THE ART OF LIVING:

VITAL MODES OF BEING AND THEIR RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE IN THOREAU

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Abstract: The following paper is interested in the predisposition to profound boredom and its potential to arouse despair. In light of such, it explores three modes of being – perceiving, walking, and writing – to illustrate a potential for living in a way that recovers vitality from the two. It pursues these matters through the life and literature of Henry David Thoreau, nineteenth-century author and philosopher who spent two years of his life at Walden Pond. The paper analyzes a broad scope of Thoreauvian literature to clarify just how certain modes of being, at their best, are vital. It ultimately situates readers in a place to consider their response to living in the world and the possibility that religious life might include a function similar to Thoreau’s three vital modes of being.

Table of Contents

Introduction

It was not until this past year that I began looking at the moon. My doing so started with that August afternoon of the total solar eclipse, on which I read Annie Dillard's classic essay, "Total Eclipse," a couple times in one sitting. I gazed at it behind filmy glasses and now gaze at it every night, when I return home from school, standing there in the short grass. I see it swell in its youth and wane in its age. I even saw it turn orange, just the other night. Looking is a habit now.

I think I had been oblivious to the moon on nearly every other day of years past, and I had not even realized so until August came and everyone was suddenly talking about it. That seemed like a problem to me, for it was not as if August appeared and I entered a new world in which the moon existed for the first time, nor as if I had suddenly been given new eyes. I hadn't had any sense of a problem, much less any sense of what the root of it might be. The eclipse gave me the first sense, but I still wonder about the second sense.

There is not always such a distinct moment in which we sense a problem. Henry David Thoreau, nineteenth century writer and and philosopher, for instance, might be characterized as having sensed a problem through myriad visions of everyday life in Concord, Massachusetts, over an indefinite span of time. His literature, namely *Walden,* reflects this sense of a problem and his concern with living in the world. It portrays a sensible problem with living in the world, that is to say, and all the while a man's retreat to a quiet pond in the woods, too. While there are many impressions to be had of Thoreau and interpretations to be made of what problem he senses with human life in the world and what he does in response to that problem, it is my hope to outline a convincing problem and response that beckon religious reflection in the work that follows – both of which are relevant to my awakened vision of the moon.

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Boredom and the Human Condition According to Thoreau

"Undoubtedly the very tedium and ennui which presume to have exhausted the variety and the joys of life are as old as Adam. But man's capacities have never been measured; nor are we to judge of what he can do by any precedents, so little has been tried."

"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."

HENRY DAVID THOREAU
-Walden-

As an introduction to the anthology *Walden and Other Writings,* editors cite a eulogy of Thoreau written by his dear friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson. The eulogy begins by tracing Thoreau's Saxon lineage and ends by highlighting a certain moment of his literary excellence, which had the habit of recording his thoughts and feelings with elegance, Emerson believed. To that end Emerson's eulogy recalls a moment when Thoreau had said the following: "Thank God they cannot cut down the clouds! All kinds of figures are drawn on the blue ground with the fibrous white paint." The portrait Emerson creates is one of a unique being against the backdrop of an intricately observed world. And yet Thoreau's own introduction to *Walden,* the work which immediately follows Emerson's remarks, seems to diagnose human beings with a struggle to see themselves meaningfully within the everydayness of their world. They are easily lost in overstimulation and in what they do and produce so much so that they have lost any sense of their original decision to do so. Perhaps they could hardly write a biography of themselves like the one Emerson writes of Thoreau. Perhaps they, and we, too, are many things, some of which are more fundamental and problematic than others.

The entirety of *Walden*, a tale of two years lived beside a pond in Concord, Massachusetts, but presented as one for the sake of maintaining clear and cohesive themes,[1] follows a sort of diagnosis-prognosis structure. Thoreau outlines problematic conditions for and examples of living in "Economy" and "Where I Lived, and What I Lived for," and he gives something like an image of their resolution in "Spring" and "Conclusion." Similarly, he retreats from Concord into relative solitude in light of a problem, but he does so only in order to return to it by *Walden*'s end as if to be able to live better within the diagnosed "problem" and recover something out of it, rather than to retreat as if intending to escape forever.

Thoreau's Diagnostic Concord

"Economy" begins with a brief outline of Thoreau's project at the pond. He introduces that project, albeit cryptically, as an effort at discovering what is absolutely necessary for living. By necessary he means what is needed, but the project is to discover both what he needs and that he is needy. As such, when Thoreau finds "vital heat" to be that which is absolutely necessary, he understands the heat to be vital precisely because he needs it anew each day. The vital, or absolutely necessary, is not something to have in excess. In fact, it is something to constantly draw upon as it fades away and provides just enough for living. What is vital, therefore, matters to Thoreau greatly.

Just a page into the outline of his project at the pond, though, Thoreau's reflections on the people of Concord reveal his perception of a problematic everyday living that seems to neither intuit nor draw upon the vital. He immediately describes his neighbors as those who work tirelessly, but also somewhat fruitlessly. Their paradoxical, fruitless excess is meant to be stark. "The twelve labors of Hercules were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have

undertaken," he remarks, "for they were only twelve, and had an end; but I could never see that these men slew or captured any monster or finished any labor."[2] Foreshadowed by the title "Economy," Thoreau uses images of labor like the one here to convey a sense of the meaninglessness in what men do. Their very existing seems to be confused with working, such that like we rarely question the fact that we exist, the citizens of Concord rarely question that or to what end they labor in burgeoning industrial systems. From this observation Thoreau diagnoses his neighbors, with whom we and even Thoreau himself are synonymous, with the problem of working without any *telos* – which is to convey a lacking sense of meaningfulness and necessity, or vitality, more so than a lacking perception of an end-goal. They work because theirs is the inherited tradition of working, without thought or question, rather than working vitally – which is to say with themselves deliberately choosing to do so and affected by doing so.

"Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born?" Thoreau thus asks of Concord as if to say that such meaningless work not only matters nothing to those who perform it, but also opposes their very vitality. Again, the question lays bare his perception of an issue in the way his neighbors live, for in *Walden*'s early chapters, work is a form of metonymy for life itself. Collectively, theirs is the "fool's life," he calls it. "How many poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life!" [3] he exclaims, grappling for his audience's attention. The matter he wishes to consider is one he poses as almost unutterably significant; the ambiguous diagnosis he wishes to present, equally so. And as "Economy" continues, the problems with living that so agonize Thoreau only prove more afflicting. "Some of you," he says, "we all know, are poor, find it hard to live, are sometimes, as it were, gasping for breath."[4] It is not working on its own that is problematic, but that in working we fail to treat ourselves tenderly, he holds, like beings worth nourishing. That we work without

question, in fact mechanically, with no time to afford for what he suggests to be vitalizing engagements; and that in such working, we stand gasping for breath under conditions we might fail to even see.

As a trend becoming evident, Thoreau thematizes life and death over the course of *Walden* as much as in any of his writings. He seems to think we, the diagnosed, know not how to live in open air – which is to say we know not how to live at all.[5] But his tone conveys an element of self criticism, too. For Thoreau himself went to Walden Pond to be knowingly refreshed by his world rather than unknowingly exhausted by it; he went to the pond to leave it, and to experiment at living in that time in-between. He does not exempt himself from the diagnosis he presents, in other words. He rather finds himself at issue in the experiment of living he undergoes, recording his own expenditures, practicing certain habits, and pondering his own vital necessities over and over again.[6] And yet the heart of the problem addressed by his experimenting is puzzling.

Though Thoreau uses language in opening chapters of *Walden* that could justify our claiming he is concerned with several, specific problems, one such justifiable and fundamental to many others, as to be discussed, is boredom. Having illustrated his use of a diagnosis-prognosis structure in *Walden*, we could understand moments when he uses language of death as contemporaneous with those when he diagnoses human beings with living in a profound boredom. But we ought to still attend to the language of life that parallels these moments, for they would similarly express the possibilities of living vitally in spite of fundamental boredom. On a few occasions, Thoreau clearly connects the existence of a problem with the suggestion that such problem may well be boredom. One such moment is the following from “Economy,” where he writes, “undoubtedly the very tedium and ennui which presume to have exhausted the variety

and the joys of life are as old as Adam. But man's capacities have never been measured; nor are we to judge what he can do by any precedents, so little has been tried."[7]

Thoreau thus suggests that our problem, boredom, is eternally old and anew.[8] Tied up in his experiment of living, he presents its correlates, tedium and ennui, as results of living un-well. His mention of man's capacities suggests that when in a state of tedium and ennui, man is still capable of something other than that state. And yet he never rules out the possibility that that very something might spring out of a kind of tedium and ennui. He seems to have great hope in what is possible for human beings, whom he wishes would more readily take up life as an experiment as opposed to a tradition, like that of industrial working taken up by the laborers in Concord. If they did, it could be that they found vitality to arise from inhabiting a "boring" world better, perhaps experimentally, rather than traditionally like the laborers in Concord working without any sense of themselves as capable of being effectors of their labor and ones affected by their labor.

Defining boredom as a state-of-mind in which a person cannot perceive meaning in his or her world keeps this option even more likely. For when can meaning arise but when there is a place of meaninglessness; or when can creation, or life, be begotten but when there is nothingness, or death; or as follows, vitality but when there is boredom, insofar as the latter hasbecome associated with death in Thoreau's writing? Michael Raposa expresses this sentiment in the thesis of his *Boredom and the Religious Imagination*, which holds that boredom may well be the starting point for spiritual life and religious imagination while acknowledging its threat upon one's existence. "Boredom may indicate the lack of a capacity to discern the full significance of a thing or situation," he writes.[9] Thus, relieving it could be recovering something

from it. We ought to entertain the possibility that vitality might arise from our boredom for reasons which will become significant.

Raposa's work stands among a body of literature on boredom that holds a similar thesis, further exploration of which leads to a brief look at boredom through a philosophical lens and creates a space to encounter Thoreau's diagnosis of the human condition as profound boredom. In her book *Experience Without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity*, Elizabeth Goldstein holds that boredom has significance as an experience of a subjective crisis of meaning and as a conditioned social phenomenon, both of which create an issue of meaning. In boredom, she claims, there are experiences without people who experience them. This alienates a person from his or her ownmost doing and being, it is understood – which is the crux of the quotidian crisis she seeks to portray in discourse on primarily literary and sociological figures.[10] Patricia Meyer Spacks calls this a "growing atrophy of experience" in her *Boredom: A Literary History of a State of Mind*, which stems not from repetitiveness so much as the superabundance of stimulation and possibilities characteristic of modernity, and thus portrays boredom, the condition in which a person has become lost to themselves in his or her experiences such that neither have meaningfulness, as inevitable; even elevated to a mythical status, almost.[11]

By meaninglessness is meant mattering. To the inevitably bored person, to say that little has meaning means that nothing in the sea of much matters to him or herself. The ceaseless flow of news epitomizes this superabundant stimulation to Thoreau, who reflects:

> I am sure that I never read any memorable news in a newspaper. If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, or killed by accident, or one house burned, or one vessel wrecked, or one steamboat blown up, or one cow run over on the Western Railroad, or one mad dog killed, or one lot of grasshoppers in the winter, - we need never read of another. One is enough. If you are acquainted with the principle, what do you care for a myriad of instances and applications?[12]

And yet one is not enough for us, his tone tells, for the readers read on, and the one wintry grasshopper, among other things, begins to matter less and less. So the news elicits bored engagement where readers do not find themselves concerned with its issues. Thoreau's point is that their engagement, in other words, matters little if anything to them, and it can be elaborated in helpful ways by using Martin Heidegger's discussion of curiosity in his magnum opus *Being and Time*. As Heidegger presents it, curiosity embodies a similar engagement with the world as that which Thoreau describes when he recounts how the people of Concord engage with the news. To Heidegger, curiosity describes the way in which human beings let the world be encountered by them. "When curiosity has become free," he writes, "it concerns itself with seeing, not in order to understand what it has seen but *just* in order to see. It seeks novelty only in order to leap from it anew to another novelty."[13] Like the way the people of Concord, as described by Thoreau, engage with the news, what we engage curiously, per Heidegger's understanding of the term "curiosity," matters none to us. The bored newspaper-reader, in his mind, is one who sees the content of the news not as something he projects his own being upon in such a way that it is vital – and this is why he reads it excessively, without tire from the tragic piece or awe that elicits pause from the picturesque description.

Theories and Histories of Boredom: Examination and "Response"

Having tried to analyze Thoreau's account of the human predicament in Concord, it has become clear that an account of boredom is central. Yet though Thoreau provides images of bored living like those of industrial workers and newspaper reading, he does not thematize boredom itself like other authors, to whom we can turn in order to consider the roots of boredom, its inevitability, and a few of its typologies. People can be bored in various places and ways – but

they can be anonymously bored, too. In fact often our boredom has no content that can make it ours, which is to say as Heideggerian philosophy claims that even "boredom is bored."[14] That said, much of our boredom can be a spawn of repetition. We tire of hearing the same story too many times in one week, or of reading the news over and over again. Or we yawn in a lecture, or tap our foot while glancing at at our watch awaiting a train at the station, or think we cannot possibly endure another liturgy; and having observed a wash of various, boring portraits of life, some begin to appear differently than others. According to Martin Doehlemann, boredom has four types: the first is situative boredom, of the sort encountered when we wait for someone or listen to a long speech; the second, boredom of satiety, the sort that arises from having had to much of a certain thing such that it becomes dull; the third, creative boredom, which compels the bored to act and do something anew; and the fourth, existential boredom, when the the soul seems as if without content[15] – like Goldstein's experiences without qualities or Thoreau's life without vitality. There are distinctions to be seen between the four, to be sure, but hindering overlaps as well.

As Svendson does in *A Philosophy of Boredom*, we can condense Doehlemann's typology into something like Gustave Flaubert's so as only to distinguish between common boredom, or the French *ennui commun*, most like situative boredom, and modern boredom, *ennui moderne*, most like existential boredom.[16] While the first afflicts concrete moments and activities, the second afflicts existence as a whole – more abstractly. In a similar vein, someone situatively bored pines after something it desires, but the existentially bored longs for something to desire. The situational has an expression like yawning, tapping one's foot, or squirming in pews, each of which is stoppable or least distractible; but the existential has none, and thus nothing it can stop or from which it can be distracted. This leads us to recognize that former has

place for human will and the latter none at all – at least insofar as we are to understand the will as an act of self-assertion. As silently as existential boredom dawns unwillingly upon someone is as silently as the existentially bored someone must wait in its midst, and yet likely unknowingly, all the while. The existential seems both inevitable and inescapable, and our response to it now all the more in question.

Heidegger pays considerable attention to this second type, only he calls it "profound boredom." He refers to it as a "silent fog" even, like a mental cold that both engenders and is engendered from emptiness in one's world and in one's sense of self; for boredom, Heidegger holds, belongs to both the world and human beings, like the essence of Being itself.[17] In the silent fog self and world are indistinct and nearly unknowable, or equally empty. Thus, profound boredom is better understood by its negative qualities than its positive ones. Atop these qualities is the absence of personal meaning and experiences, or quality, as derived from *qualitas*, which has to do with a thing's ownmost nature and identity. The absence of these interwoven concepts accumulate as the Heideggerian fog, the result of which is a world of interchangeable and indifferent subjects and objects where it becomes not only impossible to act, but also impossible to recognize that there is any absence and debilitating fog at all. As Flaubert's typology was keen to hint, the profoundly or existentially bored has neither sight nor voice to see or speak that it is bored. And here again, the question of human response becomes bewildering afresh.

Though profound boredom is mostly treated in modernity, its earlier forms, as Thoreau suggests early in *Walden*, are not new – and yet these have become riddled with crucial distinctions in time. Turning to reexamine these forms in fuller detail ought to position us to consider possibilities for responding, or not, to profound boredom and resituate into Thoreau's project at Walden. Older descriptions of boredom as evil accord with *acedia*, the pre-modern

moral sin, which progresses into the *melancholia* of the Renaissance and romanticism. At the turn of the fourteenth century, such *melancholia* was less concerned with morality than it was the body. Charles Taylor imagined pre-modern *melancholia* as a literal "black bile," which he understood to both cause and result from *melancholia*, and which arose alongside bodily sluggishness and moroseness.[18] As such, the gradual shift from *acedia* to *melancholia* opened up possibility for considering that the outside world, rather than the self exclusively, might be the root of boredom's problem and afflicting power.[19] For the body was a thing to be found in its outside world, just as the self a thing to be found somehow within the body.

The *ennui moderne* takes on a form that accounts for some of the self's action recommended in the face of the moral sin, *acedia*, and some of the self's passivity understood in the affectedness of the body, which can assume *melancholia*. It becomes a conjunction of depression and tiredness, and somewhat of a rejection of the present moment's inherent beneficence.[20] In other words, modern boredom concerns both self and world. Heidegger categorizes it as a fundamental mood, or attunement, when he gives an elaborate phenomenological account in several lectures on metaphysics. For him, the world appears to human beings through their attunement. It is not as though our world changes when we are profoundly bored, or that we can simply exit it like the tedious lecture room or train station when we find ourselves situatively bored. The mood colors our experience, so to speak; or "the mood is a condition for experience by opening up the world [and its possibilities] as a whole," so that we might be able to live in it meaningfully, and not always so bored-ly, as the Heideggerian Svendson writes.[21]

Profound boredom, though, would seem to be as near un-attunement, or moodless-ness, as possible. In its silent fog, human beings are often blind to the fact that they are bored. Little

holds our attunement, and little-to-nothing appears as a possibility towards which we might move. We have a grave stiffness, both caused by and re-causing the boredom we are ill-apt to see, in our everydayness – which is to say that we see nothing as essential, useful, or pertinent to our own existence. Thus with nothing to point towards and say, "*this* is boring me," all the profoundly bored can say is "I simply do not feel myself." That I have no meaningful self is because I have no meaningful world, or a world that has nothing about it which matters to me. And so long as I cannot see and point to the problem of my profoundly bored condition, it would seem that rather than try to respond to boredom, I ought first merely wake up to it.

Wakefulness and sleep pervade Heidegger's phenomenological account of boredom, Thoreau's literature, and even Saint Paul's apocalyptic letters – the last of which in a way that illuminates the metaphors' function in the first two. The apostle urges his audiences to be awake and in anticipation of the *parousia* on numerous occasions, much like Thoreau wishes us to be awakened to our predisposition to profound boredom in modernity. Paul writes in familiar fashion, "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall all be changed;"[22] and again in an earlier letter to the Romans, "besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed."[23] Heidegger would side with Paul's tradition and claim that human being's highest authenticity arises in their wakefulness, or resoluteness to hear a call to turn away from the silent fog of boredom – which ties us to seeing our world and ownmost selves as indistinct and not-so-mattering, and even resolves us to bodily torpor. He, like the watchman Thoreau, would come to merge the Christian *kairos*, "time," and *parousia*, Christ's second coming,[24] such that the everydayness of time in which we bore might

be tainted with expectations of seeing and experiencing what is beyond and apart from, but always in-breaking, the silent fog; in fact what is life-altering and even salvific, without our leaving the world in which we were profoundly bored. “My profession is to always be on the alert to find God in nature,” Thoreau once wrote, after all.[25]

Admittedly, profound boredom is only one phenomenon of existence. Yet it seems crucial to the vitality of human beings precisely because it poorly attunes, or even fails to attune, us to the world in which we have no escaping so long as we are mortal. With no escaping boredom, either, it would seem that in at least becoming awake to its presence and hold over our experiences, possibilities to experience, and disposition towards the world we could recover some vitality. Our lecture room and train stations might not seem quite so banal; our pews and footpath to the pond through pine-covered wood more wondrous. Our world itself, homely rather than uncanny,[26] and the realization of our being-in-it, vital. Even precursors of joy and merriment.

Reconsidering Thoreau Through the Lens of Profound Boredom

Certain themes from a brief account of boredom return us to Thoreau’s diagnosis in *Walden*’s “Economy” and “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For,” in which Concord is a portrait of people living often un-attuned to the world. As learned from phenomenology of boredom, un-attunement seems to eliminate possibility for living in a world such that the world and things within it matter – in fact, are necessary and therefore vital, like heat – to oneself. In boredom, un-attunement abounds and such a void persists, and Thoreau uses several intentional images to signify his awareness of its problematic nature and consequences for living in the world.

Thoreau best manifests concern with profound boredom and the urgency of our wakefulness towards it through certain symbols similar to that of the news. One such is working Concord, into which Thoreau was born, was summoned to jail midway through his stay at Walden Pond upon his stubborn failure to pay poll taxes, and to which he returned at the end of that stay at the pond, as previously confronted. To Thoreau, working Concord was the epitome of nineteenth-century labor, consumerism, and private life. It had become expert at blinding men to the essential facts of their existence and assumed them into a standardized work-day and way of life to which they became addicted and unaware. Theirs was the meaningless everyday into which they had become lost. “Most men,” he writes, “even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them... He has no time to be anything but a machine,” like those he works beside in the daytime, to whom belongs a fruitless excess.[27]

“As if you could kill time without injuring eternity!” he continues, inserting the idiomatic phrase *kill time* to suggest boredom. As if we could be bored and not affect the whole span of time – past, present, and future – and our possibilities for making sense of that time by envisioning ourselves within it! For “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation,” he famously says just thereafter, referring to Concord, the symbol of humanity. “From the desperate city,” Concord, “you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats.” He elaborates:

> A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things. When we consider what, to use the words of the catechism, is the chief end of man, and what are the true necessaries and means of life, it appears as if men had deliberately chosen the common mode of

> living because they preferred it to any other... But alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear.[28]

The "mass of men" to whom Thoreau refers is still his city of Concord, but again not just those excluding himself. Both, he suggests, have missed opportunity to consider the necessary, or the objects of utmost mattering to themselves. In this vein their desperation seems most nearly profound boredom, and the fact that it distances, versus attunes, them to things in the world; its quietude to be the fact that metaphorical sleep has left them voiceless to utter, *I am profoundly bored*; mention of minks and muskrats suggestive of the recoverable, tucked nearer than we think into a world in which desperation too often hails; and the sun's rising clear like proof that wakefulness and vitality are possibilities of our own. Symbolic, working Concord is the vehicle through which Thoreau problematizes both boredom's despair and our unconsciousness of it. The symbol, its representative people, and their problematic but presumably inevitable condition serves as a point from which to recover the despair's diversified opposite, vitality.

During his time at the pond Thoreau often mentions a second symbol, the railroad, which ran through Concord just a third of a mile from his cabin. He was sensitive to its noise, its cost, embodiment of new technologies, and industrial laborers. It was a ready object of his cynical skepticism. On one occasion he deliberates the speed of a foot-traveler versus the train-rider and determines that the railroad should not prevent the former from reaching around the world before the latter. His meaning is metaphorical of course, for none can deny the speed of technology. But neither can he ignore that the railroad symbolizes disenchanted men, all of whom are caught up in their coming and going, consuming and achieving. He paints a paradox of a scene as follows: "a crowd rushes to the depot, and the conductor shouts 'All aboard!' [but] when the smoke is blown away and the vapor condensed, it will be perceived that a few are riding, but the rest are run over – and it will be called, and will be 'A melancholy accident.'" In characteristic fashion,

he is quick to hear our response: "'What!' exclaim a million Irishmen starting up from all the shanties in the land, 'is not this railroad which we have built a good thing?' Yes, I answer, *comparatively* good, that is, you might have done worse; but I wish, as you are the brothers of mine, that you could have spent your time better than digging in this dirt," as if per a tradition which has lost its sense of true necessity and mattering to oneself.[29]

Quite literally, there is a good deal of vitality lost on the railway. Half the people involved in the train are run over, Thoreau claims, alluding to his later pun: "we do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is an ordinary man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you."[30] "Sleepers" refer to rectangular supports for rails in railroad tracks built by the industrial laborers Thoreau mentions.[31] They lie perpendicular to the track itself and directly underneath the full force of the machine that rides it. But the sleepers are also those who have toiled over their construction, Thoreau suggests; and furthermore, it is likely that they are those riding the train, too – for both are characterized with having the metaphorical sleep, a thing like silent fog that prevents them from seeing and knowing the symbolic train's destruction upon their own vitality and others' as well. The railroad is good to a certain measure, Thoreau readily concedes. But having identified himself as akin to the very ones he addresses, he grieves for literal and figurative life lost at its expense. Lost, literally, in the lives of those who spent their days toiling and building from habitual tradition, without question or self-at-stake; and lost, figuratively, in the sense that so many are immersed in the modern condition of sleep.

The scene and its symbols, working Concord, Massachusetts, and its railroad to Fitchburg, Massachusetts, are a vivid portrait of *ennui moderne*'s manifestations in human life

and Thoreau's belief that human beings' best response to *ennui moderne* is not to remain asleep. It is surprisingly like another, earlier one in which Thoreau recalls a moment when he asks for a particular garment from his tailor. To his request the tailor responds, and Thoreau reflects:

> 'They do not make them so now,' not emphasizing the 'They' at all, as if she quoted an authority as impersonal as the Fates. When I hear this oracular sentence, I am for a moment absorbed in thought, emphasizing to myself each word separately that I may come at the meaning of it, that I may find out by what degree of consanguinity. *They* are related to *me*, and what authority they may have in an affair which affects me so nearly.[32]

Thoreau's difficulty to find himself in the world is at issue in his struggle to discover the *They*'s relation to *me* as he speaks to the tailor. The same is at issue in Concord, the railroad, and its train, which unknowingly pummels the sleepers beneath it and carries people with complete ignorance to the train's relationship to themselves and their ancestors and the likeness of the first to the second. Each are as indistinguishable and indifferent as objects in the world when they appear in the silent fog of profound boredom. Problematically, there is hardly a self that stands out from and simultaneously has intimacy with its world, like the one Emerson initially describes belonging to our author at *Walden and Other Writings*'s inception.

It is to this problematic end that Thoreau writes the epigraph, "I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as a chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up" – referring to the poem "Ode to Dejection" by the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Just why is multifold. Having identified a problematic facet of modern humanity, though he surely identifies several, Thoreau sets out to experiment in living-well at Walden Pond so that he might return to Concord and be something like the rooster of Coleridge's imagination. It seems he does so having assumed an impression of his own responsibility to do so, rather than an impression of his own grandiose prowess to do so, having known himself interconnected and kin to mortals of the nineteenth century and those to come. It is my belief that

he sees all these subject to the desperation of both profound boredom and its voicelessness, both because of how the world appears and how we become a certain way of appearing towards it. He wishes us not to have a world in which nothing stands out or in which we ceaselessly tap our feet, glance at our watch, or have no courage to usurp our languid bodies. He yearns for human contentedness and even flourishing to result from living beside a small pond with only life's vital necessities, an occasional visitor, and seasonal landscape. He grows to know a vital life by drawing upon the world in a such a way that it matters to him, or is vital to him.

What Thoreau does not spend his time wishing is that profound, human boredom – even the type that embodies desperation and death – never existed. To do so, he seems to hold, would be utterly in vain. For our predisposition to boredom is an age-old fact of living; a fundamental un-attunement to the world, even. And still in spite of its inescapability is recoverable vitality. From our ensuing indifference and inability to see ourselves as being-at-stake towards, at home in, or responsible for the people and spaces of our fast-fleeting everydayness – to take any of them as *mine* – so to speak, is a way of life worth experimenting and hoping to near. "I would mine and burrow my way through these hills," Thoreau says, supporting, for "I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining-rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine."[33]

The pages to come intend to address the consequences and significance of living aware of and upon the foundation of profound boredom through a broader scope of Thoreau's literature. Their endeavor is to "mine," not unlike Thoreau's, in a way that does not include a conception of mine-ness as selfishness. Quite opposite, to know something as mine as Thoreau endeavors to do by the pond and forever beyond it, is to give oneself up towards it, or to concede to the possibility that the world might have a mode of intention towards oneself in addition to oneself

towards it which make both self and world matter. The second is the life of vitality, of meaningful attunement to the world; and not the despair and profound boredom of working Concord and the railroad.

-II-

The Project: Three Modes of Recovering Vitality

Thoreau mines first and foremost when he sets out to determine the greatest necessity for human beings', which he emphasizes as being "to keep warm, to keep the vital heat in us."[34] To find what is vital is to find what means most in the sense that it matters, or pertains most, to an individual's vitality. Heat is vital and therefore important, he believes, because it is grand necessity without which human beings cannot live. It must be theirs, even if nothing else is; and the heart of his experiment is to be in touch with what matters and is vital to him at all times. Pondering vital heat launches him into an experiment at Walden and beyond which aims at living in a way that is always touching and recovering the vital. Significantly, the place and mode of his experimenting is often apparently boring.

Thoreauvian literature reveals three modes of being as common to its author and apt to recover vitality from the fleeting, quotidian world. Thoreau the perceiver, walker, and writer is a character with vision of his fallenness into profound boredom, its effects on his attunement to his world at the pond and beyond, but perhaps the worthiness of ceasing to distract himself from it, too. In light of squandered possibilities for overcoming boredom, his thoughtful attention to

perceiving, walking, and writing seem to follow someone like Joseph Brodsky, who advises, "when boredom strikes, throw yourself into it. Let it squeeze you, submerge you, right to the bottom."[35] His perceiving, walking, and writing are certainly submerged in a kind of deep boredom, which stores vital potential even in its own sense of emptiness. For Thoreau, boredom harbors a receptiveness that can be recovered from the seeming void of meaning and mattering, or vitality. It can be entered in perceiving, walking, and writing such that the everyday might be reinstated with new configurations and opportunities for vital engagement. And yet his thrownness into boredom is highly counter-cultural. It requires his time, involves an awakened awareness of loss, and is something for which he has responsibility – in the sense that boredom itself matters to him. Submerging, like a response to a sort of inexplicable call of conscience, takes up a certain amount of discomfort and grief without choice.

In that vein, the following illustrations of modes of being that recover vitality in and from profound boredom also illustrate a kind of glorious courage provided by the intersection of the human being Thoreau and his world, each mattering deeply to the other. These ways to be, perceiving, walking, and writing, appear like a type of boredom worth holding distinct from profound boredom. Specifically, they look more like a human being's attunement to the world and its possibilities, rather than like its un-attunement to the world or fixedness within a realm of closed-off possibility.

Transformative Perception

In one of his daybooks, modern photographer Edward Weston who dedicated hours towards photographing a single, porcelain surface wrote, "my work has vitality because I have helped… in revealing to others the living world about them, showing to them what their own

unseeing eyes have missed."[36] The service of his artwork is not unlike Thoreau's, whose mindful perception of the world around him belongs to a portrait of vitality. By perception is most nearly meant attention, or consciously attending to certain objects and stimuli rather than others. It is a mood of openness, or a disposition with which to approach the world, as some suggest, acquired by one who sees rather than knows.[37] The perceptive seer can sift meaning from a mass of images and stimuli, be they physical, visual, or even *in memoriam*. Of course, the activity itself implies that perceivers have the capacity to control mental processes and direct them towards valuable projects. Thus for the purpose of this discussion, perception is not laborious yet always something beyond an easy, second-nature, hazy sight of things as homogeneous. While many are intrigued by its face value, some like Weston and Thoreau improve a basic definition with the hypothesis that perceiving is a crucial element of vitality. Like Weston's portraits of porcelain toilet bowls, Thoreau's pond may seem quite meaningless, and consequently less lively, if it were not for his perceptiveness.

As previously discussed, we can connect the presence of meaning to vitality and allow their opposites to be boredom and despair; and this move elicits the analogous conclusion that perceptiveness may well resist the latter pair. Thoreau seems to have taken up this conclusion as he reflects on his time at Walden and beyond. Some are quick to connect his perceptivity to theology, accordingly renaming it a "theology of perception" after assuming its ability to mythologize objects of attention.[38] While Thoreau's faith is subjective, his readiness to find evidence of transcendence in the natural world is not. In fact, we can treat it like a fact so that his perception becomes like a mode of recovering vitality from, and also in spite of, boredom and despair, whether given theological significance or not. His writing provides an occasion to

discover more specific facets and products of perception – which, in turn, provide further occasion to observe a way of being that embodies vitality.

(I)

There are perhaps four different aspects of perception – though these might be somewhat interchangeable. I suggest that its first is *novel seeing*. At the very conclusion of *Walden*, a retrospective Thoreau remarks, "there is an incessant influx of novelty into the world and yet we tolerate incredible dullness."[39] His words feel like a old refrain that had become increasingly believable the further time elapsed at the pond, and the more we read of Thoreau, the more this language of "novelty" continues. As he also writes in a journal entry of February 9, 1852, "a man goes to the end of his garden inverts his head and does not know his own cottage. The novelty is in us, and it is also in nature."[40] Daniel Peck uses the latter *Journal* reference when he discusses phenomena, examples of which are simple, like willows shining in the spring sun. The term "phenomena," he says, captures the balance between owing credit to a perceiver's creative sight and the integrity of world structures on their own in the task of perceiving.[41] Phenomena, that is to say, belong to the natural world but are revealed by perceivers' eyes – and Thoreau is clearly aware of this, for he explicitly states his belief that novelty exists in both entities in passages like the former. It is useful to situate Thoreau's writing alongside Peck's move, for together they acknowledge perception in a discussion of novelty, simultaneously crediting a perceiver and inherent features of the natural world within the task of seeing things as novel, and therefore vital.

The perception at work in so-called novel seeing employs a kind of "double vision," which is descriptive of but not entirely original to Thoreau.[42] The perceiver with double vision is

conscious of phenomena as natural and as composed by the mental eye. Yet the crux of double vision regards what is perceived, as in the following reflection from October 7, 1857: "[sitting] on the high bank of the east end of Walden this afternoon, at five o'clock, I saw, by a peculiar intention or dividing of the eye, a very striking subaqueous rainbow-like phenomenon."[43] The passage suggests a manipulative seer with a divided or two-fold vision. This "double vision" is separate from phenomenology of what is seen, though still, Thoreau seems to recognize his eye's revelatory intention and the integrity of nature in his sentence. The double vision is what regards seeing phenomena – their nature aside – as two things at the same time, and Thoreau gathers countless of these phenomena in writing to paint a picture of his world as "double," which is to say that it is both ordinary and novel at once.

Still, there is more to say on this double vision of the human perceiver so that it highlights novel seeing and its relevance. The possibility of doubling one's vision takes on a second angle in the following entry from August 15, 1845:

> I would not forget that I deal with infinite and divine qualities in my fellow. All men, indeed, are divine in their core of light, but that is indistinct and distant to me, like the stars of the least magnitude, or the galaxy itself, but my kindred planets show their round disks and even their attendant moons to my eye. Even the tired laborers I meet on the road, I really meet as travelling gods, but it is as yet, and must be for a long season, without speech.[44]

Here, Thoreau's vision is explicitly two-fold: on the one hand it sees an ordinary, summer sky and laborers beneath it, who are portrayed like those in Concord, and on the other it thinks of travelling gods. As Edward Mooney reflects, "with double vision we see both Spaulding's Farm," where Thoreau stands in this reflection, "and God's Great Hall."[45] Vision of one penetrates and informs the other such that suddenly, a humdrum everydayness appears novel. We can assume that Thoreau has never entered what feels like the Great Hall, albeit a visual

entrance. For all purposes, it is novel – and even if seen before, now revitalized such that the place clearly matters to him.

This is a profoundly life-giving vision. Seeing, as Reiner Schurmann calls it, is truly bound up with "regimes of presence," or modes of being;[46] and the value of seeing things as novel and enchanted may well be better supported by a first-hand perceiver like Thoreau than any academic. As ice cracks atop the melting pond and the wind glides over its surface in winter, Thoreau interjects, "it is glorious to behold this ribbon of water sparkling in the sun, the bare face of the pond full of glee and youth, as if it spoke the joy of the fishes within it, and of the sands on its shore."[47] The novelty of a mundane body of water, now lived-by for two years, is evident. That "it is glorious to behold" means that it is glorious to see and perceive, or in other words that the glory of the world has made for a glorious vision, opposed to a dull and tired one – another instance of which occurs just beyond that melting pond in springtime. "O the evening robin," Thoreau writes at that time, "the first I had heard for many a thousand years, methought, whose note I shall not forget for many a thousand more, - the same sweet and powerful song as of yore."[48] This is the novelty of a phenomenon and the beauty of double vision that affords such novelty, all at once.

(II)

Novel seeing and its use of double vision is an elemental phase of perception which promotes an *awakening*. We might call this perception's second phase, though it could also be argued that only the awakened being sees phenomena as novel. Still, it seems fitting that some step should precede and elicit an awakening like novel seeing. This awakening mentioned is an embodied attentiveness towards things, rather than awareness of some believable condition, like

profound boredom. It is immersed in the everyday world which modernity often calls the secular realm. In a project that advocates for religion in this everyday realm, author Stephen Batchelor construes the Buddha's teachings as something to do – like good perception, to some extent – rather than as dogmas to believe. The project helps us understand how awakening, an element of perception, is a path worthy of infinite cultivation. According to Batchelor, awakening should not be known as a future attainment, "for it is not a thing, but a process," he describes, that resides in the present. "It encompasses everything we do," he continues. "It is an authentic way of being in the world. It begins with how we understand the kind of reality we inhabit and the kinds of beings we are that inhabit such a reality. Such a vision underpins…"[49] our daily lives, he essentially concludes.

Awakening, in Batchelor's mind, has strong ties to awareness. Without absolving them from moments of boredom and lethargy, he suggests that humans can be in a nearly constant state of wakefulness – and that a focused awareness of surroundings which pervades every aspect of experience helps them achieve this wakefulness.[50] Awareness is something like perception, which, as aforementioned, has potential to see novelty and ordinariness simultaneously. Batchelor might even welcome a perceptive figure like Thoreau in his analysis of the process of awakening, for his ongoing and meaningful perception of landscapes seems to project a human being into awakened existence.

There are many moments where Thoreau epitomizes Batchelor's portrait of awakening. Quite literally, his obsession with morning embodies the value of a waking hour. He incessantly wishes to throw off sleepiness, which, again, figures literally and metaphorically. In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," a preliminary *Walden* chapter that outlines a diagnosis of the human condition somewhat like "Economy," he details the beauties of morning and awakening:

> And for at least an hour, some part of us awakes which slumbers all the rest of the day and night. Little is to be expected of that day, if it can be called a day, to which we are not awakened by our Genius, but by the mechanical nudgings of some servitor, are not awakened by our own newly acquired force and aspirations from within, accompanied by the undulations of celestial music, instead of factory bells, and a fragrance filling the air – to a higher life than we fell asleep from… That man who does not believe that each day contains an earlier, more sacred auroral hour than he has yet profaned, has despaired of life, and is pursuing a descending and darkening way.[51]

To be awake, Thoreau is telling, is to be alive. Like Batchelor, his passage construes awakening and wakefulness as something beyond a momentary vision or observation. As Thoreau soon tells, it is more like "the very atmosphere and medium through which we look. To affect the quality of the day," he says, "that is the highest of arts."[52] Such art is the wakeful life, invoked by our habits of perception.

Thoreau's transformative artistry is bountiful. One such moment of it is the hour he encounters Margaret Fuller's dead body, recounted in *Cape Cod* as a memorial of sorts versus a disastrous memory. We observe the transformative function of his awakened perception and wakeful state in the following:

> Once it was my business to go in search of the relics of a human body, mangled by sharks, which had just been cast up, a week after a wreck. I expected that I must look very narrowly to find so small an object, but the sandy beach was so perfectly smooth and bare that when I was half a mile distant the insignificant sliver which marked the spot looked like a bleached spar, and the relics were as conspicuous as if they lay in state on that sandy plain… and [they] reigned over it as no living one could, in the name of a certain majesty that belonged to it. The bones were alone with the beach and the sea, whose hollow roar seemed to address them, as if there were an understanding between them and the ocean which necessarily left me out.[53]

There is a serious wakefulness with which Thoreau approaches the shore as he looks for the body of this extraordinary thinker and companion. "I expected that I must look…" he writes, which serves to prove this wakefulness that involves his awareness of the smooth, sandy, sliver of a beach. We might say that he is awakened to, or constantly a member of, the activity of perception – which promotes this focused awareness that accompanies him as he walks along the

shore. Within this wakeful state, suddenly a mangled body becomes visible. And yet Thoreau calls the saddening, gruesome sight a "relic." There is a cognitive dissonance at hand in that something breaks in to Thoreau's expectations and sets them at naught – much like New Testament revelation, in which sets of former expectations and whatever visions had accompanied them are similarly shattered.

The awakening now becomes obvious, for the word embodies a convincing world-change. As Edward Mooney writes in a chapter called "Transforming Perceptions," "saints leave relics; ship's passengers don't" – especially when their decomposing parts epitomize mortality and despair that oppose such ethereal, immortal beings. [54] Thoreau continues, memorializing Fuller as a "certain majesty" who appears to reign over the beach and sea in a world that has left Thoreau, the wakeful perceiver himself, out. The world to which he is awakened, here, is one which exists beyond the portrait of despair beside his feet. But just as importantly, it is also one that precludes his own self-consciousness; and this sort of self-detachment may well be key to a perception that belongs to vitality. It differs, then, from the detachment in the disengaged, profoundly bored person.[55] In a clarifying phrase, Stephen Batchelor concludes that perception at its best, wakeful state, invites the seer into a sacred realm of experience, only opened up when one "lets go of the constrictive, obsessive concern with 'me' and 'mine,' thereby allowing a return to a world that transcends one's petty interests and reflects one's ultimate concerns," rather than what does not interest him or her.[56]

(III)

The perceiver who sees objects as novelty is awakened to a lifestyle of *wonder*. Though implicit in wakeful existence, this wonder is arguably a third component of Thoreauvian

perception. There are undertones of wonder in seeing objects as novel and as seeing them as double – as in both ordinary and wonderful at once. But by wonder is most nearly meant awe. It is more of a disposition than a mere reaction, as seen in the following passage from *Walden*'s penultimate chapter:

> I heard a singular rattling sound, somewhat like that of the sticks which boys play with their fingers, when, looking up, I observed a very slight and graceful hawk, like a nighthawk, alternately soaring like a ripple and tumbling a rod or two over and over, showing the under side of its wings, which gleamed like satin ribbon in the sun, or like the pearly inside of a shell. This sight reminded me of falconry and what nobleness and poetry are associated with that sport… it was the most ethereal flight I had ever witnessed. It did not simply flutter like a butterfly, nor soar like the larger hawks, but it sported with proud reliance in the fields of air… as if it had never set foot on *terra firma*… Where was the parent which hatched it, its kindred, and its father in the heavens?[57]

When he turns his gaze to the sky, Thoreau has been standing on the bank of a river near a bridge. A glimpse of hawk alters his sense of time and place, just as it does his readers'. Our gaze becomes one with his; our senses receptive to sights and sounds of his setting. As Thoreau stands, his mind wonders at the hawk's family and place of birth. He reintroduces, as Mooney sees, time and space. In "rainbow's trimmings and the sunset sky," a wondering perceiver inhabits an entirely new reality. Yet back in the broader scene, Thoreau is still fishing. There is little despairing about his state, but little beyond ordinariness about it, too. And he quickly returns there, having redirected his sight upward upon hearing a crackling noise, and fixating once again to the water beneath him. Only now, he has just caught "a rare mess of golden and silver and bright cupreous fishes, which looked like a string of jewels" – as if "it's typical to move from ecstasy to paying the phone bill," Mooney reflects.[58] The whole place appears bathed in a light and liveliness that prompts Thoreau to conclude, "There needs no stronger proof of immortality. All things must live in such a light. O Death, where was thy sting? O Grave, where was thy victory, then?"[59]

This final scene in "Spring" is fully immersed in life's pleasantness. In it we shift from quietness to an awe which wonders *what is this?*[60] to a mysterious, complicated vision of the hawk in the sky – a vision that seeks not to understand, but simply to stand before and see. The bliss this kind of perception entails is paradisiacal, as Thoreau hints when he asks, "O Death, where was thy sting?" an informed reference to the popular hymn and the apostle Paul, preaching the resurrection.[61] To be able to wonder, it then seems, not only transforms our perceptions but the very reality in which we live. It is not everyday that Thoreau walks along the bank and contributes such a significant aside. In this moment it is as if he has become one with his setting, which is worth pondering for a moment.

One name for this fit between person and setting is *oikeiosis,* a Stoic term for the fit between a creature and its world – and it is rife with connotations of affinity and affliction. It encompasses connectedness, which the portrait of Thoreau and the hawk and fishes also encompass in the previous passage. [62] Though we wish for affinity and affiliation, *oikeiosis*, the difficulty of attaining it is not lost on us. Human beings are somewhat alienated from the hawk; from the water and its fishes. We lack connectedness, but perhaps something can recover it for us. It would appear that perception that wonders at its objects makes an effort towards doing so. To wonder, for Thoreau, fits sensory input into one's own existence. It lets the wonderer, or the perceiver at his or her best, inhabit the world of those at which it wonders, best realized in moments along the lines of the one where Thoreau hears the sound of whippoorwills and imitates their songs beside Walden Pond. Their notes are not unfit for him; or if they were, he adjusts to them, finding kinship with the birds by hearing and returning their sounds. Thus not only is this whippoorwill-portrait one of affinity but one of affection, moreover *philia* – a result of *oikeiosis*, our perceptual fit-to-world at its best. Dare we say Thoreau loves Walden? Yet it is an affection

perhaps only attained when we relinquish our calculative minds, as Thoreau exhorts his audience in phrases like these: “could we not for a moment drop this by-play – and simply wonder – without reference or inference?”[63] just as he seems to do before the hawk, fishes, whippoorwills, and so forth.

Though it would seem from the excerpts treated thus far that perceptions are something to achieve, as Thoreau constructs them, they are this and something more. Lyman Mower suggests that Thoreau goes beyond the Heidegger of *Being and Time*: his objects appear as instruments “at hand” or as “mere occurrences” “to hand,” but just as importantly, as things to delight in and to wonder at, or to love.[64] When things are not for our usage such as data or tools and we perceive them as such, the potential for wonder, which would seem to affiliate us with our world in the midst of its afflictions, abounds.

(IV)

This notion of affiliating with our world is characteristic to a fourth and final component of perception: *sympathy*. The term itself is Thoreauvian, though more precisely called “sympathy with intelligence,” a pursuit of a certain kind of existence that refuses to hold life at a distance; an existence which is affiliation, essentially. The claim that sympathy, realized in our receptivity to and community with certain objects, has intelligence most nearly means that it has a focused connection. This focus is a thing which can be said to re-enchant our world and rekindle our imaginations – a focus depicted as lost in Concord. Even so, sympathy with intelligence embodies a kind of unknowing. The “intelligence” is not a thing to know. For “my desire for knowledge is intermittent; but my desire to commune with the spirit of the universe, to be intoxicated even with the fumes, call it, of that divine nectar… is perennial and constant,”

Thoreau writes.[65] The communing he describes is sympathy, and its focal point "that divine nectar;" the accompanying intelligence. We do not wish to have sympathy with merely ourselves, he says in other words. We wish to have sympathy with our world; with the very heart of our being. In fact, we wish to attain "not Knowledge, but Sympathy with Intelligence. I do not know that [objective] knowledge amounts to anything more definite than a novel and grand surprise on a sudden revelation of the insufficiency of all that we called Knowledge before," Thoreau writes.[66]

The notion of sympathy with intelligence captures a type of self and world that Charles Taylor describes in *A Secular Age*. In the work's initial chapter, Taylor aims to illustrate the shift from enchantment to Max Weber's notion of "disenchantment" by suggesting that there are two kinds of selves. The first, largely at home in the modern, disenchanted era, is the calculative "buffered self." Its world is solid, routine, and self-possessed. The second "porous self" belongs to the pre-modern, enchanted era. Rather than bounded, it is vulnerable, or sympathetic, to what is beyond the self – particularly nature and people as relevant to Thoreau. For the porous self, a lack of sympathy and disengagement are unfathomable. Taylor suggests that the world of the porous self is one which many reflect upon with nostalgia. That there is nostalgia for a past type of self and world, then, is to imply that something is lost in the present, disenchanted world. Perhaps part of that loss is a perception that takes on this notion of sympathy.

To have sympathy with intelligence is quite like to hear the sound of whippoorwills and sing along with it, and Thoreau is accomplished at describing what it is like to be a sympathetic creature. He writes in one entry, standing before a waterfall:

> There is something more than [atoms in] association at the bottom of the excitement that the roar of a cataract produces. It is allied to the circulation in our veins. We have a waterfall that corresponds even to Niagara somewhere within us… How it spends itself! I

> would say to the orator and the poet, Flow freely and lavishly as a brook that is full – without stint.[67]

The picture of resonance with nature here begins with Thoreau's perception of rushing water. This perception is surely one that embodies wonder, and as such, the picture of resonance progresses into severe affiliation with the water – so great an affiliation that Thoreau feels the thing he sees to be existent in his very veins. For emphasis, the focus of this resonance is the water. Thoreau's sympathy is with the roaring cascades. To use Taylor's language, he is fiercely porous rather than buffered to the water which he sees.

There are countless of these sympathetic moments in Thoreau's writing. Just after the hawk flies overhead in "Spring" and Thoreau returns to his fishing at the pond, he exclaims, "Ah! I have penetrated to those meadows on the morning of many a first spring day, jumping from hummock to hummock, from willow root to willow root."[68] Again, the "penetration" here opposes buffering and the world of the buffered-self. Thoreau enters the meadow he penetrates rather than seeing himself as apart from it. His sympathy peaks. And at this point, we might be right to conjecture that the way he reaches this peak is through a perception that sees the ordinary as novel and awakens into a new world and worldliness in which one is disposed to wonder. This world is quite enchanted, unlike Thoreau's diagnosis of Concord and Taylor's modern, buffered-self world; yet still full of tragedy, epitomized by Margaret Fuller's corpse by the shore, carrion in the woods, and the daily squandering of innocent creatures at Walden. Through his writing, the portrait Thoreau paints of his world is one in which perception has power to transform objects of despair, in its forms which range from mere ordinariness to incomprehensible death, into things that exude vitality. To be the porous self is to be the perceiver that harnesses this power, both because of one's innate seeing and the integrity of things seen. It is not to be the

profoundly bored, who, because nearly if not fully un-attuned to the world, is profoundly buffered from its potential to matter to the human being and convey vitality.

The Craft of Walking

As beings and modes of being, the walker and walking parallel the perceiver and perceiving insofar as both harness transformative power over our experiences of living in the world. Like perceiving, walking seems to owe some of this power to the being who walks, but some of it to the phenomenon of walking and its location as well. It happens that Thoreau is as highly concerned with the activity of walking as he was with perceiving. His essay, "Walking," was the first of its kind – a philosophical treatise on the act of placing one foot in front of another outdoors. It had been one of his "last essays," a collection of those he wanted published as his illness proved to be fatal. The piece was a tribute to the significance of his daily walk.

Even still, walking is prevalent in most all of Thoreau's literature. As we observe it in *Walden*, it seems to be one of the two crafts, so to speak, that he undertakes by the pond. The first, hoeing beans, can help to define just what is meant by the word "craft." In *Walden*'s chapter "The Bean-Field," Thoreau describes a great affection and care for his beans and their place near the pond, where he hoes. He has miles of them in length and calls his attention to them a "small Herculean labor,"[69] signifying a clear respect for not only the beans themselves, but also the activity of caring for them. This activity of caring is specifically hoeing, also said to be a craft. For the hoeing takes time, and it unites Thoreau, the hoer and craftsman, to the object he crafts, in contrast to the laborers and everyday labors of working Concord, between whom there is no such meaningful union. From crafting, Thoreau's helpers and enemies grow to mirror the beans': the dew and rain and natural fertility of the soil; the worms, cool weather, and

woodchucks. His craft involves embodied work – but that work is not seen as laborious in the Concord sense, since it is motivated by passions which find the craftsman and pertain, or matter profoundly to, him. The craft, as opposed to the traditional, industrial labor, is consciously inhabited. Fittingly, Peter Korn, author of *Why We Make Things and Why It Matters: The Education of a Craftsman*, frames being a craftsman as a lost art of this conscious inhabiting of passion. He presents the concept of fulfillment as something that results from making things with his hands rather than the products of such crafting – though he concedes that there is intrinsic value in the latter, too. We have a spiritual appetite, he believes, for "a good life [which] may be found through craftsmanlike engagement with the actions, objects, and relationships of ordinary experience, through caring about what you do."[70]

Though Korn is a furniture maker, his wood-working craft consistently mirrors Thoreau's hoeing: both are embodied sources of meaning, authenticity, and fulfillment for the craftsman. After having found him, the craft is something to call one's own. It follows that Thoreau's walking might also be similar to the notion of the craft, still assuming that hoeing and walking are similar activities. So when Thoreau writes, "[the beans] attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antaeus,"[71] the significance of his statement can be attributed to walking, as well, such that the craft of walking must embody the same sort of vitality apparent in the word "strength." Viewing walking as a craft with this particular conception of "craft" in mind aids us in understanding its vitality; and again, like perceiving, Thoreau's craft of walking can be outlined by a number of its elements that are understood to be life-giving in of themselves.

(I)

First, walking is something Thoreau does that muddles the distinction between his mind and body, a thing which belongs to our Cartesian heritage that may well be more debilitating than helpful occasionally. He belongs to a tradition of literary philosophers who resist the mind-body gap, several of whom were highly influential to him – Montaigne, Goethe, and Kierkegaard.[72] When Thoreau walks, like many walkers, he thinks, and this simultaneous mental activity is not something he consciously sets out to do, but something he presents as more of an unwilled accompaniment to the walking. Author Rebecca Solnit writes, "walking itself is the intentional act closest to the unwilled rhythms of the body… a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned." Laying groundwork for analyzing a history of walking in this way, she continues by saying, "the rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts." Her ultimate suggestion is that walking is a method of traversing the landscape of, or inhabiting, the mind.[73]

It is clear that Thoreau's walking and its relationship to his thinking is similar to how Solnit presents the two on many occasions. Taken together, a passage from *Walden* and one of a Journal entry are a short representation of the large agreement between both authors. In "Conclusion," Thoreau writes, "It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves," much like the track of sleepers which the train to Fitchburg rides in Concord. "The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths of the mind."[74] At the least, his statements reflect a known association between his feet and his mind. When he writes in his *Journal* on August 29, 1851, just how the walker and the thinker relate becomes more clear:

> How vain it is to sit down to write when you have not stood up to live! Methinks that the moment my legs begin to move my thoughts begin to flow--as if I had given vent to the stream at the lower end and consequently new fountains flowed into it at the upper. A thousand rills which have their rise in the sources of thought--burst forth and fertilize my brain… Only while we are in action is the circulation perfect.[75]

Quite literally, the bodily movement of walking elicits good thinking for Thoreau – the kind of thinking required for good writing, even. The thinking and walking, for him, are inextricably linked. And it is no mistake that many renowned thinkers, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Kant among them, are renowned walkers as well.

Peter Korn discusses crafting's ability to muddle the mind-body dichotomy we so quickly accept as norm and finds himself fiercely drawn to the craft for many reasons, this being one. When he tells his audience about the beginnings of his career as a furniture-maker, he reflects on others' impressions of his choice of professional career. In response to his father's belief that he would regret having become a tradesman, Korn discerns something like a personal validation of his choice. He says that "from the start there was a mind/body wholeness to carpentry that put it way ahead of what I imagined office work to be."[76] For the craft, he soon follows, "is created primarily to address the spiritual needs of its *maker*."[77] These statements can be used to say the same of walking, a thing which, as a craft, clearly inhabits a similar mind-body, vitalizing wholeness according to Thoreau's thought.

With time, Thoreau begins to sharpen his outlook on the mind-body overlap. His earlier work, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, advocates that the sensation of certain objects, especially natural ones, could directly affect the mind. But his later *Walden* shows a progression of this thought into that which advocates that bodily conditions mediate the transmission of meaning from sensed objects to the mind. His thought here is unlike Kant's, who believed the perception of an object was both immediate and a mental condition. Rather, it

exudes belief that the way perceptions affect the mind depends on the body.[78] As Thoreau explicitly puts it, “the states of the mind answer to the states of the body.” If something were to make an impression on the mind, the body needed to be in a state that facilitated that making, Thoreau realized; and by the time he wrote *Walden*, his view of how meaning becomes imparted to human beings depended on an inextricable mind-body connection. That a mode of being, specifically walking, might impart meaning to a walker, creates a groundwork for calling that mode quite vital. As Korn says in his piece, the craft has an uncanny way of addressing the needs of its maker and repeatedly putting the craftsman in touch with those needs, after all.

Just as all crafting is not good crafting, not all walks are good walks, and Thoreau is keenly aware of this. He writes in “Walking,” “I am alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit. In my afternoon walk I would fain forget all my morning occupations and my obligations to society. The thought of some work will run in my head and I am not where my body is, – I am out of my senses.”[79] As shown, not always does the mind follow the body’s suit. To some extent Thoreau implies that he can make an effort to redirect his mind away from social obligations and business, but to another extent, he seems inevitably affected by such things on some outings – or not. “My vicinity affords many good walks; and I have not exhausted them,”[80] which he says soon after the former passage, implies that walking exposes him to something beyond him – perhaps nature, perhaps something else – that provides the occasion for the “good walk,” where mind and body are wholly aligned such that they touch and are touched by the vital.

(II)

A second, vital element of Thoreau's walking is its *autotelic* nature, which Richard Sennet also attributes to craftsmanship in *The Craftsman* and defines as "[doing] something well, for its own sake," while making a case for extending autotelic activities into all human endeavors.[81] As follows, the autotelic, Thoreauvian walk is one where walking engages the walker as an end in itself, rather than as something to do in order to achieve or produce, though the walk might achieve and produce something fruitful for the walker, nonetheless. The following passage from "Former Inhabitants; And Winter Visitors" nearly captures the autotelic walking, as it reads:

> In the deepest snows, the path which I used from the highway to my house, about half a mile long, might have been represented by a meandering dotted line, with wide intervals between the dots. For a week of even weather I took exactly the same number of steps, and of the same length, coming and going, stepping deliberately and with the precision of a pair of dividers in my own deep tracks, - to such a routine the winter reduces us.[82]

The whole passage gives an impression of a fully immersed walker, who sets out in thick, winter snow not to achieve a thing, or even to walk an impressive distance – but simply to "step deliberately" in his own tracks. He does the activity for the sake of the activity, as if doing it has some vitality of its own. Whether he is conscious of that vitality is likely irrelevant, though perhaps to be truly autotelic, a walk must only be known as so in retrospect.

In a short section of his book called "Autotelism," Peter Korn cites sociologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who greatly influenced the concept of positive psychology and theorizes that intrinsic human pleasure comes from a phenomenon called "flow." It is activities that have flow, and Csikszentmihalyi outlines several, specific characteristics of said activities. Among these are the following: that the activity is autotelic; that during it, self-consciousness disappears and the

sense of time becomes distorted; that it merges action and awareness, or nearly aligns the mind and body; and that it excludes distractions from consciousness.

A passage from "Walking," seems to depict walking as primarily autotelic, but also as something which excludes distraction and awareness of time. Thoreau writes, "when, at rare intervals, some thought visits one, as perchance he is walking on a railroad, then indeed the cars go by without his hearing them. But soon, by some inexorable law, our life goes by and the cars return." The entire passage is framed in the context of walking, of course, though the activity only gets mentioned midway. As such the activity, predetermined as autotelic, seems to also exclude someone from the distractions – namely the railroad – around him. Even further, life ceases to go by for this "one" as he walks by the railroad. His awareness is not on time passing; his space, even, is not that so near to the cars as he truly is. The autotelic walking as opposed to one with an agenda, we might say, brings him out of distraction, which takes up a disengagement with the world much much like Heidegger's curiosity, previously shown as manifest in one who reads the news tirelessly and without a sense of its mattering. It projects him into a wholly other time and space – where thoughts can visit him, the porous being, once again. He writes a similar passage earlier in the essay which says, "in one half-hour I can walk off to some portion of the earth's surface where a man does not stand from one year's end to another, and there, consequently, politics are not, for they are but as the cigar-smoke of a man."[83] I can live in the world, and yet in some place not quite within that time and space where distraction and *ennui moderne*'s tiredness are absent, in other words.

In his book *Vital Nourishment*, author Francois Jullien approaches what he calls "the question of living" through a search to feed life with vital mindsets and actions much like Thoreau's walking. He chiefly intends to suggest that human beings need not be so concerned

with happiness as a mortal goal or *telos*. In the wake of this so-called departure from happiness, he suggests several worlds that human beings might take up as their own. One such is what he terms the "floating world," in which human activities seem quite autotelic. This floating world expresses the ability to avoid constant consciousness of an end-goal. To float in it, or to live in it, Jullien describes, is "to designate no port and set no goal, while maintaining oneself in an emergent state – alert and unencumbered," having just prior to that statement said that the word "float" contradicts "all thought of a destination and therefore cancels out any idea of finality. It expresses better than any other the maintenance and nourishment of the vital," precisely because it does not encompass constant drive to achieve and end – even happiness.[84] When one exists in this state, as Thoreau does when he walks, he or she can simply *be*. In Thoreau's floating world, all he does is respond to what moves him. His is a state with little autonomy, in the best sense, having been relieved of responsibility for success or failure to achieve. "But the walking of which I speak has nothing in it akin to taking exercise, as it is called," he writes. "Think of a man's swinging dumb-bells for his health, when those springs are bubbling up in far-off pastures unsought by him!"[85] "Think of walking just for the sake of walking!" in other words – that you might encounter so-called "springs of life"[86] while doing so, as opposed to remaining in the silent fog of boredom in which those springs are invisible.

(III)

The autotelic walk has a way of losing its walker, and such "*getting lost*" is the third and final vital element of Thoreauvian walking. Yet again, like phases of perception elements of walking are not perfectly contingent upon those that precede the ones being discussed. By losing its walker, it is meant that good walking includes getting lost in the sense that self-consciousness,

or a sense of the self, gets lost. A similar thing is embodied in the sympathy with intelligence in perception, in that sympathy belongs to one who is not merely oneself, but also one in his or her surroundings. Thoreau is once again aware of this element in his walking. He mentions it repetitively, as in the following line from "The Village," which reads, "Not till we are lost, in other words not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations."[87]

In her book *Bird Relics*, Branka Arsic undertakes a project that helps connect autotelic walking to walking that loses self-consciousness and that underlines the significance of such connection. Her chapter titled "Toward Things As They Are" describes the consequences of "getting lost" in a discussion that incorporates Stanley Cavell's understanding of Thoreau's writing. In it, she explains, "when the mind suspends its obedience to self-consciousness and stills the senses, a feeling of the external world nearing us appears, a feeling so intense – so 'indescribably pleasant' – that we let where we are access us, and in that way find the world."[88] Thoreau abandons any project of adhering to self-consciousness so that he might fully access his world. As Arsic, with the help of Cavell, understands, the loss of self-consciousness opens Thoreau to the possibility of reception of things given to him by the nature of his world. This is a positive thing, as opposed to being un-attuned and buffered from such possibility of reception. We are found when lost.

There are many moments in writing when Thoreau promotes a loss of self. "Walking" in particular, Arsic argues, claims that the proper walk is the one that encompasses a completely lost self. In it Thoreau goes so far as to equate walking's disastrous loss-of-self to death. He writes, "we should go forth on the shortest walk, perchance, in the spirit of undying adventure, never to return, – prepared to send back our embalmed hearts only as relics to our desolate

kingdoms."[89] We should go on walking to die, in effect; to have our relics sent back to those who might mourn our passing. But up to this point, Thoreau has not clarified just why – much less how such death could be life-giving.

Yet with time, a further-developed depiction of the walker who gets completely lost and so dies while walking starts to answer these questions. Perhaps the greatest method Thoreau uses to answer them is his insertion of the poem "The Old Marlborough Road," named after the old road that runs through Concord. A few of its excerpts begin to show that the good walk loses a walker into life itself. It tells that those who walk along the road "liv'st all alone,/ Close to the bone,/ And where life is sweetest/ Constantly eatest." The road itself merits the poet's attention, too: "nobody repairs it,/ For nobody wears it;/ It is a living way,/ As the Christians say."[90] We cannot refute Thoreau's previous suggestion that the self of a walker dies while walking. But the poem complicates this suggestion, making it appear as though that process of dying is truly self-generating. It alludes to John's recording of Christ's famous words, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life," in John 14:6. As Michel Henry tells, the Biblical passage is mostly an ontological proposition that regards life itself more so than existence as a progression from birth, to death, and ultimately resurrection. Life "is" not, he says. "Rather, it does not cease occurring," or being engendered from its vital source, and "in the eternal fulfillment of this process, life plunges into itself, crushes against itself, enjoys itself… thus life continuously engenders itself."[91] If the Thoreauvian walker is one whose senses reside in his body, who walks for the sake of walking and so dies to a sense of self along the Old Marlborough road into an eternally-becoming life, what happens is that the walker is resurrected into the joys, versus profoundly bored torpor, of a corporeal existence.[92]

In the wake of the self's disaster and death, now understood as things which do embody vitality, Thoreau often analyzes the experience of returning from a walk and re-gathering the self. He describes the experience famously in *Walden* as an awakening, much like one does after a dream. The following journal entry allows walking and dreaming to mirror each other in such a way: "let no man be afraid of sleep," or of dying over the course of a walk, we might say. "That kind of life which sleeping we dream that we live awake in our walks by night, we, waking, dream that we live, while our daily life appears as a dream."[93] The good walk, thus likened to a dream, must eventually be awakened from, and the process of such waking is further detailed in a second entry. Having just awoken, Thoreau reflects, "I make the truest observations & distinctions then – when the will is wholly asleep… There is a moment in the dawn – when the darkness of the night is dissipated & before the exhalations of the day commence to rise – when we see things more truly than at any other time."[94] The Thoreauvian "I," the self once lost in the craft of walking, reappears after a dream-like activity in its best, most vital form.

Rainer Maria Rilke, a poet known known to have dwelt in the world with a sense of vital engagement,[95] writes a poem titled "A Walk" that neatly combines all three elements of Thoreauvian walking. It depicts at a walk as being that which aligns the mind and body, as that which is autotelic, and as that which rids the walker of a sense of his or her self:

> Already my gaze is on the hill, that sunlit one;
> up ahead on the path I've scarcely started.
> In the same way, what we couldn't grasp grasps us:
> blazingly visible, *there* in the distance –
> and changes us, even if we don't reach it,
> into what we are, scarcely sensing it, already are;
> a gesture signals, answering our gesture…
> But we feel only the opposing wind.

Like Thoreau, one whose craft is the walk might become this same way.

Writing as Being

Similar to walking, the act of writing is like a craft insofar as it is something to be practiced or of which to make a meaningful habit. It physically and mentally engages the one who does it for its own sake with the world. Both the action of writing and the world about which Thoreau writes matter and become vitalizing. Perhaps writing exists like a facet of "artful living," a phrase most nearly meant to embody meaningful being-in-the-world, such that the one living is the one "being," in the verbal sense, in an artful, or mattering and therefore vital, way. Thoreau's own literature and others' biographical accounts make sense of his writing as such a mode of being with his world and himself simultaneously.

A handful of authors characterize Thoreau as a writer above all else. One such is Laura Dassow Walls, who describes an instance in her biography when Emerson had just asked Thoreau, "What are you doing now? Do you keep a journal?" to which he seemingly responded by committing the story of his life to his *Journal*. Walls describes his choice to do so in a way that reflects her belief that writing was Thoreau's primary occupation. Unlike his family and friends, "Henry David Thoreau would be a *writer*," [96] she says, which puts her in the camp of other authors who consider him the same – the most renowned of which is arguably the philosopher Stanley Cavell in his *The Senses of Walden*. "[Thoreau] writes because he is a writer," Cavell tells in that work, "not [as] a substitute for his life, but [as] his way of prosecuting it."[97] Gradually, this thought launches Cavell into a place from which he can describe just how writing puts a writer into his or her world unlike the un-attunement of boredom. "Specifically, the writer of *Walden* is preoccupied with the creation of a world by a word," he tells, and after which he includes a parenthetical that can be summed as follows: like a word has meaning in the context of a language; language against a form of life; a form of life a world; a world has

meaning against a word.[98] It is Cavell's belief that in writing we discover where we live and what we live for. There is a self and world – which make up the notion of being – that matter to one another and are involved in the task which we can call a mode of being that undergoes two, elemental events. The first of these is active immersion, and the second is a more passive repose.

(I)

The act of writing has an *immersive* quality which Thoreau best explains by the term "burrowing." He writes in the *Journal*, "my instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing"–[99] implying that keeping a journal and its required mental capacity is a thing which burrows, or immerses, him into his world. The burrowed, writing self Thoreau takes up is again like the porous self whose engagement, or attunement, draws him intimately near to the world. Thus we could characterize Thoreau as burrowing on many occasions, but for the purpose of this discussion, it is the act of writing to be emphasized and Thoreau as a writer, first and foremost, and therefore one who burrows into his world. What is of importance, in other words, is that writing affords Thoreau the opportunity of burrowing. As such, the *Journal* passage which coins the term "burrowing" could be paired with another that uses it again some time later to clarify how writing might be this notion of burrowing. In it Thoreau records a moment when he had watched several foxes in the wood, and his writing reflects what the act of expressing oneself with a pen takes up:

> Sometimes I heard the foxes as they ranged over the snow crust, in moonlight nights, in search of a partridge or other game, barking raggedly and demonically like forest dogs, as if laboring with some anxiety, or seeking expression, struggling for light... They seemed to me to be rudimental, burrowing men, still standing on their defense, awaiting their transformation. Sometimes one came near to my window, attracted by my light, barked a vulpine curse at me, and then retreated.[100]

Here, the fox is related to the writer who writes and by actively writing, burrows. Its quest for expression is laden with expectation, perhaps like the writer's as well. As such, the moment in which the fox and writer attempt true expression is one of imminent hope and despair – hope for successfully expressing, and despair for the potential failure to express.[101] The opening of "Brute Neighbors," as Cavell points out, enacts the connection between expression, hope, and despair in a way that again portrays the crux of writing, now understood as the act of expression, as burrowing. The Hermit who is about to go fishing meditates in a way that emphasizes the singularity of that chance to meditate and of that subject upon which to meditate:

> Let me see; where was I? Methinks I was nearly in this frame of mind; the world lay about at this angle. Shall I go to heaven or a-fishing? If I should soon bring this meditation to an end, would another so sweet occasion be likely to offer? I was as near being resolved into the essence of things as ever I was in my life... My thoughts have left no track, and I cannot find the path again... I will just try these three sentences of Con-fut-see; they may fetch that state about again.[102]

Only the current moment in the passage is the Hermit's meditative opportunity, and that it exists in singularity is what creates hope and the despair, or that simultaneous promise of achievement and anxious possibility of failure. Its singularity is what also aligns it with the vital, which matters, unlike the excess, with which humans seldom take the same degree of issue. Like the Hermit, the meditative writer is the human being who patiently, but actively, takes up expression with its pen in that vital moment, and so it follows that the one who writes meditatively becomes resolved "into the essence of things," or deeply immersed in them. Thoreau's passage wonderfully describes that moment of meditating assumed in writing only without attributing it to writing. This being in the essence of things, or being in one's world, is implied by burrowing and immersion. That we might burrow, though, assumes that there is a difference between the burrower and what is burrowed into. Thus actively writing, undertaken from that position of difference, nears what it assumes as the objects on which it writes.

To put it explicitly, writing is an opportunity to near the world, or to be in the world. It fills the "gap," as Frederick Garber calls it, between the human being, Thoreau, and the natural objects and places he encounters – much like perceptional fit, or *oikeiosis*, almost such that it makes them one in the same. Garber's language often refers to what many call writing as "inscribing," but his point is the same. "Inscribing can reveal what we most want to know about others as well as ourselves, their ways of being in places and therefore - the ultimate question for Thoreau at very point in his work – their ways of being in the world."[103] Thoreau speaks to the question of our at-homeness in the world, Garber says. He approaches this claim with the basic thesis that writing is the vehicle through which Thoreau can explore and realize that at-homeness, or nearness, of himself and even occasionally of others. Sharon Cameron's *Writing Nature* shares Garber's reading of Thoreau when she says that writing decreases "the distance between the natural and the human," which seems to help him be in the world, or realize his at-homeness. This stands in stark contrast do realizing one's disengagement.

Arsic helps clarify why this sense of writing, illustrated as akin to being-in-the-world, is vital when she discusses shadows of grief in Thoreau's writing and how the mind operates in such grief. The thesis of her passage is that nearing what was once distant is the way in which human beings live – especially in the midst of intense emotion. "Like matter," she writes, "the mind can reach self-luminosity by fusing with what it has rendered obscure... the desired self-luminosity is thus the coincidence of mental and the sensuous, since one can inhabit buried emotional content only by living it."[104] In fact, perhaps we can only live as our selves by fusing with what has been rendered obscure, like our world, which Thoreau's act of writing seems to permit.

(II)

The action of writing which burrows into the world opens up a second, more passive event of writing: *repose*. This repose may even further an understanding of how writing discloses vitality, especially when we understand burrowing and being-in-the-world as something that offers the vitality of repose. Helpfully, the repose is something that comes in the midst of what some refer to as nooning, or "the noontime of the mind." Nooning, as Arsic describes, is "the activity in which the mind is withdrawn so as to let what is external to it – landscape, trees, fruit – not only navigate it toward a certain way of thinking, but also in fact determine it."[105] Her description of the *flâneur*, presented alongside Walter Benjamin's "experience of the aura," expands upon this thought. For Thoreau, writing happens from a place of receptiveness like that of the *flâneur*, or like the experience of the aura. The "I" who writes is secondary to what it writes about – and this receptiveness, or the I's emergence in the world about which it writes, is the thing that brings about the mind's nooning.

The nooning mind of a writer is comparable to that of a *flâneur*, French for "idler," whom Benjamin famously tells is one whose mind fuses with its world – just like Garber suggests of the writer's. The "aura" this person experiences "arises from the fact that a response characteristic of human relationships is transposed to the relationship between humans and inanimate or natural objects. To experience the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look back at us," he claims, embodying an appreciation for two directions of intention inherent in everydayness.[106] In Thoreau's everydayness, there is both a writer who writes about the world and burrows, or a writer who intends toward the world, and a world which provides the glorious content about which he writes, or a world which intends toward the writer. The relatively passive disposition in which the writer is receptive of that shining world, or almost

dangerously open to it and its incalculable natures, is the repose taken to be the second element of writing. Perhaps we need the passivity of repose, though, before we could have the activity of immersive burrowing.

Like Thoreau, the *flâneur*, an idle, city-walker who lives in everydayness, has vitality because it experiences this repose. Its world is animated; even its "abstract knowledge" and "dead facts" are transformed into something experienced and "lived through."[107] Even further, the *flâneur* who has experienced the aura of the world has not only become one with his world, but become available to its time. Instead of passing time, he takes it on – his action and his world's best captured by the German *einladen*, meaning "to load" with the sense being loaded upon. To be sure, the writer Thoreau rests insofar as he is loaded with worldly nearness, care, and temporality. The writer's repose, that is to say, is one of deep proximity to everyday time and space and of great care for those times and spaces. His or her writing is much like Garber's description of writing when he says that it "can tie us to every temporal dimension, from the relatively recent past that held the doings of a woodchopper to the most ancient local events."[108]

At once, Thoreau can write in the present from a position of passive repose where some past and its world have been brought into that present and its spatial world such that both self and world and past and present are nearly the same. Gilles Deleuze articulates something along the same lines in *Difference and Repetition*, where he states that contemplation, as neither memory nor sense-making, "contracts thoughts and affects once lived into instants of the now living present."[109] It revives them, in other words, and their contemplative writer who experiences memory of both and visions of the world which motivate memory of both during the repose of writing, too. In the early pages of the *Journal*, Thoreau himself quotes a passage from Plotinus in which the latter defines contemplation, which is quite like the mood of repose, as "a kind of

tactical union, and a certain presence better than knowledge and the joining of our own centre, as it were, with the centre of the universe."[110] Up to this point Thoreauvian writing is similar and functions similarly to Plotinus's contemplation just as it does to Deleuze's notion of contemplation, too. Perhaps like he does when he walks, Thoreau loses himself in that united center, which is what makes for great repose. His place, be it that of the fox or of the pond at winter or of his colleague Margaret Fuller's body, offers him the opportunity of such in the midst of which he might act and take up his pen.

But as Arsic tells, in writing, "instants of time are slowed down to the point of becoming great spaces too large to travel, so that the mind feels abandoned to a repose in which its life, much like a plant's, impersonally noons, languid like a seed."[111] The active writing both comes from and elicits the noon, or repose, such that the latter is truly inextricable from the former. Writing as work and rest was central to Thoreau's being. He went to Walden to write as much as any other thing, and it was there, as Walls writes, that he cared less about what he wrote than "*how* he said it," or the means by which he said it – which was, of course, with a pen, "the point where a mind, in meeting the blank paper, meets the whole world," and also with repose.[112] Thus, as a writer Thoreau inhabited a space unlike literary heroes and philosophical idealists. As a writer, he was in the world. He spoke to the everyday, living man, adding "a calm depth like a lake," he wrote, so that one could still "feel the juices of the meadow." "Dig up some of the earth you stand on, and show that,"[113] he implored his audience, after all. His wish was to speak of life, having engaged the necessary and vital, and to get there he perceived and walked and finally wrote, the last of which required a world in order to create words about it and the form of life those words elicit.

-III-
Religious Significance of Vitality

Thoreau's perceiving, walking, and writing are ways in which he exists in a world which clearly has something to bestow upon him as shown through stories of each. His modes of being, we have called them, recover vitality from everyday living in that generous world that still so often occurs in the midst of a profound boredom and its despair. But to be sure, each mode waits out a nuanced, somewhat situative type of boredom in order to see that everyday living-in-the-world's beauty. It is boring, we often think, to stare at a pond's still water or a hawk's airy flight; to saunter along the same, beaten path; to write contemplatively about the place in which one lives – over and over again. But his three modes of being wait out that boredom with a patience that receives glimpses and experiences of a glorious world. While the profound boredom with which Thoreau diagnoses Concord belongs to human beings whose world is falling away, the boredom through which the vital perceiver, walker, and writer wait patiently belongs to those whose world is in advent.

By calling Thoreau's perceiving, walking, and writing "modes of being," we have already aligned them with human beings' ultimate concern. Additionally, by studying modes of being as they embody power to recover vitality from profound boredom, defined as the state in which the world matters little to human beings, and therefore that in which human beings are nearly if not fully un-attuned to the world, we have also aligned them with that which harnesses power to be in spite of the threat of non-being, or meaninglessness, particularly embodied by profound boredom. As such, Thoreau's experiment of living at Walden pond and countless spaces beyond that pond, which he leaves in order to venture onward, ought to be known as those which belong to religious discussion.

Philosophical theologian Paul Tillich uses a set of language that fits Thoreau's recovery of vitality from profound boredom into religious discussion quite well. The opening to his *Dynamics of Faith* echoes Thoreau's statement of intent to find what absolutely needs – the vital heat – in order to live each day. "Man, like every being," Tillich begins, "is concerned about many things, above all about those which condition his very existence, such as food and shelter." These vital concerns, he continues, are so urgent that they can "claim ultimacy for a human life or the life of a social group."[114] They are ultimate concerns, in other words; and ultimate concerns because they concern one's entire being. Though notoriously rife with connotations of religious tradition, faith, Tillich holds, is merely the state of being so ultimately concerned. Certainly, Tillich's notion of faith should not be excluded from the sphere of religious tradition, but equally certain, it is one that helps understand one like Thoreau, whose affiliation with tradition goes unmentioned in his literature, as quite faithful. So long as perceiving, walking, and writing are modes of being-in-the-world that recover life from some degree of lifelessness, Thoreau is certainly ultimately concerned. His reflective statements like "the infinite and eternal," which parallel the ultimate, "can be contemporary with the finite and temporal" are affirmative reminders of such.[115]

What Faith Is and Is Not

Defining faith with language of the ultimate, infinite, and eternal echoes Pauline and mystical traditions that understand faith as both subjective and objective. Ultimate faith is in one who is faithful and the thing towards which one is faithful, as embodied by many of Paul's words to the Corinthians, such as "then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."[116] The knowing fully and being fully known are both instances of faith, clearly, then, expressed as subject and

object in his speech. Ultimate concern, too, belongs to human beings and to their world, and so Thoreau can perceive, walk, and write with his being in mind, one might say, because the place in which and about which he writes is ultimate, infinite, and eternal.

By definition, the ultimate, infinite, and eternal are not within human beings' perfect grasp. They are not fully knowable but fully able to elicit engagement and wonder, and the world is invested with these three by Thoreau's understanding: "heaven," the quintessence of the ultimate, infinite, and eternal, "is under our feet as well as over our heads," he writes in *Walden*.[117] And yet, though in the physically encounter-able world, faith must be that which engages and wonders more so than that which knows, or calculates, and is kept immune from doubt. "Faith is certain," Tillich explains, "in so far as it is an experience of the holy," or that which is ultimate, infinite, and eternal. "But faith is uncertain in so far as the infinite to which it is related is received by a finite being."[118] His words imply that faith is nothing without doubt, which can always plague a finite being.

In Thoreau's project, that faith is nothing without doubt correlates to there being no possible being, much less three possible modes of being that recover vitality, without there also being the possibility of non-being and something opposite vitality – namely profound boredom. Waiting out the boredom of gazing at fishes until they appear bright and cupreous includes the risk of not seeing them as bright and cupreous; just like waiting out the boredom of walking beside the pond in winter until one experiences a loss of self-consciousness and blissful flow, the risk of not becoming lost or entering into flow; and waiting out the boredom of writing about a fox and basking in the world's repose, the risk of not finding, or being found by, more accurately, that repose. Just as well, the existence of profound boredom, a form of non-being in

that it those in it does not see, experience, and become found in these ways, obviates a reason for his experimenting with perceiving, walking, and writing at the pond, after all.

To have faith that perceiving, walking, and writing might do these things, each of which contribute power to recover vitality, does not mean to decide to believe that they will. Belief as the will to believe is not faith.[119] Faith is not such a demand made upon finite, human beings who cannot create their own infinite concerns, in other words. Instead, it is only being grasped by the sense that there is that which is ultimate, infinite, and eternal – even in the world. Thoreau's faith in Concord is the state of sensing, even if how the sense is born remains unclear, that full human potential is not being realized in those who perform tireless, industrial labor and ride the train throughout the day. Faith in Walden is his counter-state of sensing that certain modes of being might be able to recover at least some of that full potential. It has a sacramental nature about it, for the act of faith is directed toward that which is sacramental, or representative of the ultimate, like a pond fish, a quiet trail, or a burrowing fox.[120] The faith towards these is embodied in perceiving, walking, and writing, respectively, in Thoreau's literature and biography. It senses the possibly ultimate in all three and the possible vitality in engaging with them so – both of which, again, can be understood as the ultimate. Like Thoreau, the mystical traditions, Tillich writes, respond well to questions that follow these portraits of faith and wonder just how the experience of faith within the world is possible if the ultimate is the infinite, or that which is beyond the world to some extent. But faith, as mystics would teach and as Thoreau embodies, is "where the ultimate is present within the finite world, namely, the depth of the human soul."[121]

Boredom, Vitality, and Courage to Be

Faith as that which does not know but is ultimately concerned takes up a risk which shows how the faithful being is one who has vitality. For every possibility which faith senses, like those at Concord and those at Walden, there is also a risk of there being an opposite possibility. Similarly, the faithful human's modes of being might be ultimate, just like things of the world which it engages through those modes might also be ultimate, but, as every human mind has inevitably considered, both also might not be so ultimate. Tillich describes this dilemma of possible being and non-being with the concepts of anxiety and courage. His notion of anxiety is the state in which one has this existential type of doubt. It cannot be removed, but it must be taken into a "courage to be" in spite of its existence.[122] Both the anxiety and the courage are experienced bodily and mentally, and the courage which takes up the former has that which he calls "perfect vitality –" also of body and mind, or spirit. In the face of anxiety which doubts, he writes, courage is "the readiness to take upon oneself negatives, anticipated by fear, for the sake of a fuller positivity."[123] In light of such a definition, Thoreau is courageous while he patiently waits out boredom in certain modes of being for that fuller positivity because he is simultaneously aware that fuller positivity a thing which he cannot expect and which might not always arrive. His courage to perceive, walk, and write with diligence in spite of that awareness, as well as in spite of his awareness of existing, profound boredom, is a function of his own vitality – which is to be had only in the midst of a world which has its own vitality, as well.

Courage and vitality, Tillich notes, were first discussed in Plato's *Laches* in terms of whether or not an animal had courage. For animals, courage was receiving warning, having fear, but disregarding that fear. It involved knowing what to avoid and what to "dare."[124] Yet Tillich

references Plato to pin down the essence of a human being's vitality in terms of courage by showing how it differs from this sort of animal knowledge. Human beings' vital strength, he argues, is not a strength of knowledge, but instead a found strength to persist in something – like perceiving, walking, or writing beside a pond – in spite of the dangers that fears and anxieties about persisting disclose. Though Plato rejects the thought that animal courage expresses true vitality, Tillich hints that he, like himself, accepts that the human courage expresses true and even "perfect" vitality. The human being we have studied in the world is thus more vital than any other kind of being.

To have courage and its vitality is to have what Tillich calls "power of life." But the power of a human being's life, as portraits of vitality embodied in Thoreau's perceiving, walking, and writing have shown, "cannot be seen separately from what the medieval philosophers called 'intentionality,'" or being directed toward content that is meaningful and mattering to oneself.[125] This is to say that courage, because it expresses vitality, intends toward meaningful and mattering content. Thoreau certainly does this as he perceives, walks, and writes in the world, but not because he has the will-power or moral judgment to be courageous. His courage is only possible because it depends on a "gift" which comes before his action. In religious language, his matter of receiving courage can be seen as one of grace, which is to emphasize that it does not come from himself.[126]

In Thoreau's life and in Tillich's literature, one who has received the inexplicable gift of courage is one who participates in the world where he or she can be directed toward content that matters to him or herself.[127] There is no courageous, vital being without a place in which it can be so – almost like a limb cannot function without the body to which it is attached. That being, like the limb, can have concerns beyond the world or body to which it belongs, but still, it cannot

function without it. The world preconditions Thoreau's vitality, that is to say. He is a synonymously a worldly, ultimately-concerned, and faithful perceiver, walker, and writer whose soul is touched by ways in which he patiently directs himself toward the world – and it, toward him – and so recovers vitality in spite of the boredom we are apt to experience in it.

The Lost Dimension

Like other modern, philosophical theologians, Tillich believes that the age in which Thoreau writes and we live has lost something about religion. The latter poses that religion, in its truest sense, has an innermost dimension of depth that is well illustrated by Thoreau's vitality. This depth is the state of being concerned about one's own being and the state of being universally; a profound concern which perhaps religious traditions do not always express through doctrine, according to Tillich. If religion, like faith, is being grasped by ultimate concern, that human beings have lost a dimension of it means that they have lost this concern. As follows, the recovery of religion is the desperate attempt to recover that concern. It is, moreover, to no longer have the horizontal dimension, which regards things to do, make, and say, dominate the vertical, which has pause, quiet, and wakefulness. A human being need not move place to enter one dimension or the other. The two coexist, in fact, only often in an imbalanced manner which the recovery of faith and religion might restore to its right balance.[128]

In the midst of religion's lost dimension of depth, there is an opportunity for faithful living which Tillich defines as living ultimately concerned in the world. This opportunity, of course, is also one for human beings' courage – the truest expression of their vitality. During the recovery of that depth through three particular modes of being, Thoreau ceases to be "a thing among things," as Tillich calls beings without the dimension of depth, much like he portrays the

industrial laborers to be in his diagnosis of Concord.[129] But even when without the dimension of depth, it would seem that the human is not impervious to the gift of courage to be. We always ask questions of of our ultimate end, though often quietly. We sense, like Thoreau, our profound boredom; we sense that we tirelessly and desperately work; and that little matters to us, all the while. That sense stirs in our souls the fears and anxieties which courage picks up.

Sensing loss is a state of being ultimately, infinitely, and eternally concerned. Though neither Tillich nor Thoreau explain the source of human sensibility and awareness, both would agree on its universality. That any human being might be able to sense loss and have the opportunity for faith, courage, and vitality in its midst is credit to the kind of being that humans are, like Plato was beginning to sense in his *Laches*. It is also to credit the kind of world, which is a glorious one, where humans live and have this sense and opportunity. This by no means excludes the possibility that human ability to sense loss, much less to have courage to be in spite of that loss, might come from a source beyond the world. It only means that humans get to have the experience of both in the world; and that no matter the source of both, it surely shows its face to some degree in the world, too.

Thoreau's inexplicable sense of profound boredom in Concord is ultimately akin to sensing a lost dimension of living in the world. His move to the Walden pond in spite of that sense of loss is embodies his profound courage and expresses his vitality in many ways, but especially as he perceives, walks, and writes. But finally and most fundamentally, his life and literature demonstrate Tillich's notion of life's power, which he claims is always present, but "most present in those who are aware of the loss and are striving to regain it with ultimate seriousness."[130]

Conclusions

Striving with ultimate seriousness does not mean that Thoreau lives solemnly, and we ought not to, either. "We must play," rather, to use C.S. Lewis's words. "But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have taken each other seriously – no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption," he continues; and though his merriment is described in the context of being with others, we can easily adapt it to Thoreau's life and literature, which has a merriment of the kind that exists between people and their world because of that seriousness. In the seriousness that is not solemn, but playful, the world and its objects, be them animate, like Lewis's people, natural, like the pond, or even inanimate and unnatural, like the road, matter deeply to human beings. Merriment and not despair exists when our world and its objects matter to us. Lewis suggests that the merriment has a charitable attitude about it, which must only be a "real and costly love, with deep feeling" that senses the world as weighted with glory. In the midst of being many things to his readers, Thoreau is charitable. He loves his world in his vitality. At Walden "I love to see that nature is so rife with life,"[131] he writes; and "I came to love my rows, my beans. I cherish them,"[132] just like "I love to stroll" in the herb garden.[133]

But as he writes in *Walden's* "Conclusion," Henry David Thoreau left Walden he loved on September 6, 1847, to return to Concord, Massachusetts. Like that which is vital, his stay was was not excess. It was fleeting, temporary, like his finite world and what it holds. Instead of viewing Thoreau as one who went to Walden pond to live a reclusive life of quasi-solitude, for he had plenty of visitors and neighbors, of course, we might now know him as one who went to that pond for a period of recovering of vitality. His motivations for doing so might never be

perfectly singular, but one such was certainly his sense of what we can call profound boredom. From that gifted sense of profound boredom and even in spite of his existence, Thoreau set out to the pond to live deliberately, in fact seriously, but merrily. There he had a faithful courage to perceive, walk, and write, and so patiently await a reception of his world's innate vitality. All the while he became a being with his own vitality, too, unlike his portrait of the beings in nineteenth century, industrial Concord, whom he would call profoundly bored and despaired – and to whom he returns in the fall of 1847.

Return to Concord does not mark an end of recovering vitality. Nor does it mark an end of Thoreau's faithful life of ultimate concern, which vitality expresses, or his charity. He continues to vitally perceive, walk and write back in Concord and beyond and to have a real love for place, as evidenced by his own writing and others' biographies. The return merely signifies that living in the world and the world itself is transitory. And yet in spite of it being transitory, life and the finite world unequivocally possess a sense of what is ultimate, infinite, and eternal; glorious, in a word. Thoreau is a tribute to that sense both because he has it anew each day, and because it is possible that we might be more apt to have it, too, through immersion in his life and literature.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Stanley Cavell's thought in his *Senses of Walden*.
[2] Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*, p.5.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., p. 7.
[5] Ibid., p. 31.
[6] Ibid., pp. 14-15.
[7] Ibid., p. 11.
[8] Indeed, it plagued pre-modern, desert monks as *acedia*, when it had been seen as a moral sin sought to be overcome. Transcending *acedia*, meaning "without-care," was to enter into joy. With time such *acedia* became less to do with sin than of illness; a problem to be diagnosed and healed. Maybe the illness was a defect of character, or even a result of personality disorder, as Lars Svendson calls it in his *Philosophy of Boredom*, which will prove useful to understanding what is meant by "boredom."
[9] Raposa, Michael. *Boredom and the Religious Imagination*, p. 14.
[10] Goodstein, Elizabeth S. *Experience Without Qualities*: *Boredom and Modernity*, p. 4.
[11] Goodstein, *Experience Without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity*, p. 27; and *Boredom***:** *A Literary History of a State of Mind*, pp. 13-27.
[12] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 104.
[13] Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time*, pp. 214-216.
[14] Svendson. *A Philosophy of Boredom*, p. 41.
[15] Martin Doehlemann. *Langeweile? Deutung eines verbreiteten Phanomens*, pp. 22-23.
[16] See Gustave Flaubert**.** *Bouvard and Pecuchet*, trans. A.J. Krailsheimer. Harmondsworth, 1976.
[17] See Martin Heidegger, 'Was ist Metaphysik?', in *Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe*, p. 110.
[18] *Need this citation. I know this is there but I'm just spitting it out based on what I remember for now.
[19] Svendson. *A Philosophy of Boredom*, p. 52.
[20] Peter Toohey. *Boredom: A Lively History*, p. 114.
[21] Svendson. *A Philosophy of Boredom*, p. 12.
[22] See 1 Corinthians 15:50-52.
[23] See Romans 13.
[24] Svendson. *A Philosophy of Boredom*, p. 124.
[25] Thoreau. *Journal*, II, Chapter 8, p. 472; September 7, 1851.
[26] See Heidegger in *Being and Time* on *befindlichkeit*.
[27] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 6.
[28] Ibid., pp. 7-9.
[29] Ibid., pp. 59-60.
[30] Ibid., pp. 102-103.
[31] See Benjamin Reiss, "Sleeping at Walden Pond: Thoreau, Abnormal Temporality, and the Modern Body," American Literature, Volume 85, Number 1, March 2013. Duke University Press.
[32] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 27.
[33] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 109.
[34] Ibid., pp. 14-15.
[35] See Joseph Brodsky, 'In Praise of Boredom' in *On Grief and Reason*. New York, 1995.
[36] Edward Weston. *The Daybooks of Edward Weston*. Edited by Nancy Newhall, 2nd ed., Aperture, 1990. 2:211.

[37] Rick Antony Furtak. "Skepticism and Perceptual Faith: Henry David Thoreau and Stanley Cavell on Seeing and Believing." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy* 43.3 (2007). pp. 547, 551.
[38] Malcolm Clemens Young. *The Spiritual Journal of Henry David Thoreau*, pp. 19-24.
[39] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 366.
[40] Thoreau. *Journal*, III, Chapter 5, p. 292; February 9, 1852.
[41] Daniel Peck. *Thoreau's Morning Work*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994. pp. 66-70.
[42] Ibid., p. 44.
[43] Thoreau. *Journal*, X, Chapter 3, p. 74; October 7, 1857.
[44] Thoreau. *Journal*, I, Chapter 7, pp. 382-382; August 15, 1845.
[45] Mooney, Edward F. *Excursions With Thoreau: Philosophy, Poetry, Religion*, p. 56.
[46] See Reiner Schurmann's *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principle to Anarchy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
[47] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 344.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Batchelor. *Buddhism Without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening*, p. 10.
[50] Ibid., p. 62.
[51] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 99.
[52] Ibid, p. 100.
[53] Thoreau. *Cape Cod*. p. 107.
[54] Mooney. *Excursions with Thoreau*, p. 91.
[55] Watson, Gay. "The Attentive Art of Meditation and Mindfulness Practices." *Attention, Beyond Mindfulness*, p. 55.
[56] Batchelor. *After Buddhism: Rethinking the Dharma for a Secular Age*. "Everyday Sublime," pp. 232-235.
[57] Thoreau. *Walden*, pp. 348-349.
[58] Mooney. *Excursions with Thoreau*, p. 84.
[59] Thoreau. *Walden*, pp. 349.
[60] Batchelor. *After Buddhism*, "The Everyday Sublime." p. 233.
[61] See 1 Corinthians 15:55.
[62] Mooney. *Excursions with Thoreau*, pp. 147-150; also the chapter "Staney Cavell – Acknowledgment, Suffering, and Praise," in *Lost Intimacy in American Thought*.
[63] Thoreau. *Journal*, I, Chapter 2, p. 61; December 7, 1838.
[64] See Lyman Mower's piece, "Silence and Night." Unpublished.
[65] Thoreau. *Journal*, II, Chapter 3, pp. 150-151; February 9, 1851.
[66] Thoreau. "Walking," p. 671.
[67] Thoreau. *Journal*, II, Chapter 3, pp. 155-156; August 29, 1851.
[68] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 349.
[69] Ibid., p. 171.
[70] Peter Korn. *Why We Make Things and Why It Matters: The Education of a Craftsman*, pp. 10-11.
[71] Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 171.
[72] See Mooney in his "Preface," *Excursions with Thoreau*.
[73] Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust*: *A History of Walking*, pp. 5-6.
[74] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 171.
[75] Thoreau. *Journal*, II, Chapter 7, pp. 404-405; August 9, 1851.
[76] Korn. *Why We Make Things and Why It Matters*, p. 21.
[77] Ibid., p. 30.
[78] Arsic, Branka. *Bird Relics*, p. 281.
[79] Thoreau. "Walking," p. 659.
[80] Ibid., p. 660.
[81] Korn. *Why We Make Things and Why It Matters*, p. 53.

[82] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 292.
[83] Thoreau. "Walking," p. 600.
[84] Jullien, Francois. *Vital Nourishment: Departing From Happiness*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer, pp. 108-112.
[85] Thoreau. "Walking," p. 659.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 189.
[88] Arsic. *Bird Relics*, p. 261.
[89] Thoreau. "Walking," pp. 657-658.
[90] Ibid., p. 661.
[91] Michel Henry. *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, p. 55.
[92] Arsic. *Bird Relics*, p. 286.
[93] Thoreau. *Journal*, 4: 74-75.
[94] Thoreau. *Journal*, III, Chapter 6, p. 354; March 17, 1852.
[95] See Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, chapter "What are Poets For?" pp. 87-140.
[96] Laura Dassow Walls. *Henry David Thoreau: A Life*, p.4.
[97] Cavell. *The Senses of Writing*, p. 62.
[98] Ibid., 112.
[99] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 109.
[100] Ibid., p. 301.
[101] Cavell. *The Senses of Walden*, p. 58.
[102] Thoreau. *Walden*, pp. 248-249.
[103] Frederick Garber. *Thoreau's Fable of Inscribing*. pp. 78-79.
[104] Arsic/ *Bird Relics*, p. 74.
[105] Ibid., p. 278.
[106] Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, p. 146.
[107] Ibid., p. 147.
[108] Garber. *Thoreau's Fable of Inscribing*, p. 78.
[109] As cited in Arsic's *Bird Relics*, p. 317.
[110] See Plotinus, *Enneads* VI.
[111] Arsic. *Bird Relics*, 280.
[112] Walls. *Henry David Thoreau: A Life*, p. 243.
[113] Quoted in an early, miscellaneous essay often referenced by other writers, such as Arsic in *Bird Relics*, p. 244.
[114] Paul Tillich. *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 1.
[115] Thoreau. *Journal*, V, Chapter 4, p. 293; June 22, 1853.
[116] See 1 Corinthians 13:12.
[117] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. ?
[118] Tillich. *Dynamics of Faith*, pp. 18-20.
[119] Ibid., p. 42.
[120] Ibid., pp. 68-70.
[121] Ibid., p. 70.
[122] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, p. 77.
[123] Ibid., p. 78.
[124] Ibid., p. 81.
[125] Ibid., pp. 81-82.
[126] Ibid., pp. 84-85.
[127] Ibid., pp. 86-88; 155.
[128] Tillich. "The Lost Dimension of Religion," p. 2.
[129] Ibid., p. 3.
[130] Ibid., p. 5.

[131] Thoreau. *Walden*, p. 350.
[132] Ibid., p. 171.
[133] Ibid., p. 152.