# HENRY DAVID THOREAU IN CONTEXT

Well known for his contrarianism and solitude, Henry David Thoreau was nonetheless deeply responsive to the world around him. His writings bear the traces of his wide-ranging reading, travels, political interests, and social influences. *Henry David Thoreau in Context* brings together leading scholars of Thoreau and nineteenth-century American literature and culture and presents original research, valuable synthesis of historical and scholarly sources, and innovative readings of Thoreau's texts. Across thirty-four chapters, this collection reveals a Thoreau deeply concerned with and shaped by a diverse range of environments, intellectual traditions, social issues, and modes of scientific practice. Essays also illuminate important posthumous contexts and consider the specific challenges of contextualizing Thoreau today. This collection provides a rich understanding of Thoreau and nineteenth-century American literature, political activism, and environmentalist thinking that will be a vital resource for students, teachers, scholars, and general readers.

JAMES S. FINLEY is Assistant Professor of English at Texas A&M University–San Antonio. A former editor of the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, he has published multiple essays on Henry David Thoreau on topics including environmentalism, abolitionism, and *The Maine Woods*. In 2014, he participated in the 150th Thoreau-Wabanaki Tour, a retracing of Thoreau's 1857 journey through northern Maine. In 2017, he served on the faculty of an NEH Landmarks of American History seminar: "Living and Writing Deliberately: The Concord Landscapes and Legacy of Henry David Thoreau." He has received fellowships from the American Antiquarian Society and the Thoreau Society.

# HENRY DAVID THOREAU IN CONTEXT

EDITED BY

JAMES S. FINLEY

*Texas A&M University–San Antonio*

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

4843/24, 2nd Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, Delhi – 110002, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107149229
DOI: 10.1017/9781316569214



First published 2017

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-107-14922-9 Hardback

# *Contents*

# *Illustrations*

# *List of Contributors*

APRIL ANSON is a PhD candidate and the Jane Campbell Krohn Fellow in Literature and the Environment at the University of Oregon. Her work focuses on indigenous, environmental, and bio-politics in nineteenth-century American literatures and has appeared in *The Ecotone*, *Sustainable Cities: Global Concerns/Urban Efforts*, *The Evil Body*, the *Journal for the Study of Religion*, and other venues. Her secondary interests include scholarly activism and the tiny house movement.

ALBENA BAKRATCHEVA is Professor of American Literature at New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria. She has written various books and essays on nineteenth-century American literature, including *The Call of the Green: Thoreau and Place-Sense in American Writing* (2009) and *Visibility beyond the Visible: The Poetic Discourse of American Transcendentalism* (2013), and has translated Thoreau's and Emerson's major works into Bulgarian. In 2014 the Thoreau Society gave her the Walter Harding Distinguished Service Award.

RONALD A. BOSCO is Distinguished Research Professor of English and American Literature at the University at Albany, SUNY. An editor or coeditor of volumes in *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks, Complete Sermons, Topical Notebooks, Later Lectures*, and *Collected Works* of Ralph Waldo Emerson, he also served as General Editor of the final four volumes of the Emerson *Collected Works* edition, coediting three of them. Other of his publications include *Paterna: The Autobiography of Cotton Mather* (ed., 1975), *The Poems of Michael Wigglesworth* (ed., 1989), *The Illuminated* Walden: *In the Footsteps of Thoreau* (with John Wawrzonek, 2002), *Nature's Panorama: Thoreau on the Seasons* (ed., 2005), and, with Joel Myerson, *The Emerson Brothers: A Fraternal Biography* (2006) and *Ralph Waldo Emerson*: *The Major Prose* (ed., 2015). He is a recipient of the Emerson Society's

Distinguished Achievement Award (2002) and the Thoreau Society Medal (2004).

KRISTEN CASE is Associate Professor of English at the University of Maine at Farmington. She is former editor of the *Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* and director of Thoreau's Kalendar: An Online Archive of the Phenological Manuscripts of Henry David Thoreau. Her recent publications include *Little Arias* (2015), a book of poems, *American Pragmatism and Poetic Practice: Crosscurrents from Emerson to Susan Howe* (2011), and the introduction to the forthcoming Penguin Classics bicentennial edition of *Walden and Civil Disobedience.*

JEFFREY S. CRAMER is the Curator of Collections for the Walden Woods Project's Thoreau Institute Library. He is the editor of *Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition* (2004), *The Quotable Thoreau* (2011), and *The Portable Thoreau* (2012), among other works.

KATHRYN CORNELL DOLAN is Assistant Professor at Missouri University of Science and Technology. She teaches and researches nineteenth-century US literature, food studies, global studies, and environmental criticism. She is the author of *Beyond the Fruited Plain: Food and Agriculture in U.S. Literature, 1850–1905* (2014). She is currently working on her second book project, *Dinner Stories: Food Animals and the Environment in Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literature*. She has published in *ISLE*, *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, and *American Literary Realism* and has presented papers at MLA, American Literature Association, among others, including a "Writing for Liberty" conference in Lancaster, UK.

CRISTIN ELLIS is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Mississippi. Her first book, *Antebellum Posthuman: Race and Materiality at Midcentury*, is forthcoming from Fordham University Press. She has published articles on Frederick Douglass and environmentalism, and Walt Whitman and race.

DAVID FAFLIK is Associate Professor of English at the University of Rhode Island. The author of *Boarding Out: Inhabiting the American Urban Literary Imagination, 1840–1860* (2012), he is currently at work on two book projects. The first of these treats urban reading practices in the nineteenth-century transatlantic; the other examines the relation between New England Transcendentalism and the antebellum understanding of spiritual "unbelief."

JAMES S. FINLEY is Assistant Professor of English at Texas A&M University–San Antonio. His work has appeared in *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature and Environment*, and the *Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies*.

SAMANTHA C. HARVEY is Professor of English Literature at Boise State University. She is the author of *Transatlantic Transcendentalism: Coleridge, Emerson, and Nature* (2013) and the editor of *Coleridge's Responses: Coleridge on Nature and Vision* (2008). She has also written articles on British and Transatlantic Romanticism and the environmental humanities. She is currently working on a book about the metaphor of the "book of nature."

RONALD WESLEY HOAG is Professor of English at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. A longtime Thoreau Society "booster," he is a past editor of the *Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies.* His publications on Thoreau include a book-length study of Thoreau's career as a lecturer, the most comprehensive consideration of this subject to date, co-authored with Bradley P. Dean and published in the 1995 and 1996 volumes of *Studies in the American Renaissance*.

ALAN D. HODDER teaches the comparative study of religion and American literature at Hampshire College where he holds the Rosamond Stewardson Taylor Chair of Comparative Religion. He is the author of *Emerson's Rhetoric of Revelation* (1989) and *Thoreau's Ecstatic Witness* (2001), as well as numerous articles and review essays on early American religion and literature, American Romanticism, and Euro-American interest in India and the Far East. He is also the co-editor, with Robert Meagher, of *The Epic Voice* (2002).

KATHLEEN COYNE KELLY is Professor of English at Northeastern University. She has primarily published in medieval studies, and is currently working on a book, "Lost and Invented Ecologies: Studies in Medieval Literature." She is also developing a public, online, searchable and annotatable database of all the drawings that Henry David Thoreau included in his Journal, and is writing a book that examines the function, historical context, and overall significance of the drawings.

ANDREW KOPEC is Assistant Professor of English at Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne. His essays on the relation between economic and literary cultures appear in *PMLA*, *Early*

*American Literature, ESQ*, and *The Eighteenth Century*. He is currently completing a book manuscript entitled "Pacing Panic: American Romanticism and the Business Cycle."

JOHN J. KUCICH is Professor of English at Bridgewater State University. He serves as the editor of the *Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies*, the journal of the Thoreau Society. He is the author of *Ghostly Communion: Cross-Cultural Spiritualism in 19th Century American Literature* (2004) and several recent essays on the intersections between Native and European American cultures in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He is currently working on an essay collection on Thoreau's *The Maine Woods*.

HADLEY C. LEACH received her PhD from Johns Hopkins University.

DANIEL S. MALACHUK is Professor of English at Western Illinois University. He is the co-editor of *A Political Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (2011) and the author of *Two Cities: The Political Thought of American Transcendentalism* (2016).

ALEXANDRA MANGLIS received her DPhil in English from the University of Oxford. Her dissertation tackled temporal reimaginings and distortions in Thoreau's work. She is currently editor at *Wave Composition*, an online journal of contemporary experimental literature.

WESLEY T. MOTT is Professor of English at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Author of *"The Strains of Eloquence": Emerson and His Sermons* (1989), he edited volume 4 of *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1992), *Biographical Dictionary of Transcendentalism* and *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (both 1996), the three-volume *American Renaissance in New England* (2000–2001), and *Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context* (Cambridge, 2014). A longtime member of the *Concord Saunterer* and *Thoreau Society Bulletin* editorial advisory boards, he is an editor of the *Journal* in the Princeton edition of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau*.

MICHELLE C. NEELY is Assistant Professor of English at Connecticut College. Her essays on Thoreau have appeared in *American Literature* and the *Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies*. She is currently completing a book entitled *Unlikely Environmentalisms: 19th-Century American Literature in the Anthropocene*.

SANDRA HARBERT PETRULIONIS is Distinguished Professor of English and American Studies at Penn State. Her books include *To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord*, *Thoreau in His Own Time*, and with Laura Dassow Walls and Joel Myerson, *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism*. Her current work includes two long-term projects: with Noelle A. Baker, she is producing a digital edition of Mary Moody Emerson's manuscript Almanacks; and she is under way on a cultural biography of nineteenth-century reformer and author Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

LARRY J. REYNOLDS is University Distinguished Professor and Thomas Franklin Mayo Professor of Liberal Arts at Texas A&M University. His authored books include *European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance* (1988), *Devils and Rebels: The Making of Hawthorne's Damned Politics* (2008), and *Righteous Violence: Revolution, Slavery, and the American Renaissance* (2011).

DAVID M. ROBINSON is Distinguished Professor of American Literature and Director of the Center for the Humanities at Oregon State University. He is author of *Emerson and the Conduct of Life* (Cambridge, 1993) and *Natural Life: Thoreau's Worldly Transcendentalism* (2004), and he also wrote the chapter "Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller and Transcendentalism" for the annual *American Literary Scholarship* from 1988 to 2008. He has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Council of Learned Societies, and was elected a Fellow of the Massachusetts Historical Society in 2010.

WILLIAM ROSSI is Professor of English and Director of Undergraduate Studies at University of Oregon. He is co-editor of two volumes of the Princeton edition *Journal* and of *Figures of Friendship: Emerson and Thoreau* (2010); editor of Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings* (2008); and author of essays on Emerson, Thoreau, and Transcendentalism.

KENT C. RYDEN is Professor Emeritus of American and New England Studies at the University of Southern Maine. He is the author of three books – *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place*; *Landscape with Figures: Nature and Culture in New England*; and *Sum of the Parts: The Mathematics and Politics of Region, Place, and Writing* – as well as many articles, chapters, and reviews on topics in ecocriticism, the environmental humanities, and regionalism.

RICHARD J. SCHNEIDER is Professor Emeritus of English at Wartburg College. He is the author of *Civilizing Thoreau: Human Ecology and the Emerging Social Sciences in the Major Works* (2016), of *Henry David Thoreau* in Twayne's US Authors series, and of numerous journal articles on Thoreau. He is also the editor of *Approaches to Teaching Thoreau's Walden* (1992), *Thoreau's Sense of Place: Essays in American Environmental Writing* (2000), and *Henry David Thoreau: A Documentary Volume* (2004). He is a former member of the Thoreau Society board of directors and former editor of the *Concord Saunterer*.

CARL H. SEDERHOLM is Professor of Interdisciplinary Humanities at Brigham Young University and chair of the Department of Comparative Arts and Letters. He is co-editor (with Jeffrey Weinstock) of *The Age of Lovecraft*, co-editor (with Dennis Perry) of *Adapting Poe: Re-Imaginings in Popular Culture*, and the co-author (also with Dennis Perry) of *Poe, the "House of Usher," and the American Gothic*. He is also the author of multiple essays on authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, H. P. Lovecraft, Stephen King, Jonathan Edwards, Lydia Maria Child, and Nathaniel Hawthorne.

JONATHAN SENCHYNE is Assistant Professor of Library and Information Studies and Director of the Center for the History of Print and Digital Culture at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He has published in *Early African American Print Culture*, *Book History*, and *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*. His research has been supported by fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Antiquarian Society, and the New York Public Library.

CORINNE H. SMITH is an independent scholar, outdoor educator, and former librarian. She is the author of *Westward I Go Free: Tracing Thoreau's Last Journey* (2012), and the middle-grade biography, *Henry David Thoreau for Kids: His Life and Ideas, with 21 Activities* (2016). She contributes to the blog of Thoreau Farm: Birthplace of Henry David Thoreau in Concord, Massachusetts, where she also serves as occasional docent.

FRANÇOIS SPECQ is Professor of American Literature and Culture at the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon (Université de Lyon) and a researcher affiliated with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), IHRIM. He has published translations of *The Maine Woods* and "Slavery in Massachusetts," and critical studies of

a number of works by Henry David Thoreau in journals such as *ESQ, Criticism*, *Revue Française d'Études Américaines*, and *Amerikastudien*. He is co-editor of *Thoreauvian Modernities: Transatlantic Conversations on an American Icon* (2013) and of *Walking and the Aesthetics of Modernity: Pedestrian Mobility in Literature and the Arts.* (2016).

WILLIAM W. STOWE is Benjamin Waite Professor of English, Emeritus, and Professor of Environmental Studies, Emeritus, at Wesleyan University, where he specialized in American literature, modern drama, and environmental literature and was a founding member of the College of the Environment. He is the author of *Balzac, James, and the Realistic Novel* (1983), *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (1994), "Doing History on Vacation: Thoreau's 'Ktaadn' and Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*," *New England Quarterly* (1998), "Margaret Fuller, Nature, and Vacation Writing: Trenton Falls and the Lakes," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (2002), and "Transcendental Vacations: Thoreau and Emerson in the Wilderness," *New England Quarterly* (2010), as well as many articles on French and American literature, and nineteenth-century travel and nature writing. He has also edited two volumes, *The Poetics of Murder*, with Glenn W. Most (1983), and *Pete Dunne's New Jersey: Nature Writing in the Garden State* (2015).

STAN TAG teaches at Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Western Washington University, courses in creative writing, literature, words, punctuation, growing up, maps, animals, trees, weather, natural history, walking, and space, place, and imagination. In 2014, he was a member of the 150th Thoreau-Wabanaki Tour retracing Thoreau's 1857 trip through the Maine woods with Joe Polis and Edward Hoar. He is currently writing a book on the history of the early women's ascents of Katahdin.

ROBERT M. THORSON is Professor of Geology at the University of Connecticut. He has held visiting academic appointments at Harvard University (American studies), the Universidad Tecnica Federico de Santa Maria (Valparaiso, Chile; civil engineering), Dartmouth College (geography), and Yale University (history). His books include *Stone by Stone: The Magnificent History in New England's Stone Walls* (2002), *Beyond Walden: The Hidden History of America's Kettle Lakes*

*and Ponds* (2009), and *Walden's Shore: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Science* (2014). He is also an opinion columnist for the *Hartford Courant*.

LAURA DASSOW WALLS is the William P. and Hazel B. White Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame, where she is also affiliated with the History and Philosophy of Science program. She has written extensively on Thoreau and Emerson, including books and articles; her most recent book, *Passage to Cosmos: Alexander von Humboldt and the Shaping of America* (2009), received the James Russell Lowell Prize from the Modern Language Association and the Merle Curti Award for Intellectual History from the Organization of American Historians. Her next book, *Henry David Thoreau: A Life*, is forthcoming in 2017.

LESLIE PERRIN WILSON is Curator of the William Munroe Special Collections at the Concord Free Public Library. She writes on local literary and historical topics and is the author of *In History's Embrace* (2007) and the extensive guidebook section of *Historic Concord and the Lexington Fight* (2010 edition; updated reprinting 2016). Her most recent exhibition catalog, *From "Thoreau's Seasons" to "Men of Concord": N. C. Wyeth Inspired*, was published in 2016. She has collaborated with Joel Myerson on an iconography of lifetime portraits of Ralph Waldo Emerson (2017).

MICHAEL ZISER is Associate Professor of English at the University of California, Davis and co-director of the Environments and Societies Research Initiative there. He is the author of *Environmental Practice and Early American Literature* (Cambridge, 2013).

# *Preface*

Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), with its sylvan setting, its paeans to self-reliance, and its iconoclastic critiques of society and conformity, has often been read as a declaration of individuality and autonomy, a casting-off of attachments, and a prescription for living simply and independently. This perception, exacerbated by the proudly personal nature of *Walden*, has shaped impressions of Thoreau the person as insouciantly solitary to a point of misanthropy: fiercely introspective, committed to isolation, and disdainful of others' experiences and expertise. One need not read far into *Walden* to recognize that the crafting of such an image is a priority for Thoreau. The text's first sentence pointedly strings together clauses that serve to detach Thoreau from society as well as interpersonal dependency: "When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only" (*W* 3). The text thus begins with two instances of self-referentiality: first, with what Lawrence Buell has termed Thoreau's "favorite pronoun,"[1] followed by an acknowledgment of the text's own composition. These references present a turning inward that transitions into – and depends on – instances of turning away, as Thoreau notes that he both lived by himself and put significant distance between himself and the community. Further, lest his intellectual lifestyle imply that others labored for him, Thoreau affirms his material and domestic autonomy, demonstrating – again with the first-person pronoun – that he did not have to rely on anyone other than himself.

What can be easily lost in this sentence is Thoreau's secondary concern with conveying context. He locates himself topographically and geopolitically, recounts the history of his dwelling, and describes his activities. It is important that his readers recognize his conditions and the manner in which the text was composed, the where, when, and how of *Walden*'s

coming into being.[2] The following sentence, moreover, continues in this vein and thus demonstrates even more explicitly that a narrative of autonomy and individuality need not be decontextual. First, Thoreau notes his own anticipatory concern – likely based on reactions from neighbors both during and after his Walden experiment – that many will find his "mode of life . . . impertinent," a term that connotes the sort of rudely oppositional behavior that has typically attached to Thoreau. Thoreau then posits that were readers to consider the "circumstances" of his two years at the pond, they would instead come to see his experience as "very natural and pertinent" (*W* 3). With his insistence on establishing his surroundings it is clear that Thoreau wishes to avoid the particular connotations of *impertinent* that indicate un-belonging, improper fit, and irrelevance. In a word, readers should attend to context. Considering contexts, Thoreau believes, will establish the pertinence of his experiment and, by extension, the text. In addition, Thoreau suggests that in order for his message of independence and individuality to translate and be valuable for others, it must be situated rather than deracinated; otherwise, it is simply a hermit's misanthropic message. More important, for Thoreau, individuality does not require separation from one's contexts but rather a vigilant attending to them. The particular risk of conformity – which Thoreau, across *Walden*, wishes to avoid – is that contexts no longer appear as such; that is, the barrier between self and surroundings loses its distinction. The challenge, all this is to say, in narrating independence and autonomy is that it might inspire in readers a hermeneutic of decontextualization, and that they might, in misreading Thoreau's position, celebrate self-referentiality at the expense of context.

Cambridge University Press's "Literature in Context" series is predicated on the belief that an author's life and works benefit from contextualization. Such an approach is particularly crucial, I am suggesting, when it comes to Henry David Thoreau in light of a well-established tradition within Thoreauvian reception of decontextualization, whether it is the perennial attraction of calcifying his thinking into a single *ism*, the historical tendency to link him to a particular social or political movement, or the cottage industry of publishing Thoreau quotations and aphorisms.[3] *Henry David Thoreau in Context* thus recapitulates Thoreau's plea at the opening of *Walden* that readers attend to his contexts. The Thoreau that emerges from these chapters is a contextualized Thoreau, one whose education, diverse friendships, reading habits, trips and excursions, work history, and political commitments all brought him into contact with countless components of global history as well as mid-nineteenth-century

American life. *Henry David Thoreau in Context* reveals Thoreau as deeply concerned with and shaped by the worlds – both macro- and microscopic – surrounding him, worlds that register across his writings through disquisitions, direct citations, and elliptical allusions. As the chapters that follow demonstrate, Thoreau's "circumstances" are manifold, for Thoreau, as biographer Robert D. Richardson, Jr., has noted, had a "nearly limitless capacity for being interested" (*Mind* 376).

Contributors to this volume pay specific attention to the historical, political, and scholarly challenges of contextualizing Thoreau. These challenges stem in part from the fact that Thoreau lived during a period of fundamental disruption. On a grand scale, the boundaries of US polity shifted dramatically during his lifetime. In addition, the contours of civic belonging were both intensely policed and radically challenged. The period also saw dramatic transformation in the realms of epistemology, ontology, and metaphysics, with concurrent upheavals in education, aesthetics, and the circulation of ideas. The United States in particular experienced a period of unsettlement, haunted by competing and contested narratives of time and space.[4] And the imperial violence that characterized this era extended to a variety of ecologies, as new environments were interpolated into market forces and technological developments exacerbated already-existing environmental exploitation. In many ways this was a time of crisis: bookended by military clashes (the War of 1812 and the Civil War), rocked by financial panics (1819, 1837, and 1857) and a series of political showdowns (the Missouri Compromise, Nullification, Texas annexation, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the break-up of the Second Party System), and continually destabilized by social unrest concerning the status of marginalized people within a patriarchal, Protestant, white-supremacist nation (Removal, labor strikes, anti-Popery, women's rights, the Fugitive Slave Law, and *Dred Scott*).

The challenge of contextualizing Thoreau stems also from the nature of his work. As essays in this volume suggest, Thoreau's life and writings both reflect his period's unsettlement and engage in unsettling, an approach encapsulated by his claim in *Walden* to "speak . . . *without bounds*" and his pun on *extravagant*: "I fear chiefly lest my expression may not be *extravagant* enough, may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced. *Extra vagance!* it depends on how you are yarded" (*W* 324). The chapters in *Henry David Thoreau in Context* approach their material in a similar spirit. Although a glimpse at the table of Contents reveals five sections organized under conventionally thematic rubrics and thirty-four

chapters with disciplinarily legible titles, each chapter unsettles its theme and demonstrates that, for Thoreau, even single contexts require their own contextualization. Some chapters privilege surrounding contexts, while other chapters provide in-depth analyses of Thoreau's writings as a means of illuminating contexts heretofore un- or under-recognized. Others still provide a summative treatment of a theme, topic, or issue across Thoreau's writings. Although most of today's preeminent Thoreauvians are represented, the list of contributors also includes non-Thoreauvian specialists in nineteenth-century American literary studies and other relevant disciplines. Fittingly, for a study devoted to an author notoriously hostile to both institutions and the nation-state, *Henry David Thoreau in Context* features the work of scholars from outside the academy and from international settings. And since we all consider ourselves to be or to have been – at various points and in various environments – scholars, teachers, and readers, the essays are pitched as broadly as possible.

The collection opens with a section addressing Thoreau's most recognizable geographic contexts, beginning with chapters on his hometown and the pond and surrounding ecosystem that form the subject of his famous text. "Geographic Contexts" also considers the urban environments of Massachusetts where much of his social, intellectual, and political activity transpired. The final chapters of this section look beyond eastern Massachusetts, first to Maine, the region perhaps most identified with Thoreau outside of Concord, and then to the routes and destinations of his least-understood journey, his late-in-life trip to Minnesota. Collectively, the chapters in this section contextualize the modes by which Thoreau experienced geographies: first hand (on foot, on water, by train), for long periods of dwelling and for brief stops, through reading others' accounts, and through his imagination. These geographies are urban, suburban, rural, and wilderness; they have been shaped by colonialism, industry, and politics; and they, to varying degrees, bear the imprints of Thoreau's attention. While the chapters in this section are in effect compartmentalized, differentiated by environmental and geopolitical boundaries, their geographic contexts ramify across the remaining sections of the volume.

As the chapters in Part II, "Literary and Intellectual Contexts," demonstrate, to read what Thoreau wrote is to read *with* Thoreau, for, as Robert Sattelmeyer details, "the primary tools of [Thoreau's] trade were the works of other writers."[5] The first chapters in this section situate Thoreau's education and his writings within the intellectual traditions of the classics, Medievalism, and European Romanticism. The second cluster in this

section contextualizes Thoreau's literary production within antebellum intellectual culture, including New England Transcendentalism and mid-nineteenth-century print. The final component explores his attraction to travel writings, traces his training in and lifelong practice of translation, and details his ambivalent but nonetheless close relationship to lyceum culture and the lecture circuit. Collectively, the chapters in this section synthesize the texts, traditions, theories, and technologies that shaped Thoreau's modes of thinking and expression and that were in turn reshaped in his writings.

Part III, "Cultural and Political Contexts," situates Thoreau in relation to a period that has received a surfeit of names that both speak to and obscure the turbulent and contested nature of the era: the era of good feelings, the age of Jackson, the age of reform, the age of expansion, the market revolution, the impending crisis. The part begins, much as *Walden* does, with an investigation of capitalism and the effects of the nascent market economy followed by a chapter on Thoreau's responses to new technologies and industrialism and a chapter that considers Thoreau's complex views on democracy in relation to contemporary currents of individualism, dissent, and utopianism. Subsequent chapters in this part demonstrate the intensively local contexts of Thoreau's commitments to abolition; the historiographic, imperial, racial, geographic, and ethnographic contexts that shaped Thoreau's fascination with Native American culture; Thoreau's favorable responses to the "warrior spirit" popular within antebellum America; and the historical and contemporary contexts that influenced Thoreau's experimentations with diet and food. Although focused largely on what has been termed "the political Thoreau," these chapters range widely across Thoreau's writings, revealing that Thoreau was deeply concerned with socio-cultural issues and suggesting that these concerns registered in nearly every context. "Use all the society that will abet you," Thoreau suggested in a letter to H. G. O. Blake (*L* 136). He apparently followed his own advice.

The chapters in "Scientific and Environmental Contexts" bring into relief Thoreau's wide-ranging, idiosyncratic, shifting, and ambivalent relationships to some of the major theories, disciplines, practices, and professionals that comprised scientific culture in the antebellum United States. As each chapter reveals, cordoning off Thoreau's interests as well as his relevant contexts into disciplinary categories is particularly challenging, due to what Laura Dassow Walls has termed Thoreau's "postdisciplinary practice" and because Thoreau wrote during an era in which scientific praxis and authority were in the midst of becoming – but certainly had not

yet become – professional and positivist.[6] Further, as recent scholarship has demonstrated, Thoreau's interests in science and nature were inseparable from his concern over topics covered elsewhere in this volume including capitalism, Native American culture, and the abolition of slavery.[7] The opening chapter addresses natural history and Thoreau's scientific practice before *Walden*. The following chapter situates Thoreau's "Indian Books" and his work on seed dispersion amidst mid-century racial science. The next chapters demonstrate the extent to which Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* influenced Thoreau's practice of reading the landscape, examine Thoreau's practice of seasonal observations – and his "Kalendar" project – in relation to the long history of naturalist calendars, and consider Thoreau's challenges to human exceptionalism in the context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writings on animal rights. The final chapter contextualizes Thoreau's writings on evolution not only in relation to Darwin and his contemporaries but also in relation to twentieth-century treatments of Darwin as a metonym for secular modernity. Rather than simply praising the "green Thoreau" as ahead of his time, contributors in this section model how to go about reading his works in an appropriately postdisciplinary manner.

The final part, "Thoreau's Legacies," considers the relevance of Thoreau's life and writings to a series of late nineteenth-, twentieth-, and early twenty-first-century contexts. The first two chapters detail attempts by scholars, general readers, and activists to shape Thoreau's reputation, attending first to biographies of Thoreau and second to Thoreau's reputation. The final five chapters address Thoreau's writings and image in relation to a series of specific contexts, beginning with a chapter that reads Thoreau and the philosopher Stanley Cavell in the context of one another. The next chapter takes Thoreau's investigations of time as the context for a consideration of a handful of contemporary poets' transformations of Thoreau's words and ideas into their own work. The following chapter provides an appropriately Thoreauvian hybrid, mixing analysis, social criticism, and personal narrative in an investigation of Thoreau's role as "patron saint" of the tiny house movement. In the juxtapositional spirit of *Walden*, the collection ends with a somewhat unlikely pairing – Thoreau within the context of US environmentalism and examples of Thoreauvian appropriation within pop culture, from *Jeopardy!* to Young Adult fiction. Collectively, these chapters make quite apparent that Thoreau was correct when he mused that he "had several more lives to live" (*W* 323).

"The Pond in Winter" chapter of *Walden* opens with Thoreau's recounting his sense on waking one morning that a series of abstract

questions had been posed to him: "what–how–when–where?" (*W* 282). Contributors to this volume have themselves addressed questions such as these to Thoreau and his writings. Taken together, the nature of their findings has much in common with Thoreau's survey of Walden, also in "The Pond in Winter." After describing his sounding the depths of the pond and coming close to accessing, through his findings, "the laws of Nature," he explains that while all our understandings of nature come from "those instances we detect," there nonetheless exists a transcendent harmony in nature which "is still more wonderful" (*W* 290). Despite making more than a hundred soundings along eleven axes, Thoreau admits that his results are "vitiated" when compared with that transcendent harmony. But rather than despair in what he did not discover, he finds satisfaction in noting Walden's "remarkable depth for so small an area" (*W* 287). So it is with *Henry David Thoreau in Context*. The contributors have done masterful work in sounding Thoreau's life and writings, synthesizing both his depth and breadth, and providing a collective portrait that is itself remarkable.

At the same time, what remains is a survey, providing us with a much greater understanding of Thoreau and his contexts, but nonetheless one that, like Thoreau's survey, contains "almost elements enough to make out a formula for all cases" (*W* 290). This volume, thus, is not a complete or final picture of either Thoreau's writings and his contexts, for it is both hoped and expected that the "remarkable" depths contained herein will prompt further contextual readings and writing. "The universe is wider than our views of it," Thoreau reminds us (*W* 320). So too the man and the writings he has left us.

## Notes

1 Buell, "Thoreau and the Natural Environment," in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Joel Myerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 175.
2 For a more detailed account of *Walden*'s composition, and the final text's relation to material written during Thoreau's sojourn at the Pond, see J. Lyndon Shanley, *The Making of Walden, with the Text of the First Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).
3 Walter Harding, *A Thoreau Handbook* (New York: New York University Press, 1959), 132; Michael Meyer, *Several More Lives to Live: Thoreau's Political Reputation in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1977), 8; Thomas Koenings, "The Commonplace *Walden*," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 59, no. 3 (2013): 439.

4 See Dana Luciano, Introduction to *Unsettled States: Nineteenth-Century American Literary Studies*, ed. Dana Luciano and Ivy G. Wilson (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 1–28.
5 Robert Sattelmeyer, *Thoreau's Reading: A Study in Intellectual History with Bibliographical Catalogue* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), xi.
6 Laura Dassow Walls, *Seeing New Worlds: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Natural Science* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 12.
7 See, for instance, Jane Bennett, *Thoreau's Nature: Ethics, Politics, and the Wild*, new ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002); Lance Newman, *Our Common Dwelling: Henry Thoreau, Transcendentalism, and the Class Politics of Nature* (New York: Palgrave, 2005); Laura Dassow Walls, "Greening Darwin's Century: Humboldt, Thoreau, and the Politics of Hope," *Victorian Review* 36, no. 2 (2010): 92–103; and James Finley, "'Justice in the Land': Ecological Protest in Henry David Thoreau's Antislavery Essays," *Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* n.s. 21 (2013): 1–35.

# *Acknowledgments*

One of the pleasures of editing this collection has been the opportunity to work with those whose scholarship, writing, and thinking I admire. I am deeply indebted to the contributors – many of whom I am fortunate to call friends – for their thoughtful and incisive treatments of Thoreau and his contexts and for their good spirit and collegiality throughout the process. I am particularly grateful to Kristen Case, Jeffrey S. Cramer, Wesley T. Mott, Michelle Neely, Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, Linda Stillman, and Kevin Van Anglen for their advice, assistance, and encouragement as I worked on this project. My sincere thanks to Ray Ryan at Cambridge University Press for his continued support, to Edgar Mendez, Stephanie Sakson, and Lorenza Toffolon for their assistance, and to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions. Release time from the College of Arts and Sciences and the English Department at New Mexico State University enabled me to work on the project. I thank Ryan Cull, Harriet Kramer Linkin, Tracey Miller-Tomlinson, Elizabeth Schirmer, and Tyson Stolte for feedback on the proposal. My thanks to Hayley Ellisor as well for her work on the manuscript.

Additional thanks are due to Brigitte Bailey, Michael Berger, Marlowe Daly-Galeano, Michael Frederick, Robert Hudspeth, Rochelle Johnson, Courtney Marshall, Lance Newman, Karen Rosenthall, Siobhan Senier, Laura Dassow Walls, David Watters, and Reginald A. Wilburn. My deepest debts, here and in every context, are to Katherine Gillen.

# *Chronology*

*Jeffrey S. Cramer*

| | |
|---|---|
| **1812** | |
| May 11 | John Thoreau and Cynthia Dunbar, HDT's parents, wed in Concord, with Rev. Ezra Ripley officiating. |
| **1817** | |
| July 12 | David Henry Thoreau born in Concord, the third of four children: Helen (1812–1849), John (1815–1842), and Sophia (1819–1876). |
| **1818** | |
| October | Family moves to Chelmsford, Massachusetts, where HDT's father opens a grocery store. |
| **1821** | |
| | Charles Dunbar, HDT's maternal uncle, discovers a plumbago mine in New Hampshire. |
| September 10 | Thoreau family moves to Boston, where father works as a schoolteacher. |
| **1822** | |
| | HDT visits Walden Pond for the first time. |
| **1823** | |
| March | Family moves back to Concord, where father begins making pencils with Charles Dunbar; family takes in boarders. |
| **1824** | |
| | John Thoreau renames pencil firm to "John Thoreau & Co." after partners leave. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **1826** | |
| | HDT begins attending Concord Academy. |
| **1829** | |
| | HDT attends lectures at the newly formed Concord Lyceum. |
| Fall | HDT joins Concord Academy Debating Society. |
| **1830** | |
| | Thoreau's maternal aunt, Louisa Dunbar, moves in with the Thoreau Family. |
| **1833** | |
| August | HDT takes entrance examinations for Harvard College and begins classes. |
| **1835** | |
| | To earn money, HDT teaches in Canton, Massachusetts, during winter term. |
| **1836** | |
| | HDT peddles pencils in New York with his father. |
| May | HDT leaves Harvard temporarily due to illness. |
| July | HDT attends dedication of the Concord Memorial Bridge, taking part in the singing of Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Concord Hymn." |
| September 9 | Emerson's *Nature* published. |
| **1837** | |
| | HDT begins to call himself Henry David Thoreau. |
| April | HDT reads Emerson's *Nature*. |
| May | HDT tosses bunch of wrapped violets with his poem "Sic Vita" through a window for Emerson's sister-in-law, Lucy Jackson Brown. |
| July 7 | Emerson purchases Coolidge House (later renamed Bush) on the Cambridge Turnpike, Concord. |
| August 30 | HDT graduates Harvard, taking part in the commencement exercises. |
| Summer | HDT camps at Flint's Pond in Lincoln with Harvard classmate, Charles Stearns Wheeler. |
| Fall | HDT accepts teaching position in Concord but resigns after two weeks over the issue of corporal punishment. |

| | |
|---|---|
| October 22 | HDT begins Journal, following Emerson's question, "Do you keep a journal?" |
| November 25 | HDT's first published piece, an obituary notice for Anna Jones, appears in *Yeoman's Gazette*. |
| **1838** | |
| April 11 | HDT delivers first public lecture, "Society," in Concord. |
| May 3 | HDT travels to Maine for the first time to search, unsuccessfully, for a teaching position. |
| June | HDT opens small private school before taking over the Concord Academy in September, where John will join him as a teacher the following year. |
| October 16 | HDT elected secretary of the Concord Lyceum. |
| November 8 | HDT elected curator of the Concord Lyceum. |
| **1839** | |
| July | HDT meets Ellen Sewall, to whom both John and then Thoreau will propose and by whom both will be rejected. |
| August 31 | HDT takes two-week boat trip with John on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers to Concord, New Hampshire. |
| **1840** | |
| March | Amos Bronson Alcott and family move to Concord. |
| July | First issue of the *Dial* (1840–44) is published, for which HDT will be a contributor and sometime editor. |
| November | HDT teaches himself surveying. |
| **1841** | |
| January 6 | HDT signs off from the First Parish in Concord. |
| March | HDT invited to join Brook Farm, which he declines. |
| March 19 | Emerson's *Essays* [*First Series*] published. |
| April 1 | Concord Academy closes due to John's poor health. |
| April 26 | HDT moves into Emerson household. |
| **1842** | |
| January 1 | John cuts finger stropping a razor. |
| January 11 | John, age 27, dies of lockjaw. |
| January 27 | Emerson's five-year-old son, Waldo, dies of scarlatina. |

| | |
|---|---|
| July 2 | HDT's "Natural History of Massachusetts" published in the *Dial*. |
| July 9 | Nathanial Hawthorne and Sophia Peabody wed and move into the "Old Manse," ancestral home of the Emerson family. |
| July 19 | HDT sets out to climb Mount Wachusett with Margaret Fuller's brother, Richard. |

**1843**

| | |
|---|---|
| January | HDT's "A Walk to Wachusett" published in the *Boston Miscellany*. |
| February 8 | HDT delivers lecture, "The Life and Character of Sir Walter Raleigh," in Concord. |
| April | HDT's "Dark Ages" published in the *Dial*. |
| May 5 | HDT moves to Staten Island to tutor William Emerson's children, where he will stay until mid-December. |
| October | HDT's "A Winter Walk" published in the *Dial*; "The Landlord" published in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. |
| November | HDT's "Paradise (to Be) Regained" published in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. |
| November 29 | HDT delivers lecture, "Ancient Poets," in Concord. |

**1844**

| | |
|---|---|
| January 8 | HDT's "Homer. Ossian. Chaucer." published in the *Dial*. |
| March 10 | HDT delivers lecture, "Conservatives and Reformers," in Concord in the morning, in Boston in the evening. |
| April 8 | HDT's "Herald of Freedom" published in the *Dial*. |
| April 30 | With Edward Hoar, HDT accidentally burns 300 acres of woodland, causing more than $2000 in damage. |
| August 1 | HDT rings First Parish Church bell for the Concord Women's Anti-Slavery Society's annual fair at which Emerson reads his address on West Indian Emancipation. |
| September | Emerson purchases forty-one-acre lot by Walden Pond. |

| | |
|---|---|
| October 19 | Emerson's *Essays: Second Series* published. |
| Fall | HDT helps build the family's "Texas" house in the southwest portion of Concord. |
| **1845** | |
| March 25 | HDT delivers lecture, "Concord River," in Concord. |
| March 28 | HDT's "Wendell Phillips before the Concord Lyceum" published in the *Liberator*. |
| Late March | HDT begins work on a small house by Walden Pond on property owned by Emerson. |
| July 4 | HDT moves into the small house by Walden Pond. |
| Summer | HDT begins writing *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* and *Walden.* |
| **1846** | |
| February 4 | HDT delivers lecture, "The Writings and Style of Thomas Carlyle," in Concord. |
| July | HDT spends night in jail for non-payment of poll tax. |
| August 31 | HDT leaves for Maine where he will climb Katahdin, forming the basis for his essay, "Ktaadn." |
| **1847** | |
| January 19 | HDT delivers lecture, "A History of Myself" – the first of many lectures based on his time at Walden Pond – in Lincoln. |
| March–April | HDT's "Thomas Carlyle and His Works" published in two parts in *Graham's Magazine*. |
| May | HDT begins to collect specimens for Louis Agassiz at Harvard. |
| September 6 | HDT leaves Walden Pond, moving in with Emerson family while Emerson is in Europe (October 1848–July 1849). |
| **1848** | |
| January 3 | HDT delivers lecture, "An Excursion to Ktaadn," in Concord. |
| January 26 | HDT delivers lecture, "The Relation of the Individual to the State" – an early version of "Civil Disobedience" – in Concord. |

| | |
|---|---|
| February 16 | HDT delivers lecture, "The Rights and Duties of the Individual in Relation to the State," in Concord. |
| March 27 | HDT begins life-long correspondence with Harrison Gray Otis Blake. |
| July–November | HDT's "Ktaadn and the Maine Woods" published in five parts in the *Union Magazine*. |
| October 31 | James Russell Lowell's "A Fable for Critics" published in which Thoreau is satirized for treading in "Emerson's tracks with legs painfully short." |
| **1849** | |
| May | HDT's "Resistance to Civil Government" (later titled "Civil Disobedience") published in Elizabeth Peabody's *Aesthetic Papers*. |
| May 30 | *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (Boston: James Munroe and Co.) is published. |
| June 14 | HDT's sister Helen, dies of tuberculosis. |
| October 10 | HDT travels to Cape Cod for the first time. |
| **1850** | |
| January 23 | HDT delivers, in Concord, the first of several of lectures about Cape Cod. |
| July 19 | Margaret Fuller dies in shipwreck off Fire Island, New York, and HDT goes, at Emerson's request, to search for the remains and papers. |
| August 29 | Thoreau family moves to house on Main Street, Concord, where HDT will live for the remainder of his life. |
| September 18 | Passage of the Compromise of 1850, which includes the Fugitive Slave Law. |
| September 25 | HDT travels to Canada. |
| **1851** | |
| | HDT fitted for false teeth. |
| March | Return of fugitive Thomas Sims to slavery incites Thoreau's condemnation in the Journal. |
| April 23 | HDT delivers lecture, "Walking, or the Wild," in Concord. |
| December 30 | HDT delivers lecture, "An Excursion to Canada," in Lincoln. |