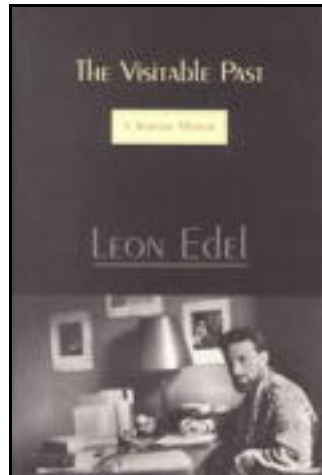


## CITIZENS' PROFESSOR LEON EDEL



Of the creative spirits that flourished in Concord, Massachusetts, during the middle of the nineteenth century, it might be said that Hawthorne loved men but felt estranged from them, Emerson loved ideas even more than men, and Thoreau loved himself.

**1907**

September 9, Monday: [Joseph Leon Edel](#) was born in Pittsburgh, the first child of Simon Edel and Fannie Malamud (Russian-Jewish immigrants who had arrived in the US in the earliest years of the 20th Century).

**1927**

[Leon Edel](#) took his BA degree at McGill University.

**1928**

[Leon Edel](#) took his MA degree at McGill University.



1932

[Leon Edel](#) took his PhD degree at the University of Paris.

1944

August 25, Friday: The liberation of Paris.

[Japanese](#) naval vessel sunk:

- Destroyer *Yunagi*, by submarine *Picuda* (SS-382), Philippine Islands area, 18 degrees 46 minutes North, 120 degrees 46 minutes East

(Between 1943 and 1947, as a member of a psychological warfare unit, [Leon Edel](#) was accompanying the US and its Allies on their march from Normandy to the Rhine by way of Paris, and then into Germany. These were the guys who were assuring us that *Führer* [Adolf Hitler](#) had only one testicle. Learning how to use psychology in the service of war would come in handy for Leon in the postwar era, as it would become possible for him to advance his academic career in American academies through the derogation of Henry Thoreau.)

WORLD WAR II

1950

[Leon Edel](#) became an assistant Professor at New York University.

1953

Dr. [Leon Edel](#)'s WILLA CATHER: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY. He became a full professor at New York University.

The secret of biography resides in finding the link between talent and achievement. A biography seems irrelevant if it doesn't discover the overlap between what the individual did and the life that made this possible. Without discovering that, you have shapeless happenings and gossip.



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1959

Professor [Leon Edel](#)'s LITERARY BIOGRAPHY.

Any biographer must of necessity become a pilgrim a peripatetic, obsessed literary pilgrim, a traveler with four eyes.

1962

Professor [Leon Edel](#)'s [HENRY JAMES](#): THE CONQUEST OF LONDON, 1870-1883 and [HENRY JAMES](#): THE MIDDLE YEARS, 1882-1895.

1963

Professor [Leon Edel](#) was awarded a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award for his prospective 5-volume definitive biography of [Henry James](#), which would not be completed until 1972.

The biographer who writes the life of his subject's self-concept passes through a fade into the inner house of life.

Later on, new documents relating to James's gay side would blindsides Edel –who was already “invested”– and this literature professor would not be able to figure out how to react.

1970

[Leon Edel](#)'s [HENRY D. THOREAU](#) hit new lows of derogation:<sup>1</sup>

If A WEEK remembers, in part, the ecstasy of youth, it is a book written with a sense of lost childhood and adolescence. A significant link between it and WALDEN may be found in a quotation (in A WEEK) from the Chinese writer Mencius (Meng-tzu): “If one loses a fowl or a dog, he knows well how to seek them

1. [Leon Edel](#). [HENRY D. THOREAU](#). Minneapolis MN: U of Minnesota P, 1970

Of the creative spirits that flourished in Concord, Massachusetts, during the middle of the nineteenth century, it might be said that Hawthorne loved men but felt estranged from them, Emerson loved ideas even more than men, and Thoreau loved himself.

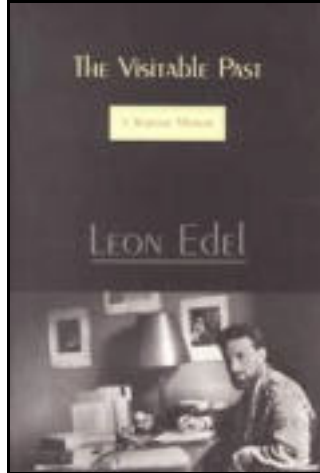


again; if one loses the sentiments of his heart, he does not know how to seek them again.... The duties of practical philosophy consist only in seeking after those sentiments of the heart which we have lost; that is all." It seems clear that between the writing of *A WEEK* and of *WALDEN* Thoreau came to feel that the sentiments of his heart were irrecoverable, for in *WALDEN* we read his celebrated parable which harks back to this quotation. It is set down almost irreverently with a remark that readers would pardon some "obscurities, for there are more secrets in my trade than in most men's." [Edel quotes parable] The obscurity of the parable disappears when it is placed beside the quotation from Mencius. What is more we can read a deeper secret than the loss of youth's first ecstasies. The symbols Thoreau uses represent the most faithful animals in man's life - his dog, guide, companion, devoted beyond the devotion of humans to his master, and his horse, a bay, a handsome animal, which embodies man's thrust, his drive, his animal instincts. A horse carries a man and gives him a sense of support and direction. And finally the loss of the turtledove admits to a loss of love and tenderness, symbol of delicacy and affection. A man so bereft had indeed to seek comfort in cold thought. The parable speaks for an eternal quest for the ideal. It also tells us that Thoreau felt he had lost touch with the deepest part of himself - his instincts, his animal nature, with which all men must make some kind of truce. And so like the Eastern philosophers whom he read, he transcends this part of himself. He sits by a pond and meditates but only partly in serenity and humility. His thoughts often express petulance and anger, of a deeply irrational kind. Behind his mask of peace, Thoreau was not at peace with himself.

1971

May 12, 8PM Wednesday evening: Professor [Leon Edel](#), a specialist in [Henry James](#), accepted the Citizens' Chair in English at the University of Hawaii –upon the completion of a performance of George Frederick Handel's Sonata for Recorder, Opus 1, Number 11 in F Major– by delivering a lecture on another Henry with whom he was not quite so familiar, a lecture entitled "The Mystery of Walden Pond." This lecture marks a high point in Thoreau-derogation, as if Professor Edel had gotten up on the wrong side of the bed that morning. His take on [Henry Thoreau](#) turned out to be that our guy had been some kinda "fragile Narcissus" utterly unable to "rise above the contemplation of his own visage." Henry was merely proclaiming in [WALDEN](#) that he had no guide, he had no support, he had no drive, he had no peace, he had no strength of the spirit, he had no love (all he had in his life was a "horror of sex"). —What his life amounted to was a quest for things of the spirit and of the instinctual life, things of which, in his personal "spiritual immaturity," he was utterly deficient. Having decided to live his life as a "loner," this chosen condition of life was (surprise) depriving him of human friendship. His shanty at Walden Pond was a desert island, a refuge, amounting to an escape from human obligations. Thoreau's ideal of personal freedom was a selfish ideal, for it was something to be "gained at the expense of

others.”



This Thoreau-as-escapist of Edel’s was listening only to himself and writing only of himself and scribbling daily in a journal filling many volumes that amounted to a mirror of himself — a mirror making everything about his life, as mirrors will, the exact opposite of what his situation actually was. (Have I mentioned that Adolf Hitler had only one testicle?) “He was dependent, insecure, mother-attached.” Confined in a lifelong childhood, unable even to leave his mother’s home, he fantasized about how he was getting away from it all “in a supposed wilderness.” “[S]piritual helplessness” was creating in him an “anger and rage” and a capability of “subdued violence,” of which Professor Edel informs us that he has become sensitized. He can feel it. Edel can feel it in Henry’s words: Thoreau forgot society, forgot companionship, did not understand love. No saint, Henry was merely another guy who “preached what he did not practice” while “vent[ing] his rage on his neighbors and look[ing] down on the hard-working farmers” of Concord, “impoverished” neighbors whom “he despised.” Why did he so despise them? —Because they possessed what he so lacked in this self-imposed alienation from his fellow human beings: “the warmth of human love, the tenderness and companionship of women and children.” Thoreau went looking for a personal Narcissistic utopia but “[t]here are no utopias in the real world”:

He was, to put it in mythic terms, a fragile Narcissus embodied in a rough New Englander. He talked only of himself, in fact he announces this in the opening of WALDEN. “I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well.” At that rate I suppose we should all talk about ourselves. And he wrote a journal which was the mirror of himself —he wrote in it daily —it fills many volumes. He said that even the echoes of his voice were the only “kindred voices” that he heard. A man who listens only to himself will, of course, never discover other voices. What does man do when he creates a myth? Often he makes everything the opposite of what it is. If he is puny he thinks himself a giant. Little Tom Thumb killed ogres and rescued his family, and he was as small as a pea. David symbolized the myth of brain over brawn. Samson was all brawn only so long as his hair was uncut. Shorn, he lost his prowess. Thoreau, shut up in his childhood, could not leave home. He created a myth of how he got away from the world in a supposed wilderness. In the first paragraph of WALDEN Thoreau remarks that having stayed in his hut, he is once again a sojourner in civilized society. Had he ever left it? Yes, in the realms of his fancy. He was dependent, insecure, mother-attached. He made



a myth of self-reliance. But his spiritual helplessness engendered anger and rage; one is conscious of subdued violence in him, for no man wants to think of himself as helpless. And so he vented his rage on his neighbors and looked down on the hard-working farmers. Thoreau was no saint. He preached what he did not practice; he preached only what he imagined – he pursued an ideal, a noble, beautiful and unreal dream. His spiritual immaturity was nowhere more revealed than in his horror of sex. And this in a lover of nature was strange indeed. All his life was a search for an utopia which many of the impoverished farmers he despised had in effect by their own hearth: the warmth of human love, the tenderness and companionship of women and children, that love which Thoreau in his deepest anguish lavished on animals and plants with whom he could commune in his alienation from his fellows. ...Thoreau never thought through to the end the meaning of personal freedom gained at the expense of others. Man lives by myth.... Thoreau gave us an exquisite myth –a myth of some retreat –Walden, a desert island, some refuge, some “great good place” of the mind that in a crowded world has a potent appeal. But it is also a flawed myth – in preaching self-reliance he forgot society, he forgot companionship, he did not understand love. ...There are no utopias in the real world.

Thoreau’s parable about the three animals turns out to be, according to Citizens’ Professor Edel, something recycled from [A WEEK](#) that just happened to get “dropped almost irrelevantly” into [WALDEN](#):

<b>lost hound</b>	<b>the faithful hound, guide, protector, loyal, loveable; who does not know how many bonds are established between a man and his dog?</b>
<b>lost bay horse</b>	<b>plougher of fields, embodying strength and thrust and support; animal of support and chivalry, spirited creature, symbol of our instincts</b>
<b>lost turtle-dove</b>	<b><i>ehako</i>, as the Hawaiians call it musically— whose soft cooing and swiftness as messenger, symbol of love and of the Holy Ghost, embodies so much of man’s association with the creatures of the air and the mysteries of religion</b>

Within WALDEN there is ... parable and mythic statement and paradox and humor. I want to look at one small parable ... foreshadowed in Thoreau's earlier book, A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVER [sic]. In that book he quotes from the Chinese Meng-tsu, "If one loses a fowl or a dog, he knows well how to seek them again; if one loses the sentiments of his heart, he does not know how to seek them again.... The duties of practical philosophy consist only in seeking after those sentiments of the heart which we have lost; that is all." In WALDEN this is translated into a personal parable, dropped almost irrelevantly into the book with the remark that the reader must pardon some obscurities "for there are more secrets in my trade than in most men's." Many have been puzzled by this parable:

**WALDEN:** In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line. You will pardon some obscurities, for there are more secrets in my trade than in most men's, and yet not voluntarily kept, but inseparable from its very nature. I would gladly tell all that I know about it, and never paint "No Admittance" on my gate.

I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud, and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves.

To anticipate, not the sunrise and the dawn merely, but, if possible, Nature herself! How many mornings, summer and winter, before yet any neighbor was stirring about his business, have I been about mine! No doubt many of my townsmen have met me returning from this enterprise, farmers starting for Boston in the twilight, or woodchoppers going to their work. It is true, I never assisted the sun materially in his rising, but, doubt not, it was of the last importance only to be present at it.



A hound, a bay horse, a turtle dove. Thoreau names three members of the animal kingdom close to all mankind; the faithful hound, guide, protector, loyal, loveable [*sic*]; who does not know how many bonds are established between a man and his dog? And the horse, in olden times, in Thoreau's time, plougher of fields, embodying strength and thrust and support; animal of support and chivalry, spirited creature, symbol of our instincts. Who does not know, even today, when the combustion engine has replaced the horse, how many bonds are established between a man and his horse? And finally the turtle dove –*ehako*, as the Hawaiians call it musically– whose soft cooing and swiftness as messenger, symbol of love and of the Holy Ghost, embodies so much of man's association with the creatures of the air and the mysteries of religion—

Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me (says the Psalmist) Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then I would fly away, and be at rest.



A hound, a bay [*sic*], a turtle dove. Thoreau has lost them and in his parable he announced that he always searched for them. Is he not proclaiming the loss of things belonging to the deepest part of himself? Without guide, without support, shorn of drive, there was no peace, no strength of the spirit, no love. His life was indeed a quest for these lost things of his spirit and of the instinctual life. And if he found that other men were similarly bereft, this was because Thoreau could not recognize that his very condition of life deprived him of human friendship. A man who decides to be a "loner" must accept the consequences of that decision. Translated into another language we might say that Thoreau's quest for the lost things of his spirit was a quest for the mature experiences of this world: he could not rise above the contemplation of his own visage. ...Walden was a mood, a fancy, a fleeting dream. Someone who looks for the unattainable must keep on looking as Thoreau did – the hound, the bay horse, the turtle dove always eluded him.

The WALDEN parable The other analyses

1972

Professor [Leon Edel](#) relocated from New York University to the University of Hawaii.





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1978

[Leon Edel](#) retired.

The answer to old age is to keep one's mind busy and to go on with one's life as if it were interminable. I always admired Chekhov for building a new house when he was dying of tuberculosis.

1979

[Leon Edel](#)'s BLOOMSBURY: A HOUSE OF LIONS.

1984

[Leon Edel](#)'s WRITING LIVES: PRINCIPIA BIOGRAPHICA.

1997

September 5, Friday: [Joseph Leon Edel](#) died in Honolulu.

2001

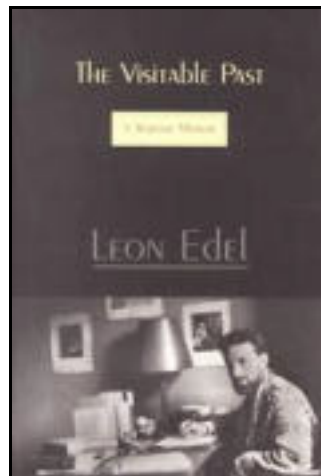
[E.O. Wilson](#), whose entire [shtick](#) as a moral philosopher/scientismist had been dismissed by [Henry Thoreau](#) with a single sentence, was awarded the Thoreau Society Medal.



"No good ever came of obeying a law which you had discovered."  
— [Henry Thoreau](#), JOURNAL, March 19, 1851



Thoreau scholar [Leon Edel](#)'s THE VISITABLE PAST: A WARTIME MEMOIR (U of Hawaii P) was posthumously published, as composed by him in his retirement from notebooks. This was his recollection of [World War II](#) experiences as a youthful member of a psychops unit arriving in Normandy a month after D-Day with the De Gaulle force that was to enter Paris. Paris had been the scene of his own student days during the late 1920s and early 1930s, so of course the young man's war memories brought forward the young man's prewar memories. Edel self-described his procedure as "trying to let one kind of story beget another; one moment of experience summon a series of past moments."



(Of course, since this Thoreau scholar's entire military career in that psychops unit had been one of lying – about for instance the number of testicles that Hitler had, factoids of that nature– one cannot know in a memoir such as this which of the proffered materials one can trust to be truthful versus which one cannot.)



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"  
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: July 23, 2013

*ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT  
GENERATION HOTLINE*



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.  
Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.  
Arrgh.