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Theme

The Concept of Self-Reliance in Henry
David Thoreau's Work
Walden; or, Life in the Woods:
A Thematic Analysis

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Dedicated to

My dear parents

My sisters, my brother and his wife

My nieces and nephews

And friends.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iii
General Introduction	01
 Chapter One: Transcendentalist Principles and Perspectives	
1.1 Introduction	07
1.2 Transcendentalist Principles	08
1.2.1 Quest for Truth	08
1.2.2 Individualism	09
1.2.3 Materialism	11
1.2.4 Self-Reliance	13
1.3 Transcendentalist Perspectives.....	14
1.3.1 Nature	14
1.3.2 The Individual and Society	16
1.3.3 Non-Conformism	16
1.3.4 Self -Realization	17
1.4 Conclusion.....	18
 Chapter Two: Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self -Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works	
2.1 Introduction.....	20
2.2 Ralph Waldo Emerson's Philosophy of Self-Reliance.....	20
2.2.1 Emerson's Self-Reliance Doctrine	20
2.2.2 The Concept of Individualism in Emerson's Essay <i>Self-Reliance</i>	25
2.3 Emerson's Self-Reliance in the Works by Henry David Thoreau	28
2.3.1 <i>Walden; or, Life in the Woods</i>	28
2.3.2 <i>Civil Disobedience</i>	29
2.4 Conclusion	31

Chapter Three: Self-Reliance in Henry David Thoreau's

Walden; or, Life in the Woods

3.1 Introduction	33
3.2 <i>Walden; or, Life in the Woods</i> Analysis.....	34
3.2.1 <i>Walden</i> and Self-Reliance	35
3.2.2 <i>Walden</i> , Simplicity and Self-Reliance	36
3.2.3 <i>Walden</i> , Solitude and Self-Reliance	40
3.3 Conclusion	42
General Conclusion	44
Bibliography	46
Abstract	

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Overview

Henry David Thoreau is considered one of the most influential and inspiring figures in American thought and literature. Thoreau is recognized as an important contributor to the American literary and philosophical movement known as Transcendentalism. His most known book, *Walden* (1854), represents an expression of his Transcendentalist philosophy.

Despite their differences, Thoreau was deeply influenced by Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom he met in 1837. Emerson used his influence to promote Thoreau's literary efforts and philosophical ideas. In his *Walden* project, Thoreau's Transcendentalist themes were strongly reflected, principally Self-Reliance. For Emerson self-reliance can be both spiritual and economic, and Thoreau adopted Emerson's higher dimensions of individualism.

In Transcendentalist philosophy the self is the substance of reality; the real-life world is an emanation of the self. Self-reliance thus refers not just to managing one's own financial incomes, but also more philosophically to the way humankind rely on the self to survive. Thoreau suggests that *Walden* is not just a natural phenomenon, but also a metaphor for spiritual belief which is closely connected to the conception of self-reliance. This issue comes under our topic in terms of exploring the concept of self-reliance in Transcendentalist thought, and how the idea shapes the relation between individual and society.

2. Significance of the Study

Based on the contextual and moral approaches, this study aims to demonstrate that Emerson's concept of self-reliance is explicitly impacted in Thoreau's work *Walden*. Moreover; it attempts to clarify Thoreau's personal understanding of self-reliance in *Walden*. It is, then, expected to elucidate that *Walden* was not a statement of economic protest, but an attempt to overcome society's barriers to self-reliance. Materials and information provided in this work will help the reader understand how modern development has contributed to spiritual stagnation and how materialism threatens human's independence and simplicity of life.

3. Objectives of the Study

In this study, we have attempted to investigate the concept of self-reliance in Thoreau's essay *Walden*, and to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine how Emerson's concept of self-reliance is reproduced and illustrated in Thoreau's work *Walden, or Life in the Woods*.
2. To define the truly self-reliant individual, and outline how this individual should develop self-reliant attitudes in his real life.
3. To understand the relationship between the individual and society.
4. To find out how solitude changes the individual's thought to become self-reliant.

4. Statement of the Problem

Self-reliance is a central conception within American Transcendentalist thought. The idea of self-reliance has been most explicitly formulated in Ralph W. Emerson's essay entitled *Self-Reliance*. Yet, the influences of the idea of self-reliance are visibly projected in Thoreau's *Walden* though it takes different forms. This study looks at Emerson and Thoreau, as two writers who model self-reliance, one in theory, and the other in practice. It also seeks how Thoreau further experienced self-reliance in his stay at the woods in *Walden*.

5. Research Questions

The main concern of the study is to find an answer to the following question:

- To what extent is Emerson's concept of self-reliance reflected and illustrated in Henry David Thoreau's work *Walden*?

Within the framework of the above research question, we aim to answer the following sub questions:

1. How does Thoreau's own experience highlight many of the qualities that a self-reliant individual must have?
2. What are the similarities between Emerson's and Thoreau's beliefs about conventional society?
3. How can solitude change the individual's thoughts and attitudes to adopt self-reliance in their daily life?

6. Methodology

The method adopted for conducting this study is descriptive and analytical. Descriptive because the study tends to answer the "who", "what", "where" and "how" questions to comprehend and summarize the text under investigation. Analytical because it develops a deeper conversation about the "why" and the wisdom of the corpus. The basic materials for the study consist of extracts from Ralph W. Emerson's *Self-Reliance* and Henry D. Thoreau's *Walden*. We use a thematic analysis as a means to gain insight and knowledge about self-reliance dimensions as claimed by Thoreau. By using thematic analysis to extract data, we determine patterns that will allow us to conduct more consistent research and analysis. The present study follows inductive method: themes generate from the data that is collected, and are not imposed or predetermined by the researcher. According to the context of this study, thematic analysis includes a bit of grounded theory and interpretivism. The grounded theory is a general research method. It implies the study of all other concepts related to the concept

under investigation in addition to the behavior and attitudes of characters. Interpretivism involves researchers to interpret elements of the study. Interpretivism studies usually focus on meaning and employ multiple methods to reflect different aspects of the issue.

7. Results

Through the examination of Ralph W. Emerson's *Self-Reliance* and Henry D. Thoreau's observations projected throughout his essay *Walden*, the study confirmed the following results:

1. Emerson's doctrine of self-reliance is strongly reflected and illustrated in Thoreau's essay *Walden*.
2. The ability to be self-reliant and responsible in both Emerson and Thoreau's works results in putting less focus on material objects and more on inward ideas.
3. Self-reliance does not come from money or reputation; it can only result from being satisfied with basic means of life.
4. Thoreau, like Emerson, posits the view of human self-sufficiency that rejects social involvement.
5. For both Thoreau and Emerson, the embracement of individualism can revolutionize society.
6. American Transcendentalism gave birth to the capitalist system based on private, rather than state, ownership of businesses, factories, etc., with free competition and profit-making.

8. Study Limitations

Walden is a collection of essays, in journal form, of the time Henry David Thoreau living in solitude on the edge of Walden Pond. We have noticed that Thoreau's essay is somewhat ironic that this Pond was not so very isolated (note all his visitors

and his proximity to Emerson's family --since the Pond was on Emerson's land--and his daily visit into Concord for the daily news). It is also essential to mention that this essay was edited and published years after his stay at the Pond, leaving time and advantage for further reflection and revision--done in the world of business and consuming. We wonder what Thoreau would say about the contemporary world ravaged with haste and how he would react towards materialism which threatens independence and simplicity of life. Above all, though it is hoped that this work will contribute to the current ongoing debate on the often overlooked but equally important of the self-reliance dimensions as claimed in Thoreau's essay *Walden*.

9. Study Organization

Before proceeding to the presentation of the present study, it seems relevant to give a brief account on how it is going to be organized. Chapter One is an attempt to define American Transcendentalism as an individualistic movement. Chapter Two examines Emerson's delineation of self-reliance in his essay, an essay that defines the truly self-reliant individual and outlines how this individual should live, as it explores the impact of Emerson's *Self-Reliance* on Henry David Thoreau's works. Chapter Three, a detailed look at *Walden*, reveals how Thoreau exemplifies self-reliance in his personal trek to the woods in Concord, and show the close but ironic inheritance that the work shares with Emerson's *Self-Reliance*. A general conclusion will end this contribution with an understanding of how the idea of self-reliance shapes the role of the individual within or without society.

Chapter One

Transcendentalist Principles and Perspectives

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Transcendentalist Principles
 - 1.2.1 Quest for Truth
 - 1.2.2 Individualism
 - 1.2.3 Materialism
 - 1.2.4 Self-Reliance
- 1.3 Transcendentalist Perspectives
 - 1.3.1 Nature
 - 1.3.2 The Individual and Society
 - 1.3.3 Non-Conformism
 - 1.3.4 Self -Realization
- 1.4 Conclusion

1.1 Introduction

In the mid nineteenth century, a group of thinkers, led by Emerson, proposed a definition of what a real US culture should be. According to them, time had come for a new writing and a real reform in American culture. The country was in full territorial expansion, economic and political development, but lacked a cultural and mental maturity. Those thinkers therefore wanted to break free from various influences that kept dominating the American intellectual life, and advocated a new era.

This period started with the publication of R.W. Emerson's *Nature*, an essay, in 1836. This text had a great impact on many thinkers of the time, and was regarded as the manifesto of a new movement, that was soon called "Transcendentalism".

Transcendentalism introduced the American Renaissance, giving it enough strength and power. It gave birth to many texts, essentially philosophical essays, which analyzed the intellectual, but also moral, social, religious and political situation of the USA in the 1830s, 40s and 50s, and supported a firm independent spirit. Even though the Transcendentalists were essentially philosophers and thinkers, novelists such as Hawthorne or Melville, and poets such as Walt Whitman or Emily Dickinson, also felt profoundly indebted towards Transcendentalism which deeply influenced them in many different ways.

The Transcendentalists can be understood in one sense by their context; by what they were rebelling against, what they saw as the current situation and therefore as what they were trying to be different from.

1.2 Transcendentalist Principles

In the early nineteenth century, a number of ministers in Boston wished to bring about a fresh New England theology that stressed the ethical and pious behaviour of the individual in the self-determination of their own salvation. This group of liberals began to criticize the Congregational Church and its Calvinist ideals, stating that they hindered the individual's moral growth. Transcendentalist writers, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Margaret Fuller produced a series of books, essays and other works that best describe the tenets of the movement.

1.2.1 Quest for Truth

Quest for Truth is one of the main tenets of transcendentalism. Emerson and Thoreau both wrote extensively about it. For transcendentalists, truth is anything which an individual judges to be correct out of their own intuition. And the best ways to find this truth is to communicate with nature, and search inside oneself.

Emerson, in his most famous essay, *The American Scholar*, urged Americans to stop looking to Europe for inspiration and imitation and be themselves. He believed that people were naturally good and that everyone's potential was limitless. He inspired his colleagues to look into themselves, into nature, into art, and through work for answers to life's most perplexing questions. His intellectual contributions to the philosophy of transcendentalism inspired a uniquely American idealism and spirit of reform.

*The theory of books is noble. The scholar of
the first age received into him the world
around; brooded thereon; gave it the new
arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it
again.*

It came into him, life; it went out from him,

truth.

*It came to him, short-lived actions; it went out
from him, immortal thoughts.*

*It came to him, business; it went from him,
poetry.*

It was dead fact; now, it is quick thought.

It can stand, and it can go.

It now endures, it now flies, it now inspires

*Precisely in proportion to the depth of mind from
which it issued, so high does it soar, so
long does it sing.*

(Extract from The American Scholar, Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Emerson further states: *"Unless your heart, your soul, and your whole being are behind every decision you make, the words from your mouth will be empty, and each action will be meaningless. Truth and confidence are roots of happiness."*

Emerson asserts, here, individuals can reach truth and achieve success and happiness in their lives only when they exhibit self-reliance and become decision makers.

1.2.2 Individualism

The individual was the key element of Transcendentalism beliefs. American Transcendentalists asserted that understanding the individual would unlock the mysteries of life. In Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Self-Reliance* and Henry David Thoreau's essay *Resistance to Civil Government (Civil Disobedience)*, both transcendentalist thinkers speak about being individual and what reforms and changes need to be made in society.

In his essay *Self-Reliance*, Emerson describes his view of what an individual is, and how the one becomes an individual, by addressing all the various parts that consist of an individual. Emerson says:

We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds... A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men.

(Emerson, 2001)

According to Emerson, individuals must trust themselves and follow what they believe in, and not listen to what other people think. He writes,

It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps perfect sweetness the independence of solitude. (Ibid)

Being individualists, Emerson and Thoreau rejected the dominant religious, political, and cultural values of American society in order to make people aware that they are more important than everything, including government and society. In his essay *Self-Reliance*, Emerson notes: "*Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity.*" (Emerson, 2000, p.3) According to Emerson, society is a barrier against the individuality of its members, and to surmount all those obstacles and barriers, a man has to be self-reliant, and responsible enough for his own life. Emerson further asserts: "*To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, -- that is genius.*" (Ibid., p.175)

Chapter One Transcendentalist Principles and Perspectives

Emerson explains, here, that self-trust and self-confidence are the best solutions to overcome societal pressures. In other words, Emerson's praise of the individual spirit in *Self-Reliance* reveals Transcendentalists optimistic outlook of the future by asserting that the path toward self-reliance comes from self-trust and not from conforming to traditions and societal customs.

In the same way, Thoreau expresses in his essay *Civil Disobedience*:

I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have right to assume is to do at any time what I think right (Thoreau, 1849)

For Thoreau, being men first is the main issue to consider, then being responsible, gaining respect and doing what is right are assumed to be the right things to do.

1.2.3 Materialism

Transcendentalists disregarded Materialism. They believed that striving for material goods was worthless and unhealthy pursuit. Emerson expands on this idea in his essay *Wealth* from *The Conduct of Life*. He states,

As soon as a stranger is introduced into any company, one of the first questions which all wish to have answered, is, How does that man get his living? And with reason. He is no whole man until he knows how to earn a blameless livelihood. Society is barbarous until every industrious man can get his living without dishonest customs

(Emerson, (1860) cited in Atkinson (1950). pp 693-694).

Emerson describes, here, how material goods affect people's thoughts and behaviours. On the subject of making a living, Emerson realizes that the value of the work being

done is extremely important: *"The first of these measures is that each man's expense must proceed from his character . . . Do your work, respecting the excellence of the work"* (Emerson, (1860) cited in Atkinson (1950), p. 708). The *"excellence of the work"* should be as the individual conceives it, while remaining indifferent to whether or not the choice of vocation is acceptable to conventional society.

In terms of wealth, Emerson notes that the truly self-reliant person does not want money as an end:

Whilst it is each man's interest that not only ease and convenience of living, but also wealth or surplus product should exist somewhere, it need not be in his hands. Often it is very undesirable to him. Goethe said well, 'Nobody should be rich but those who understand it. (Ibid., p. 700).

But, most interestingly, Emerson notes the moral nature of money:

Money is representative, and follows the nature and fortunes of the owner. The coin is a delicate meter of civil, social and moral changes . . . Wealth is mental; wealth is moral. The value of a dollar is, to buy just things; a dollar goes on increasing in value with all the genius and all the virtue of the world. (Ibid., pp 702 – 703).

And, while *"Pride is handsome, economical", "vanity costs money, labor, horses, men, women, health and peace, and is still nothing at last; a long way leading nowhere"* (Ibid., p 709). Money can be used properly, and in that sense wealth is favourable. Most importantly, *"The secret of success lies never in the amount of money, but in the relation of income to outgo"* (Ibid., p 711). Again, Emerson does not believe in wealth

as a means to happiness; he believes in the right spending of wealth:

Friendship buys friendship; justice justice . . . It is to spend for power and not for pleasure. It is to invest income . . . Nor is the man enriched, in repeating the old experiments of animal sensation; nor unless through new powers and ascending pleasures he knows himself by the actual experience of higher good to be already on the way to the highest.

(Emerson, (1860) cited in Atkinson (1950), pp 715-716).

Self-reliance allows people to understand the tools that the world offers and use these benefits properly.

1.2.4 Self-Reliance

American Transcendentalism promotes Self-reliance as an ideal, even a virtue, and contrasts it with various modes of dependence or conformity. In *Self-Reliance*, Emerson explains that the spiritual principles of self-trust are the true meanings of self-reliance. He further asserts that individuals possess within their nature the capacity for realizing their path in life. Thus, they must trust themselves and remain loyal to the internal inspiration which directs their choices to face society's pressures. As Emerson claims it is extremely important to take strong stands towards inconsistencies. It is only through self-trust and self-reliance that individuals can achieve greatness. He notes:

Your genuine action will explain itself and will explain your other genuine actions. Your conformity explains nothing. Act singly, and what you have already done singly will justify you now. Greatness appeals to the future. (Emerson, 2001)

In the same way, Henry David Thoreau makes the ultimate commitment to self-reliance, in order to, as he says, "follow the bent of [his] genius". By leaving society and living in solitude, he stresses the importance of living independently, as he builds his own house and lives off his own land.

Self-reliance is a set of ideals and values according to which one must have unfailing trust in oneself and confidence in one's faculties, choosing individuality over conformity to society.

1.3 Transcendentalist Perspectives

Transcendentalists' beliefs and philosophy were mainly based on elements of Kant's idealism and the Romantic's love of nature. Transcendentalists focused their writings on the self-more than on social institutions and the empirical observations of the material events in the world. They further directed their philosophical inquiry to natural things in the world as part of a whole living system. Thus, they were both idealists and naturalists.

1.3.1 Nature

American Transcendentalists considered Nature as a symbol of spirituality. Many writers, including Ralph W. Emerson, Henry D. Thoreau and Margaret Fuller, focused greatly on nature and the relationship individual-nature. They experienced the solitude of nature to understand the meaning of life.

In his essay *Nature*, Ralph Waldo Emerson believes that nature and its beauty can only be understood by a man when he is in solitude. It is only far away from the hustled life that a man realizes the significance of nature. He asserts that it is extremely essential for a man to take himself away from the distractions of the society to understand the importance of nature and what it has to offer. Emerson further claims that everything in the Universe is linked to one another. It is then essential to see nature

Chapter One Transcendentalist Principles and Perspectives

plainly instead of seeing it superficially as most of people do. Emerson further states that he is one of the lucky individuals who sees nature plainly, simply because he is living a life full of peace and solitude. Emerson notes:

To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds, will separate between him and what he touches. (Emerson, 1910)

Emerson explains that to develop deep connection with nature, it has to be seen through the eyes of a child. It is only then that an individual will be in a position to understand nature. Transcendentalism is also visible in the essay *Nature*, where the poet asserts that when he is alone in the woods he can feel himself being one with the nature as a result of which he can also feel the presence of God within him and all around him. Emerson notes:

No reason can be asked or given why the soul seeks beauty. Beauty, in its largest and profoundest sense, is one expression for the universe. God is the all-fair. Truth, and goodness, and beauty, are but different faces of the same All. (Ibid)

American Transcendentalists believed in the individual's involvement with the universe, thus they focused their attention and philosophical inquiry on natural things in the world. They argued that nature is their source to search for truth.

1.3.2 The Individual and Society

Transcendentalism seemed the ideal philosophy for a new generation that strongly believed all men are created equal and have the same rights. In this, the movement began to overlap with efforts toward social reform to reverse conditions that prevented individuals from realizing their full potential. Most of the Transcendentalists became involved in social reform movements, especially anti-slavery and women's rights, for if all men and women were spiritually equal from birth, they all deserved to be treated with social and political equality as well.

Transcendentalists firmly believed that society and social institutions corrupt the purity of individuals. Thus, the basic tenet of Transcendentalists is the belief that people are at their best when they are self-reliant and independent.

1.3.3 Non-conformism

Transcendentalists believed that individuals were born pure, but society misguided and corrupted their inner good will as they grew older. They claimed that a person could transcend society's conformity and achieve true peace by remaining outside of society's influences. They further asserted that artificial laws, customs, fashions, or values killed individuality.

In his essay *Civil Disobedience*, Thoreau supported violating the laws set forth by the government if one felt they were harmful. He refused to submit to the concept that slavery was morally acceptable. Though, he was shunned by many for his radical ideas, he ignored the protests and stood up for what he believed in. Thoreau says: " *A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority.* "On the same issue, Emerson states: '*Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of our own mind.*' (Emerson, 2001)

Non-conformity is considered as a failure to conform. However, Thoreau and Emerson regarded it as a success; a successful method to defend one's beliefs and rights.

1.3.4 Self-Realization

Transcendentalists believe that individual virtue and happiness depend upon self-realization. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman as many others agree upon self-realization as an ethical ideal though they differ in their views on how this ideal can be actualized.

Common to all Transcendentalist writers is the belief that the organic relationship between the self and the universe can only be realized by the power of intuition and imagination. Faith in the imagination enabled those writers to realize their own moral and metaphysical insights. Emerson notes: "*Self-trust is the first secret of success*". For him, trusting one's imagination, beliefs and thoughts is the way to success and happiness.

American Transcendentalists not only give considerable interest to the individual, but also seek harmony with the world. For them, everything and everyone is interconnected, thus the individual understanding himself, his place in the world and what that means to the greater world is one of the basic beliefs of American Transcendentalism. Emerson says: "*Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.*" Emerson urges his readers to be self-confident and trust their own thoughts and potentialities.

Along with self-realization, American Transcendentalism promotes knowledge, learning and listening to what others could teach them. Individuals were encouraged to supersede their fate and forge their own path in the world.

1.4 Conclusion

Transcendentalism was a spiritual way of life and way of thinking. It emphasized the here and now and the actions in this life as opposed to an afterlife.

For Transcendentalists, people should learn things for themselves rather than just accept things the way they are. The question of the 'self', quest for truth, conflict between the individual and society, non-conformity, materialism are major issues and themes tackled by most Transcendentalist writers. Emerson and Thoreau were among the founders of transcendentalism in American literature. Both writers emphasized the importance of the soul and nature and they complemented their views on individualism and self-reliance.

Emerson formulated and expressed the philosophy of Transcendentalism which was based on a group of new ideas about literature, religion, culture and philosophy.

Chapter Two

Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self - Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Ralph Waldo Emerson's Philosophy of Self-Reliance

2.2.1 Emerson's Self-Reliance Doctrine

2.2.2 The Concept of Individualism in Emerson's Essay *Self-Reliance*.

2.3 Emerson's Self-Reliance in the Works by Henry David Thoreau

2.3.1 *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*

2.3.2 *Civil Disobedience*

2.4 Conclusion

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

2.1 Introduction

At the forefront of the Transcendentalist movement was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Himself a former Unitarian minister, Emerson was and is still viewed as the highest profile member of the "Transcendental Club" that was responsible for the re-thinking of American spirituality.

This chapter examines, in one hand, Emerson's views and thoughts in his essay *Self-Reliance*, an essay that describes the truly self-reliant individual and outlines how this individual should live. On the other hand, it explores the impact of Emerson's Self-Reliance on Henry David Thoreau's works.

2.2 Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance

Taking direction from ancient Greek philosophy and European thinking, Ralph Waldo Emerson embraced the idea that there was within each individual an "aboriginal self". This "self" represented the "deep force" that defined not a particular, individual identity but a universal, human identity, and this is where Emerson's *Self-Reliance* came into the picture.

2.2.1 Emerson's Self-Reliance Doctrine

Emerson's basic philosophy regarding the importance of the individual in moral and intellectual development is Self-Reliance. Based on intuition, Emerson's essay *Self-Reliance* supports and expands the persistent ideals and beliefs that constitute the American Transcendent movement's philosophy. Emerson aims to promote the values and principles of transcendentalism. He connects his views to the individual, society and all its aspects, including religion, education, and art. Emerson argues self-reliance must be applied to all aspects of life, and illustrates how such an application would benefit society.

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

It is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion; in their education; in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views. (Emerson, 2001)

In regard to religion, Emerson believes a lack of self-reliance has led prayers to become "a disease of the will" and creeds "a disease of the intellect". He argues prayer has become a form of begging. However, prayer should be a way to contemplate life and unite with God (i.e., to trust thyself and also in God). Self-reliant individuals do not pray for something, but rather embody prayer in all their actions. Emerson also believes true prayer involves an avoidance of regret and discontent, which indicate a personal "infirmity of will," as well as of sympathy for the suffering of others, which only prolongs their own infirmity, and instead should be handled with truth and health to return them to their reason.

In regard to education, Emerson asserts the education system fosters a restless mind that causes people to travel away from themselves in hope of finding something greater than what they know or have. He says:

They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination, did so by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth."One should not yearn for or imitate that which is foreign to oneself, for "Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half possession... Every great man is unique. (Ibid)

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

(Emerson develops these ideas further in his essay, *The American Scholar*, which calls for the creation of a uniquely American cultural identity distinct from European traditions.)

As far as society is concerned, Emerson rejects the values of conventional society in his essay, asserting plainly that

"Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs"

(Emerson, 2000, p.122).

Self-reliance, for Emerson, requires a rejection of society as it exists; conformity is the opposite of self-reliance. It is quite important for the self-reliant individual to reject conforming to all societal standards, for such conformity ties the person to society. He further states,

The objection to conforming to usages that have become dead to you, is, that it scatters your force. It loses your time and blurs the impression of your character . . . under all these screens; I have difficulty to detect the precise man you are. And, of course, so much force is withdrawn from your proper life. (Ibid., p. 124).

Emerson asserts, here, if a person tries to please all aspects of society, this person's "force" and effectiveness disappear. Conformity does not allow the development of true individuality, and conventional society pressures the individual to stick firmly to values that the people share. For in conventional society,

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

most men have bound their eyes with one or another handkerchief, and attached themselves to some one of these communities of opinion. This conformity makes them not false in a few particulars, authors of a few lies, but false in all particulars. Their truth is not quite true

(Emerson, 2000, p. 124).

Of course, *"For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure"* (*Ibid.*). Further, one of the problems that Emerson has with conformity is that it *"explains nothing"* (*Ibid.*, p.125). There is no expansion of individuality with an adherence to societal standards, and Emerson is convinced that a self-reliant person will ignore the trappings of convention insofar as they threaten individual thought and action. Emerson goes on to advocate that

A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition as if everything were titular and ephemeral but he. I am ashamed to think how easily we capitulate to badges and names, to large societies and dead institutions

(Ibid., p.123).

For Emerson, *"life is for itself and not for a spectacle. I much prefer that it should be of a lower strain, so it be genuine and equal, than that it should be glittering and unsteady"* (*Ibid.*). Emerson values practical concerns. He notes the value of certain things, while he maintains his belief that a society adhering to convention is a society none should desire inclusion within. He further writes: *"What I must do, is all that concerns me, not what the people think"* (*Ibid.*). The self-reliant man does not worry about appearances and how his actions may be perceived, for in this insecurity lies the destruction of individuality and potential. He realizes that only when people live with an

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

aversion for the conventional can a truly worthy society exist, one in which individuals live among each other. Emerson's credo, "*If I know your sect, I anticipate your argument*" (Emerson, 2000, p. 124), shows the truly stifling nature of society.

Emerson identifies the role that work has in the self-reliant person's life. He states,

If you maintain a dead church, contribute to a dead Bible-Society, vote with a great party either for the Government or against it . . . under all these screens, I have difficulty to detect the precise man you are . . . But do your work, and I shall know you. Do your work, and you shall reinforce yourself. (Ibid)

In *Self-Reliance*, Emerson argues against the "*reliance on Property, including the reliance on governments which protect it, [for] it is the want of self-reliance*" (Ibid., p.136). Emerson further notes that "*They measure their esteem of each other, by what each has, and not by what each is*" (Ibid). According to Emerson, "*Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles*" (Ibid., p. 137). Ownership and material possessions cannot bring self-fulfillment, because true self-fulfillment must originate within the individual. Therefore, a reliance on property, a conventional standard in society, will not foster individuality.

Emerson's purpose in writing and speaking about self-reliance was to liberate the self to the discovery of the transcendent self in American society that was ever-evolving. Emerson notes:

Whenever a mind is simple, and receives divine wisdom, old things pass away-means, teachers, texts, temples fail; it lives now and it absorbs past and future into the present hour. All

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

things are made sacred by relation to it,--one as much as another. (Emerson, 2000, p. 188).

Emerson ends the essay by writing about self-worth. He states "man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say 'I think,' 'I am,' but quotes some saint or sage." He says that the people who believe in the saying – "trust thyself" must value themselves, never underestimate themselves and consider themselves equal to the great men of history.

2.2.2 The Concept of Individualism in Emerson's Essay *Self-Reliance*

Emerson's commitment to individualism, personal freedom and responsibility, extends to all living beings, and is therefore the basis for a moral and ethical philosophy of universal respect and value. Emerson uses "men" and "mankind" referring to the whole existing humanity and gives a number of examples of great individuals who exhibited self-reliance and achieved success in their lives. This became the base of Ralph Waldo Emerson's work *Self-Reliance*.

Emerson opens his essay with the assertion, "*To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius.*" (Ibid., p.175). He asserts, here, every individual has a genius in him which comes out when one trusts himself, has faith in himself, when one can trust his thoughts, feelings and his desire and passion even after all disapprovals. He further states:

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort and advancing on Chaos and the Dark.

(Emerson, 2000, p. 177)

Speaking to the values of individual expression and self-confidence, Emerson again urges individuals to trust in the integrity of their individual experience and in the possibilities for enlightenment and success which reside in each unique experience. He asserts that true fulfillment and enlightenment is only accessible through individual experience and intuition. Emerson further claims that developing and achieving one's genius comes from seeking individual freedom and truth. In *Self-Reliance*, Emerson writes,

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better or worse as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. (Ibid., p. 176)

Encouraging people to embrace the internal genius that resides within the soul, Emerson desires people to trust themselves and achieve their own aims in life because no one else

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

can live or define their particular life for them. When an individual follows a path defined by someone else or imitates someone else's life, Emerson claims an individual is oppressed and broken; thus, they must trust their inner voices and always being honest with their personal experience.

In his essay *Self-Reliance*, Emerson attempts to teach individuals how to keep consistent and faithful to their values while facing pressures and opposing obstacles. Such inconsistencies should not be feared. Emerson says:

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words and tomorrow speaks what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said today. (Emerson, 2000, p. 183)

Emerson seeks to persuade the individual that such adherence to consistency for consistency's sake has no value; the self-reliant individual must be willing to embrace new revelations and beliefs. In disregarding old beliefs, one is not creating new truths or embracing new ideas that come into fashion, but moving ever closer to the one universal truth. As Emerson states,

Is it bad then to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood. (Ibid)

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

Emerson gives instances of people who have trusted themselves and have finally achieved success, and illustrates that great men of the past were often misunderstood because they were self-reliant and stayed true their unique individual genius. However, he also suggests that great thinkers of the past are no more important than those of the present. They only serve as models as to how an individual must stay true to oneself.

2.3 Emerson's Self-Reliance in the Works by Henry David Thoreau

Despite their differences, Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophy of self-reliance is strongly reflected in American Transcendental literature. *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, and *Civil Disobedience* by Henry David Thoreau, reveal the impact of Emerson's philosophical ideas on Thoreau's thoughts.

2.3.1 Walden; or, Life in the Woods

Henry David Thoreau was one of the most interesting characters of the Transcendental Club. Thoreau was considered as the shadow of Ralph Waldo Emerson, he had his own ideas and thoughts about nature and the world in general. Emerson noticed in Thoreau a deep vocation and discipline; meanwhile, Thoreau saw in Emerson a teacher, a guide, a father, and a friend. Thoreau was a great writer who succeeded to produce his transcendentalist ideas in each one of his works, and create conscience among the individual, nature, and humanity

For two years Thoreau carried out the most famous experiment in self-reliance when he went to Walden Pond, built a hut, and tried to live self-sufficiently without the trappings or interference of society. Later, when he wrote about the simplicity and unity of all things in nature, his faith in humanity, and his sturdy individualism, Thoreau reminded everyone that life is wasted pursuing wealth and following social customs. Nature can show that "*all good things are wild and free.*" His literary masterpiece,

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

Walden, shows his unique perspective on nature, man, perception, and culture. Thoreau says:

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. (Thoreau, 2011, p.93)

For Thoreau, the most important thing was to have a harmonious connection with nature. He further writes: "*Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail*". Thoreau invites, here, his readers to embrace simplicity rather than luxuries. It is possible then to say that Thoreau was a man who had a true relation with nature. He saw in nature a different world, where everybody lived in a harmonious relation.

As exemplified in *Walden*, nature and one's true nature were a touch stone shared closely by Emerson and Thoreau.

2.3.2 Civil Disobedience

Thoreau was Emerson's student, he stayed with him for a while and was affected by his ideas, especially those concerning the individual and society. Emerson's idea that in society the heart and power of man is drawn out and ignored, which makes people afraid of expressing their own ideas as well as being afraid of truth, led Thoreau to think that

Everyone has an obligation to himself and himself, alone. Too many people in society conform to what the government says is right and moral, when the true meaning of right or moral comes from what each individual holds to be what is right. To become

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

a true individual is to make every decision based upon your own personal belief of its morality, no matter what society says, and to act upon your belief accordingly. (Thoreau, 1849)

According to Thoreau and Emerson, individuals are responsible for themselves and should not ask for protection from the state. In his *Self-Reliance*, Emerson advised men to trust themselves and accept the society of their contemporaries, the connection of events that God found for them. In the same way, Thoreau expressed in his famous essay *Resistance to Civil Government*:

You must live within yourself, and depend upon your- self always tucked up and ready for a start, and not have many affairs, in order to avoid of the reliance on the protection of the State, which indicates the necessity of living simply (Ibid)

Emerson and Thoreau defined how an individual must be, which can be summed up as trusting one's own ideas, finding the truth within oneself as Emerson says: "*Nothing can bring you peace but yourself*" (Emerson, 2000, p. 21) and not to let society suppress one's individuality. Furthermore, individuals are responsible for themselves and should not ask for protection from the state. The man of principle cannot be constrained into any wrongdoing and will not compromise his freedom and integrity.

Chapter Two Ralph Waldo Emerson's Theory of Self-Reliance and its Impact on Thoreau's Works

2.4 Conclusion

Emerson's doctrine of self-reliance is a call to men's better natures; it is an invitation to embrace their own thoughts and opinions, their own convictions and contradictions and their own integrity and independence. For Emerson, this is what really matters because *"[n]othing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind"* (Emerson, 2000, p. 135). Self-trust may be risky and difficult, but it is the only way towards peace, creativity and fulfillment: *"Nothing can bring you peace but yourself"* (Ibid., p. 153). Emerson's philosophy is well projected in the famous words of his friend and colleague, Henry David Thoreau, who personally represented the self-reliance promoted by Emerson through his own life decisions and commitments. Like Emerson, Thoreau invites his readers to follow their own star, no matter how eccentric or unfamiliar it may appear to be: *"[I]f one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours"* (Thoreau, 2004, p. 303). This was an idealistic and optimistic message for future generations.

Chapter Three

Self-Reliance in Henry David Thoreau's

Walden; or, Life in the Woods

3.1 Introduction

3.2 *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* Analysis

3.2.1 *Walden* and Self-Reliance

3.2.2 *Walden*, Simplicity and Self-Reliance

3.2.3 *Walden* ,Solitude and Self-Reliance

3.3 Conclusion

3.1 Introduction

Henry David Thoreau was one of the most famous American authors. He could reflect his ideas and beliefs in all his works, and his love for nature was his main inspiration. Thoreau was related to the philosophy of Transcendentalism. A philosophy that combined romanticism with reform, celebrated the individual rather than the masses, emotion rather than reason. He spent his lifetime writing essays, poems, journals, and publications. Each of Thoreau's works reflected a self-proclaimed, deep idea of self- discovery, self-knowing, and self- reliance. His relation with nature was his treasure. He knew how to penetrate into its heart and live in a harmonious relation.

Thoreau put into his writings all his power to convey his ideas and thoughts. Using his personal experience, wide reading, imagination, and originality, Thoreau could attract his readers through a variety of techniques, like paradox exaggeration and irony.

It has been necessary then to investigate and analyze one of Thoreau's famous work *Walden* to examine how Thoreau exhibited self-reliance in his personal trek to the woods in Concord, and uncover how Thoreau's own experience highlights many of the qualities that an autonomous person must have.

The method adopted for analyzing Thoreau's work *Walden* is descriptive and analytical. The basic materials for the analysis consist of extracts of Henry D. Thoreau's *Walden*. We use a thematic analysis which involves a qualitative analytic method as a means to gain insight and knowledge about self-reliance dimensions as claimed by Thoreau. By using thematic analysis to extract data, we determine, organize and describe patterns that will allow us to interpret various aspects of our research topic and thus conduct more rigorous research and analysis. It is essential to view the work *Walden* in a theoretical or analytical way rather than merely approaching it with a

Chapter Three **Self-Reliance in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods***

descriptive focus. Intensive reading needs to take place during this process to ensure the identification of all relevant ideas in the text, including even the most simple ones in order to trace and reveal how self-reliance contributes in the promotion of human freedom, and demonstrate how the value of modern improvement has contributed to spiritual stagnation.

3.2 *Walden; or Life in the Woods* Analysis

First published in 1854, *Walden* is one of the most prominent works of transcendental literature. The book records the two years, two months, and two days Thoreau spent in a cabin he built on Ralph Waldo Emerson's property near Walden Pond. Thoreau's life at Walden Pond embodies a philosophy set out most famously and directly in Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, *Self-Reliance*.

Walden is a difficult book to read for many reasons. First, it is written in an older prose, which uses long and complex sentences and paragraphs, as it uses vivid and detailed descriptions. Throughout the book, Thoreau does not hesitate to use metaphors, allusions, hyperbole, personification, irony, satire and oxymorons, making his messages quite difficult to decode. Second, its logic, based on a different understanding of life, is contradictory to what most people believe. And third, the non-literal language used by Thoreau accentuates the difficulty for his readers quite often.

Walden combines an autobiographical account of Henry David Thoreau's experiment as a self-reliant individual with a social critique of Western Culture's attitude toward material goods and nature. Some of the major themes that are present within the text are: self-reliance, simplicity, and progress. The book further emphasizes the importance of solitude, contemplation, and closeness to nature.

Chapter Three **Self-Reliance in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods***

The book comprises eighteen chapters, yet extracts from particular chapters are to be studied and analyzed to examine how Thoreau exemplifies self-reliance in his personal trek to the woods, in Concord, and showing how the idea of self-reliance is visibly projected in Thoreau's *Walden* though it takes different forms.

3.2.1 *Walden* and Self-Reliance

In his book *Walden*, Thoreau argues for a separation between material wealth and spiritual growth, engaging in what he calls '*Voluntary poverty*'. Thoreau believes that living a simple life, rejecting materialistic goods can purify his life and give it essence, as it can leave his mind free. "*Simplify, Simplify* ", *Walden* advises.

As a self-described Transcendentalist, Thoreau stresses the importance of an independent life, in which he relies on no one for his everyday existence, focusing on the profound lessons that humankind can learn from nature. Thoreau explains in *Walden*,

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived (Thoreau, 2011, p. 93).

Some critics think that Thoreau's choice to live at Walden Pond was simply because he was a hermit. However, his sheltered life was the result of his brother's death, which promoted Thoreau to go to Walden Pond.

As anyone may obviously see, Thoreau did not choose a life on the pond simply because he was a hermit. He left his nearby town of Concord for the life at the pond on July 4, 1845, which was Independence Day. By leaving for Walden on July 4th Independence Day, Thoreau would have spent his first full day at Walden Pond on the anniversary of his brother's birthday.

Chapter Three **Self-Reliance in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods***

In *Walden*, Thoreau wants to prove that, " *a man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone*", he further proves to his own satisfaction that he can support himself with a minimum of expenses. For food, he subsists mostly on rice and rye meal, he makes bread whose only ingredients is flour, and he advocates for vegetarianism, which lets him avoid the trouble of catching animals and the moral dubiousness of killing them. For clothing, he has only the fewest and most utilitarian garments. Thoreau believes in the individual's power to live an everyday life charged with meaning. In the seventh chapter of *Walden*; The Bean Field, Thoreau describes his field, his daily work, and the close relationship he achieves between his beans and himself. Thoreau states,

It was a singular experience that long acquaintance which I cultivated with beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting, and threshing, and picking over, and selling them, - the last was the hardest of all. (Thoreau, 2011, p. 164)

In the middle of the same chapter, Thoreau presents a list that includes his outgoes and income. Through this list he explains to his readers how much money he has spent and how much money he has earned with his crop. This list which reveals that his income is no lower than his outgo is the proof of Thoreau's faith in self-reliance, Thoreau's faith in nature and Thoreau's faith in simplicity.

3.2.2 Walden, Simplicity and Self-Reliance

When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only. (Ibid., p. 5)

Chapter Three **Self-Reliance in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods***

With these words, Henry David Thoreau begins the tale of his experiment of simple living at Walden Pond. Over the course of the book, Thoreau outlines his philosophy of life, politics, and nature.

In the first chapter of *Walden*, Economy, Thoreau informs his audience how much he does enjoy and appreciate to live a simple and peaceful life in contact with nature, revealing how the natural world around him makes his life quiet and harmonious. Thoreau claims that it is better to have time to walk in nature, think about beautiful things, and breathe pure air, instead of working long hours to pay for big houses, luxurious cars, or properties. From the pond, Thoreau realizes that in contrast to his happiness, other men are wasting their lives by chasing after wealth and social status. Within the same chapter, Thoreau asserts that men are enslaved by their "needs"; men do not work by passion ; they work because they need huge amounts of money to pay for their costly desires. Thoreau says;

By a seeming fate, commonly called necessity, they are employed, as it says in an old book, laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal. It is a fool's life, as they will find when they get to the end of it.

(Thoreau, 2011, p. 7)

Thoreau further argues that the most important thing is to have enough food, clothing, shelter, and fuel to exist. He states,

None of the brute creation requires more than Food and Shelter. The necessaries of life for man in this climate may, accurately enough, be distributed under the several heads of Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel ; for not till we have secured these are we

Chapter Three Self-Reliance in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*

prepared to entertain the true problems of life with freedom and a prospect of success. (Thoreau, 2011, p. 14)

According to Thoreau, men have the right to have a worthy life, with enough possibilities to live it out, yet the problem is that they tend to turn their needs into wants, and then these wants become necessities when they are in fact not necessary at all. Thoreau further asserts,

Consider first how slight a shelter is absolutely necessary... Many a man is harassed to death to pay the rent of a larger and more luxurious box who would not have frozen to death in such a box as this. (Ibid., pp. 31-32)

For Thoreau, shelter proves to be something for which humans expend great energy to acquire, asserting that when they have too many things around them, they cannot leave behind their terrible materialism. Thoreau sees that people should consider this as a fault in society:

If it is asserted that civilization is a real advance in the condition of man, -- and I think that it is, though only the wise improve their advantages, -- it must be shown that it has produced better dwellings without making them more costly

(Ibid., p. 33)

Thoreau argues, here, that society limits men's freedom by preventing them from living according to their principles and ideas. It provides a style of life where men have to work so hard, like machines, in order to get an artificial happiness. Thoreau expounds upon this idea, noting: "*While civilization has been improving our houses, it has not equally improved the men who are to inhabit them. It has created palaces, but it was not*

Chapter Three Self-Reliance in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*

so easy to create noblemen and kings” (Thoreau, 2011, p. 36). For Thoreau, luxuries are unnecessary in life because they are obstacles to humans growth. Shelter and Food are important, yet Thoreau asserts that true riches should be within the human spirit. Thoreau's own house, in *Walden*, shows his self-sufficiency: *"My dwelling was small, and I could hardly entertain an echo in it; but It seemed larger for being a single apartment and remote from neighbors."* (*Ibid.*, p. 162).

Thoreau does not believe in sacrificing independence for shelter. He further states: *"I was more independent than any farmer in Concord, for I was not anchored to a house or farm, but could follow the bend of my genius, which is a very crooked one, every moment"* (*Ibid.*, pp. 58- 59). According to Thoreau, life does not require wealth but commodities for soul and body.

In terms of clothing, Thoreau looks at the undue importance it has occupied throughout history. He claims that people misuse clothing as something that becomes a form of status identification and masking. A further problem occurs when clothing becomes a part of identity itself. Thoreau writes: *"Everyday our garments become more assimilated to ourselves, receiving the impress of the wearer's character, until we hesitate to lay them aside"* (*Ibid.*, p. 14).

Thoreau regards reliance on clothing as a form of reliance on society, leaving no room to develop autonomy:

No man ever stood the lower in my estimation for having a patch in his clothes; yet I am sure that there is greater anxiety, commonly, to have fashionable, or at least clean and unpatched clothes, than to have a sound conscience (Ibid)

Chapter Three **Self-Reliance in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods***

Thoreau asserts that when one mistakenly believes that one's worth is related to the expressiveness of one's clothing or shelter, one is neglecting the importance of a healthy mind and spirit.

Nature, on the other hand, remains a strength and an appropriate refuge for Thoreau. In the woods, he spends his time watching nature; sometimes he even forgets the hours or the days of the week. The best activities for him are reading and admiring nature. In the woods, he feels comfortable because he realizes that there is a different and new world, where everybody works to live. A world where there is no ambition, egoism, power, or excess of luxury. A world that is simple but perfect for all men work enough, but not too much. All are equal and nobody has a different status.

Throughout his novel, Thoreau advises his readers to respect and love their lives without forgetting that money is necessary but not indispensable. The best things do not have monetary value; they can be achieved with intelligence and self-trust.

3.2.3 *Walden*, Solitude and Self-Reliance

The book is for the most part a record of a man's time spent in solitude, and the reflections he has in that state. For this reason, Solitude has been chosen as a title for *Walden's* fifth chapter.

By leaving society and avoiding almost all ordinary human contacts, Thoreau seeks the Holy Land in the woods of Concord, Massachusetts. He notes, "*I love to be alone, I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude*" (Thoreau, 2011, p. 138). He further asserts, "*We need the tonic of wildness, - ... We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander*" (Ibid., pp. 320 - 321).

Chapter Three Self-Reliance in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*

At Walden Pond, Thoreau could experience relaxed and comfortable environment, enriched by the sounds of the animals in the woods and the wind in the trees. He says: *"Though it is now dark, the wind still blows and roars in the wood, the waves still dash, and some creatures lull the rest with their notes"* (Thoreau, 2011., p. 132). Thoreau further describes the feelings and emotions that nature has produced in him. He asserts that he feels good when he listens to the sounds of the frogs, the rustling leaves, and the cool and pure breeze. Within the same chapter, Thoreau states: *" The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature, - of sun and wind and rain, of summer and winter, - such health, such cheer, they afford forever! "* (*Ibid.*, p. 141)

Thoreau asserts that he has never felt alone though he has been living alone in his cabin; on the contrary he explains that he is well accompanied by nature. He further writes,

I am no more lonely than the loon in the pond that laughs so loud, or than Walden Pond itself ... I am no more lonely than the Milk Brook, or a weathercock, or the north star, or the south wind, or an April shower, or a January thaw, or the first spider in a new house. (Ibid., p. 140)

Making all those comparisons, Thoreau explains to his readers why he has not felt alone, and how the sweet company of the natural world has filled his solitude. On the other hand, Thoreau speaks about many guests he has received in his cabin, and the pleasure he has taken in the company of others who live in the woods. Thoreau notes,

I had more cheering visitors than the last. Children come a-berrying, railroad men taking a Sunday morning walk in clean shirts, fishermen and hunters, poets and philosophers, in short,

Chapter Three **Self-Reliance in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods***

all honest pilgrims, who came out to the woods for freedom's sake . (Thoreau, 2011, p. 157)

Thoreau believes that the community of humankind is constant and has everyone as a member. As he believes that a real connection with others depends on a real connection with oneself. Thoreau further claims that solitude is a wonderful state in his life, because it has given him the opportunity to commune with his interior and with nature.

3.3 Conclusion

A detailed look at *Walden*, revealed how Thoreau exemplified self-reliance in his solitary life in the woods, in Concord. Through *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau projects his strong condemnations of the hypocrisy, mindless conformity, and waste of the human spirit that have obliged him leave society and live in solitude. According to Thoreau, the conditions that favour human fulfillment are quiet concentration, simple labour, and a life attentive to the lessons of nature. Thoreau believes that the best life is the simplest life. He rejects those luxuries that most men find so important, criticizing the pretensions of his society, which spends its time and energy pursuing material advancements.

By leaving such society and such artificial milieu, Thoreau describes how much he has enjoyed every day of his life at Walden, and appreciated the gifts that nature offers.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

GENERAL CONCLUSION

It has been seen that, *Walden* is a work of Transcendentalism for it makes the idealistic assumption that there is a true self to discover. A visible resemblance can be detected initially while connecting Henry David Thoreau's work *Walden* with Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophy of Self-Reliance.

Self-reliant individuals are exhorted by Emerson to reject conventional society and its values which prevent true individuality from developing. Thus, 'Self-Reliance', as an ideal, consists of not only acknowledging one's potential, but also living free from societal concerns. Chapter one defined American Transcendentalism as a movement that was deeply individualistic and as a system of principles and perspectives closely connected with the idea of individualism. Chapter two examined Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophy projected in his essay *Self-Reliance*, and explored the impact of Emerson's thoughts on Thoreau's works *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, and *Civil Disobedience*. Chapter three presented a detailed look at *Walden*, revealing how Thoreau exemplified 'Self-Reliance' in his solitary life in the woods, in Concord. Thoreau's exploration of his identity was founded on individualism rather than membership in any cultural group. For him, allegiance to any group was liable to distract or seduce one way from fidelity to one's personal values and highest calling.

This study has attempted to show that Thoreau's work points out to the health and vitality that nature imports, highlights the importance of individual self-realization, and invites readers to face life as it is, to reject materialism and embrace simplicity. Yet, such ideals remain unrealizable in the corrupt and materialistic society of the contemporary world. Much research has been conducted on Thoreau's work *Walden*, such as: *Study Guide for Walden by Henry David Thoreau* by David Barber (1992),

Reflections on Walden by Elizabeth Witherell, with Elizabeth Dubrulle (1995), *Self-Reliance in Emerson's and Thoreau's Work* by Andreas Kirchhoff (1997), and *Walden; or, Life in the Woods by Henry D. Thoreau* by Barbara Celarent (2009). Yet, more are to be looked for investigating the concept of self-reliance, then further studies could be carried out about *Walden* and the implications of the concept of self-reliance.

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ABSTRACT

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, American literature has been preoccupied with questions of the self and identity. The beliefs of individualism, self-actualization, and self-reliance have been omnipresent in the Transcendentalist philosophy. In this vein, we are interested to explore the concept of self-reliance in Transcendentalist literature, and demonstrate how self-reliance may contribute in the promotion of human freedom. Thus, an analytical method has been adopted, focusing on the contextual and moral approaches. Dealing with key texts by Ralph W. Emerson's *Self-Reliance* and Thoreau's philosophy projected in *Walden*, these approaches have enhanced our investigation about the concept of self-reliance in Thoreau's *Walden*, and the relationship between the individual and society. According to the context of this study, the method opted for includes a bit of grounded theory and interpretivism as means to identify, analyze and report patterns (themes) within a dataset that provide answers to the research questions being addressed. This study argues that Emerson's values of individualism, self-reliance and personal freedom are strongly reflected and illustrated in H.D. Thoreau's *Walden*, and reveals how the idea self-reliance shapes the relation individual-society. While Thoreau's work *Walden* values the ideals of self-reliance, we can claim that such ideals are unrealizable in the corrupt and materialistic society of the contemporary world. Much research has been conducted on *Walden*, yet more are to be looked for investigating the concept of self-reliance, then further studies could be carried out about *Walden* and the implications of the concept of self-reliance.

Keywords

Individualism , Freedom, Materialism , Self-reliance , Solitude , Transcendentalism.

RÉSUMÉ

Depuis le début du dix-neuvième siècle, la littérature américaine s'est préoccupée de ces questions à savoir l'individu et l'identité. Les concepts de l'individualisme, de l'auto-actualisation et de l'auto-suffisance sont omniprésents dans la philosophie transcendentaliste. Dans cette perspective on s'intéresse particulièrement à explorer le concept de l'auto-suffisance dans la littérature transcendentaliste et à démontrer comment ce concept peut contribuer à promouvoir la liberté de l'individu. Dans cette optique, une méthode analytique a été adoptée, en se basant notamment sur des approches contextuelles et morales, et les idées clés exprimées par Ralph W. Emerson et Thoreau à travers son idéologie évoquée dans son livre : *Walden ; or, Life in the Woods*. Ces approches ont contribué à bien mener notre recherche sur le concept d'auto-suffisance dans ladite œuvre, et mieux clarifier la relation entre l'individu et la société. Selon le contexte de cette étude, la méthode adoptée inclut l'analyse par théorisation ancrée (Grounded Theory) et l'interprétation comme moyens d'identification, d'analyse et de report des thèmes extraits de *Walden*. Ceci, nous permettent de porter un éclairage sur les questions traitées. En outre, cette étude révèle que les valeurs de l'individualisme, de l'auto-suffisance et de la liberté individuelle exprimées par Emerson sont fortement définies et illustrées dans l'œuvre de Thoreau : *Walden ; or, Life in the Woods*. En plus, elle élucide comment le principe de l'auto-suffisance régule la relation entre l'individu et la société. Cependant, on peut présumer que les valeurs idéales relatives au concept de l'auto-suffisance ne peuvent être réalisées dans une société corrompue et matérialiste du monde contemporain. Plusieurs recherches ont été effectuées sur l'œuvre de Thoreau : *Walden*. Néanmoins, il reste beaucoup à faire sur son analyse ainsi que sur l'implication du concept de l'auto-suffisance.

Mots clés :

Individualisme, Liberté, Matérialisme, Auto-suffisance, Solitude, Transcendentalisme

ملخص

اهتم الأدب الأمريكي منذ بداية القرن التاسع عشر بمسألة الذات و الهوية، إذ نلمس وجود الشعور بالفردية و تحقيق الذات والاعتماد على النفس بقوة في الفلسفة المتعالية، وفي هذا المنحى انشغلنا باستكشاف مفهوم الاعتماد على النفس في الأدب المتعالي لنبين كيف يمكن له أن يساهم في ترقية حرية الإنسان ، ولقد تبيننا طريقة تحليلية تقوم على أساس المقاربات القرينية والمعنوية واعتمدنا على المعطيات الأساسية التي أشار إليها كلا من رالف والدو إيمرسون وهنري ديفيد ثورو من خلال فلسفته المستوحاة من كتاب: وحي الغابة (*Walden; or, Life in the Woods*)، سيّما وأن هذه المقاربات ستعزز بحثنا حول مفهوم الاعتماد على النفس في الكتاب المذكور أعلاه وتحدد العلاقة بين الفرد و المجتمع. وأخيرا نأمل في فهم قيم الفردية والاعتماد على النفس والحرية الشخصية وفقا لكتاب وحي الغابة (*Walden ; or, Life in the Woods*) لثورو وتوضيح كيف يمكن لمبدأ الاعتماد على النفس تشكيل العلاقة بين الفرد والمجتمع. في حين نخلص إلى أنه لا يمكن تحقيق قيم المقال المثالية المتعلقة بمبدأ الاعتماد على النفس في مجتمع معاصر فاسد ومادي. وقد تطرق الكثيرون إلى دراسة هذا الكتاب، لكن المجال يبقى مفتوحا للتوسع والبحث فيه وفي موضوع الإعتماد على النفس.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الفردية ، الحرية ، المادية ، الاعتماد على النفس ، الوحدة ، المذهب المتعالي.