carry further through the wind. 

In each instance, the passage of air provides movement (literally) and meaning 
(figuratively). These instances are framed by the rigid, factual, and scientific observations of 
Walden, while the more poetic and philosophical wanderings of Thoreau's mind coincide with 
the flux and movement of the world outside of his mind. This externalization, however, does not 
equate to emptiness. In the wind there is not only something to hear, but something carried, 
something which comes from beyond the conscious, from "celestial parts only" (Thoreau 85); 
"All sound heard at the greatest possible distance produces one and the same effect, a vibration 
of the universal lyre...It is not merely a repetition of what was worth repeating in the bell, but 
partly the voice of the wood" (Thoreau 123). 

That “something” which is “worth repeating” and which is “the voice of the wood” itself 
is exactly this higher, spiritual, celestial awareness which Thoreau seeks to attune himself to. As 
a result, what the wind carries is not just the “something” of awareness, but the universal; by 
carrying the very sounds of nature, the air renders itself a “universal lyre” carrying with it the 
sounds of spirituality, divinity, and awareness. It is this larger unconscious sense of the essential 
self and selfhood which Thoreau seeks to recognize by way of nature's Aeolian harp.
As further evidence will make clear, nature is not the only medium for this metaphorical Aeolian harp. In yet another attempt to wake is townsfolk from their unconscious slumber, Thoreau presents a rather negative example of the Aeolian movement of air. Venturing out of his solace and into the public space of the village, Thoreau notes how the villagers, "being commonly out of doors, heard whatever was in the wind" (168). Being lost in the routine of their daily lives, the townspeople go unaware of the wonders and sounds of nature which Thoreau perceives; for them the atmosphere does not contain "the faint hum of a mosquito...itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wandering" (Thoreau 89). Instead they are surrounded by "whatever," by the sounds of gossip and work which diffuse through the village. What is missing in this broad perception of hearing is the cosmological which Thoreau locates within the refined.

It is this awareness which Thoreau seeks not only for himself, but for his peers in this rendering of the Aeolian harp. If all that is heard is the "whatever" of the village, then the unconscious remains unconscious, asleep to the "standing advertisement, till forbidden, of the everlasting vigor and fertility of the world" (Thoreau 89) and deaf to "The harp [which] is the travelling patterer for the Universe's Insurance Company, recommending its laws, and our little goodness is all the assessment that we pay" (Thoreau 218). In the latter instance, lacking this awareness is potentially more dangerous than remaining unconscious; if the harp is the "Universe’s Insurance Company,” then it is a necessity which must be heard, not only because it reveals the unconscious, but because it tells us how to live with its “laws” and our “assessments.”

Other examples of the Aeolian harp are abundant throughout Walden, the majority of them more optimistic than the above. More often than not this music is created organically by the world which surrounds Thoreau, such as the animals outside that "[give] a voice to the air"
(Thoreau 114) and storms that provide "Æolian music to a healthy and innocent ear" (Thoreau 131). At these moments, the Aeolian harp’s music is, as it is in Romantic poetry, “evoked not by art, human or divine, but by a force of nature" (Abrams 26). In other instances, however (such as that above regarding the "hot air" of gossip), the movement of sound is created both by manmade objects and by man himself.

In regards to the manmade there is "The whistle of the locomotive...sounding like the scream of a hawk" (Thoreau 115). In this instance there is both a shift in what establishes the Aeolian harp and a perceptual shift. While the sound of the train’s whistle is associated with a hawk’s scream, it is also associated with the sound of labor; the Aeolian harp here is not just an expression of sound moving through the air, but an expression of how travelling sound can make for a perceptual shift from that which is natural (the hawk) to that which is manmade (the locomotive) by man’s labor (the whistle).

At other points the Aeolian harp is created by Thoreau himself, by the sound of his hoe "[tinkling] against the stone," the music of which "echoed to the woods and the sky, and was an accompaniment to [his] labor" (Thoreau 159). It is likewise made by the slap of his "paddle on the side of [his] boat, filling the surrounding woods with circling and dilating sounds, stirring them up" (Thoreau 174). In these actions Thoreau is creating the vibrations which travel through the air, making him not only the creator of the Aeolian harp, but the structure of the Aeolian harp around which (or here, whom) the sound moves.

Thoreau, then, is also reminiscent of “the figures in luminist paintings [who]… [meditate] inwardly, and the landscape meditates through [them]” (Novak 192). In regards to Thoreau both as the creator and structure of the Aeolian harp and as a figure found within luminist paintings, Thoreau not only projects into nature but absorbs nature. This exchange is an example of the idea
that “wilderness is necessary to our spiritual and psychological well-being [and] it is a container of far more, of mystery, of a life apart from ours” (Hogan 45).

The sound and meditation which Thoreau finds in his work and sounding of the hoe can be seen in Linda Hogan’s “art to raking,” in which “The water that rose up through the rings of that wood, the minerals of earth mined upward by the burrowing tree roots, all come alive [and her] own fragile hand touches the wood, a hand full of [her] own life” (153). What we find in this is an art which makes Hogan, too, both creator and structure, and the figure that not only meditates on nature, but allows nature to meditate through her. For Thoreau, though, this is instead found (to use Hogan’s language) in what we might term his “art of hoeing.”

In considering Walden as a piece of literary architecture, the most significant representation of the Aeolian harp metaphor is Thoreau's house at Walden Pond. Similar to the way that the book is designed with a plan and intention, Thoreau's house was built with an intent and meaning; once fully built his dwelling was "suggestive somewhat as a picture in outlines" (Thoreau 85). This picture of the dwelling closely mirrors the picture of Walden itself; Walden stands as a piece of literary architecture in which the structure of the book is in communication with the structure of Thoreau's dwelling.

On a metaphorical level, this structure is akin to that of the Aeolian harp: the structure of Walden has its foundation in the rigidity of the factual and scientific, while flux and movement are created by way of philosophy and poetry. Mirroring this is the structure of the Walden house, which is made with a traditional, simple foundation which provides shelter and support, as well as “[guarding] against the intrusion of humanity,” while the spacious aspects created by an open door and the exposed, bare windows allow for the outside to move both in and out of the interior, “[fostering] the continuous perception of nature” (Burbick 61).
This sense of movement between inner and outer is evidenced by the extreme simplicity of Thoreau's design, whereby the physical walls are all that bar him from the outside world. Indeed, as both Sophia Thoreau’s drawing of her brother’s house and the “Building the House” and “Architecture” sections in “Economy” make evident, Thoreau’s home was a simple four wall design, simple enough for Thoreau, “with the help of some of [his] acquaintances...[to] set up the frame” (Thoreau 45). Aside from those four walls there was “the foundation of a chimney at one end,” one door, and two windows (Thoreau 45 see figure 1). Even Thoreau’s cellar, built for and “where potatoes would not freeze in any winter,” possessed a simple design whereby “The sides were left shelving, and not stoned” (Thoreau 44).

Fig.1: Marilynne K. Roach’s artistic representation of Thoreau’s living space at Walden Pond. Marilynne K. Roach, Down to Earth at Walden, Houghton Mifflin, 1980, p.22.

The simplicity of these designs reflects the purpose of the home to protect Thoreau, to keep him “perfectly impervious to the rain” and, in the winter months, house “a fire...necessary for warmth” (Thoreau 45). In this regard, the boards, the roof, the flooring, &etc. are equivalent
to the scientific and factual of *Walden*; just like those aspects of the scientific and factual, the structure of Thoreau’s house provides the rigid frame within which movement occurs. On the structural, foundational level, though, the house is as rigid and unmoving at those facts which Thoreau supplies about how much he spent on building the house.

At its most simple, Thoreau’s house is nothing more than a mathematical, rigidly prescribed structure, “a tight shingled and plastered house, ten feet wide by fifteen long, and eight-feet posts, with a garret and a closet, a large window on each side, two trap doors, one door at the end, and a brick fireplace opposite” (Thoreau 48). This may seem banal and obvious in terms of what comes to mind when we think of the word “house.” It is important to note, though, that not all structures are built in this way.

Take, for example, the poet's lodge that Alcott built for Emerson. For Alcott, the project was more about ornament, creative expression, and experimental architecture, for the finished project was "a two-story picturesque wonderment of art” which utterly lacked both a foundation and an adherence to the rules of mathematics and physics (Walls 235). Thoreau’s house, by comparison, is not just a house then, but a tangible, architectural representation of Thoreau’s adherence to and embodiment of that which is accurate, correct, and true to the rules of the world.

In addition to sparse furniture and goods, Thoreau employed sparse interior design, as is evidenced in the “Furniture” section of “Economy.” Mirroring the simplicity and exactness of his home, Thoreau proudly proclaims that his furniture

...consisted of a bed, a table, a desk, three chairs, a looking-glass three inches in diameter, a pair of tongs and andirons, a kettle, a skillet, and a frying-pan, a dipper, a wash-bowl,
two knives and forks, three plates, one cup, one spoon, a jug for oil, a jug for molasses, and a japanned lamp. (65)

Again, what this exactness and simplicity suggest is a sense of rigidity. So precise and necessary is everything which Thoreau possesses that there is no room for movement; like the structure of his house, his furniture and interior design are so set and rigid that they are as if scientific and factual, allowing no room for flux or movement.

While this rigidity does not allow for movement in and of itself, it does create the structure around and through which movement takes place. That is, the rigidity of Thoreau’s home, goods, furniture, and design, while unmoving themselves, create a negative space in which flux and movement do occur; Thoreau “[combines] descriptively powerful images of interior space with [his] transformative experiences in [his] own [life at Walden Pond],” and as a result “the spatial imagination opens up like reflecting mirrors in a funhouse, showing space to be fluid and changeable” (Olsen 19). This can be seen with Thoreau’s decision to not include “gazers to shut out but the sun and moon...willing [instead] that they should look in” (Thoreau 67).

In this way, the structure of Thoreau’s home mirrors the structure of the book, in which the solid and rigid provide the structure which not only supports movement, but allows for movement to take place. To say that his house mirrors the book is, on the larger scale, to say that Thoreau’s home is an architectural Aeolian harp, in which the structure of the house itself and the rigidity of his furniture, goods, and design, stand as the frame of the harp, while the openness of the windows and door are what allow for the outside to pass in and through, for the breeze to pass around the struts and risers. With this metaphor, it becomes clear that “space and movement
are inseparable, that space is whatever we have considered in it, that it is both 'space' and 'place’” (Olsen 21 emphasis retained).

By designing his home in this way, Thoreau is making an attempt to understand “what it is to live in the open air” and acknowledge that “our lives are domestic in more senses than we think” (Thoreau 28). Thoreau's design does not only allow for the Aeolian effect to take place in and around his home, however, but equally allows both his home and himself to experience the Aeolian movement; by placing each—his home and himself—into the external world, Thoreau could "meet [his] home as one would a friend, to accept its being as given, to dwell with the land rather than upon it" (Blakemore 123). Furthermore, this would, like the American Indians with whom Thoreau was so fascinated, make himself “so intricately tied to the land base as to be inseparable from it” (Walls 15); "if he arranged materials just so, nature would speak through him in a voice that carried to town, where even people in the streets would stop to listen, to hear something higher, beyond themselves” (Walls 289). It is also when materials are arranged in this way that it becomes clear that "The face of the land is our face, and that of all its creatures…[that] What grows here and what grows within us is the same” (Hogan 97).

On the large scale this is seen with Thoreau's placement of his house in the woods, a location which “served further to embody this vision of humanity as simultaneously naturalized and spiritualized, by situating it not only 'on' but ‘in’ the soil of earth’” (Rossi 38 emphasis retained); like “the infancy of the human race,” Thoreau is interested not just in inhabiting the land, but moving into the land just as “some enterprising mortal crept into a hollow of a rock for shelter” (Thoreau 28). On a smaller, more abstract scale, this is witnessed when Thoreau moves all of his furniture outdoors to clean his home. Seeing everything set among the brush and trees Thoreau notes how natural the setting is, "to see the sun shine on these things, and hear the free
wind blow on them” (Thoreau 113). This perception of his home goods resting out of doors functions as a reversed Aeolian harp, where the outdoors is no longer moving through the structure of Thoreau's house, but is moving around the objects externalized from that structure. This reversed Aeolian harp is also seen explicitly with the statement that “the free wind [blows] on” the furniture.

It is in this external world that Thoreau wishes to place himself, where he would find himself "not so much within doors as behind a door," where he would be "neighbor to the birds; not by having imprisoned one, but having caged [himself] near them" (Thoreau 85). This focus on the closeness with nature is akin to “The Brownian design [of Capability Brown]” of seamlessness between where the home ends and nature begins, of “the green sward—the smooth expanse of grass—right up to the house” (Brook 116). Thoreau gets at this idea himself when he exclaims that there is "No yard! But unfenced Nature reaching up to your very sills"; nature "growing up," "breaking through," "rubbing," "creaking," "reaching"; "no gate,-no front yard-and no path to the civilized world!" (128).

As much as Thoreau may embody this aspect of Brownian design, Thoreau’s own home is not an allusion to the landscape and housing architecture of the famous European. Unlike Brown, Thoreau is interested in what is truly natural, while Brown was interested in creating spaces to appear as if they were natural. Furthermore, Brown’s success was in part due to the popularity of these (arguably) picturesque designs of both home and landscape architecture; because Thoreau was not concerned with catering to the styles of the time, as was Capability Brown, Thoreau’s project instead is more reminiscent of an opposition to “Most men [who] appear never to have considered what a house is, and are actually though needlessly poor all their lives because they think that they must have such a one as their neighbors have” (Thoreau 35).
Yet in uniting the two—nature and his home—or making them as if seamless, Thoreau is attempting “to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment” (Thoreau 17). Rather than remaining in the past or looking forward to the future, Thoreau’s house is right on that line; he does not have a fence to keep his grounds within the sphere of the home and separate from nature, nor does he live fully in the wild without shelter or an enclosure. Instead he lives right on both, in a liminal space, allowing nature to move both up onto and into his home, and allowing his home to move into nature.

On the corporeal level this is meant to ignite the experience which is “more intimate, touching bodies more directly,” and which can be “tasted and drunk” (Bickman 76), the experience “when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore” (Thoreau 129). On the mental or spiritual level this is meant to address how “nature’s breezes [are not only] the analogue of human respiration… [but] are themselves inhaled into the body and assimilated to its substance…and [are made] to fuse materially, as well as metaphorically, the ‘soul’ of man with the ‘spirit’ of nature” (Abrams 42).

The larger idea behind this is, as it is for Walden, for Thoreau "to toe that line" of the external and the internal, between the conscious (in the architecture of the house and book) and the unconscious (in the philosophy of the architecture of both the house and book) (Thoreau 17). This is what the Aeolian harp metaphor stands for. In building his memoir with foundations which give rigidity and allow for flux and movement throughout, Thoreau rhetorically creates an Aeolian harp which reflects his desire to wake his readers to the ability to "establish their lives on that basis" of using the external to open the internal, of using the conscious to become aware of the unconscious (Thoreau 11).
The metaphorical use of the Aeolian harp, then, is akin to its use in Romanticism, in which “The wind-harp has become a persistent Romantic analogue of the poetic mind, the figurative mediator between outer motion and inner emotion” (Abrams 26). More than that, Thoreau’s use of the Aeolian harp mirrors its use “in the major [Romantic] poems, [where] the wind is not only a property of the landscape, but also a vehicle for radical changes in the poet’s mind” (Abrams 26). This metaphor is necessary in achieving Thoreau’s goal then, for it is “The rising wind...[which] is correlated with a complex subjective process: the return to a sense of community after isolation, the renewal of life and emotional vigor after apathy and a deathlike torpor, and an outburst of creative power following a period of imaginative sterility” (Abrams 26).

Achieving this balance between external and internal, conscious and unconscious, is—for Thoreau—something of a ceremony. By this I mean that, like "The intention of a ceremony," Thoreau’s intention with the Aeolian harp structuring is "to put a person back together by restructuring the human mind," with that person and mind here being his own (Hogan 40). Thoreau’s creation of this structure is his way of “searching for a new way to speak” (Hogan 46); just like “we make our own songs to contain” this reciprocity between the external and internal, the earthly and spiritual “with ceremonies and poems,” Thoreau’s literary architecture functions as a way to speak to this realization (Hogan 46).

Realizing this intention of the ceremony creates an internal structuring in which "This reorganization is accomplished by a kind of inner map, a geography of the human spirit and the rest of the world...[which] takes us toward the place of balance, our place in the community of all things" (Hogan 40). In Walden it is the metaphorical Aeolian harp structure which creates this "community of all things," in which the internal is granted the freedom to move into the external,
and the external into the internal, all with the support and grounding of the rigid frame; the Aeolian harp allows for Thoreau to achieve a “skin [which] contains” not only himself, but all things—“land and birds…[as] the animals and ancestors move into the human body, into skin and blood. The land merges with [him]” (Hogan 41).

While this Aeolian harp need not consist of the same material for all, its creation is required if we are to open our unconscious, whether or not that be by us "[constructing our] dwellings with [our] own hands, and [providing] food for [ourselves] and families simply and honestly enough" (Thoreau 46), which is the example Thoreau provides in this memoir. "This is the writer’s assurance that his writing is not a substitute for his life, but his way of prosecuting it" (Cavell 62).

It is at this point that "The real ceremony begins...when we take up a new way, our minds and hearts filled with the vision of earth that holds us within it, in compassionate relationship to and with our world" (Hogan 40-41). This ceremony gives birth to the creation and balance between the external structure and internal movement for "the poetic faculty [to] be universally developed, as birds universally sing when they are so engaged" (Thoreau 46).
CONCLUSION

Thoreau’s Intersection of Nature, Literature, Architecture, & the Aeolian Harp

“But couldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life?” –Michel Foucault

In terms of the relationships between nature and architecture and *Walden* and architecture, this argument has presented an infusion whereby Thoreau’s conception of nature not only applies to architecture, but to the structure of *Walden* itself, a literary architectural structure mirrored in the form and function of the Aeolian harp. This infusion sees Thoreau’s “fundamental question of ‘what a house is’ (p.35)—the purpose it serves as well as its relationship to its inhabitant—[as seeking] to collapse the ideal and real, to eliminate the gap between an imaginative and a physical existence” (D’Amore 73). That is, both Thoreau’s conception of nature as it is applied to architecture and the reading of *Walden* as literary architecture, seek to eliminate the dichotomies between inner and outer and the conscious and unconscious, an elimination which is represented with metaphor of the Aeolian harp.

Theodore M. Brown, in “Thoreau’s Architectural Program,” takes this collapse to the level of the universal; the ideal and real for Brown is the dichotomy between inner and outer, a dichotomy which “stemmed primarily from Thoreau’s cosmic view” (14). At this level architecture becomes something more than the physical; it takes on a dual aspect of physicality and metaphysicality and, Brown argues, it is a duality which “Thoreau imagined [as] a membranous architecture which would produce and stimulate this vital interchange” between the two (14-15).
In this, “Thoreau’s cosmic view,” nature, literature, and architecture all maintain a symbiotic relationship whereby aspects of nature seep into architectural design and architecture maintains a simple existence reflecting the necessities of life as they are associated with nature.

On the metaphorical level, this is represented with the Aeolian harp. The harp itself is the rigid design through which nature moves and seeps, a structure which in and of itself contributes towards the call to live according to the essential self; the ultimate goal is to obtain this cosmic view in which there is no longer any distinction between inner and outer, conscious and unconscious.

Building both *Walden* the book and the Walden house with this sense of unity or integration, Thoreau adheres not only to the concepts of simplicity and necessity, but to the concept of oneness within nature (akin to the idea of Thoreau’s “cosmic view”) and drops it both into the literal box which constitutes his home and onto the pages of the book. In this relationship—one which argues in favor of the application of nature onto architecture, and of architecture onto the literary structuring of *Walden*—the idea of Thoreau’s “cosmic view” may still be found to exist.

If architecture is to grow from the needs and desires of its designer, it is hard to deny that the relationship between nature and architecture is anything less than a conversation between the “inside and outside...natural screens delineating space and modulating light” (Brown 14). This is the same conversation found in the structure of the book, in which the frame of the text creates the space for flux and movement, through which the inside and the outside, inner and outer, achieve a symbiotic relationship. What Thoreau perceived in creating *Walden*, then, is “that both language and rhythm have a physical basis” (Matthiessen 85-86).
Because Thoreau maintains this structuring around more philosophical ideas, it first appears that the book lacks structure, that it is the unorganized wandering of Thoreau’s thoughts and mind. In this way, the perception is that “The text is always moving toward structuring itself, yet [is] always pulling back from doing so” (Bickman 44). It is clear, however, from a close reading of the placement of the chapters, sentence structures, and language that a complete structure does exist. What makes it appear as if there is a pulling back from structuring is the abstract nature in which it is structured.

The initial sense of cohesiveness and organization (what I have been referring to as “structuring”) is maintained by the factual and scientific approaches which Thoreau provides. These approaches create the pillars of the book and the frame of the Aeolian harp. With this frame set up, there is a negative space through which movement takes place, and it is here where Thoreau presents his higher, more philosophical ideas.

It is also here, however, that the structuring appears to pull away from itself; the chapters, language, and sentence varieties move from the concrete and definite to the abstract and philosophical, creating an “openness to flux, a responsiveness to a continually changing world” (Bickman 47). It is in these moments that “[Thoreau] can hardly find enough verbs of action to describe what [his experiences] do to him... [and it] seems to take him out of himself: he leaves his body in a trance and has the freedom of all nature,” the result being a language that moves away from the concrete structuring and towards a language that is more abstract and lofty (Matthiessen 88-89).

What bring the structuring back are the very concrete and rigid aspects that the structure strays from in the first place. That is, in both the language and structure of the book, the concrete, scientific, and factual are what allow for the “openness to flux” to not get too lost; it appears that
a structure is never fully achieved because the abstract and philosophical pull away from that structuring, yet it is the concrete and factual (which establish the sense of structure in the first place) which keep the philosophy grounded and lend toward the overall structure. This larger structure, then, functions off of the relationship between flux and rigidity as it is represented through the Aeolian harp.

It is also important to note that this metaphorical use of the Aeolian harp assists the reader in not getting too weighed down in the rigidly defined aspects of the book. The Aeolian harp, then, functions both to ground readers so that they do not get lost in Thoreau’s philosophy, but also maintain a buffer between us and the rigidity of his words so that we do not lose his words with our own reality; without the Aeolian harp, the numerous other metaphors that run throughout Walden are at the risk of “[hardening]” and, as a result, we “mistake the structure of our language [as well as Thoreau’s] for the structure of reality” (Bickman 81). In this sense, the Aeolian harp structure both gives us the space to move in and around Thoreau’s philosophies while also separating us just enough to avoid staying wedged down in the world and words of Thoreau’s reality.

What “The structuring of Walden [affirms],” then, is that “that there are moments…[when] flux and form split apart from each other, [and] moments when they are not only credible to each other but embrace each other as well,” and it is this very embrace between the two which Thoreau seeks to accomplish with this book (Bickman 59); “The shifting styles of the book indicate the experience of being buffeted between opposing realms: of matter and spirit, of the literal and the figurative, of outer and inner” (Bickman 80).

In typical Thoreau fashion, then, the book does not just say, it does; Thoreau does not just live, but lives with his hands; Thoreau is not just a philosopher, but philosophizes; Thoreau does
not just write to speak, but writes to show. *Walden* is a tangible embodiment of the experiment which Thoreau wishes for all people to live and which he lived out himself, in which “His ability to do whatever he did with his whole being was the product of an awakened scrutiny, not, as for [his neighbors], an unconscious response of the minds that had never conceived any arbitrary gap between spiritual adventures” (Matthiessen 117).

In this way what is established here, in its entirety, is “the sense that the content cannot neatly be abstracted from style, that the medium to a large extent is the message” (Bickman 60-61). And so it is with *Walden*, then, that our existence is a an experiment in living through which, Thoreau hopes, we can embrace both the flux and the rigidity in accomplishing an infusion between the concrete and the abstract, the factual and the philosophical, the inner and the outer, and ultimately the conscious and unconscious. “The clear implication” here, in Thoreau’s conclusion, is that “if we want to know what [Walden Pond’s] depth is right now,” or if we want to know anything else that Thoreau has experienced, “we will have to go out and measure it ourselves,” for ourselves (Bickman 37).

“To locate ourselves” in this existence of awareness, though, we must realize that “the first step is to see that we ourselves are its architects and hence are in a position to recollect the design,” and that “The first step in building our dwelling is to recognize that we have already built one” (Cavell 81-82). Once we have taken this first step, our “focus [draws] on the process itself, [and] we learn about how we experience structures and remain open to possible alternatives rather than being committed to one overarching structure" of existence (Olsen 35). It is this very acceptance of alternatives which allows not only for the essential self to be built, but for the essential self to grow and change with the internal dwelling that is our subconscious self. 
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