THOREAU AT TWO HUNDRED

Henry David Thoreau’s thinking about a number of issues – including the relationship between humans and other species, just responses to state violence, the threat posed to human freedom by industrial capitalism, and the essential relation between scientific “facts” and poetic “truths” – speaks to our historical moment as clearly as it did to the “restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century” into which he was born. This volume, marking the two-hundredth anniversary of Thoreau’s birth, gathers the threads of the contemporary, interdisciplinary conversation around this key figure in literary, political, philosophical, and environmental thought, uniting new essays by scholars who have shaped the field with chapters by emerging scholars investigating previously underexplored aspects of Thoreau’s life, writings, and activities. Both a dispatch from the front lines of Thoreau scholarship and a vivid demonstration of Thoreau’s relevance for twenty-first century life and thought, Thoreau at Two Hundred will be of interest for both Thoreau scholars and general readers.

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THOREAU AT TWO HUNDRED

Essays and Reassessments

EDITED BY

KRISTEN CASE

and

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Foreword

Michael Schleifer
President, the Thoreau Society, Inc.

In 2016, the Thoreau Society celebrates seventy-five years of existence. Founded in 1941 by a mixed group of academics and enthusiasts, the Society is the oldest and largest single-author society in the United States. Members can be found in more than fifty countries. Since its founding, members have gathered annually (in recent years, on the weekend closest to Thoreau’s birthday), with many traveling several thousands of miles to attend. Activities at the annual event include the presentation of academic papers and panel discussions about all things Thoreau in addition to nature walks, river trips, and other outdoor activities.

The breadth of Thoreau’s reach never ceases to amaze his devoted readers. In the charged political atmosphere of 2015, acts of civil disobedience could be seen from Charleston, South Carolina to Washington, DC, among other less highly publicized instances. His influence continues to resonate in our collective conversations about social justice, the environment, economics, and what constitutes a good and meaningful life. In the fall 2015 issue of Yes! Magazine, a short essay appears under the title “Thoreau Was My Financial Advisor,” expounding on Thoreau’s description of a thing’s cost to the “amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it.”

With its support of this volume, the Society continues its stated mission: to stimulate interest in and foster education about Thoreau’s life, works, legacy, and his place in his world and ours, challenging all to live a deliberate, considered life.
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Lawrence Buell extends sincere thanks to John Stauffer for his searching responses to an earlier draft of “Disaffiliation as Engagement”; to Rachel Levy and Margaret Doherty for valuable research assistance; and, for the opportunity to discuss some of the thorny underlying issues behind the chapter, to Michael T. Gilmore, Robert Gross, and Lawrence Rosenwald. Professor Buell dedicates this essay to the memory of Timo Gilmore, in friendship and in thanks.
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Len Gougeon thanks the many friends and colleagues who have encouraged and supported the larger project from which his chapter derives, especially Joel Myerson, Robert Richardson, Laura Dassow Walls, Robert Gross, Albert von Frank, and Wesley Mott. He would also like to thank the diligent cadre of able research assistants who, over a period of years, have aided him in searching, sifting, and transcribing a veritable mountain of primary materials relating to cultural conflict and the Civil War.

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Abbreviations

This volume cites the ongoing Princeton University Press edition of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau* for Thoreau’s works, correspondence, and journal entries currently published in that series. For writings, letters, and parts of his journal not yet available in the Princeton Edition, we have cited the 1906 Houghton-Mifflin edition. General references to the Princeton Edition are abbreviated as PE; general references to the 1906 edition are abbreviated as HM. The following abbreviations for individual volumes are also used:

### COR

### EEM

### EX

### J

### MW

### PJ

### RP
Abbreviations


A Note on Citations from the Princeton Edition

The essays in *Thoreau at Two Hundred* follow the Princeton Edition of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau* in not regularizing “inconsistencies in punctuation, word-division, or spelling” (W 382), especially where such accidental features represent Thoreau’s choices between American and British spellings (“fibre/fiber,” “plough/plow”) or his opting to follow local forms (“Shakespere” not “Shakespeare”) – all of which were common in early nineteenth-century New England. Likewise, “mistakes, anomalies, and inconsistencies in the manuscript” of Thoreau’s Journal “have been allowed to stand unless sense is seriously threatened” (PJ 1: 590).