



# THOREAU SOCIETY BULLETIN

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Courtesy Kenneth Turkington

Columbine Cliff, across the Sudbury River from Fair Haven Hill.  
“Columbine” refers to wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)

## Thoreau’s Places

by Richard Higgins

Like Adam in Paradise, Thoreau named his world. In doing so, he created a literary universe as distinctive and enduring as Joyce’s Dublin or Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County. Columbine Cliff and Clamshell Bend, Bittern Cliff and Boat’s Place, Hubbard’s Grove, Deep Cut, Assabet Bath, Yellow Birch Swamp—have not untold numbers of his admirers long scanned the detailed but miniature map in the 1906 edition of his *Journal* to find out just where these magical places were?

Thoreau named places for practical, personal, and poetic reasons. His toponymy gave him a quick and easy way to refer to the places where he made his observations about nature. He also christened places to deepen his connection to them, to better know and love them. “It is worth the while to know the names of the brooks & ponds and hills,” he wrote. “A name enriches your associations wonderfully.”<sup>1</sup>

And he took a wordsmith’s delight in coining monikers for places he considered notable, such as Curly-pate Hill, the rock of which has a curvy, oblong grain “kinked up in a curious manner, reminding me of a curly head.”<sup>2</sup> Naming was a creative act for Thoreau. He who names, he said, is a poet.<sup>3</sup>

Thoreau employed many naming schemes. He identified places by their flora, such as Painted Cup Meadow, Purple Utricularia Bay, and Sassafras Island. He named places after birds or animals, such as Fox Path Hollow or Owl Nest Swamp, and after their natural features, like Dashing Brook or Boulder Field. His place names were musical (Cymbidium Meadow, Ripple Lake), practical (Boiling Spring, which Thoreau said “burst up” from the ground), and whimsical (Horse-skull Meadow, Ermine Weasel Woods, Money-diggers’ Hill).

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Now Thoreauvians have a new way to find these places. Botanist Ray Angelo, author of the 1984 *Botanical Index to Thoreau's Journal* and an online guide to the flora of Concord, has created a reference guide to 580 places in Concord and Lincoln mentioned in the *Journal*. The reference, available online at [www.ray-a.com/ThoreauPlaceNames.pdf](http://www.ray-a.com/ThoreauPlaceNames.pdf), gives detailed botanical and historical facts about the sites. And very practically, it lists their GPS coordinates, which can be pasted into an Internet browser to show their location. (Although most places are pinpointed precisely, the guide acknowledges it is making an informed guess for some, such as the cellar hole of Cato Ingraham mentioned in *Walden*, that can not be located with certainty.)

In addition to rich botanical information, Angelo provides fascinating tidbits of the area's natural and human history. One learns, for example, that Pole Brook, which flowed from Pine Hill past Mount Misery and into a swamp by the Sudbury River, got its name because wagons could not enter the swamp during hay season, so the hay was drawn on poles behind horses.

Angelo began "Thoreau Place Names" some 40 years ago. As he researched the *Journal* for plant names for his botanical index in the early 1980s, he also compiled index cards on Thoreau's place names so he could understand his landscape. When he created his



Courtesy Ray Angelo

### Ray Angelo at Pratt's Spring in 1983

online flora of Concord in 2012, Angelo realized he could use his card catalog to create a separate reference not only to show the plant locations but also to provide a more accurate, in-depth guide to Thoreau's world than the well-known 1906 map by Herbert Wendell Gleason. Angelo's guide corrects a number of locations Gleason misplaced.<sup>4</sup>

Angelo posted his first place names online in 2013. In 2019, with other projects out of the way, he turned to it in earnest. With the

help of new GIS mapping resources and a crew of volunteers who searched for and photographed the places, the project was largely completed last fall. Angelo, ever the scientist, informs me that after it is finalized later this year, it will be updated if significant new facts emerge.

Humans, of course, have been naming the natural world since we first walked upright, driven by an innate need to sort and categorize. Naming has also been done for specific ends. Explorers have historically planted verbal flags on places to conquer and own them. Scientists name nature at least in part to objectify and master it.

Thoreau's naming was different. It seems to have grown out of his belief that our relation



Courtesy Steve Tobin

Bittern Cliff, on the Sudbury River. "Bittern" refers to the American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*).



to nature must be a personal one. He inscribed places to deepen that relationship and feel more at home in his landscape. He expressed that connection when he asked, “What name for a natural object is most poetic?” His answer: That which is “given for convenience” by him “whose life is most nearly related to it, who has known it longest and best.”<sup>5</sup>

“Thoreau’s names were a way in which he showed appreciation for and a bond with his surroundings,” Angelo says. That personal bond echoes the affinity Thoreau felt for the trees he called his acquaintances in *Walden* and the *Journal*. And it may help explain why he sometimes preferred his own place names over others, as when he wrote of an otter that had “eaten fish near the mouth of Pole Brook (my *Bidens* Brook).”<sup>6</sup>

Naming places was also a poetic act for Thoreau, as noted above. By naming he storied them. “The wayfarer’s tree! How good a name!” Thoreau writes in his *Journal*. “Who bestowed it? How did it get adopted? The mass of men are



Courtesy Steve Tobin  
Metamorphic rock on  
Curly-pate Hill

very unpoetic, yet that Adam that names things is always a poet. The boor is ready to accept the name the poet gives. How nameless is the poet among us!”<sup>7</sup>) Angelo speculates that Thoreau may have been encouraged in place-naming by his walking companion Ellery Channing, who coined poetic names for the locales they visited on their sojourns.

For Thoreau, naming was recognizing, seeing, and in a sense creating. And he did not limit it to physical places. Paddling the Sudbury River on September 14, 1854, he was struck by the splendid yellow of “the great *bidens*” (*Bidens laevis*), “the flower and ornament of the riversides at present.” He knew the plant, but he felt an urge to name the color. “It is a splendid yellow—Channing says a lemon yellow . . . Full of the sun. It needs a name.”<sup>8</sup>

Even a distinctive time of day could cry out for a name. “What shall we name this season?” Thoreau asked on August 11, 1853, “—this very late afternoon, or very early evening, this severe and placid season of the day, most favorable for



Courtesy Richard Higgins

Remnant of Painted Cup Meadow. “Painted Cup” refers to the wildflower *Castilleja coccinea*.





Courtesy Steve Tobin

Cornel Rock, named for the dogwood genus *Cornus*

reflection, after the insufferable heats and the bustle of the day are over and before the dampness and twilight of evening! The serene hour, the Muses' hour, the season of reflection! . . . It is the turning-point between afternoon and evening."<sup>9</sup>

And at times he coined names, it seems, just for pleasure. In "Wild Apples," Thoreau writes that "it would be a pleasant pastime to find suitable names for the hundred varieties which go to a single heap at the cider-mill." He then does just that, listing with obvious relish the names of 26 apples species he invented, along with the equally made-up Latin names "for the benefit of those who live where English is not spoken." He enumerates "the Apple



Courtesy Steve Tobin

Heron Rock, or Bath Rock, in the Sudbury River

which grows in Dells in the Woods, (*sylvestrivallis*)," "the Apple that grows in an old Cellar-Hole (*Malus cellaris*)," the Saunterer's Apple, found by those who become lost, and the Railroad-Apple, which grows from cores tossed out of trains. There's also the Wood-Apple (*"Malus sylvatica"*), Beauty of the Air, Blue-Jay Apple, Slug-Apple and "the Apple whose Fruit we tasted in our Youth."<sup>10</sup>

Thoreau had a superb memory and was fastidious about recording natural facts. Yet he could be lax or whimsical with place names, according two, three, and four names to certain locales. For that reason there are almost twice as many names

referenced as actual places in Angelo's guide. Thus Bittern Cliff was also Tupelo Cliff, Holden Wood was Echo Wood, and Willow Bay was Lily Bay. The Andromeda Ponds and Cassandra Ponds were the same place, as were Pout's Nest and Wyman Meadow, and also Little Goose Pond and Ripple Lake. He called a small pond at the head of Clematis Brook in Lincoln, where heron fed, Heron Pool, Button-Bush Pond, Clematis Pond, and Nightshade Pond. And he was "extra-vagant" in naming a small brook a bit south of the Concord Depot train station. He called it Swamp Bridge Brook, Depot Field Brook, Depot Brook, Forget-me-not Brook, and Myosotis Brook. Five names for an unassuming brook that today runs under Sudbury Road in a conduit! We may be glad he did not try to name the Nile.



Courtesy Richard Higgins

Wharf Rock, on the northern shore of Flint's Pond



Especially in his later years, Thoreau seemed to revel in his denominating role, bestowing names with the grandeur of an explorer. “I will call that Echo Wood,” he pronounced in 1850.<sup>11</sup> “[Traveled] to what I will call Yellow Birch Swamp,” in Estabrook Woods, he wrote in 1853.<sup>12</sup> Five months later, on June 10, after another trip to Estabrook, Thoreau went on what must be his all-time bender of naming, writing: “It contains what I call the Boulder Field, the Yellow Birch Swamp, the Black Birch Hill, the Laurel Pasture, the Hog-Pasture, the White Pine Grove, the Easterbrooks Place, the Old Lime-Kiln, the Lime Quarries, Spruce Swamp, the Ermine Weasel Woods; also the Oak Meadows, the Cedar Swamp, the Kibbe Place, and the old place northwest of Brooks Clark’s.” His entry that day contains 24 capitalized place names.<sup>13</sup>

A year later, in 1854, he “drank at what I will call Alder Spring at Clamshell Hill.”<sup>14</sup> After botanizing in a sphagnum bog near the Old Road to Nine Acre Corner, on February 4, 1858, he noted in his



Courtesy Nancy Hartle

Old Lime-Kiln site, in Estabrook Woods. The kiln was used to turn locally quarried limestone into plaster in colonial times

*Journal*, “call it Ledum Pond-hole.”<sup>15</sup> That December, he mentions “what I will call Sassafra Island.”<sup>16</sup> On March 27, 1859, having put his boat in the river, he sailed up to “what I will call Otter Bay,” a wetland off the Sudbury River just above the Fitchburg Turnpike (Rte. 117).<sup>17</sup> Two months later, mayflower was “still sparingly in bloom on what I will call Mayflower Path.”<sup>18</sup> And he said of a stretch of the Concord River that July: “There extends from Tarbell Hill to Skelton Bend what I will call the Straight Reach, a mile and a third long and quite straight.”<sup>19</sup>

Thoreau did not name all the places in his world. Leaning Hemlocks and Fair Haven Hill, for example, were already names in common usage. Whether he came up with Thrush Alley, Trillium Woods, and Cardinal Shore is uncertain.

And he identified places by their landowners surprisingly often. About a third of the places in the *Journal* are named for Barrett, Baker, Conant, Hosmer, Heywood, Hubbard, Tarbell, Wheeler, and others. That may seem odd for someone so devoted to raw nature and so hostile to property rights, but it reflects his connection to his hometown, its history, and his neighbors. “It shows in a sense that he thought of Concordians as part of the landscape, contrary to the superficial portrayal of him as a solitary, quasi-misanthrope,” Angelo says. It also corresponds with Thoreau’s belief that humans are inseparable from nature and that natural history and human history are thus entwined. The name “Clamshell Hill” called to mind not only the shells but also Concord’s former inhabitants, the Native Americans who harvested the clams.

The history of the apple tree is remarkably connected with the history of man, Thoreau writes in “Wild Apples.” And now hundreds of places in Concord and Lincoln are linked to him.

• **Richard Higgins** is a writer and editor and the author of *Thoreau and the Language of Trees*. He wrote about Thoreau’s life in his garret on Main Street in *American Scholar* (Winter 2020).



Courtesy Nancy Hartle

Yellow Birch Swamp in Estabrook Woods



## Notes

1. Henry D. Thoreau, *Journal, Volume 3: 1848-1851*, ed. Robert Sattelmeyer, Mark R. Patterson, and William Rossi (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 53-54 (April 19, 1850).

2. Henry D. Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, vol. 16 (*Journal*, vol. 10), ed. Bradford Torrey (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), 155 (November 2, 1857).

3. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 11 (*Journal*, vol. 5), 347 (July 30, 1853).

4. Gleason's map initially appeared in the final volume of the 1906 edition of *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*. It was reproduced in Robert F. Stowell's *A Thoreau Gazetteer* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972) and is also available online at <https://concordlibrary.org/special-collections/gleason/Map>. A version annotated by Ray Angelo with corrections is posted at: <https://archive.org/details/herbert-gleason-thoreau-country-map-corrected>.

5. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 13 (*Journal*, vol. 7), 56 (September 24, 1854).

6. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 13 (*Journal*, vol. 7), 26 (September 8, 1854). On Thoreau's acquaintances among the trees, see, e.g.: Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 17 (*Journal* vol. 11), 268 (October 31, 1858); and Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), 265.

7. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 11 (*Journal*, vol. 5), 347 (July 30, 1853).

8. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 13 (*Journal*, vol. 7), 40 (September 14, 1854), emphasis in source.

9. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 11 (*Journal*, vol. 5), 370 (August 11, 1853).

10. Henry D. Thoreau. *Excursions*, ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 283-84.

11. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 8 (*Journal* vol. 2), 82 (1850).

12. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 10 (*Journal* vol. 4), 447 (January 3, 1853).

13. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 11 (*Journal* vol. 5), 239 (June 10, 1853).

14. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 12 (*Journal* vol. 6), 268 (May 16, 1854).

15. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 16 (*Journal* vol. 10), 274 (February 4, 1858).

16. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 19 (*Journal* vol. 13), 39 (December 22, 1859).

17. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 18 (*Journal* vol. 12), 84 (March 27, 1859).

18. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 18 (*Journal* vol. 12), 184 (May 6, 1859).

19. Thoreau, *Writings*, vol. 18 (*Journal* vol. 12), 236 (July 14, 1859).



Courtesy Ray Angelo

Three Friends' Hill, in Lincoln, Massachusetts, overlooking Flint's Pond (presently the home of DeCordova Museum). According to Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, Thoreau gave the hill this name in honor of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Ellery Channing, and Thoreau himself.



Courtesy Scot Miller

Yellow Pine Lake. This alternate name for Walden Pond, which appears twice in Thoreau's *Journal*, may have been coined by Channing. "Yellow pine" refers to pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*).



# Thoreau and Me, Going on Fifty-Six Years

by Tom McKone

For me, the discovery came in sophomore English in 1965. I was an inquisitive reader and liked being introduced to new writers. We had just learned about Ralph Waldo Emerson and read selections from his essays and poetry; he was the best author we had read so far. Then the teacher told us about a friend of Emerson's who was also a writer and who walked in the woods every day. Not only that, he built himself a small house near a pond in the woods and lived there alone for two years. That day I started on a journey that changed and deeply enriched my life.

I had grown up and lived in a city, but from childhood I had been drawn to the woods. Occasionally, my family drove out to Penwood State Park, a few miles from Hartford, for a picnic, playing in a brook and taking short hikes on the trails. When I was old enough, I hiked there with friends. It was a small, forested park on a ridge. There was a fire tower, a pond, and an isolated ranger's cabin far enough off the beaten path that few other than adventurous boys were likely to find it. Penwood was one of my favorite places to go.

So when Mr. Carney told us about Henry David Thoreau, he had my attention like never before. Soon I had bought a copy of *The Portable Thoreau* and read *Walden*. Then came "Walking," "Life without Principle" and "Civil Disobedience." Each piece opened new horizons for my idealistic teenage self and strengthened my connection to my newfound friend. Here was a man who shunned materialism, championed nature, and sought to live a genuinely moral life. Like me, he was a serious walker. His writing was beautiful, and he was a perceptive, original, and inspiring thinker who forced me to think. He could be opinionated, I soon learned, and his normally effective use of exaggeration occasionally crossed the line into the outrageous. Sometimes I didn't agree with him, and after reading a biography of him, I learned he wasn't always easy to be with. But the fact that Thoreau was a rebel in how he lived and in what he wrote intrigued and challenged me. More than anything, though, here was a man who sincerely believed we could change ourselves and we could change the world.

Two years later I joined the Thoreau Society and I have been a member almost continuously since then. I've attended the Annual Gathering sporadically and have occasionally contacted staff or other members with inquiries. I have the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* going back to Summer 1967, which proclaimed "BULLETIN ONE HUNDRED!!!" on the front page. I've kept up my membership so I could stay current on Thoreau news, research, and events, and to support and encourage broader interest in him. But mostly, this extended relationship has been between Henry and me. Anyone who knows me knows of my interest in him.

Of course, being interested doesn't come close to describing a fifty-six-year relationship. Over the past half-century, I have turned to Thoreau to renew my sense of wonder, to remind myself that "surely joy is the condition of life,"<sup>1</sup> to help me regain my perspective when my world or the world as a whole has seemingly been knocked off its axis, and to help me draw inner strength and courage in the face of adversity. Some people turn to the Bible or a stiff drink; I have *Walden*, the *Journal*, and the essays, and maybe a glass of water, which I have been told is the only drink for a



Photo by George Longenecker

wise man. Like Thoreau, I was born a walker; if people selected their own last names, that's what mine would have been. I've walked in many places he did—including the White Mountains, Mount Monadnock, Mount Katahdin, Concord, areas around Walden Pond, and the railroad tracks from the pond into town. I've walked in many places he didn't—including the full length of the Appalachian Trail, Grand Canyon and many other places out West, and various cities in North America and Europe. As a young man, I generally disliked large cities, but later I grew to appreciate them and have enjoyed experiencing them on foot.

In Thoreau, I find calm in the storm, music in the world around me and in the flow of his words, and strikingly clear and fresh thinking. He advised us: "Read not the Times. Read the Eternities."<sup>2</sup> And that is why his writing remains perpetually vibrant and vital: he wrote for the Eternities. Just as Thoreau read the ancient classics, a thousand years from now *Walden* will be one of the books from the American Age that is still read. American composer Charles Ives once wrote, "Thoreau was a great musician, not because he played the flute but because he did not have to go to Boston to hear 'the Symphony'."<sup>3</sup> He heard the Music of the Spheres, he lived that music, and he put it on the page. He inspired me to try to live a fulfilling life, to live as deeply as he did. The first time I read *Walden* I underlined and copied down the sentence, "How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book."<sup>4</sup> Even then I knew how important he would be to me.

Like a good friend, Thoreau has known when to push and when to stand back. He emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, of exploring my own higher latitudes, and of being true to my own



mode of living—and not my father’s or mother’s or neighbor’s. Or even his. I have seldom had an urge to stretch the seams, and he has never encouraged me to do so.

“The life in us is like the water in the river,” he has been telling me for my entire adult life. “It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it.”<sup>5</sup> To borrow a phrase from E.B. White, at an early age I wholeheartedly accepted Thoreau’s “invitation to life’s dance.”<sup>6</sup> His joy, optimism, and wisdom have been no small gifts.

• **Tom McKone** is a former English teacher, principal, and public library administrator.

#### Notes

1. Henry D. Thoreau, “Natural History of Massachusetts,” in *Excursions*, ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 5.

2. Henry D. Thoreau, “Life without Principle,” in *Reform Papers*, ed. Wendell Glick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 173.

3. Charles Ives, “Essays Before a Sonata,” in *Essays Before a Sonata and Other Writings* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1962), 51.

4. Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 107.

5. Thoreau, *Walden*, 332.

6. E.B. White, *The Points of My Compass: Letters from the East, the West, the North, the South* (New York: Perennial Library, 1979), 20.

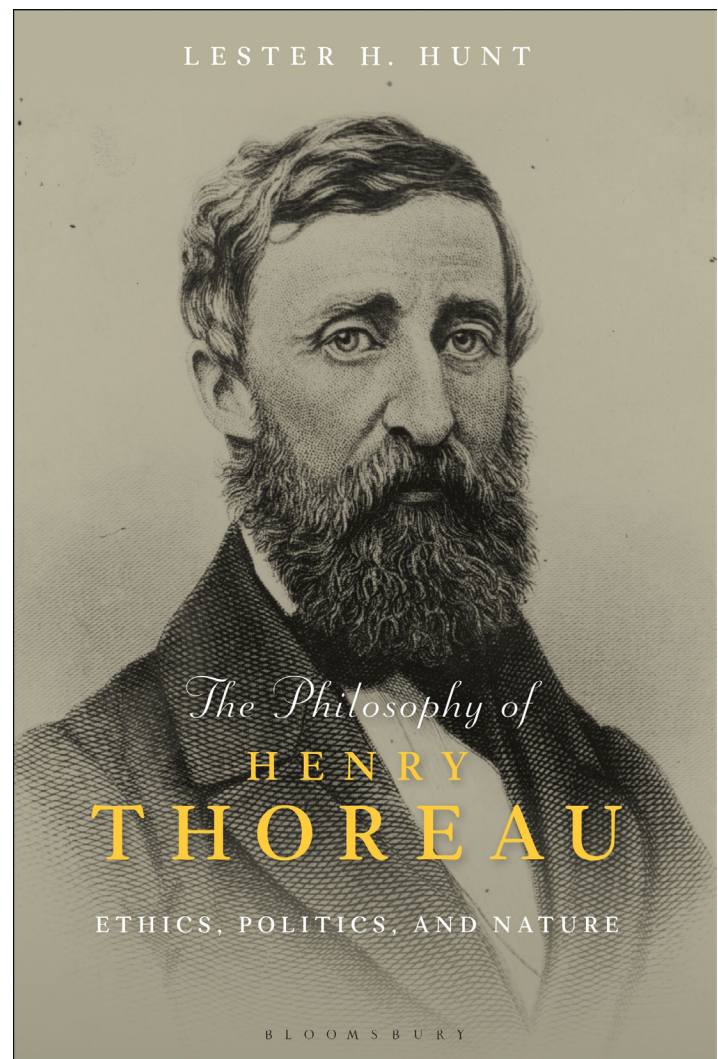
## *The Philosophy of Henry Thoreau: Ethics, Politics, and Nature: A Review*

by Jonathan McKenzie

Lester H. Hunt, *The Philosophy of Henry Thoreau: Ethics, Politics, and Nature*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020.

In *The Philosophy of Henry Thoreau*, Lester Hunt provides an intimate exploration of key philosophical themes in Thoreau’s oeuvre, fashioning a light analytical reading of Thoreau’s major texts. Hunt cautions the reader early that his ambitions are in check, and that he uses the book primarily to test Thoreau, to examine the extent to which his thought can handle rigorous philosophical scrutiny. Given the parameters, Hunt’s book offers a novel way of reading Thoreau, and the book largely succeeds in situating Thoreau’s arguments philosophically.

Hunt devotes one chapter to each of the topics of politics, ethics, economy, and nature as they appear in Thoreau’s thought. The chapters operate somewhat independently of each other, which works well, given that Thoreau attracts readers of a wide array of disciplinary backgrounds, and some may be more interested in one topic than another. Each chapter rests on a question, which Hunt uses as a brace for interrogating Thoreau’s philosophy and testing it for rigor. For instance, in the chapter on economy, Hunt investigates Thoreau’s asceticism, particularly “whether this aspect of his thinking can be reconciled with his other views about what is valuable or important” (78). In narrowing the scope of the investigation, Hunt patiently guides the reader through a careful



analysis of Thoreau’s ideas and ideals; in this case, investigating the ways in which Thoreau’s ascetic practice constrains his vitalism. This method is effective for readers who are not philosophically trained, as it provides a dual service: while offering a novel reading of Thoreau, it also serves as a guide to reading texts like Thoreau’s through an analytical lens.

The especial value of Hunt’s unique approach is not that it sheds new light on Thoreau’s work (though, as I will mention below, there are portions of the book that add tremendous depth to Thoreau’s ethics), but that it offers a framework for taking Thoreau seriously as if he meant to write as a professional philosopher. Hunt forcefully contends that Thoreau’s work “presents us with doctrines” (x). It is the difficult task of the book to guide the reader through a systematic exposition of Thoreauvian doctrines that, as Hunt makes clear, Thoreau often fails to do on his own.

Hunt’s most successful chapter deals with Thoreau’s ethics. Here, we receive a much-needed framework for evaluating Thoreau’s appeal to conscience. While the morality of conscience is a classic Thoreauvian theme, Hunt treats it seriously as an ethical theory. The crux of the chapter concerns the degree to which Thoreau’s ethical intuitionism is justifiable. Hunt argues, correctly I believe, that Thoreau “believes ethical intuitionism proper, that he thinks intuitionism is true” (50). Thoreau’s intuitionism—his tendency to trust initial ethical conclusions without sustained argument or justification—is a persistent element in his work. For



many who write on Thoreau's social and political thought, the question of the degree to which his intuitionism ought to guide action is an essential one. Here, Hunt gives that question the best treatment we have seen thus far.

Other chapters are also successful in providing a framework for analyzing Thoreau, even if the results are not quite as groundbreaking or compelling. Hunt works best with *Walden*, which he reads masterfully, and when making connections to Thoreau's broadly social and political thought ("Resistance to Civil Government" and "Walking" receive excellent treatments). When straying from these readings, Hunt's analysis of Thoreau's work is less convincing. Hunt's belief that Thoreau's ecstatic realization of the force of nature in "Ktaadn" leaves him "repelled" by the inhumanity of nature, and that he prefers a retreat back in to the pastoral, is a facile and unnecessary claim that obscures the depth of Thoreau's spiritual, ecological, and philosophical views on nature. The discussion continues into obscure claims about Thoreau's preferences for bogs and the notion that we could best understand the *Journal* as a course in "nature appreciation" (121).

As a guide to reading Thoreau, *The Philosophy of Henry Thoreau* will appeal to scholars in a variety of disciplines. While the substantive chapters are arranged effectively, the biographical

introduction offers little to contextualize the book philosophically. The book as a whole is well suited for those who may lack philosophical training, but are familiar with Thoreau's work, life, and ideas. The introduction, on the other hand, appears to be written for precisely the opposite audience: those philosophically trained but new to Thoreau. This is not to say that the two audiences cannot both be served by the same book, but only that the introduction seems likely to confuse readers about the intended audience of the book.

Hunt walks a fine line in the book, and does so with success. If Thoreau is a philosopher, why not treat him seriously as such? Hunt reveals the benefits of such a reading, while also alerting readers to its limits. While Thoreau perhaps has doctrines, to approach him solely as a philosopher would result in an underwhelming experience. Respecting the reasonable constraints outlined in the preface, Hunt achieves something rather special: he helps us take Thoreau a little more—but not too—seriously.

• **Jonathan McKenzie** is an assistant professor of Political Science at Northern Kentucky University and the author of *The Political Thought of Henry David Thoreau: Privatism and the Practice of Philosophy* (University of Kentucky Press, 2015).

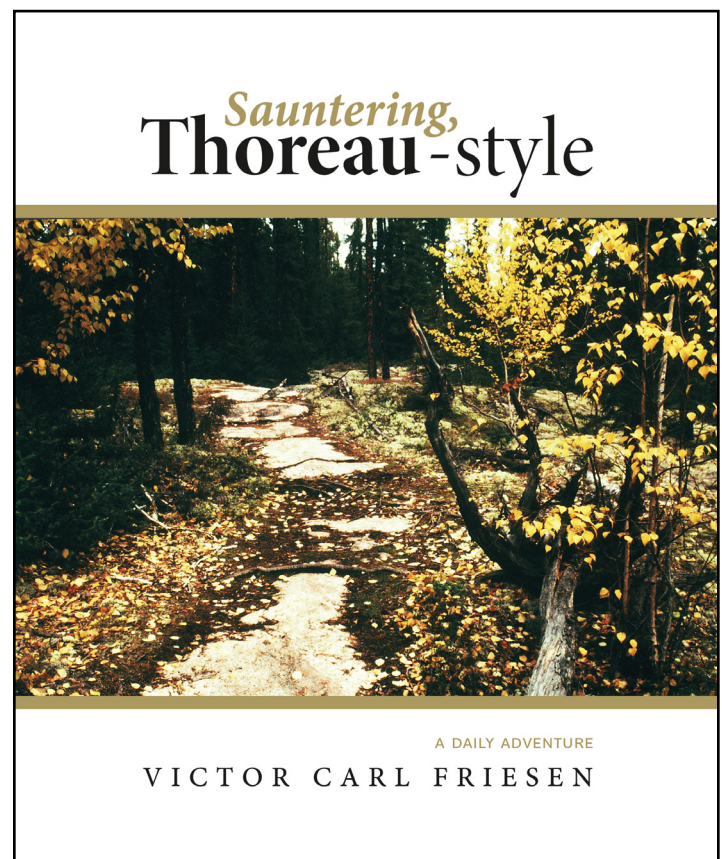
## Sauntering, Thoreau-style: A Daily Adventure: A Review

by Henrik Otterberg

Victor Carl Friesen. *Sauntering, Thoreau-style: A Daily Adventure*. Regina, Saskatchewan: Your Nickel's Worth Publishing, 2020. 114 pp. Softcover (ISBN: 978-198878-346-8), 25 CAD.

When I was a fresh-faced student of comparative literature during the long-ago first presidency of Clinton, some older peers took us neophytes under their wing and inducted us into some of the lore of the discipline. They ventured to give us examples of what kinds of projects *not* to undertake, all with a mixture of humor, irony, and mild derision. Fresh out of business school, which had increasingly bored me, I was keen to learn the ropes in my novel environment, and especially anxious to keep my fifth-column background hidden from my new colleagues and friends. It was easy enough to laugh along at the account of a dissertation studying how many recent Swedish poets, having produced a second volume of poetry, also came around to a third. Likewise, our mirth was unanimous and warm at a biography of Strindberg purporting to list his laundry expenses in granular detail (while I would much later find myself wishing similar receipts to have been unearthed apropos Thoreau in 1845-47, to save *him* some retroactive derision).

Yet one object of gleeful scorn silently gave me pause. This was Peter Hallberg's massive, thousand-page-plus, three-volume Ph.D. dissertation from 1951, entitled *Natursymboler i Svensk Lyrik*. This imposing, unwieldy tome formed an exhaustive statistical account of nature symbols in modern-era Swedish verse. Hallberg had gone on to become a prominent professor of Old Norse literature, but



this, his first offering, was commonly considered a freak product of pedantry and misguided energy. With a fair amount of statistical training under my belt, however, I felt compelled to take a closer look, and soon found myself engrossed. Hallberg's core project was to discover how, in portraying the natural world, a number of Swedish poets employed the five senses in their works. He did not



stop at simple description based on traditional close reading, but in effect cut apart the collected works and statistically tabulated every relevant word according to five categories: light; color; sound; smell; and touch. It was noteworthy, and telling, that he left out the sense of taste, in favor of bifurcating sight into light and color. (Hallberg assumed taste to pertain to cooked or otherwise prepared foods, hence at a cultural remove from nature. What about huckleberries plucked fresh from the vine, a Thoreauvian might ask?) Yet despite this idiosyncrasy, it was fascinating to ponder Hallberg's results. His sensory percentages regarding the total mass of diced poetry coalesced as follows: light (33%); color (30.5%); sound (21.5%); smell (4%); and touch (11%). Comparing with a cluster of medieval Swedish ballads, Hallberg showed that these proportions, if not precise percentages, remained in place over the centuries.<sup>1</sup>

What Hallberg's work indicated was that there was a constancy over time, beyond the aesthetics, genres, and conventions of style vigorously championed by each age, in how literary imagery tended to divide itself into our hierarchical spectrum of human senses. By way of comparison, as evolutionary biologists today will readily confirm, our human sense of sight is at once our most acute and most crucial for survival; our hearing valuable but somewhat lesser; while our senses of touch, smell, and taste can be seen as auxiliaries to the leading duo. In the orchestra of our full sensorium, then, sight and hearing might be seen as prominent soloists, while the other faculties retain their supportive roles. And as in life, so in art.

Already an enthusiastic reader of Thoreau, I soon decided to study his early essay "A Winter Walk" for my degree work, admiring its vivid, fresh, and uncommonly radical imagery. In the process I came across the Canadian scholar and poet Victor Carl Friesen's seminal 1984 study *The Spirit of the Huckleberry*, where he looked closely at the sensuousness at play in Thoreau's prose works. Friesen's jargon-free method, relying on painstaking combings of the *Journal* and other works of Thoreau, recalled Hallberg's meticulousness and dedication to task. Friesen showed how Thoreau's style always drew amply from his sensory impressions, literally invigorating his writing while protecting it against abstractions, lax generalizations, and dry theorizings. Friesen also provided a key to one of the signal traits of Thoreau's style: his novel and brave use of synesthesia.<sup>2</sup> To the frustration of his mentors Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller, the young Thoreau employed this technique, whereby the impressions produced on one of the five senses is expressed by way of another sense—as a form not merely of iconoclasm, but of what we might here term *iconocosmosis*. In other words, it made new, fresh worlds to appear to Thoreau's readers by allowing sensory inputs to disperse, reassemble, and seep into each other. At once startling and revealing, Thoreau's synesthesian pen acted like a living kaleidoscope, conveying the richness, surprise, and joy inherent to the landscape around him: a sunrise akin to a clash of cymbals; snow lying warm as cotton on sun-baked sills; the wintry ground warmed by a subterranean, summery fire.

Friesen was also attentive to proportions and interplay in Thoreau's creative imagery. He showed how "in a sample of forty synesthetic images, the subject in about two-thirds of them has to do with sounds, and two-thirds of that number derive their vocabulary from the sense of sight. Most of the remaining subjects are concerned with sight, while the sense of touch, thermal and

tactile, provides a vocabulary for about one-third of the total transfers." In other words, Thoreau was unusually versatile in his tropology, while at root recognizably human in his perception. For, as Friesen explained, our common stock of visual terminology is richer than that of acoustic phraseology, arguably reflecting the prime importance we put upon our sense of vision. Sight is also, he added, "Thoreau's dominant sense and so can provide him with needed imagery elsewhere."<sup>3</sup>

In publishing *The Spirit of the Huckleberry*, Friesen drew upon his Ph.D. thesis from nearly a decade earlier, at the University of Alberta in 1975. Already in 1968, he had reached out to eminent Thoreauvian Walter Harding, and in him found an early supporter of his work. In 1974 Harding published an essay in the *Thoreau Journal Quarterly* that was clearly indebted to Friesen. Here Harding opined that Thoreau's sensuousness as evinced by his writings set him apart from his times and coevals.<sup>4</sup> At long length its qualities were recognized, and this allowed Thoreau to emerge from overly restrictive critical pigeonholings during the 19th century and beyond. Like a variegated butterfly shedding its grey chrysalis, Thoreau's style would in time be recognized for its sensuous qualities, in no small part due to Friesen's efforts.

In 1995, Friesen followed up his academic study with *The Year is a Circle: A Celebration of Henry David Thoreau*, gathering his own well-wrought poems on natural phenomena with congenial Thoreauvian passages and a wealth of affecting photographs, many from his mid-continent prairie home territory of Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Friesen arranged the book as an *en-plein-air* conversation with Thoreau, allowing select quotes to become the impetus for his own pen and camera.

Now, in *Sauntering, Thoreau-style*, Friesen—a life member of the Thoreau Society—largely lets Thoreau himself do the talking, interspersing Thoreau's words with deceptively unassuming commentary of his own. It recalls the Swedish poet laureate Harry Martinson's famous concept of *andra enkelhet* or *residual simplicity*: quietly retaining the knowledge and wisdom garnered from earlier, ambitious studies, it can afford to let go of apparatus and argument, instead genially ambling along with its subject. And it is surely no coincidence that the most frequently quoted third party in Friesen's new book turns out to be Thoreau's regular walking companion Ellery Channing—for one feels, in reading the present volume, that the trio have shared numerous walks to mutual joy and fulfillment. The arc of the book offers an elegant counterpoint, one narrative thread gradually expanding on Thoreau's philosophy and practice of sauntering, while the other interweaves aptly chosen thematic materials on clouds, waters, land, woods, snow, and the seasons, mostly from Thoreau's *Journal* and essays. Time and again Friesen's gloss on Thoreau's radical literary techniques reveals his creativity and stubborn war against cliché. Friesen points out, for instance, that Thoreau was at some pains to vividly portray cold air in his early essay "A Winter Walk." How did he go about it? Well, "by picturing the air again and again as icy, a near-solid substance": "stiffened," "withdrawn and tense," "crystallized," and "refined and shrunk" by far sub-zero temperatures. Friesen's gloss leads us to infer that Thoreau sought a literal *solid-arity* with us, his readers, who would eventually indeed "feel chilled to our very marrow" by the consciously static imagery (94). This is a book not to be missed by dedicated Thoreauvians. It evinces the fruits of a lifetime of vicariously conversing with and walking alongside the Concord



saunterer and his friends. They would surely have delighted at Friesen's company.

• **Henrik Otterberg** wrote his Ph.D. on Thoreau's aesthetics. He is a longstanding contributor to *TSB* and *The Concord Saunterer*, and serves on the Thoreau Society board of directors.

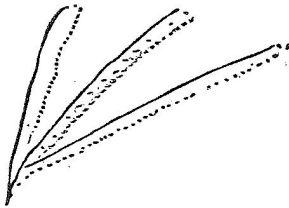
#### Notes

1. Peter Hallberg, *Natursymboler i Svensk Lyrik*, 3 vols. (Göteborg: Wettergren & Kerbers Förlag, 1951), I: 81, 95ff; III: 1001ff.

2. Victor Carl Friesen, *The Spirit of the Huckleberry: Sensuousness in Henry Thoreau* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1984), 74ff.

3. Friesen, *Spirit of the Huckleberry*, 74.

4. Walter Harding, "Thoreau, Sensuous Transcendentalist," *Thoreau Journal Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (April, 1974): 3-7. In an early, unpublished lecture draft of this same essay, Harding juxtaposes select passages by Emerson and Thoreau on what following one's "genius" actually means. Of Emerson's attempt, Harding concludes that "there is hardly a sensory word in the entire passage. Were Emerson blind and deaf and, indeed, lacking all his senses, he would have no difficulty writing [these] sentences. But in Thoreau's writings, the senses pulsate through every line. We hear, see, smell, taste, and feel every passage of his we read." (From page 5 of a 7-page lecture ms., a Xeroxed copy of which is in the author's private collection c/o the late Bradley P. Dean.)



Courtesy Thoreau Drawings Archive,  
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"The hoar frost formed of the fog was such a one as I do not remember on such a scale. Apparently as the fog was coarser and far more abundant, it was whiter, less delicate to examine, and of far greater depth than a frostwork formed of dew. . . . The trees were the ghosts of trees appearing in their winding-sheets, an intenser white against the comparatively dusky ground of the fog. . . .

"Every one, no doubt, has looked with delight, holding his face low, at that beautiful frostwork which so frequently in winter mornings is seen bristling about the throat of every breathing-hole in the earth's surface. In this case the fog, the earth's breath made visible, was in such abundance that it invested all our vales and hills, and the frostwork, accordingly, instead of being confined to the chinks and crannies of the earth, covered the mightiest trees, so that we, walking beneath them, had the same wonderful prospect and environment that an insect would have in the former case. . . .

"That glaze! I know what it was by my own experience; it was the frozen breath of the earth upon its beard."

—*Journal*, January 18, 1859

## Additions to the Thoreau Bibliography

by Henrik Otterberg

Bagge, P[eter]. "The Overly Examined Life of Henry David Thoreau." *Reason: The Magazine of Free Minds and Free Markets* (May 2021): 38-41. [Contributing editor and cartoonist Bagge offers a humorous take on various well-known divides in Thoreau's reception via a series of illustrated vignettes from Thoreau's life, each commented upon by two cartoon critics at loggerheads. One sees Thoreau as a man of moral principles and spiritual depth, an admirable abolitionist also having started the tiny house and minimum-footprint movements, while the other sees "a self-centered misanthrope" and a grandstander "too cheap to pay his own taxes," while grudgingly admitting to Thoreau's anti-slavery credentials: "... only I wish he wasn't so *smug* about it."]

Balthrop-Lewis, Alda. *Thoreau's Religion: Walden Woods, Social Justice, and the Politics of Asceticism* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Reviewed by Rebecca Kneale Gould in *Thoreau Society Bulletin* 313 (Spring 2021): 8-9.

Cusumano, Joseph. "Henry Thoreau: Secret Schizoid." *The Concord Saunterer*, New Series 28 (2020): 102-129. [Cusumano, an experienced counselor and veteran Thoreauvian, adds to our understanding of Thoreau's intricate personality by analyzing it along the schizoid continuum. Far from pathologizing the condition, Cusumano summons evidence from a range of recent psychoanalytic studies to place Thoreau in a high-functioning category, that of the "secret schizoid," a personality type first identified by Richard Klein (107). Among the *DSM 5* criteria for the schizoid mental framework are: a predisposition for solitary activities; little if any interest in physical intimacy; an indifference to the praise or criticism of others; and a streak of perceived emotional coldness, detachment, or flattened affectivity. Very common to the type is also a perennial struggle with close friendships, where an urge toward intimacy is balanced by a fear of becoming enslaved to the other. Yet a tendency of emulation of admired mentors is also common to the schizoid, and Cusumano raises the compelling examples of Emerson and John Brown apropos Thoreau. With admirable caution, and avoiding the risk of getting carried away with his thesis, Cusumano points out that Thoreau's personality evidently contrasted with other *DSM 5* schizoid criteria, such as a lack of desire or enjoyment of family relationships, a lack of interest in activities, and a lack of close friends or confidantes. Cusumano in sum depicts Thoreau as a complex, talented, evolving, and self-healing "secret schizoid," whose condition also improved over time, to the extent that he unequivocally rejoiced at warmer relations with friends and townsfolk at the time of his death.]

Dilts, Wayne T. *Thoreauviana: Original Articles about Henry David Thoreau and His Beloved Concord* (Self-published, 2019). Paperback (ISBN: 978-1-093-25469-3), USD 16.



[Dilts, a New Jersey high school teacher, offers a potpourri of articles pertaining to Thoreau. The most intriguing ones concern a careful cataloguing of Thoreau's houses, and an essay contextualizing Thoreau's New Jersey connections as a surveyor and lecturer. The book is available at the Shop at Walden Pond.]

Dustin, Christopher A. "Voicing Silence: Thoreau's Spiritual Audition." *The Concord Saunterer*, New Series 28 (2020): 74-101. [In these days dominated by the discussion of the "green" and "political" Thoreau, often convergingly so, it is refreshing to encounter an ambitious grapple with his language. Thoreau's consummate writing skill is often taken for granted, despite its *sui generis* power. (Here is a suggested parlor game for the bored: how many fridge-magnets can you extract from a given portion of *Walden*? You will soon find yourselves immersed, and struggling to keep up.) Dustin's offering is particularly interesting in unapologetically giving short shrift to both traditional rhetorical analyses of Thoreau's writing, as well as to later, postmodernist ones focusing on Thoreau's paradoxes, wordplay, and perceived mischievousness. Dustin, by contrast, takes Thoreau seriously, in the sense that he ignores his humorous traits in favor of what he identifies as Thoreau's deeper earnest commitment to a processuality in

nature that can only adequately be met by an indirection or obscurity of expression. Dustin even goes so far as to state that Thoreau's goal is a virtual silence, "the source of which . . . lies in what he sees as the transcendent ground itself . . . there is no getting to the bottom of it" (82). Nature on this view is itself constantly in flux, ever being (re)created, by an ultimate force that can at best be obliquely acknowledged but never fully captured or expressed. All this may fleetingly recall the (in)famous analysis of "*Walden's* False Bottoms" by the deconstructionist critic Walter Benn Michaels (*Glyph* 1 (1977), pp. 132-49), but a crucial difference is that Dustin does not see Thoreau's language as breaking under supposed tension. Quite the opposite: Dustin sees it as merely displaying a respectful distance to what it wishes at root to convey. In quoting Thoreau liberally from the entire span of his career, Dustin makes the implicit case that the limits of language were apparent and accepted by Thoreau from the outset. This may need some further development, as other critics have been inclined to see a phase of intense commitment to an absolute language in the younger Thoreau. Perhaps this latter culminates in the "Sounds" chapter of *Walden*, where every conceivable strategy to get closer to a true translation of nature is observed and attempted: from the self-registering of the storms noted on the torn sailcloth, over the vines bearing their mature expression in berries, to Thoreau's at length placing his desk and writing implements out-of-doors, the better to be infused and inspired by their natural environment. Then there is the matter of Thoreau's frequent invocation of nature as a book, recalling the medieval Christian postulate (in some quarters) of nature offering an alternate true scripture, fully transparent and thus also redemptive for those inclined to read it carefully. Dustin's study promises to bloom into a monograph in due course, and he will surely consider these aspects in his broader analysis—which again is to be welcomed with keen interest.

Gessner, David. "The Advantages of Failure: What Thoreau Taught Me About Journal Writing." *The Literary Hub* (June 4, 2021), <https://lithub.com/the-advantages-of-failure-what-thoreau-taught-me-about-journal-writing/>. [In typical fashion, Gessner, who might be called the David Sedaris of current nature-oriented writers, combines irreverent humor, keen insight, and lively engagement in describing his own development as a writer inspired by Thoreau. Above all, he writes, being a persistent and self-contained journal keeper helps weed out ornateness and artifice from one's style, as well as nervousness about one's project. Gessner counsels: "work really, really hard for a really, really long time. Do it every day. Reject rejections, refuse to let others convince you that what you are doing is wrong or not good enough. Build up muscles of nonconformity. And also: sometimes getting angry helps. Show the bastards." While careful to point out his own contrasts with Thoreau—"he wouldn't want to join me for my nightly cocktail hour down in the shack"—clearly Gessner is in favour of what he calls "Thoreau's method": scribbling down spontaneous notes, then testing and developing them over time in different venues (journals, lectures, essays, books) to eventually arrive at an "organic architecture" where they all fall into place. Readers familiar



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with Bradley P. Dean's and Ronald Wesley Hoag's careful study of Thoreau's lectures during the mid-1990s will recognize an echo of the "winnowing" compositional technique they there found Thoreau committed to.]

Hess, Scott. "Thoreau's Legacy for Climate Change." *The Concord Saunterer*, New Series 28 (2020): 153-184.

[Hess gives an informed reception history of how environmentalists and climate change activists have invoked Thoreau in their advocacy, moving toward a consideration of the present. He shows how recent and frequent citation of Thoreau's life at Walden Pond by advocates like Bill McKibben and Richard Primack "tends to frame climate change in terms of individual consciousness, lifestyle, and self-culture, activating associations of personal withdrawal and suspicion towards social movements and governments." While respectful of their efforts, Hess feels foregrounding Thoreau in this fashion to be counterproductive to the truly gargantuan tasks ahead: "climate change," he writes, "is a problem that can ultimately only be solved collectively and politically" (155). To support his claim, Hess cites social studies finding weak if any viable links between larger political outcomes and individual choice regimes focused on sparse consumption and light carbon footprints. He also offers ways of understanding Thoreau's mode of address in *Walden* as collective rather than singular.]

Hester, Jessica Leigh. "Walden Pond is Full of Jellyfish, But Don't Panic." *Atlas Obscura* (May 5, 2021), <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/jellyfish-in-walden-pond>.

[Avid swimmer and journalist Hester writes of how Thoreau faithfully chronicled the wealth of animal and plant life in and around Walden Pond, while he did not say anything about jellyfish. Today swimmers in the pond, especially those stroking a bit further out, may come upon nickel-sized jellyfish, akin to seed-pod tufts in cloudy clusters, billowing around their limbs in a gentle, pulse-like motion. Hester explains that this invasive species of *Craspedacusta sowerbyi* is native to China's vast Yangtze River valley, and may have hitched a ride across the globe on imported fish, aquatic plants or even on birds, being resilient travelers. Since the 1880s, these jellyfish have been spotted in at least 44 U.S. states. And contrary to expectation, they are of an invasive type that has apparently caused little disruption to indigenous plant and animal life: "They're able to sting, but can't hurt humans. They eat zooplankton and other small creatures, but probably not so many that they're cramping the lifestyle of local fish," a cited ichthyologist comments. Researchers in general don't consider them a problem, while local swimming regulars in Walden Pond often find themselves enchanted, as Hester learns. What about Thoreau himself? Well, quite obviously he did not come across them, though he did allow in *Walden* that his beloved pond's water was likely commingled with those of the Ganges and the Persian Gulf. In his single, ultimately excised, mention of China's Yangtze River, which he spelled "Kiang Zu," in a draft of "Autumnal Tints," dispersion

and infusion were very much on his mind. The dried and crumpled leaves of autumn would, he avowed, make for potent teas once they had dropped into the pools and ditches below: "green, black, brown, and yellow teas, of all degrees of strength, enough to fill the Hoang Ho & the Kiang Zu & set all Nature a-gossiping" (from a manuscript leaf included in #385 of the limited-issue "Manuscript Edition" of Thoreau's *Writings* issued by Houghton Mifflin in 1906; cf. the 2007 Princeton University Press edition of *Excursions*, ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer, p. 240).]

Johnson, Fenton. *At the Center of All Beauty: Solitude and the Creative Life*. New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021. 245 pp. Paperback (ISBN: 978-0-393-54144-1), 16 USD. [Johnson, a writer and professor of English and LGBT Studies at the University of Arizona, was born in the early 1950s as the ninth of nine children into a Kentucky whiskey-making family. Here he writes openly and movingly of solitude as a natural if still unconventional existential adult choice: "I find myself well along in life and living alone, a state of affairs I have come to embrace as the way things ought to be. I have dated many men and a few women in my life, and count myself lucky to have met and come to know almost every one of them. I have had many

enduring friendships and . . . two great loves," one of whom had the misfortune to die young (4). Sensing an affinity with a number of writers and artists with a similar inclination toward solitude, Johnson devotes a chapter to each. He relates how their experiences have resonated with him in finding his own path, which he admits has involved challenges of loneliness. Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Paul Cézanne, Henry James, Eudora Welty and Nina Simone, among several others: all in various ways lost themselves, only to find new identities through their art, music, writing, or communion with nature, Johnson reasons. His first kindred portrait is of Thoreau, however, whose life he feels personified the three monastic vows

essential to those seeking true solitude and independence. Voluntary poverty and chastity, certainly: but what of the third, and perhaps most difficult vow, that of obedience? Surely Thoreau would have balked at any external authority to bow down to. Yet Johnson finds that Thoreau "practiced the hardest form of obedience, . . . obedience to his [own] conscience" (50). This inner compass led Thoreau to fruitful forms of renunciation, disregarding the common capitalist focus on amassment of riches and things, in favor of genuine experience and insight.]

Kelly, Kathleen Coyne; Hardy, Matt & Palermo, Greg. "An Inexhaustable (Digital) Landscape: Reading Thoreau's Journal Drawings." *The Concord Saunterer*, New Series 28 (2020): 40-73. [Kelly and co-authors, based at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, report on the genesis of a comprehensive database of Thoreau's drawings in his *Journal*, and also its accompanying website, congenially named *Henry David Thoreau's Journal Drawings* ([thoreaudrawings.northeastern.edu](http://thoreaudrawings.northeastern.edu)). In view of the sheer volume of drawings—around 800—as well as their fluid



Source: OpenCage, BY-CC-SA 2.5

*Craspedacusta sowerbyi*



relationship with Thoreau's surrounding text, the group argue convincingly that "writing and drawing became for [Thoreau] an interdependent and more embodied way of knowing the natural world" (45). Hence a clear rationale for the larger project, helping us understand Thoreau's maturation and increasing sophistication as a naturalist and artist more fully. The authors describe the background and structure of their digitizing work, its principles, sources and challenges, and how to access the database and search for particular drawings.]

Mills, Woody. "Sandwich to Brewster with Thoreau." *Thoreau Society Bulletin* 313 (Spring 2021): 1-6. [Retired naturalist Mills, a native of upper Cape Cod, gives an informed account of one segment of Thoreau's last journey to the Cape in the summer of 1857. To accompany this retracing of Thoreau's path through the mid-Cape region, Mills supplies a number of arresting color photographs of the waterways, bogs, and bays that charmed Thoreau along the way. Readers will be glad to know that Thoreau's fondly recalled "noble ponds" are protected and maintained by the Nickerson State Park today, and well worth a visit.]

Raymond, David B. "The Aim of the Laborer: Critical Assessments of Henry David Thoreau's Philosophy of Work." *The Concord Saunterer*, New Series 28 (2020): 130-152. [Raymond begins his well-wrought study by offering a reception history of Thoreau's philosophy of work. He shows how "the fault line of criticism has [consistently] fallen on Thoreau's relationship with capitalism" (131), and how the critiques arguably say more about their authors than their subject. Thus Thoreau was habitually denigrated for laziness and lack of industry by early, conservative-leaning critics such as James Russell Lowell and Robert Louis Stevenson. Later academic critics of left-leaning persuasions, such as Michael T. Gilmore, Stephen Fink, and Nicholas K. Bromell, then turned turtle on this perspective, to instead chide Thoreau for being insufficiently resistant to the capitalist system. All of them miss the mark, according to Raymond. They neglect Thoreau's core Transcendentalist beliefs, which combine an anti-materialist bent with the conviction that all lasting social change must emanate from the individual, rather than from larger political or, for that matter, economic regimes. "For Thoreau," Raymond writes, "work was as much about moral relationships between producer and consumer as it was about equitable distribution of goods and services. Neither a capitalist stooge nor a socialist revolutionary, Thoreau devised a vision of work based on spiritual values rather than material values" (149). Raymond having earlier commented on Thoreau's work ethic in the 2009 *Concord Saunterer*, it would be interesting in time to have his take on Thoreau's actual microeconomy or practice of work, encompassing his family obligations, pencil manufacture and surveying income, available taxation records, wealth markers, and/or estate records, etc. To my knowledge, no systematic archival research has yet been published regarding the Thoreau family finances.]

Shurcliff, Charles. "The Strange Evolution of Henry Thoreau's House: An Architectural Journey." *The Concord Saunterer*, New Series 28 (2020): 1-39. [Landscape architect Shurcliff offers a spirited argument that Thoreau's house at Walden

Pond evolved over two versions: a first one employing visible posts, the second one doing away with them to create freer space indoors. This progression would explain some obscurities in Thoreau's own writing about his dwelling. Shurcliff marshals a close reading of evidence from Thoreau's lengthy dream-house passage in the "Housewarming" chapter of *Walden*, plus a reminiscence Thoreau's contemporary Joseph Hosmer and the findings of amateur architect Roland Wells Robbins, who excavated Thoreau's house site in the 1940s. To clarify his thesis, Shurcliff helpfully includes sketches of the two versions of the house that he envisions Thoreau to have built at the pond.]

Stahl, Bil. "Henry and Me" in the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* 313 (Spring 2021): 7. [Stahl, a retired academic librarian and longstanding Thoreauvian, reflects frankly and perceptively on his lifelong relationship with Thoreau via his writings and philosophy.]



We are indebted to Dave Bonney, Bil Stahl, Corinne Smith, and Richard Winslow III for their contributions to the present list of additions. Please send further tips to: [henrik.otterberg@kagaku.se](mailto:henrik.otterberg@kagaku.se).

## President's Column

by Rochelle L. Johnson

*We live among countless landscapes of memory. . . . They convey both remembrance and omission, privileging particular arcs of story while neglecting so many others.*

—Lauret Savoy, *Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape* (Counterpoint, 2015, pp. 112-113)



Walden Pond taught me the brutality of systemic racism. Thirty years ago, my sister and I planned our first walk around the pond. Before heading to Lincoln, we stopped at a nearby market to pick up food for a picnic lunch. Out in front of the store, we divvied up our short grocery list, and I headed to the produce department while she sought out crackers and cheese. When I had apples and grapes in hand, I went to find her. I came upon her walking away from me down an aisle, a store employee apparently following her. I trailed the employee who followed her until we each took a right, in turn, down the next aisle. My sister grabbed the cheese and then turned back toward the employee—who was watching everything she did—and toward me. Incensed, I, the customer and protective older sister, issued an ironic question to the store's employee: "Can we help you?" He mumbled something and walked away.

I asked my sister what was up, what he was doing tracking her every move. She replied, "Oh, that happens all the time. That's part of being Black." You see, my sister is African American, often subject to the assumption that her colored skin means she is a thief. Adopted at birth by our parents, she is labeled "Black" by



our color-fixated society—though a recent DNA test told her that she has as much European as African blood coursing through her veins. And what does it matter anyway? Like many, I’ve learned that race is a construction as much as anything—a convenient way for labeling, and too often subjugating, people who look different from oneself or who hail from other lands. “Race” overlooks the fact that we are all the same species of animal.

On that day, my sister and I left the store, picnic in cloth bag, and headed to Walden—to the possibility of peace amid the trees, birdsong, glimpses of Thoreau’s “sky water,” a storied pond reflecting the vaulted heavens. But that afternoon I experienced neither an idyllic encounter with nature nor a trip down literary history’s lane. Only a walk overshadowed by the dehumanization of discrimination.

Sometimes I find it fitting that my memories of that day center on black and white, and not on the green that defines Walden’s legacy. Thoreau knew this tension. Injustice “spoils” his walks, too, as he tells us in “Resistance to Civil Government.” In *Walden*, he feels it, too. Through lilac bush, disintegrating lintel, and crumbling stone wall, he excavates the names and lives of people who had resided by the pond before him, sharing the stories of impoverished Black individuals, among others, embedded in the land. Elsewhere, he wrote about his encounters with people fleeing the unjust bonds of enslavement and implored his fellow

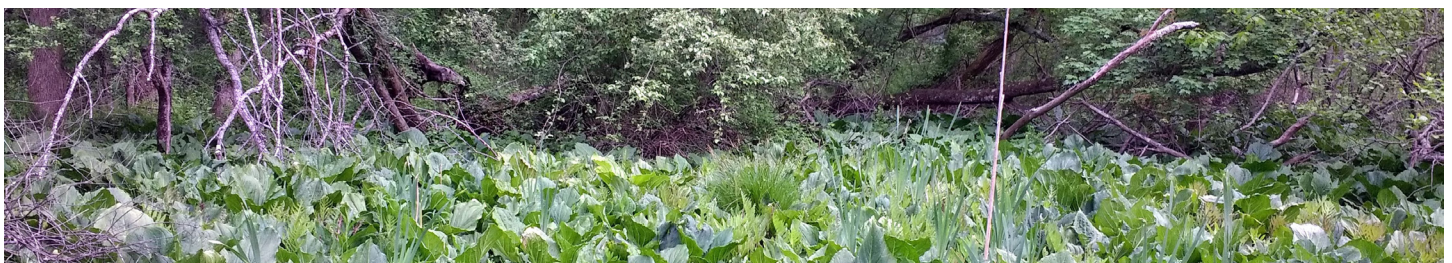
citizens to consider upon whose racial enslavement their own freedom depended. Like mine, Thoreau’s grasp of racism was far from complete, to be sure. He attempted, though, to disentangle the ways that industrial capitalism is mired not only in nature’s despoliation but also in other people’s subjugation.

We need now more than ever to continue this work. As writer Hop Hopkins explains it, “we will never survive the climate crisis without ending white supremacy. Here’s why: You can’t have climate change without sacrifice zones, and you can’t have sacrifice zones without disposable people, and you can’t have disposable people without racism.”<sup>1</sup> As president of the Thoreau Society, I am honored to work with a Board of Directors and staff committed to exploring how we can better address issues of outreach, diversity, equity, and inclusion. If you’d like to join that effort, please reach out to us. We have important work to do—and a fine model in Thoreau to inspire us.

• **Rochelle L. Johnson** is the president of the Thoreau Society.

#### Notes

1. Hop Hopkins, “Racism is killing the planet: The ideology of white supremacy leads the way toward disposable people and a disposable natural world,” *Sierra: The National Magazine of the Sierra Club* (8 June 2020): <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/racism-killing-planet>.



## Notes from Concord

by Michael J. Frederick

Over the summer Thoreau Society members joined together remotely from around the globe for our virtual Annual Gathering. Visit [thoreausociety.org](http://thoreausociety.org) to watch Jane Goodall honoring George Schaller for his life’s work and his being awarded the Thoreau Prize for Literary Excellence in Nature Writing. An exceptional interview with Schaller follows. You can also register to watch recordings of the entire conference, including the interview between Maria Madison of the Robbins House and our keynote presenter Ibram X. Kendi.

As summer turns to autumn, we anticipate a return to some in-person programming (following CDC guidance). **All in-person events will also be live-streamed.** Online-only events will be offered as well.

We are featuring two programs with the Write Connection in partnership with Thoreau Farm. More workshops may be added.

- October 3, 1-2:30 PM, workshop at Thoreau Farm: Corinne H. Smith, author of *Westward I Go Free: Tracing Thoreau’s Last*



*Journey and Henry David Thoreau for Kids: His Life & Times, With 21 Activities*, will explore the natural areas and trails near Thoreau’s birth house for her presentation on “Awaken Your Senses: Write Outside Your Door.” Suggested donation: \$5.

- December 5, 2-3 PM, webinar. Robert A. Gross, author of *The Minutemen and Their World* and winner of the Bancroft Prize, will discuss his latest book, *The Transcendentalists and Their World*. Free.

We will also be featuring two programs sponsored by the Thoreau Society and Thoreau Farm in cooperation with Princeton University Press and the Concord Museum.

- October 12, 7-8 pm, online panel discussion: Join us for a virtual book launch for *Now Comes Good Sailing: Writers Reflect on Henry David Thoreau*, edited by Andrew Blauner. Twenty-seven of today’s leading writers contributed to this anthology of original pieces about the author of *Walden*. We will be joined by contributors Jordan Salama, Jennifer Finney Boylan, and Gerald Early.
- October 24, 7-8 pm, panel discussion at Concord Museum: Join us for *Now Comes Good Sailing*, an in-person event at the Concord Museum, featuring *Now Comes Good Sailing* anthology contributors George Howe Colt, Kristen Case,



Megan Marshall, Wen Stephenson, Will Eno, and Tatiana Schlossberg.

Finally, we are very pleased to announce our program during the Concord Festival of Authors.

- October 29, 8:00 PM, presentation at location TBD: Join the Thoreau Society for a special event honoring botanist and best-selling author Robin Wall Kimmerer with the 2021 Thoreau Prize for Excellence in Nature Writing. Kimmerer, a forest ecologist, and advocate for the rights of Native peoples, is the author of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*.

The pandemic year of 2020-2021 has been the most challenging period the Society has faced since I began my position as Executive Director in 2006. With the help of Thoreau Society members and supporters, we also had the most memorable year of programming, including an Annual Gathering that far exceeded everyone's expectations, including my own. We are truly blessed with dedicated Board members, editorial staff, shop associates, admin team, and membership.

Visit [thoreausociety.org](http://thoreausociety.org) for the latest information, program changes, and registration. In-person and live-streaming options may have to be adjusted according to circumstances and the latest CDC guidance. Our goal is to continue to bring quality programming to the public and Thoreau Society members near and far.

- **Michael J. Frederick** is the executive director of the Thoreau Society.

administration's Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) was in part a response to a spate of drownings across the Commonwealth, nearly 30 in two months. The peremptory closure led to a strong backlash. Advocates of reopening pointed out that none of the recent drownings happened at Walden Pond, that the rules governing swimming at Walden Pond were developed with extensive community input, and that the ban would only serve to encourage long-distance swimmers to head to the ocean or other bodies of water that could be more dangerous than Walden Pond. By July 7, a compromise had been reached: open water swimming would be permitted again, but only in the early morning and evening hours, when lifeguards are not on duty, and swimmers must wear bright-colored floating buoys and observe several other precautions. A legislator from the town of Bedford stated: "As soon as the ban took effect, my inbox filled with constituent emails. They shared their personal stories of mental and physical health, and how open water swimming at Walden Pond has been their lifeline over the years. . . . I am relieved that DCR's new rules include measures meant to prevent future tragedies, while still allowing residents to care for themselves."

Open water swimming remains dangerous. It "should not be attempted by individuals who have not trained or prepared for the activity," DCR warns. Since 2013 there have been three drownings at the pond, and many more close calls, as measured by emergency response team activations.

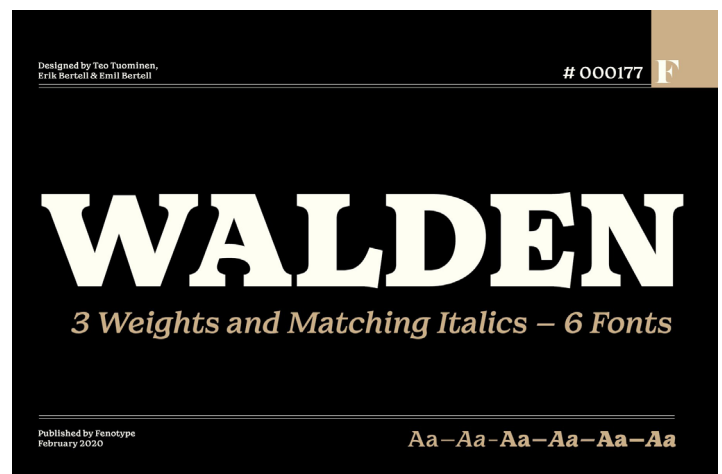
Also from **Wes Mott**: For the second summer in a row, a pair of loons has made its home at Walden Pond. An article in the *Boston Sunday Globe* (July 18) draws on the expertise of local naturalist (and Shop at Walden Pond associate) Peter Alden. Alden says that the behavior of the pair indicates that there may be a nest nearby. This may be the first time in around 200 years that loons are breeding at Walden. Thoreau encountered the bird during his time at the pond, but no breeding pairs. "At most," he wrote in *Walden*, "it tolerates one annual loon."

## Notes & Queries

by *Brent Ranalli*

From **Wes Mott**: Julimar Avila, a Boston-based competitive swimmer preparing for the rescheduled Tokyo Olympics, faced a problem last year. The pandemic had shut down all the indoor pools. Where was she to train? The answer: Walden Pond. But first Avila needed to overcome her acute fear of open water swimming—swimming without guide ropes, not being able to see the bottom. This kind of phobia can be manifested in anxiety, panic, shortness of breath, rapid breathing, and nausea. As Steve Marantz of the *Boston Globe* (August 11) put it, "Henry David Thoreau went there in the mid-19th century to find deep meaning in life. Avila went to exorcise a demon. . . . So she took the plunge. Submerged her fear. Willed herself forward, stroke by stroke." She started out with a group, for support. "Walden Pond is in her heart" now, concludes Marantz, and not because she read Thoreau's "thick prose" as a Boston University student, but because it helped her overcome her fear and pursue her own dream of being an Olympic athlete. "I realized I didn't want to look back and say, 'What if?'"

The big news story from Walden Pond this summer was a ban on open water swimming. On July 2, Avila and many others woke up to learn that swimming on the pond outside the cordoned-off beach areas would no longer be permitted. This ruling by the Baker



Courtesy Emil Bertel, Fenotype

From **Juliet Trofi**: In 2020, the designers at Fenotype introduced a new font, "Walden." "A heavy serif font with a handmade feel, Walden gives a hearty impression. Despite its rustic appearance, Walden is perfectly adaptable to contemporary use, wherever a bit more character is needed." "Decidedly kept simple," the font comes in three weights with matching italics.

This new font is not to be confused with the creations of The Walden Font Company, "purveyors of fine historical typefaces





Courtesy Erzsébet Bognár

On August 3, 2015, 29-year-old Ankit Agrawal of India, visiting Walden Pond with friends, encountered unexpectedly deep water when he entered near Thoreau's Cove. He panicked, took in water, and was unconscious by the time he was pulled to shore by nearby swimmer Erzsébet Bognár, who proceeded to perform CPR until emergency response teams arrived. Bognár, a mother of five, has a deep personal connection with Walden Pond; she has been swimming there in all seasons ever since moving to Massachusetts from Hungary in 1990. This photo of Bognár and Agrawal was taken shortly after Agrawal was released from the hospital. She attended his wedding in India the next year and they remain close.

since 1995." The Walden Font Company mostly resurrects and makes available fonts from other eras. Available sets include "Minuteman," "Wild West," and "Civil War."

Kathryn Schulz is at it again! The author of the infamous 2015 hatchet job against Thoreau published by *The New Yorker* under the title "Pond Scum" has written a new essay for the magazine, the gist of which is: "In our Misanthropocene epoch, some nature writers see a world that would be wonderful if it weren't for all the other people in it." Thoreau is not the main target this time, but he is dragged in for a misdirected swipe here and there. For example: "Those writing [about Nature] in the misanthrope tradition readily incorporate their fellow-humans, but only as objects of resentment and revulsion. [They] champion a crude Thoreauvian code of

existence, according to which any suggestion of interdependence, anything that we need from or provide for one another, violates a sacred freedom." The caricature is so crude and off the mark that one can imagine Thoreau responding (along the lines of a letter he wrote to Daniel Ricketson) that he perceives no hurt from it since he does not feel *addressed* by it.

An article by **John Roman** in the November 2020 issue of *Artists Magazine* explores cycloramas, the gargantuan 360-degree paintings that were popular entertainment during the nineteenth century. Most major cities boasted at least one or two large buildings built specifically for such exhibitions. Art that fills the whole field of vision has a special power on the imagination, Roman argues, and he cites Thoreau as evidence. "Some months ago I went to see a panorama of 'The Rhine,'" Thoreau writes in "Walking." "It was like a dream of the Middle Ages. I floated down its historic stream in something more than imagination, under bridges built by Romans, and repaired by later heroes, past cities and castles whose very names were music to my ears, and each was the subject of a legend. I floated along under the spell of enchantment, as if I had been transported to a heroic age."

In an Annual Gathering presentation from 2019, **Corinne H. Smith** pointed out that "Walking" isn't the only piece of writing by Thoreau that bears the impression of this cyclorama. In "Resistance to Civil Government," Thoreau writes that when it was seen through the window of a jail cell, "Concord was turned into a Rhine stream, and visions of knights and castles passed before me." Since "Resistance to Civil Government" was completed around the second week of April in 1849, Thoreau must have seen the Rhine panorama sometime earlier than then (and earlier than May 26, when he went into Boston to pick up his first copies of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, sometimes assumed to be the date he saw the cyclorama). The Rhine exhibition, Benjamin Crackbone Champney's *Great Panoramic Picture of the River Rhine and its Banks*, was on display at Horticultural Hall in Boston from December 1848 to May 1849. Smith also pointed out that the organized tour that brought Thoreau and William Ellery Channing to Canada in 1850 was inspired by the success of another cyclorama exhibition, William Burr's *Moving Mirror of the Lakes, the Niagara, St. Lawrence and Saguenay Rivers*, which opened in Boston in February 1850. It is not known whether Thoreau saw the painted version, but he could not pass up an opportunity to see Quebec City and the St. Lawrence River up close and personal at



Source: DigitalCommonwealth.org, CC BY-NC-ND

Cyclorama building on Tremont Street in Boston



discount prices. (Thoreau did definitely visit one more cyclorama. He mentions it in “Walking”: a panorama of the Mississippi. Smith speculates that this exhibition may have inspired him to make his final journey, the 1861 trip to Minnesota.)

Of the October 13, 1860, photo of Boston taken from a hot air balloon that appeared in *TSB* 308, **Dan Shively** comments: “It’s ironic to observe that within less than three months Thoreau would be writing the famous passage in the *Journal* for January 3, 1861: ‘Thank God, men cannot as yet fly, and lay waste the sky as well as the earth! We are safe on that side for the present.’”

Malcom Gladwell’s new book *The Bomber Mafia* profiles Karl Norden, the cranky perfectionist engineer (nicknamed “Old Man Dynamite”) who pioneered the development of sighting equipment for accurately dropping bombs from airplanes. Norden “read Dickens avidly for revelations on the lives of the disadvantaged, and Thoreau for the discussion of the simple life. He hated paying taxes. He thought Franklin Roosevelt was the devil.” Norden was a devout Christian who considered that he was doing God’s work. Once bombs could be dropped from the air with precision, wars would be fought and won with a minimum of casualties. Gladwell shows that the technology for precision bombing lagged far behind the doctrine during World War II. But technology has well caught up today. Bombs can be dropped with exquisite precision, from manned aircraft and even from drones. We are living Norden’s

dream. Why am I not cheered? (The answer, I find, is in Thoreau’s “Paradise to be Regained.” Even if the technical problem of the bomb sight has been solved, the problem of the war-making impulse has not.)

**Alireza Taghdarreh** sends this bulletin from Iran: “I talked to a group of teachers [from the U.S. and other countries] at the Walden Woods Project this summer—at a time when the civilized world is leaving Afghanistan in the hands of the Taliban, an extremist group that threatens every sign and symbol of civilization throughout the whole world. Here is part of what I said: In *Walden*, Thoreau says, ‘This pond never breaks up so soon as the others in this neighborhood, on account both of its greater depth and its having no stream passing through it to melt or wear away the ice.’ Such is the story of closed, totalitarian societies in which the ice of ignorance is deep with no stream of other thoughts passing through them. This reveals the role translators play in bringing streams of new ideas to flow through people’s frozen minds in their societies. Without them icebergs bear even more icebergs.”

**Tom Fate** brings Thoreauvian themes into a reflection on life lessons from his mother, who died last year at age 95. Those who endured the Great Depression and World War II, he writes in the *Chicago Tribune* (April 2, 2021), understood “‘the gospel of this moment’ . . . the present tense is not a cage but a gift.”

## Call for Papers: “Thoreau & the Nick of Time”

A Thoreau Symposium will be held at The Snorrastofa Cultural and Medieval Centre, Reykholt, Iceland, on May 25-27 (Wed-Fri), 2022, with voluntary joint excursions to follow on May 28-29 (Sat-Sun). In case rescheduling is necessary due to COVID-19, designated backup dates, likely during the fall of 2022, will be announced.

**Plenary:** Laura Dassow Walls, William P. and Hazel B. White Professor of English, University of Notre Dame, plus several invited session speakers.

**Organizers:** Bergur Thorgerirsson (Executive Director, Snorrastofa), Henrik Otterberg (Thoreau Society, Sweden), Deborah Medenbach (Thoreau Society, USA), Michael Frederick (Executive Director, Thoreau Society, USA).

**Theme:** Thoreau grappled with new scientific concepts of time that opened up immense chronologies and revealed a vastly more senescent Earth than earlier known or thought possible. The relatively contained and traditional Biblical narrative of a few millennia of history was no longer tenable. Thoreau himself lamented the loss of simpler times of mythological clarity and cyclical revolution, while remaining clear-eyed about his rapidly changing present. Today we embrace the concept of “deep time”

as regards the age of our universe and planet, but increasingly worry about an imminent and self-created environmental catastrophe. Once again we feel our worldly time to be short, the responsibility fundamentally our own. How are we to find a sustainable way forward, and may Thoreau help us to it?

**Presentation topics could touch on:** *science* (how did the natural sciences of Thoreau’s day, such as geology and zoology, open up and challenge traditionally and theologically received notions of time?); *aesthetics* (how did Thoreau deal with and portray time in his own thought and writings?); *history* (is it linear, circular, staggered, or perhaps just chaotic? what did Thoreau himself make of it?); furthermore *politics* (which timeframes are relevant to making informed, ethical decisions? a single human life or career, or perhaps something larger, of longer duration? can time frameworks from non-Western or indigenous cultures provide clues or answers?); and finally *reception* (has Thoreau’s time come or gone, in terms of his relevance to us?)

Please submit your abstracts/session proposals (maximum 500 words), by November 1, 2021, to Henrik Otterberg at [henrik.otterberg@kagaku.se](mailto:henrik.otterberg@kagaku.se).





## Call for Submissions for a Special Issue of *The Concord Saunterer*: “Other than Thoreau: 19th-Century African-American Nature Writers”

I thought of the fishes of the water, the fowls of the air, the wild beasts of the forests, all appeared to be free, to go where they pleased, and I was an unhappy slave.

—Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave* (1849)

Henry David Thoreau has been canonized as the preeminent American nature writer of the nineteenth century. We have identified his precursors and inspirers and recognize his profound influence on the genre of nature writing, wherever it is practiced across the world. Yet many of his American contemporaries and near-contemporaries who had a thing or two to say about the natural world and their place in it have gone unrecognized, in part because of how we have defined the genre of nature writing itself. As a handful of scholars have argued, perhaps we need to look in unlikely places to find the eco-voices of nineteenth-century Black Americans (recent readings of Frederic Douglass come to mind) as well as of indigenous peoples. To do so enlarges our understanding of nature writing, its contexts, its occasions, and its purposes. While Kimberly Ruffin (*Black on*

*Earth: African American Ecoliterary Traditions* [2010]) and others have begun this work, in this issue, our focus is, first, on Thoreau’s contemporaries and near-contemporaries, and second, on whatever relationships we might identify or tease out between him and them.

We invite submissions that are based on archival research, that reposition relatively unknown as well as known African-American writers as nature writers, and/or that revisit those unlikely places: slave narratives, diaries, oral histories, research and field notes, art in various media, or any other cultural artifact, including geographical locations. In short, we hope to create an anthology of sorts devoted to nineteenth-century African-Americans whose productions have hitherto gone unrecognized as descriptions of, musings on, or simple indexical registers of, the more-than-human world. In addition to full-length scholarly essays, we are interested in seeing pieces that function, in effect, as actual anthology entries with contextualizing introductions and notes. We also invite creative responses that might be read as acts of recovery of nineteenth-century African-American nature writers.

Queries welcome. Submissions due March 1, 2022, to be sent out for review in time for the 2022 issue. Contact Kathleen Kelly at [cs@thoreausociety.org](mailto:cs@thoreausociety.org).

In 2012, the Pig Iron Theatre Company collaborated with Japanese writer Toshiki Okada to produce a Thoreau-inspired play called “Zero Cost House” about the 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear emergency at Fukushima. During the pandemic year it was revived as “Zero Cost House (for Zoom).” Kevin McGill tipped us off about the production. Tantalizingly, a recording does not appear to be available, but we will keep our eyes peeled.

A motto from Thoreau’s August 30, 1856, *Journal* (“It is vain to dream of a wildness distant from ourselves. There is none such”) inspired the title of a recent art exhibition at the Addison Gallery of American Art, in Andover, Massachusetts. The exhibit, “A Wildness Distant from Ourselves: Art and Ecology in 19th-Century America,” explored the Euro-American experience of nature as “other.” Shared by Jym St. Pierre. And from Mike Berger: A May-June 2020 art exhibition at Halsey McKay Gallery in New York City took its title, “Woof of the Sun, Ethereal Gauze,” from the first line of a Thoreau poem that appears in the “Tuesday” chapter of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*.

Marlies Hendersen, who has researched Thoreau’s passage through Billerica, Massachusetts on the Concord River (see TSB #303), has collaborated with Billerica Local Access TV to create a 360 degree /

gyroscopic interactive virtual experience of a visit to the Middlesex Canal Museum, a paddle from the Billerica Dam to the Lowell Centennial dam, and a virtual walk with Thoreau along the Middlesex Canal. Search online for “Virtual Riverfest Billerica.”

Found by Richard Smith: Tamworth Distilling of New Hampshire has unveiled a new Thoreau-themed offering. “We named this corn whiskey The Mellow Fellow as a nod to Thoreau’s desire to live simply and peacefully among his natural surroundings. This July, we raise our glasses, half full, to individualism, idealism, and the divinity of nature.”

On November 17, 1860, Thoreau wrote in his *Journal*: “Silas Hosmer tells me how [Abel] Moore & [John] Hosmer sold the Heywood Lot bet the RR. & Fair Haven—They lotted it off in this wise ie in triangles—& carrying plenty of liquor they first treated all round—& then proceeded to sell at auction—but the purchasers—excited with liquor were not aware when the stakes were pointed out that the lots were not as broad in the rear as in front—& the wood standing cost then as much as it should have done delivered at the door.” The *Journal* entry includes a sketch of the shape of the lots. Kathleen Kelly ([k.kelly@neu.edu](mailto:k.kelly@neu.edu)) asks: Does anyone have any information or thoughts about this episode? (Is it a true story? Is it discussed in



Courtesy Tamworth Distilling





Courtesy Steve Tobin

Two Rod Road, called by Thoreau “Bridle-road” in the *Journal*. The road, which leads from Punkatasset Hill northward into Carlisle along the eastern border of the Estabrook Woods, was evidently a horse path in Thoreau’s time, before it was widened for carriages and wagons. Today it is a hiking trail.

the literature?) Thank you to those who already responded to a query on this topic on the Thoreau Society Facebook page.

**Joseph Moldenhauer** writes: “An organization called Rootstrikers was founded by Harvard professor and attorney Lawrence Lessig. The organization’s mission is to identify and combat the corrupting influence of money in American politics. Rootstrikers.org’s home page does not identify the source of its title. But it seems apparent to me that the metaphorical origin is a passage on philanthropy in the ‘Economy’ chapter of *Walden*: ‘There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.’”

• **Brent Ranalli** is the editor of the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*.

**Please send your submissions  
for the *Bulletin* to the editor:**  
brent.ranalli@thoreausociety.org

Although exceptions will occasionally be made for longer pieces, in general articles and reviews should be no longer than 1500 words. Longer submissions may be forwarded by the editor to *The Concord Saunterer*. All submissions should conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The Thoreau Edition texts (Princeton University Press) should be used as the standard for quotations from Thoreau’s writings, when possible. Contributors need not be members of the Thoreau Society, but all non-members are heartily encouraged to join.

The *Thoreau Society Bulletin* is a quarterly publication containing Thoreau Society news, additions to the Thoreau bibliography, and short articles about Thoreau and related topics. It is indexed in *American Humanities Index*, *American Literary Scholarship*, and *MLA International Bibliography*.

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Established in 1941, **The Thoreau Society®**, Inc. is an international nonprofit organization with a mission to stimulate interest in and foster education about Thoreau’s life, works, legacy, and his place in his world and in ours, challenging all to live a deliberate, considered life. The Thoreau Society™ has the following organizational goals:

- To encourage research on Thoreau’s life and works and to act as a repository for Thoreau-related materials
- To educate the public about Thoreau’s ideas and their application to contemporary life
- To preserve Thoreau’s legacy and advocate for the preservation of Thoreau country

Membership in the Society includes subscriptions to its two publications, the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* (published quarterly) and *The Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* (published annually). Society members receive a 10% discount on all merchandise purchased from The Shop at Walden Pond and advance notice about Society programs, including the Annual Gathering.

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**The Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies:** Kathleen Coyne Kelly (English Department, Northeastern University, Boston, MA); e-mail: cs@thoreausociety.org.

**Thoreau Society Bulletin:** Brent Ranalli, 341 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742, U.S.A.; e-mail: brent.ranalli@thoreausociety.org.

**The Thoreau Society Collections:** The Society’s Collections are housed at the Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods, owned and managed by the Walden Woods Project. For information about using the Collections or visiting the Institute, please contact the curator at: curator@walden.org.

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