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Henry David Thoreau, Walden Woods, and an Aesthetics of Garden

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'Gardening is civil and social,
but it wants the vigor and freedom
of the forest and the outlaw…'

'Each town should have a park,' Henry David Thoreau (1817–62) wrote in his journal on October 15, 1859,

> or rather a primitive forest, of five hundred or a thousand acres, where a stick should never be cut for fuel, a common possession forever, for instruction and recreation . . . inalienable forever. Let us keep the New World *new*, preserve all the advantages of living in the country. There is meadow and pasture and wood-lot for the town's poor. Why not a forest and huckleberry-field for the town's rich? All Walden Wood might have been preserved for our park forever, with Walden in its midst, and the Easterbrooks Country, an unoccupied area of some four square miles, might have been our huckleberry-field.[1]

It is Thoreau's provocation on the park that offers a segue to discussion of his aesthetic reflections on the garden and landscape in mid-nineteenth century Concord, Massachusetts. Taken together with the quote which provides its epigraph,[2] this essay considers how, why, and in what contexts Thoreau employs a garden-gardening rhetoric in his works. A critique of Thoreau's aesthetics

1 Henry David Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Journal XII: March 2, 1859–November 30, 1859*, ed. Bradford Torrey (Boston, MA and New York, NY, 1906), 387; cf. Henry David Thoreau, 'Huckleberries' in Henry David Thoreau, *Thoreau: Collected Essays and Poems*, ed. Elizabeth Hall Witherell (New York, NY, 2001), 500, 496; Henry David Thoreau, *Wild Fruits: Thoreau's Rediscovered Last Manuscript*, ed. Bradley P. Dean (New York, NY, 2000), 238.

2 Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849; Newton Abbot, Devon, 2001), 32.

of garden offers a new reading of Thoreau's environmental philosophy and writings, for it unpacks the intersections, collisions, and contingencies that surround what is often considered by Thoreau to be a misnomer for 'nature,' and uses this to review and revisit Thoreau's relationship with, and sentiment towards, nature. Here, 'garden' is employed both as process (*to* garden) and consequence (*a* garden) to examine Thoreau's commentary on nature and wildness. A focus on an aesthetics of garden also casts Thoreau as gardener – and it is this idea that has major import for this essay. For it is the voice of Thoreau the gardener, Thoreau the botanist that continues to resound and echo in contemporary calls to protect, conserve, restore Walden Woods.

This essay begins by placing the garden in Thoreau's writings, and examines the ways in which the garden-as-motif, -metaphor, or -allegory features in commentary on – and is used to make particular arguments about – nature and landscape. The second part explores Thoreau's arguments on the processes and practices of gardening, especially Thoreau's tending of his bean field in Walden Woods. In the third part, Thoreau's endeavours as a botanist and natural historian are analysed, before the final part examines how Thoreau's garden aesthetic and botanical observations and records coalesce in ecological restoration strategies in Walden Woods.

1. Thoreau and the garden

When Thoreau writes of the garden, it is a garden moulded and informed by American Transcendentalism, and by an American version of the romantic pastoral.[3] The garden aesthetic occupies an interesting position in Thoreau's writings, for it is often employed as anathema to his observations on nature and wildness. For Thoreau, the garden is comparable to the cultivated field and pasture, to the urban industrial; it is 'under the sway of man . . . tamed and broken by society,'[4] while 'all good things are wild and free,' and 'in Wildness

3 For further discussion on Thoreau and the American pastoral, see e.g.: Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964; Oxford, 2000); also Greg Garrard, 'Wordsworth and Thoreau: Two Versions of Pastoral' in Richard J. Schneider (ed.), *Thoreau's Sense of Place: Essays in American Environmental Writing* (Iowa City, IO, 2000).

4 Henry David Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Journal II: 1850–September 15, 1851*, ed. Bradford Torrey (Boston, MA and New York, NY, 1906), 448.

is the preservation of the world.'[5] It is in the untamed, uncultivated lands that Thoreau finds emotional and spiritual solace, contemplation, strength:

> The wilderness is near, as well as dear, to every man. *Even the oldest villages are indebted to the border of wild wood which surrounds them, more than to the gardens of men*. There is something indescribably inspiriting and beautiful in the aspect of the forest skirting and occasionally jutting into the midst of new towns, which, like the sand-heaps of fresh fox burrows, have sprung up in their midst. The very uprightness of the pines and maples asserts the ancient rectitude and vigor of nature. Our lives need the relief of such a background, where the pine flourishes and the jay still screams.[6]

Thoreau's retaliation against an aesthetics of garden is at its most vehement in his writings in praise of wildness and wilderness – and especially in describing his ascent of Mount Katahdin in Maine in 1846. In his essay, 'Ktaadn,' he notes,

> Nature was here something savage and awful, though beautiful . . . This was that Earth of which we have heard, made out of Chaos and Old Night. *Here was no man's garden*, but the unhandselled globe. *It was not lawn, nor pasture, nor mead, nor woodland, nor lea, nor arable, nor waste-land.* It was the fresh and natural surface of the planet Earth, as it was made forever and ever, – to be the dwelling of man, we say, – so Nature made it, and man may use it if he can.[7]

Thoreau also parodies a garden aesthetic in 'Chesuncook,' to draw a distinction between the wildness of Maine's North Woods and Walden Woods:

> Those Maine woods differ essentially from ours. There you are never reminded that the wilderness which you are threading is, after all, some villager's familiar wood-lot, some widow's thirds, from which her ancestors have sledged fuel for generations, minutely described in some old

5 Henry David Thoreau, 'Walking' in idem: *Collected Essays and Poems*, 246, 239.

6 Thoreau, *A Week*, 108, emphasis added.

7 Henry David Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*, ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Princeton, NJ, 2004), 70, emphasis added. Cf. Daniel B. Botkin, *No Man's Garden: Thoreau and a New Vision for Civilization and Nature* (Washington, DC, 2001).

> deed which is recorded, of which the owner has got a plan too, and old bound-marks may be found every forty rods, if you will search.[8]

When he writes of the absence of 'some villager's familiar wood-lot, some widow's thirds' in the Maine woods, Thoreau acknowledges and concedes the degree to which Walden has been slowly tamed and domesticated to meet the needs of the neighbouring towns of Concord and Lincoln. It is not until Thoreau's immersion in the Maine wilderness that he begins to question and recast his perception, experience, and engagement with the wildness and wilderness of Walden; to re-evaluate his place in, on nature.

In a similar way to the wildness and wilderness found on Katahdin, Thoreau also uses the wildness of the swamp as a means of refuting an aesthetics of garden. As Daniel B. Botkin argues, it is the image and metaphor of the swamp (rather than the mountain) that is echoed and revisited throughout Thoreau's wildness writings.[9] Such is Thoreau's attentiveness to and love of swamps that Rod Giblett declares Thoreau the 'Patron Saint of Swamps.'[10] As Thoreau argues,

> Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities, but in the impervious and quaking swamps. When, formerly, I have analyzed my partiality for some farm which I had contemplated purchasing, I have frequently found that I was attracted solely by a few square rods of impermeable and unfathomable bog, – a natural sink in one corner of it. That was the jewel which dazzled me. I derive more of my subsistence from the swamps which surround my native town than from the cultivated gardens in the village . . . A town is saved, not more by the righteous men in it than by the woods and swamps that surround it.[11]

Indeed, an early restoration sensibility can be found in Thoreau's writings on swamps when he suggests that, 'redeeming a swamp . . . comes pretty near to making a world.'[12]

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8 Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*, 152.

9 Botkin, *No Man's Garden*.

10 Rod Giblett, *Postmodern Wetlands: Culture, History, Ecology* (Edinburgh, 1996), esp. 'Henry David Thoreau: Patron Saint of Swamps,' 229–39.

11 Thoreau, 'Walking,' 241–2.

12 Henry David Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Journal IX: August 16, 1856–August 7, 1857*, ed. Bradford Torrey (Boston, MA and New York, NY, 1906),

Evident throughout Thoreau's writings is the parity of 'gardening' with 'edgelands' – a parity that Thoreau both celebrates and admonishes. Such 'edgelands' run the gamut of the swamps and forests that border Concord (which are valued and lauded as the antithesis of gardens), to the lawns, gardens, and cultivated fields within the town (where the garden is presented as antagonistic, a hybrid). In this respect, gardening, as well as the garden, might be read as a synonym for the encroaching of Concord – whether by its infrastructure or townsfolk – into a Walden Woods edgelands.

It is in Thoreau's writings on an aesthetics of garden that he teases out and unpacks some of the tensions and refrains that manifest in his (more extensive) writings on farms, farming, and agriculture. Through analogy and comparisons to gardens and gardening, Thoreau seeks to question and challenge engagement and experiences in nature – and to interrogate the valuing of nature. As he remarks, 'The gardener sees only the gardener's garden. Here, too, as in political economy, the supply answers to the demand.'[13] What Thoreau advocates is a valuing of the wild and wildness in nature, of nature unconstrained and unregulated – a value that goes beyond natural capital; beyond the cultivated and monetized. The aesthetics of garden in Thoreau's writings provides a platform to critique nature's place in society, and society's place in nature – his agitation is expressed when speculating, 'When we walk, we naturally go to the fields and woods: what would become of us, if we walked only in a garden or a mall?'[14] Again, it is nature unbounded and unconstrained that Thoreau praises, while cautioning against the confines of the tamed, controlled, managed nature of the garden.

But this rhetoric in Thoreau's writings also encourages a reconfiguring and reimagining of what constitutes a garden, and gardening; revealing a more holistic positionality:

> We are wont to forget that the sun looks on our cultivated fields and on the prairies and forests without distinction. They all reflect and absorb his rays alike, and the former make but a small part of the glorious picture which he beholds in his daily course. In his view the earth is all equally cultivated like a garden.[15]

311.

13 Thoreau, 'Autumnal Tints' in idem: *Collected Essays and Poems*, 393.

14 Thoreau, 'Walking,' 229.

15 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley (1854; Princeton, NJ, 2004; 150th anniversary edn), 166.

It is this contradiction and struggle that underpins this essay's discussion of Thoreau's aesthetic reflections on the garden; a struggle that is further echoed in Thoreau's own gardening endeavours.

2. Thoreau-as-gardener and his Walden bean field

For all Thoreau's writings on the perils of an aesthetics of garden, he also acknowledges how practices of gardening, agriculture, and cultivation are mirrored in his beloved Walden Woods as a working landscape. In the nineteenth century, Walden Woods (and Walden Pond) was subject to 'wood-chopping, ice-cutting, or the like business.'[16] In early 1852, Thoreau records this wood-chopping in his journal, noting on January 21, 'This winter they are cutting down our woods more seriously than ever, – Fair Haven Hill, Walden, Linnaea Borealis Wood, etc., etc. Thank God, they cannot cut down the clouds!' and then on January 30, 'Though they are cutting off the woods at Walden, it is not all loss. It makes some new and unexpected prospects.'[17] By 1855, the felling of Walden's wood-lots had intensified, leading Thoreau to lament on March 6,

> Our woods are now so reduced that the chopping of this winter has been a cutting to the quick. At least we walkers feel it as such. There is hardly a wood-lot of any consequence left but the chopper's axe has been heard in it this season. They have even infringed fatally on White Pond, on the south of Fair Haven Pond, shaved off the topknot of the Cliffs, the Colburn farm, Beck Stove's, etc., etc.[18]

Thoreau's individual gardening and cultivation practices are revealed in the tending of his bean field beside his cabin at Walden Pond. As Thoreau wrote of his two-year residency in a cabin he built by himself on the shores of Walden Pond between July 1845 and September 1847, 'I went to the woods because

16 Ibid., 213. Cf. Robert Sattelmeyer, 'Depopulation, Deforestation, and the Actual Walden Pond' in Schneider (ed.), *Thoreau's Sense of Place*.

17 Henry David Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Journal III: September 16, 1851–April 30, 1852*, ed. Bradford Torrey (Boston, MA and New York, NY, 1906), 212–13, 253.

18 Henry David Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Journal VII: September 1, 1854–October 30, 1855*, ed. Bradford Torrey (Boston, MA and New York, NY, 1906), 231.

I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.'[19] As Leo Marx suggests, Thoreau's *Walden*, published in 1854, presents 'the report of an experiment in transcendental pastoralism.'[20] Thoreau's bean field offers one example of the pastoral or Arcadian idyll; of a return to the land, and the (emotional) commitment, investment, and intimacy with the land that follows.

Such is the significance of the bean field to Thoreau's experience at Walden, that 'The Bean-Field' is the subject of *Walden*'s seventh chapter, and opens not only with a description of the plot, but also offers an insight into Thoreau's relationship with his plot:

> I came to love my rows, my beans, though so many more than I wanted. They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antæus. But why should I raise them? Only Heaven knows. This was my curious labor all summer, – to make this portion of the earth's surface, which had yielded only cinquefoil, blackberries, johnswort, and the like, before, sweet wild fruits and pleasant flowers, produce instead this pulse. What shall I learn of beans or beans of me? I cherish them, I hoe them, early and late I have an eye to them; and this is my day's work . . . But what right had I to oust johnswort and the rest, and break up their [woodchucks'] ancient herb garden?[21]

Thoreau rallies against the taming of nature whilst practicing it – the bean field allows Thoreau to explore the tensions and interdependencies that arise between gardener and garden. Further commenting on his commitment and intimacy with his plot, Thoreau notes how,

> There the sun lighted me to hoe beans, pacing slowly backward and forward over that yellow gravelly upland, between the long green rows, fifteen rods, the one end terminating in a shrub oak copse where I could rest in the shade, the other in a blackberry field where the green berries deepened their tints by the time I had made another bout . . . As

19 Thoreau, *Walden*, 90. Cf. Cooperstown and Lake Otsega reimagined as Templeton and Glimmerglass in James Fenimore Cooper, *The Deerslayer; or, The First War-Path. A Tale* (1841; London, 2011).

20 Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 242.

21 Thoreau, *Walden*, 155.

> I had little aid from horses or cattle, or hired men or boys, or improved implements of husbandry, I was much slower, and became much more intimate with my beans than usual.[22]

For Leo Marx, *Walden*'s 'The Bean-Field' chapter sees Thoreau '[turn] his wit against the popular American version of pastoral,' and the chapter presents 'a seriocomic effort to get at the lesson of agricultural experience.'[23] Marx's characterization and discussion of Thoreau's venture as a husbandman further speaks to an aesthetics of garden and to Thoreau's intimacy in the *knowing*, *meaning*, and *value* of his beans, and of labour in his bean field.

The bean field reappears in Thoreau's writings nearly a decade and a half after his sojourn at Walden Pond, for in April 1859, Thoreau replants trees on the site of his former bean field in Walden Woods. This endeavour reveals an early example of ecological restoration and an explicit example of a Thoreauvian restoration sensibility. As Thoreau records in his journal,

> *April* 19. . . . P. M. – Began to set white pines in R. W. E.'s Wyman lot.

> *April* 20. . . . Setting pines all day.

> *April* 21. Setting pines all day. This makes two and a half days, with two men and a horse and cart to help me. We have set some four hundred trees at fifteen feet apart diamondwise, covering some two acres. I set every one with my own hand, while another digs the holes where I indicate, and occasionally helps the other dig up the trees. We prefer bushy pines only one foot high which grow in open or pasture land, yellow-looking trees which are used to the sun, instead of the spindling dark-green ones from the shade of the woods. Our trees will not average much more than two feet in height, and we take a thick sod with them fifteen to eighteen inches in diameter. There are a great many more of these: plants to be had along the edges and in the midst of any white pine wood than one would suppose.[24]

22 Ibid., 156–7.

23 Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 255.

24 Thoreau, *Journal XII*, 152. Cf. Henry David Thoreau, 'The Succession of Forest Trees' in idem: *Collected Essays and Poems*. Thoreau's thoughts on reforestation, plant

In rewilding the bean field – the garden – Thoreau recasts the role of 'gardener' as perhaps 'steward,' and begins a renewed commitment and intimacy with not only the plot, but also the wider woods.

3. Thoreauvian studies in natural history and botany

Nathaniel Hawthorne's description of Thoreau offers an overview of the scrutiny and rigour awarded to all of nature by Thoreau-as-observer.

> Mr. Thorow [sic] is a keen and delicate observer of nature – a genuine observer, which, I suspect, is almost as rare a character as even an original poet; and Nature, in return for his love, seems to adopt him as her especial child, and shows him secrets which few others are allowed to witness. He is familiar with beast, fish, fowl, and reptile, and has strange stories to tell of adventures, and friendly passages with these lower brethren of mortality. Herb and flower, likewise, wherever they grow, whether in garden, or wild wood, are his familiar friends. He is also on intimate terms with the clouds, and can tell the portents of storms. It is a characteristic trait that he has a great regard for the memory of the Indian tribes, whose wild life would have suited him so well; and strange to say, he seldom walks over a ploughed field without picking up an arrow-point, a spear-head, or other relic of the red men – as if their spirits willed him to be the inheritor of their simple wealth.[25]

It is to Thoreau's 'keen and delicate' observation of Concord's natural history that discussion now turns, with his studies in botany underpinning and steering an intimacy and commitment to nature. And it is here that the aesthetics of the garden again appears, as a means of encouraging a long view – arguing in his essay 'Autumnal Tints,' 'Only look at what is to be seen, and you will have garden enough, without deepening the soil in your yard. We have only to elevate our view a little, to see the whole forest as a garden.'[26] In calling for this

succession, and wilderness preservation are also addressed in e.g. Robert Kuhn McGregor, *A Wider View of the Universe: Henry Thoreau's Study of Nature* (Urbana and Chicago, IL, 1997). See also: Jean Giono, *The Man Who Planted Trees* (1954; London, 2014).

25 Nathaniel Hawthorne, quoted in Walter Harding, *The Days of Henry Thoreau: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ, 1982), 138.

26 Thoreau, 'Autumnal Tints,' 392.

long gaze, he continues, 'Why not take more elevated and broader views, walk in the great garden, not skulk in a little "debauched" nook of it? Consider the beauty of the forest, and not merely of a few impounded herbs?'[27]

Moreover, an aesthetics of garden – and of a garden idyll – is also echoed in Thoreau's botanizing and natural history observations.[28] Thoreau's observations, recordings, and collection of flowering trees and plants are not confined to Concord, but extend across Concord, Lincoln, Walden, Estabrook Woods, Mount Wachusett, the Maine Woods, and Cape Cod – with the whole of 'Thoreau Country' read as Thoreau's garden. In 'Thoreau as Botanist,' Ray Angelo argues,

> Thoreau was not the first to botanize in Concord, Massachusetts . . . [He] certainly was not the last to botanize here. His writings have fueled an interest in the flora of Concord that extends uninterrupted over a century and a half to the present day. There is probably no other township in New England that has had such long-standing and continuous attention devoted to its plants.[29]

Angelo's study offers an insight into the events that '[stimulated] Thoreau's interest in systematic natural history,'[30] and traces the development of Thoreau's scientific and technical botanical knowledge, and his mastery of Concord's flora and fauna. (Thoreau's scrutiny of, and intimacy with, the Walden landscape is further echoed in his land surveying as environmental inquiry – epitomized in his 1846 survey of Walden Pond.[31]) Commenting on Thoreau's library, Angelo notes how it 'reflects the relative dearth of botanical

27 Ibid., 393.

28 Cf. David M. Robinson, 'Thoreau, Modernity, and Nature's Seasons' in François Specq, Laura Dassow Walls, and Michel Granger (eds.), *Thoreauvian Modernities: Transatlantic Conversations on an American Icon* (Athens, GA, 2013); Kristen Case, 'Thoreau's Radical Empiricism: The Kalendar, Pragmatism, and Science' in Specq, et al. (eds.) *Thoreauvian Modernities*; McGregor, *A Wider View of the Universe*; Mary M. Walker, 'A History of Concord's Flora' in Edmund A. Schofield and Robert C. Baron (eds.), *Thoreau's World and Ours: A Natural Legacy* (Golden, CO, 1993); J. Walter Brain, 'Thoreau's Poetic Vision and the Concord Landscape' in Schofield and Baron (eds.), *Thoreau's World and Ours*.

29 Ray Angelo, 'Thoreau as Botanist' in Henry David Thoreau, *Thoreau's Wildflowers*, ed. Geoff Wisner (New Haven, 2016), xxviii.

30 Angelo, 'Thoreau as Botanist,' xxix.

31 Thoreau, *Walden*, esp. 286, also Patrick Chura, *Thoreau the Land Surveyor* (Gainesville, FL, 2010); cf. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Chain-Bearer; or, The Littlepage Manuscripts* (London, 1845).

references of the time. He owned almost all the volumes that would pertain to Concord's vascular flora and a number that were only marginally relevant' – while Thoreau's herbarium '(numbering in the end more than 900 specimens) was no doubt one of the larger collections in eastern Massachusetts at the time.'[32]

Both *Walden* and the *Journals* reveal a fascinating insight into the processes and practices of Thoreau's botanical and natural history observations. For Robert Kuhn McGregor, the journal 'was at once a faithful record of natural phenomena and a presentation framed in prose poetry – science and art.'[33] In a journal entry from December 4, 1856, Thoreau reflects,

> About half a dozen years ago I found myself again attending to plants with more method, looking out the name of each one and remembering it. I began to bring them home in my hat, a straw one with a scaffold lining to it, which I called my botany-box . . . Still I never studied botany, and do not to-day systematically, the most natural system is still so artificial. I wanted to know my neighbors, if possible, – to get a little nearer to them. I soon found myself observing when plants first blossomed and leafed, and I followed it up early and late, far and near, several years in succession, running to different sides of the town and into the neighboring towns, often between twenty and thirty miles in a day. I often visited a particular plant four or five miles distant, half a dozen times within a fortnight, that I might know exactly when it opened, beside attending to a great many others in different directions and some of them equally distant, at the same time.[34]

The above passage is one such indication from across the *Journals* of the much larger project Thoreau sought to undertake; to compile what he sometimes referred to as his Kalendar or Book of Concord. As Bradley P. Dean notes,

> After reading John Evelyn's *Kalendarium Hortense*, or *Gardener's Almanack* (1664) in the spring of 1852, Thoreau occasionally referred to this large project as his 'Kalendar.' Apparently he intended to write a comprehensive history of the natural phenomena that took place in his hometown each year. Although he planned to base his natural history of Concord

32 Angelo, 'Thoreau as Botanist,' xxxviii, xxxix.
33 McGregor, *A Wider View of the Universe*, 177.
34 Thoreau, *Journal IX*, 157–8.

> upon field observations recorded in his journal over a period of several years, he would synthesize those observations so that he could construct a single 'archetypal' year, a technique he had used to wonderful effect in *Walden*.[35]

On the ecological (and botanical) significance of *Walden*, Edmund A. Schofield attests, 'it is remarkable that a literary work should contain such an ecologically meaningful catalogue of species for one site. The fact that *Walden* does contain such a catalogue demonstrates the intimate link between *Walden* the book and Walden Woods.'[36] Richard B. Primack also comments on the ecological and botanical rigour of *Walden*, in noting how Thoreau was 'a keen observer of changes in the seasons and differences in the landscape from one year to the next. *Walden* contains chapters devoted to individual seasons, and he intended to expand his later observations into a book entirely about the seasons.'[37] This focus and emphasis on Walden's seasons and natural patterns as an organizing narrative device is also explored by Leo Marx, noting, 'the organizing design of Walden has been made to conform to the design of nature itself; . . . the sequence of Thoreau's final chapters follows the sequence of months and seasons. This device affirms the possibility of redemption from time, the movement away from Concord time, defined by the clock, towards nature's time, the daily and seasonal life cycle.'[38]

Thoreau published only one essay during his lifetime devoted to the field of botany – 'The Succession of Forest Trees,' in 1860 – with two further botanical essays published posthumously – 'Autumnal Tints,' and 'Wild Apples,' both in 1862.[39] But it is two more of Thoreau's works – both published for the first time within the last twenty-five years – that consolidate and, perhaps, better illustrate Thoreau's endeavours as a field scientist, and the breadth of his

35 Bradley P. Dean, 'Introduction' in Thoreau, *Wild Fruits*, xi. See also: 'Thoreau's Kalendar: a digital archive of the phenological manuscripts of Henry David Thoreau,' led by Kristen Case at the University of Maine at Farmington, http://thoreauscalendar.umf.maine.edu, accessed 17 July 2017.

36 Edmund A. Schofield, 'The Ecology of Walden Woods' in Schofield and Baron (eds.), *Thoreau's World and Ours*, 168.

37 Richard B. Primack, *Walden Warming: Climate Change Comes to Thoreau's Woods* (Chicago, IL, 2014). In *Walden Warming*, Primack and his team pair Thoreau's nineteenth century observations with their own observations from across the first two decades of the twenty-first century, to examine the effects of climate change on the flora and fauna of eastern Massachusetts.

38 Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 261.

39 These three essays are included in: *Collected Essays and Poems*.

scientific inquiry: *Faith in a Seed: The Dispersion of Seeds, and Other Late Natural History Writings*, and *Wild Fruits: Thoreau's Rediscovered Last Manuscript*.[40] It is in these works that the beginnings of Thoreau's Kalendar project are writ large, providing insight into his thinking on plant-animal interactions, succession, natural selection and adaptation, and more.

4. How Thoreau's field observations are helping to restore Walden

Thoreau's call for the need of public parks – where '*All Walden Wood might have been preserved for our park forever, with Walden in its midst*'[41] – serves as a leading (if not *the*) galvanizing action for Walden's environmental and literary activists and campaigners alike, with Thoreau's botanical (and wider natural history) observations co-opted (and politicized) in defence of Walden. Thoreau's writings are synonymous with this New England pond, and vice versa – making it extremely difficult to extricate *Walden* especially (but also the *Journals*) from Walden Pond and Walden Woods. And so, it is perhaps little surprise that Thoreau's legacy, his environmental philosophy and writings, continue to resound so loudly across this wooded landscape. This tie has been exploited, with the purpose of allowing Thoreau to continue to 'speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness.'[42]

Whenever Walden Woods has been threatened by development pressures, Thoreau's philosophy and writings have occupied a prominent position in the arsenal of environmental campaign groups – including the Thoreau Society's Save Walden Committee, the Thoreau Country Conservation Alliance, Walden Forever Wild, the Walden Woods Project, and Friends of Thoreau Country. Whether it is the restoration of Red Cross Beach, shoreline restoration around Walden Pond, the protection of Bear Garden Hill and Brister's Hill from

40 Henry David Thoreau, *Faith in a Seed: The Dispersion of Seeds, and Other Late Natural History Writings*, ed. Bradley P. Dean (Washington, DC and Covelo, CA, 1993); Thoreau, *Wild Fruits*. On Thoreau and science: Part II. 'Thoreau as Scientist' in Schofield and Baron (eds.), *Thoreau's World and Ours* contains essays on: A. Hunter Dupree, 'Thoreau as Scientist: American Science in the 1850s,' Robert Sattelmeyer, 'The Coleridgean Influence on Thoreau's Science,' Laura Dassow Walls, 'Seeing New Worlds: Thoreau and Humboldtian Science,' and William Rossi, 'Thoreau as Philosophical Naturalist-Writer.' Further texts examining Thoreau's science include: Robert M. Thorson, *Walden's Shore: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Science* (Cambridge, MA, 2014); Thoreau, *Thoreau's Wildflowers*.

41 See footnote 1.

42 Thoreau, 'Walking,' 225.

development, the restoration of the former Town of Concord landfill, the installation of Thoreau's Path on Brister's Hill, the unsuccessful campaign to save Deep Cut Woods from sports field expansion, or defeating the decision to build a bus depot at the site of the former Concord landfill, Thoreau's words have been instrumental in shaping an ecological response.[43] Each time, it is Thoreau's commentary on the ecological condition, and his extensive and detailed observations and records of Walden's flowering trees and plants, that serve as a reference model to underpin the management program or restoration strategy for a particular site.[44]

One example of translating Thoreau's observations from page to place can be found in the trail improvements that accompanied the shoreline stabilization at Walden Pond. Along one stretch of the pond, it was neither possible to rebuild the sandy slope at its prior angle, nor maintain the slope at a lower gradient, and so field stones (disguised with topsoil and native planting) and light fencing were used to stabilize and prevent further erosion of the shoreline. These stones raise some concerns from visitors, but echo the Walden narrative:

> in *Walden*, when Thoreau describes the path around the pond, he talks about it being 'regularly paved' with stones, almost as if someone had put them there . . . if we are going to be real purists, we could take the trail out completely, but Thoreau talked about there being an Indian path, which means that people were using it – but it could have been a foot or two wide, rather than four.[45]

43 For further discussion on conservation campaigns and ecological restoration strategies in Walden Woods, see e.g.: essays in Schofield and Baron (eds.), *Thoreau's World and Ours*, including: William R. Jordan, III, 'Renewal and Imagination: Thoreau's Thought and the Restoration of Walden Pond,' Cindy Hill Couture, 'Walden Restoration: Legal and Policy Issues;' also Laura Smith, 'Restoring Walden Woods and the Idyll of Thoreau II: A Recent Historical Tracing of Changing and Renegotiated Restoration Goals,' *Ecological Restoration* 32.1(2014).

44 Cf. Peter Loewer, *Thoreau's Garden: Native Plants for the American Landscape* (Mechanicsburg, PA, 1996), Edmund A. Schofield and Mary Bush-Brown, *Plants of the Thoreau Institute: A Sampling of Thoreau's Favorites* (Lincoln, MA, n.d.), also: David R. Foster, *Thoreau's Country: Journey Through a Transformed Landscape* (Cambridge, MA, 2001).

45 Walden Pond State Reservation. Interview., 13 July 2007.

Indeed, in a journal entry from September 4, 1851, Thoreau observes,

> For roads, I think that a poet cannot tolerate more than a footpath through the fields; that is wide enough, and for purposes of winged poesy suffices . . . And now, methinks, this wider wood-path is not bad, for it admits of society more conveniently. Two can walk side by side in it in the ruts, aye, and one more in the horse-track. The Indian walked in single file, more solitary, – not side by side, chatting as he went. The woodman's cart and sled make just the path two walkers want through the wood.[46]

And during the installation of Thoreau's Path on Brister's Hill, a mile-long interpretive trail, Thoreau's words again cross from page to place – informing the tree replanting and restoration strategy, favouring pitch pine stands over white pine,[47] and appearing as quotes on granite and bronze markers placed along the trail. One of the markers references the pitch pine directly: 'I see in the open field . . . a few pitch pines springing up, from seeds blown from the wood a dozen or fifteen rods off . . . in a few years, if not disturbed, these seedlings will alter the face of nature here.'[48]

It is against Thoreau's refrain that 'gardening is civil and social, but it wants the vigor and freedom of the forest and the outlaw'[49] that restorationists work in Walden Woods; endeavouring to temper, balance, preserve Walden's vigour and freedom with material restoration strategies. What restorationists have achieved, across several sites, is a retelling and reimagining of Thoreau's botanizing and scientific inquiry, as well as his wider environmental philosophy.

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46 Thoreau, *Journal II*, 455, 457.

47 Massachusetts Audubon Society. Interview, 11 July 2007.

48 Henry David Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Journal XIV: August 1, 1860–November 3, 1861*, ed. Bradford Torrey (Boston, MA and New York, NY, 1906), 269–70.

49 See footnote 2.