DAVID BARRAL

Reading(s of) "deliberately": Thoreau *Liber*-ated

Abstract: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately." In order "to look again at the actual words of *Walden*, the main literary monument to the era's eccentric etymological speculation" (Michael West), "deliberately" is the best place to start. This article aims to subject *Walden*'s most notable (instance of the) adverb to Thoreau's hermeneutic methodology, "laboriously seeking [its] meaning" and minding the "perpetual suggestions and provocations" of etymology. In other words, it is an attempt to read the word as deliberately as he, a Harvard-trained translator of the Classics and connoisseur of Enlightenment and Romantic philological theories, wrote it. This article focuses on wordplay stemming from the pseudo-etymological root "*liber*"—from freedom, through bark and leaves, to books. Throughout, the multi-layered adverb is shown to illustrate Thoreau's idiosyncratic conception of ancient *askesis*.

Keywords: Henry David Thoreau, deliberately/deliberation, etymology, wordplay, *askesis*.

Introduction

This article is the second part of a study[1] whose premises I shall restate briefly. Although the adverb "deliberately," particularly as it occurs in the sixteenth paragraph of *Walden*'s second chapter (hereafter II§16), is arguably the most *operative* word in *Walden*, it has not fully received the "laborious" treatment Thoreau himself recommends, the "conjectur[ing] of a larger sense" which, in "Reading," builds upon the "suggestions and provocations" of etymology (101). (Hereafter, I abbreviate this paragraph and chapter as II§16.) A book qualifies as "heroic" in virtue not only of the *work* that its writing—the selection of its words—represents but also of that which it requires from its readers: "books must be read as reservedly and deliberately as they were written" (101). Beyond a linguistic, translational effort, however, the idea of "equall[ing] the elaborate beauty and finish and the lifelong and heroic literary labors of the ancients" hints at their *magna opera*'s subject matter (103), particularly their representation of the ergonomics of semi-divine, or heroic heavy lifting: none other than the paradigmatic athlete Hercules is convoked two pages into *Walden*, at the close of the third paragraph, as Thoreau announces his desire to address the busy condition of New

Englanders. What Thoreau says disparagingly of his contemporaries' professional practices (that they don't "ha[ve] an end" [4]—no final limit and therefore no finality) might be favorably applied to reading, a busyness which, if not "lifelong," does mobilize the "whole life" (101). Demanding "laborious" reading, this "noble intellectual exercise" (101) implies both delivery pains and iron discipline in more than the strictly educational sense. Just as Hercules's works are retributive, meant as a correction for a sin against God-written natural order, the work we do in proper reading (in proper anything) should be remedial to what is automatic in our condition and aim at self-conscious improvement in our ethics—the benefits of which will revolutionize our physics and logic. It is ascetical in Pierre Hadot's sense,[2] an attitudinal disposition that the adverb "deliberately" fully captures—the final assumption in this study. (*Liber*, after all, is a quasi-homophone of *labor*—which was not lost on Thoreau, as we shall see from his heavy and speculative punning on the radical *lb* [306].) What is true for "deliberate reading" holds for "deliberate living," my chief concern here. Having previously tracked the appearance of the adverb in Thoreau's writing of *Walden* and attempted to solve F. O. Matthiessen's accurate etymological equation ("deliberate = *de* + *librare*, to weigh" [95]), I here formulate two of my own, which address the main homographic, pseudo-etymologies of "deliberately": I first focus on *liber* ("free"/"bark") and then on *liber* ("book")—puns whose various aspects and implications scholarship has either lightly touched upon or ignored.[3]

DELIBERATE = DE + LIBERARE = DE + LIBRO

Liberation(s) from the Liber

Hiding in plain sight and embedded in the adverb "deliberately" lies the verb "liberate."[4] Interestingly, in Thoreau's time and sources, the morphological identity was often mistaken to be etymologically grounded. Oswald, for instance, in his *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, lists the verb "deliberate" and its derivatives under "Liber *a*[*djective*]. *Free*" (206). Although Thoreau was too competent a philologist to make that mistake, he embraced the rich polysemy for punning purposes.[5] Besides, Thoreau might have found some inspiration in readymade etymological sources, such as Walter Whiter who, in his *Etymologicon Universale*, proposes to show "that *Livrer* and *Liber*, relating to Freedom or Liberty, belong to the *Liber*, the Bark—*Liberare*, quasi Corticem detrahere, as some have understood" (*EU* 2: 1018). Leaving for the woods is liberating insofar as living deliberately is an active, cathartic process of shedding the *liber* of social superficialities.

Besides philological ingeniousness, Thoreau could draw upon ample thematic precedent regarding a conception of the woods as the place for conscious and free living. In *The Laws of Menu*, the "characteristicks of a *Bráhmen* set free" seem to imply a primitive, sylvan environment: "An earthen water-pot, the roots of large trees, coarse vesture, total solitude" (178). For the collective imagination, the woods offer what the pond alone could not, an ideal setting to deliver essential life and soul from civil superfluities. In the *polis*, conscience is blanketed on both the material and mental planes, by habits and customs, habits and costumes, comforts and conformism, sartorial and behavioral fashions—which all take up time, space, and thought, relegating the "essential facts of life" to psychological limbo. Thoreau's charge is scathing:

> The nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements, which, by the way are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it, as for them, is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity. (*Walden* 92)

Like the ancients' exercise of philosophy, living deliberately is therapeutic; the *libra* and its operations draw the line between "aliment" and "ailment," to use words of Thoreau's which anticipate what contemporary thinkers call the *pharmacological* nature of technological progress.[6] Since Sparta, in Thoreau's ideal vision, embodies the reduction of the infrastructural jungle to a tundra ("internal improvements"), a "more than Spartan simplicity" points to an infrasocial dimension, i.e., the natural—a cabin in the woods, say, surrounded by trees, the vegetable incarnation of the "rigid" *oikos* that curative economy requires. The state that Thoreau wishes to find in the woods, out of the sociopolitical and socioeconomic, is an original state of mind, reminiscent of the solitude to which Emerson gives the itinerary and the entering of which necessitates leaving one's bedroom for nature—the woods, already: "To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. . . . In the woods . . . a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life, is always a child" (10). In his experiment, Thoreau rids himself of the second skins that buffer body and consciousness and, unshackled from appearances and contingences, finds his own person's company again. Or, rather, he pursues a purely physical *im*personality, the transcendentalist grail of common humanity that lies in a capacity to experience a thoroughly material world mindfully, with heightened senses. Leaving for the woods, Thoreau addresses the idiosyncrasies of his life and intellectual training, literally fulfilling the Stoic requisition to "live according to nature" as well as Emerson's unification of the two precepts: "'Know thyself' . . . 'Study nature'" (56). In a sylvan setting, life verges simultaneously on self-knowledge (knowledge of what one is, at heart) and world-knowledge, knowledge of one's nature and of (one's place in) Nature, of soul and body, of spirit and matter.

Morphologically indistinguishable from the *liber* of liberty is the liber, the (originally Latin) name of the phloem, the vascular tissue between bark and cambium; the writing support before papyrus, it gave the French "livre."[7] A savvy botanist, Thoreau introduces the reader to this technical term as early (in *Walden*'s chronology, not that of its drafts) as "Economy," in a comparison of the respective layers of man and tree:

> Our outside and often thin and fanciful clothes are our epidermis or false skin, which partakes not of our life, and may be stripped off here and there without fatal injury; our thicker garments, constantly worn, are our cellular integument, or cortex; but our shirts are our liber or true bark, which cannot be removed without girdling and so destroying the man. (24)

In "deliberately," this liber is grafted with affixes, making for a wealth of contradictory, complementary interpretations. Let us start with the Latin prefix *de-* in its privative, negative aspect and read "*de*-liberately" as "*without* liber." Although Thoreau could have checked the entry for *delibro* in the *Ainsworth* ("to peel, or pull off the bark" [567]), the spark for his dendrological wordplay around the Latin *liber* may be Court de Gébelin, the French philologist whose *Monde Primitif* he encountered at Harvard and whose influence on Thoreau was documented by Michael West.[8] The entries from the section devoted to the radical "Le, Lo" in the *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, from "ΛΕΠος, εος, τό, *Lepos*" (9: 533) to "ΛΕΠΤος, *Leptos*" (9: 534) would have provided him with a blueprint for punning on libers, cortices, peels, shavings, scales, and sloughs. Without liber, therefore, living is frontal, a locking of horns with reality ("[to] front only the essential facts of life"). Our stiff social coating, a mossy cork which is indissociably physical (comforts) and mental (preoccupations), makes us insensitive to real life and ignorant of its true necessities. Without it, we at last escape our default condition: encrustment.

This is ancient ascetical territory. Porphyry, for instance, captures the "external and . . . internal" nature of the required "denudation" (23) with a sartorial twist (which resounds through Thoreau's works):

> We must therefore divest ourselves of our manifold garments, both of this visible and fleshly vestment, and of those with which we are internally clothed, and which are proximate to our cutaneous

> habiliments; and we must enter the stadium naked and unclothed, striving for [the most glorious of all prizes,] the Olympia of the soul. (23)

The image of shedding the body to purify the soul is related to another classical philosophical trope, "common to all philosophical schools" according to Hadot (51). In *Exercices Spirituels*, he devotes a long passage to what Plotinus calls "sculpting one's own statue" (48, 51): "sculpture [is] an art that 'takes away'" to ultimately reveal form, or *atomic* essence (51). Thoreau himself had read in Porphyry that "he who is the priest of the highest God, is skilled in the manner in which his statue ought to be fashioned, and in purifications, and other things through which he is conjoined to this divinity" (84). *Walden* seems to echo it thus:

> Every man is the builder of a temple, called his body, to the god he worships, after a style purely his own, nor can he get off by hammering marble instead. We are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and blood and bones. Any nobleness begins at once to refine a man's features, any meanness or sensuality to imbrute them. (221)

Although the trope is literally that of edification, or "temple-building," and Thoreau seems oblivious to the difference between subtractive sculpture and additive painting, the implied sculpting of one's "material," one's corporeal matter, is also found in an explicit early Journal entry: "He is the true artist whose life is his material—every stroke of the chisel must enter his own flesh and blood, and not grate dully on marble" (June 23, 1840; 1: 139). This is not unrelated to Plotinian "fashioning," the object chipped away at not being the individual *self*, *pace* Foucault,[9] but the essential soul. The resulting "refinement" must be taken etymologically, as an intensive process (*re-*) of touching the limit (*finis*), of getting as close to it as possible. In *Walden* still, Thoreau describes our relationship to matters that concern us as aesthetic, cosmetic:

> No face which we can give to a matter will stead us so well at last as the truth. This alone wears well. For the most part, we are not where we are, but in a false position. Through an infirmity of our natures, we suppose a case, and put ourselves into it, and hence are in two cases at the same time, and it is doubly difficult to get out. In sane moments we regard only the facts, the case that is. (327)

"Face-giving," "matter," and "wearing well" all hint at the art of sculpture. As for the "infirmity in our natures," it does not refer so much to a moral flaw as to our constitutive lack of the mineral rigidity that prevents the potential statue in a block of solid marble from slouching and adopting "false positions," making it other than it is meant to be. Perviousness to social fictions "imbrutes" us, making us raw and rough, as we *encase* ourselves, or box ourselves in a "case," which both stands for the judicial object in need of deliberation and the benumbing envelope we must in turn liberate ourselves from.

Deliberation, in that sense, contradicts Plato's conception of philosophy as the "disengage[ment] of the soul from sense." (Stanley 3: 43). Rather than negating the sensory in Platonic, Plotinian or Epictetian fashion, and in conformity with the earlier Stoical epistemological doctrine of sensuous perception as the basis of knowledge (Ritter 1: 466), Thoreauvian "living without cork" amounts to making oneself sensitive, vulnerable to everything about life which is forgotten in the normal modes of existence. As an *écorché*, one cultivates an exquisite—as the adjective applies to pain—sensitivity to the world and oneself as a part of it. In *A Week*, Thoreau had expressed the inadequacy of our current sensory apparatus to reality: "We need pray for no higher heaven than the pure senses can furnish, a *purely* sensuous life. Our present senses are but the rudiments of what they are destined to become" (382). "*Purely*" should not be taken so much as an adverb of degree or intensity but as expressing manner. *Pure* sensuousness is not *mere* sensuousness, but sensuousness *made pure*, sensuousness minus sensuality: "All sensuality is one; . . . all purity is one" (*Walden* 220).

By severing the liber from his life, Thoreau wishes to purify his senses, to shed not the sensory but what precludes improved receptivity to and perception of the world, as Cicero advocated: "The testimony of the senses deserves to be trusted, if the senses themselves are free and sound [*libres et sains*], if nothing stands as an obstacle to the fidelity of the perceptions they convey" (De Gérando 3: 95-96—my translation). Unrefined, rudimental senses are an obstacle to the adequate exercise of Stoical *physics*: "the laws of the universe are never indifferent, but are forever on the side of the most sensitive" (218-19). By going to the woods, Thoreau means to fine-tune his measuring equipment, to make his *libra* hypersensitive. Just as he equates ethics and physics, Thoreau does not distinguish between the moral and the other senses which, in their liberated form, allow for an integral, mindful experience of the world. In "Resistance to Civil Government", tapping ancient *theoria* as much as Scottish common-sense philosophy (which he studied at Harvard), he establishes the connection, if not the identity, of "the moral sense," i.e., our critical faculty to "make moral distinctions" (66), and perception: "Action from principle,—the perception and the performance of right,—. . . divides the *individual*, separating the diabolical in him from the divine" (72). Justice is a matter of *aesthesis*; unjust people are simply anaesthetized by material abundance and its attendant fictions.

Deep Living and Close Shaves

Although Thoreau might not have been aware from his philological sources that conscientiousness and consciousness, as well as the *science* they derive from, are originally about cutting (and therefore separating, discriminating), he did call "the intellect . . . a cleaver" (98)—a word which Webster connects to *liber* (212). The sectional metaphor really stems from "deliberately" but only comes to saturate II§16 from the moment Thoreau uses the adverb "deep," often associated to incision. He would live as he sometimes cuts himself, with the implied danger of going *too* deep. Accordingly, in "The Pond in Winter," the question of investigative depth leads to a comparison that Thoreau had sketched in *A Week*, between the "mealy-mouthed . . . Love of Nature" and the surly "woodchopper" deriving their subsistence from the nature they live in (93):

> [The fisherman's] life itself passes deeper in Nature than the studies of the naturalist penetrate; himself a subject for the naturalist. The latter raises the moss and bark gently with his knife in search of insects; the former lays open logs to their core with his axe, and moss and bark fly far and wide. He gets his living by barking trees. (283)

Barking (up the right) trees is such deliberate living, that, while the naturalist merely brandishes "his knife," the fisherman's "life" is "itself" the cleaving instrument. Later in II§16, the trenchant quality of Thoreau's relation to life looms in the lexicon of husbandry. Horizontally, "cut[ing] a broad swath" (literally, "mowing a large patch," and figuratively, "casting a wide net") signals exhaustivity—in *A Week*, Thoreau had labelled Time "the great mower . . . who cuts so broad a swathe" (31). As for "shav[ing] close," it suggests, vertically, shortness and thus superlative proximity. Beyond scything, the two phrases belong to the arboricultural practice of stripping "swaths of bark." The dendrological liber thus serves as a dermic metaphor: living deliberately is about shaving oneself close and, since this is risky business, sometimes having a close shave—and sometimes not, having shaved *too* close. Shaving is quintessentially dangerous, and the thought of Thoreau's uncle, "who goes to sleep shaving himself", a disquieting one (*Walden* 259). The metaphor of shaving is not innocent, as Thoreau's brother, John, died in his arms of tetanus, which he had contracted cutting his ring finger while stropping a razor (Walls 124). Like Emerson, Thoreau knows that risk is inherent to experience in more than a semantic respect: it is etymologically constitutive of experience.[10] Danger of death is the condition of life or, as he writes in *Walden*: "The amount of it is, if a man is alive, there is always danger that he may die, though the danger must be allowed to be less in proportion as he is dead-and-alive to begin with" (153). In *A Week*, against "the rays of Greek poetry," Thoreau had conjured the "ruins of Egypt . . . with their dust, foulness preserved in cassia and pitch, and swathed in linen; the death of that which never lived" (95). Life that was not becomes *undeath*, and mummies have nothing to fear. Nor do risen corpses, or the Frankenstein monsters haunting "Resistance." With a gothic streak, the marines are zombified in the Navy Yard by a necromantic, thanatopractical State's "black arts," "*laid out alive* and standing [and] buried under arms with funeral accompaniments" (65-66; my italics). Under the effect of moral *rigor mortis*, the file of soldiers constitutes a nightmarish standing army; having been reduced to mere bodies, they are dead men walking, "against their conscience" and thus orthogonal to themselves. The diagnosis of *deadening* as a minor death is one Thoreau shares with Epictetus:

> there is a double απονέκρωσις, or απολίθωσις, mortification, or petrification of the soul; the one, when it is stupified and besotted in its intellectuals; the other, when it is bedeaded in its morals as to that pudor, that naturally should belong to a man, And he concludes, that either of these states . . . is a condition little less deplorable, than that of bodily death[.] (Cudworth 1: 400)

While death is at the core of deliberate living, it is not to be feared, however. Delivered from the liber, life is dis*covered* every moment for what it is deeply, so as not to make the other discovery: "that I had not lived" (90). In an Autumn 1845 entry, the Journal reads: "Why should we be startled at death–life is a constant putting off of the mortal coil– Coat–cuticle–flesh and bones, all old clothes" (2: 211). When the entry made its way into *Walden*, it was considerably less death-laden: "Our moulting season, like that of the fowls, must be a crisis in our lives. The loon retires to solitary ponds to spend it. Thus also the snake casts its slough, and the caterpillar its wormy coat, by an internal industry and expansion; for clothes are but our outmost cuticle and mortal coil" (24).

The "slough" analogy—the old skin bearing the marks of whatever friction living entails, pushed away by new, sensitive dermis fresh out of the matrix—is a central motif in Thoreau's work, which "deliberately" also plays on. The analogy complements that of barking, which is purely extrinsic: the peeling should not be taken as an exclusively outer process, but as the result of an intimate growth, an outgrowing. Since it does not catch us theoretically unprepared, death comes as no surprise; strange therefore that one should *start* at death, when life is a constant giving way, a shedding of itself, a discovery. Death is no individual apocalypse. Rather, life is apocalyptic by nature, and death the ultimate *revelation*, after all the veils have fallen—which circles back to the apophatic, or subtractive quality of Thoreau's *bio-logy*, his "discourse on life." Deliberate living is a matter of living life down to the wire, of life and death, or the difference between the two, a veil of an infinite thinness.

The deliberate life's contiguity to death accounts for the violence and bellicoseness that permeate the central part of II§16: "to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life." Beyond the wink at Spartan economical robusticity, which retains the bare minimum in anticipation of wartime deprivations, life is metaphorized as a brutal struggle ("sturdy"), a combat aiming to break the ranks of the interior enemy that passes for life. Thoreau's project for life is not to lead it carefree but to "drive [it] into a corner," to put it back against the wall, not to con*duct* but to "re*duce* it" (my italics), i.e., etymologically again, to put it back in its place, to box it in so that it does not aggrandize itself or evade examination. This life, hounded and hunted, flayed and skinned, is soon but a bone to gnaw ("Know your own bone; *gnaw* at it, bury it, unearth it, and *gnaw* it still," Thoreau puns in a letter to Blake on March 27, 1848 [1; 362]), a bone to break—like the fisherman's log—to extract the marrow and leave it dry. Although Thoreau seems to keep life at arms' length, as an object of scrutiny, it is really *his* life that is close to the bone. Whether or not he remembered that "*ΛΕΠΤος*, *Leptos*," meant "thin as bark; 2°. Meager; 3°. Fine" (Court de Gébelin 9: 534; my translation), or that Cudworth translated the comparative "*λεπτομερέστερον*" (*leptomeresteron*) as "more thin and subtile" (2: 326),[11] his Walden Journal casts gauntness as a philosophical skeleton key:

> It is only your lean men that have a word to say about life & the philosophies—the full orbed belly well encased in fat in no place worn down to the bone rolls through the world without a creak or sound. [They are your dry and fleshless bones that rattle eloquence . . .—until some care wears a man to the quick he's silent as the grave. (Fall 1846; 2: 325)

Philosophy, as an exercise to "solve some of the problems of life" (15), if not life itself as a problem, implies an awareness of what elementally supports living, quantitatively ("Economy") and qualitatively ("Where I lived, and what I lived for"), the means and ends of life. After all: "the improvements of ages have had but little influence on the essential laws of man's existence; as our skeletons, probably, are not to be distinguished from those of our ancestors" (12). Our essence being physiological in nature, any practical philosophy worthy of the name must tackle the fact of our anatomical, osteological equality with our forebears, which can only be fully established post-mortem.

Knowing our bones to be the same as theirs begs the question of the discrepancy in our respective living conditions. As a revelation of life's framework, death should not be evaded at all costs but flirted with; it may be the price for fronting bare reality. Not unlike the prison in "Resistance," death would almost require that we know it from the inside—and move on to the next cycle of reincarnation. At the risk of dying, one must live *really*:

> If you stand right fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if it were a cimeter, and feel its sweet edge dividing you through the heart and marrow, and so you will happily conclude your mortal career. Be it life or death, we crave only reality. (*Walden* 98)

Confrontational epistemology and the envisaging of facts; the *telos* of reality, whether in life or death; marrow, or essential substance; the sharp-edged, incisive instrument, a metaphor for the mind's critical faculty; the "happy conclusion" of our "mortal career"—the above rehearses all the elements that "living deliberately" introduces to.

In II§16, Thoreau dramatizes his ignorance in deliberating upon life, like Socrates, putting himself in the position of "learning what life has to teach." And sharing Montaigne's platonic-sounding definition of philosophizing, he appends Life's lesson to the fact that living ends in death, whether death is the terminus, or a station stop. As a good Stoic, Thoreau practices *praemeditatio malorum,* which Hadot defines as "an exercise . . . designed to prevent the wise man to be unexpectedly surprised by the [negative] event" (165-66). However, a hard-liner in this also, Thoreau narrows, or extends, the scope of the exercise to the single real event in life: death. In keeping with his Early Stoic and Epicurean reliance on sense, Thoreau could not subscribe to the Platonic part of the proposition, i.e., that philosophical knowledge, as disengagement of "the soul from sense," culminates in death,[12] but he still seems to retain, with desperately playful agnosticism, the possibility of reincarnation. For someone steeped in ancient transmigratory doctrines as well as the most modern scientific theories, death is final neither on the count of spiritualism nor materialism, and always a transformative threshold. Death, a changing of place, is a new start, an occasion to get rid of superfluities. "Pray, for what do we move ever but to get rid of our furniture, our *exuviæ*; at last to go from this world to another newly furnished, and leave this to be burned?", he asks (*Walden* 66). The point of our translations is to lose things in them.

Libers, layers, leaves

If Thoreau's eschatology, as Michael West memorably argued, is scatological, one of its species is the exuvial. Our last layer lifted, we pass over into another world. But the world itself, given the transcendentalist equation of micro- and macrocosmic, is constituted of layers. Impatient with the despair which arises in men from the mistaken belief that there is nothing new to be discovered, *Walden* concludes on the declaration that our familiarity with the world is limited to one sphere: "We are acquainted with a mere pellicle of the globe on which we live. Most have not delved six feet beneath the surface, nor leaped as many above it. . . . Yet we esteem ourselves wise, and have established order on the surface. Truly, we are deep thinkers, we are ambitious spirits" (*Walden* 332). Once we reckon with the shallow quality of our knowledge and political power, going beyond the earth's dermis in any direction becomes fraught with danger. With dry metrical precision, Thoreau offers a humorous reminder in the guise of a truism: most of the people who *currently* live on the globe are unfamiliar with this exact depth, the province of undertakers and their patrons. Tongue in cheek, he proceeds to declare our profundity as thinkers and ambition—taken etymologically, a "going somewhere"—as "spirits," confined as we are to the thinnest membrane.

In "Spring," Thoreau had already conjured an earth of concentric layers, folded into which were our own mortal envelopes:

> The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, which precede flowers and fruit—not a fossil earth, but a living earth; compared with whose great central life all animal and vegetable life is merely parasitic. Its throes will heave our exuviae from their graves. (309)

Thoreau pictures the earth as a planetary-scale system with a "central life," a self-regulating engine of renewal, whose pangs are indifferently of "birth or death," and—to quote from "Resistance"—"convulse [its] body" (74). Here, in a slightly toned-down version of the idea that "critical acumen is exerted in vain to uncover the past" (*A Week* 155), Thoreau is berating his contemporaries for the retrospective bias of their science, as Emerson did resoundingly for their culture. Earth is a poetic matrix, an entity in the constant process of making and shedding. A proper physical theory of earth, a comprehensive geology must account for the depth beyond the surface and the scale of the recycling that is really going on. Thoreau is attempting to alter our perspective physically, much as contemporary eco-systemic philosophers do, extending the reach of our attachments (what Stoical *oikeiosis* also proposes to do, in concentric circles outward[13]) and making them manifest. The point is not to negate the past or stress that it can only be experienced as present: it is rather that the present is the cumulative result of the past. Lacing his Lyell with a pinch of Diogenes or Marcus Aurelius, Thoreau gives time a material, excremental form in this passage of In *A Week*:

> And do we live but in the present? How broad a line is that? I sit now on a stump whose rings number centuries of growth. If I look around I see that the soil is composed of the remains of just such stumps, ancestors to this. The earth is covered with mould. I thrust this stick many aeons deep into its surface, and with my heel make a deeper furrow than the elements have plowed here for a thousand years . . . I raise my fairest and freshest flowers in the old mould. Why, what we would fain call new is not skin deep; the earth is not yet stained by it. It is not the fertile ground which we walk on, but the leaves that flutter over our heads. The newest is but the oldest made visible to our senses. (153)

The stick that Thoreau will notch his time on in *Walden* here serves as a fathoming tool into the mucky geological eras of the world. In a trademark axiological turn, he again convokes "leaves" and "flowers" as the manifestations not of radical novelty but of eon-old renewal. By mistaking the old for the new, we betray our superficial grasp of the workings of the physical world.

In one of *A Week*'s last passages (posterior to the Fall 1845 manuscript[14]), both the image of a concentric system and the question of our relationship to flora hinge on a conspicuous occurrence of "deliberately"—the botanical lexicon surrounding the adverb suggests that Thoreau was punning along dendrological lines long before the first version of II§16 (1847):

> This world has many *rings*, like Saturn, and we live now on the outmost of them all. None can say *deliberately* that he inhabits the same sphere, or is contemporary with, the *flower* which his hands have plucked, and though his feet may seem to crush it, inconceivable spaces and ages separate them, and perchance there is no danger that he will hurt it. What do the *botanists* know? Our lives should go between the *lichen* and the *bark*." (385; my italics)

After a roundabout by astronomical confines, Thoreau lands the suggestion not only that vegetables and we occupy different dimensions and are not strictly contemporaneous or neighborly but also that determining the nature of our relationship requires an awareness of the universe's layered constitution. To define our common belonging, our "making a world" together, we need to deliberate on the *rings* that separate us. More than just rhetorical, a casting of aspersions on the limited scope of *episteme*, here botanical, Thoreau's question opens in earnest to the wisdom of dendrology: what do the botanists know, indeed? In a razor-thin version of *Walden*'s life-like cleaver, Thoreau suggests that we get "more thin and subtle"—as Cudworth writes of the Stoic's soul or Epicurus's intermundane deities—, that we let our lives sneak into the interval between liber and moss, and learn interstitially through our inhabiting of different layers.

A few pages earlier, Thoreau had introduced the topic of our peripheral existence thus:

> It is easier to discover another such a new world as Columbus did, than to go within one fold of this which we appear to know so well . . . history accumulates like rubbish before the portals of nature. But there is only necessary a moment's sanity and sound senses, to teach us that there is a nature behind the ordinary, in which we have only some vague preëmption right and western reserve as yet. We live on the outskirts of that region. (383)

In Heinrich Ritter, Thoreau could have encountered the concept of *epokhe*, or "suspension of judgment, withholding of all assertion (*εποχη*)" (3: 391). While the Academical or Skeptic "suspension of assent" (Stanley, 5: 146) is an attitudinal consequence of mistrusting the senses as the foundation of true knowledge, Thoreau bases his own on "sound senses," senses which can *sound* the everyday for the eternal *phusis* that lies beneath. The surface quality of our existence is not a spatial or temporal fact anymore, but a phenomenological one; as with Emerson's dialectic of the handsome and the slippery,[15] our "western reserve," as opposed to Eastern letting go, prevents too definite a *purchase* on this undefined territory. The Ohio Western Reserve is Thoreau's smaller-scale, local version of Emerson's more abstract "unapproachable America" (485) which recedes as the settlers push in, just like Nature of which Thoreau could say, in the grief of mourning his brother: "She always retreats as I advance" (February 21, 1842; 1: 365). Living deliberately is epochal discovery:

> There are perturbations in our orbits produced by the influence of outlying spheres, and no astronomer has ever yet calculated the elements of that undiscovered world which produces them. I perceive in the common train of my thoughts a natural and uninterrupted sequence, each implying the next, or, if interruption occurs, it is occasioned by a new object being presented to my *senses*.

> But a steep, and sudden, and by these means unaccountable transition, is that from a comparatively narrow and partial, what is called common sense view of things, to an infinitely expanded and liberating one, from seeing things as men describe them, to seeing them as men cannot describe them. This implies a sense which is not common, but rare in the wisest man's experience; which is sensible or sentient of more than common. (386)

As most of the previous block quotes illustrate, Thoreau's conception of a layered world is rooted in botanical analogy. In mockery of Enlightenment and nineteenth century philologists and their pet candidates for linguistic reductionism, Thoreau peels down his cosmogeny to a *foliology* ("The Maker of this earth but patented a leaf" [*Walden* 308]), couching his blend of epistemology and eschatology in the vocabulary of leaf-turning: "What Champollion will decipher this hieroglyphic for us, that we may turn over a new leaf at last?" (308). This conclusion stems from a notorious elucubration in *Walden*:

> No wonder that the earth expresses itself outwardly in leaves, it so labors with the idea inwardly. . . . Internally . . . it is a moist thick lobe, a word especially applicable to the liver and lungs and the leaves of fat (λείβω, *labor*, *lapsus*, to flow or slip downward, a lapsing; λοβος, *globus*, lobe, globe; also lap, flap, and many other words); *externally* a dry thin *leaf*, even as the *f* and *v* are a pressed and dried *b*. The radicals of lobe are *lb*, the soft mass of the *b* (single lobed, or B, double lobed), with the liquid *l* behind it pressing it forward. In globe, *glb*, the guttural *g* adds to the meaning the capacity of the throat. (306)

More than a rewriting of philologist Charles Kraitsir (*SA* 29-30), the above "demonstrates Thoreau's ability to apply glossological techniques independently" (West 186), and what matters lies as much in Thoreau's very personal additions ("labor," "lapse," "lobe," "leaf") as in what he leaves out from Kraitsir's lists.[16] But despite the conspicuous absence of "liber" in Thoreau's reduction of the earth to a folio, the word is represented by its next of kin: "liver." Notwithstanding the local oversight—or Freudian lapse, or conscious omission—Thoreau generally subscribes, if opportunistically and playfully, to the thesis of a common etymon of lobe, liver, liber and leaf.

Leaves and libers will eventually provide Thoreau with a paradigm of rebirth in *Walden*'s conclusion:

> Every one has heard the story which has gone the rounds of New England, of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood, which had stood in a

> farmer's kitchen for sixty years . . .—from an egg deposited in the living tree many years earlier still, as appeared by counting the annual layers beyond it; which was heard gnawing out for several weeks, hatched perchance by the heat of an urn. Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, whose egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodenness in the dead dry life of society, deposited at first in the alburnum of the green and living tree, which has been gradually converted into the semblance of its well-seasoned tomb,—heard perchance gnawing out for years . . .—may unexpectedly come forth amidst society's most trivial and handselled furniture. (333)

The anecdote and metaphor of the insect originally lodging in the sapwood of a tree, to be "hatched by the heat of an urn" (the choice of the container is not random, a subtle evocation of death providing the occasion for rebirth) is a double instance of deliberation, both getting rid of the liber and getting one's sustenance from the raw material of a tree. While the "woodenness" of coaxial rings hints at the numbness caused by societal sediment, making it back from dried rings is a coming to one's senses, to one's life. From apparent coffin, the liber becomes real cradle.

DELIBERATE = *DE* + *LIBER*

Living with(out) Books

If libers, as bark, can lodge and sustain life, what of libers as books? Ultimately, Thoreau's wish to live deliberately etymologically implies a living "*from* the liber," by the book and by means of the book, keeping the books of his life.

In "Reading," the woods allow for the meditative deciphering of sustaining, sacred books:

> My residence was more favorable . . . to serious reading, than a university; and though I was beyond the range of the ordinary circulating library, I had more than ever come within the influence of those books which circulate round the world, whose sentences were first written on bark. (402)

"Circulating libraries," which make books *go round* for a subscription, cannot reach Thoreau, situated as he is out of their limited sphere, both literally (he lodges out of town) and figuratively, since their stock in trade, the pseudo-literary fare, or "Little Reading" (104), does not concern him in the least. On the contrary, he enters the sphere of these fundamental books, the "sacred scriptures, or bibles of mankind", which still go round the planet (106)—"influence" debuted as an *astrological* concept. Establishing one's residence among trees is a return to the origin of writing, as if text reminisced its first incarnation, its engraving on liber: registered on bark, the first words of humanity are better read in the woods, the locus of universalism more than any university.

"Reading," however, opens on Thoreau's failure to get any done during the first summer (99-100). But although his life is thus "de-liberate" in a negative sense ("without books") he still manages to derive nourishment from books somehow: "Yet I sustained myself by the prospect of such reading in future" (100). Living *without* books is not only *not* antithetical to living *from* certain books, but conditional to it. Whether the Iliad in the Greek, "more study" of which exhaustion precludes, or the Confucian analects, Thoreau's reading is not about killing but improving time, reading what is present while being present to the reading: "I will just try these three sentences of Con-fut-see; they may fetch that state about again. I know not whether it was the dumps or a budding ecstasy. Mem. There never is but one opportunity of a kind" (224-225). Emphatically, Thoreau does not "read" Confucius's sentences, but "tries" them—a verb which, with its experimental and judicial undertones, he has applied to life (9-10). Automatic reading (and writing) should be avoided as much as automatic living or mechanical waking: "If others are the machines to provide this provender, they are the machines to read it" (105). Rather than gulping letters down indiscriminately like his contemporaries, with "unwearied gizzards . . . whose corrugations even yet need no sharpening" (105), Thoreau reads selectively and ruminatively, siding with the Bovidae against the Galliformes.

Thoreau's attentive thought experiment requires pulling life to pieces, "analytically" detailing it, as much as putting it into words. Again, there is precedent in ancient "spiritual exercises;" in the words of Marcus Aurelius: "One should always make, for oneself, a definition or description of the object which presents itself in representation; . . . one should tell oneself its true name and the name of the parts that compose it and in which it is resolved" (Hadot 195). Thoreau's breaking down of life has all the trappings of "physical analysis," including its necessarily *logical*, verbal aspect. The metaphor of "reduc[tion] to . . . lowest terms" he borrows to the field of mathematics or physics, "terms" being the elements between which relations are established—as in an equation, for instance, an equilibrating operation central to accounting. This is obvious from an 1848 letter to Blake: "When a mathematician would solve a difficult problem, he first frees the equation of all encumbrances, and reduces it to its simplest terms.

So simplify the problem of life, distinguish the necessary and the real" (March 27; 1: 360). Equations aim for elementary gauntness. But "terms" are also, quite ordinarily, words. Thoreau's solving of life consists both in separating its constitutive elements numerically, in a mathematical formalism, and terminologically, putting life into words, finding the words which express it at bottom, heeding the fundamental dimension of their "primitive meaning" (*A Week* 362). Finally, *Walden* is terminological in the sense that it explores (the) last (of) things, their boundaries and the merits thereof, early advocating for a "primitive and *frontier* life" (11). It is terminal only as it ushers a new beginning: when Thoreau indeed chooses Vulcan over Terminus, "sacrific[ing] an old forest fence" to the fire (249), he suggests that limits contain the principle of their exceeding, an intuition that informs eschatology.

As Thoreau deals in the terms of Life, the question of "publishing its meanness to the world" is central. If his ambition is to make people acquainted with the results of an experience that is private *a priori*, insofar as it is individual, but communicable and thus universalizable, it requires publication (and impression). Now the place and time in which Thoreau wishes to account for life, be it miserly or sublime, he calls "[his] next excursion." At first glance, it would seem to refer to his next hike, after the woods. Thoreau did not ambition to stay there for life, aware as he was of the flux in human reasons or moods and the threat of being stuck in a rut, the routing of non-life turning into a routine, of marking a path too deeply for use, of confining himself *voluntarily*: "I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live. . . . It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves" (323). Strictly understood, this "next excursion" is none other than *writing Walden*, retrospectively transcribing the experience he registered in "bulk" in his *log*-book. This writing, therefore, *is* the present stroll which consists in accounting for past deliberate living. Such wandering naturally possesses an ex-*cursive* quality, it is figurative digression in its literal, calligraphic aspect. Whether "in Concord" (4) or "if only in these woods" (August 23, 1845; 2: 177), Thoreau is always but a traveler, a "sojourner" (3), who never settles: "I have observed that the afterlife of those who have travelled much is very pathetic. True and sincere travelling . . . is as serious as the grave, or any other part of the human journey, and it requires a long probation to be broken into it" (*A Week* 306). Thoreau, whose allusions to metempsychosis are a singular motif in his works and life, is hinting at his next existence and the prerequisite of (a symbolic?) death and reincarnation. However, in a world without Thoreau, a world where he doesn't exist anymore as a body, only *Walden* is left. Dead to this life, as he is to us, Thoreau still delivers an experience of essential life through the gift of this present where deliberate reading—deliberate *anything*—always and forever resides.

Life by the Book(s)

What book is Thoreau writing, exactly? Cavell described *Walden* as both a sacred text (14) and a book of accounts (as *Écritures* and *écritures*, in neat French), where the spiritual and material dimensions of this present in need of inhabiting overlap. As Thoreau well knew from his perusal of official registries (a necessary part of his activity as a surveyor), a *liber* is a book of public records. In Cavell's words: "What is left to us is the accounting. Not a recounting, of tales or news; but a document, with each word a warning and a teaching; a deed, with each word an act" (30). *Walden* constitutes a liber of deeds in the notarial sense, written as much in the performative mode as in the informative. It is not a book addressed by one private being to others, but a book of accounts, compiled for humanity present and to come. By *commun*icating a personal experience, putting it at the disposal of whoever would like to consult it and maybe verify it for themselves in as deliberate a reading, Thoreau is working in the public interest—remember that his way to secure the *interest* of his contemporaries is precisely to go without borrowing (40-41). Hence the metastasizing of log-books in *Walden*.[17]

As an official register of transactions, the liber resonates with numerous polysemic terms in II§16. Foremost, the deed Thoreau publishes begs the question of "resignation," which signifies beyond mere fatalism. The first sense of *resignare*, in Latin, is to "open what is sealed; to unseal" (Ainsworth 891), to break (*re-*) the seal (*signum*) to open a letter, and thus, "to discover, and declare" (free from obscurity)—the ultimate "dis-covery" of the mortal envelope. *Resignare*, however, also means making a mark in an account book (*signum*) opposite, or again (*re-*), on the credit side, balancing the former mark and annulling the claim, indicating that the debt is cancelled, that debit and credit are equilibrated—it is the negative double of deliberation. But the type of resignation Thoreau wishes not to practice is a twin to the equally undesirable fact of living what is not life ("*nor* did I wish"—my italics). On the one hand, Thoreau refuses to live a counterfeit life, the falsity of which he would only uncover when dying. On the other, he does not wish to resign *himself*, to chalk himself out of existence, to call it quits with this world and give back what was given, life, which would amount to dying—suicide looms large. The two terms of the alternative that Thoreau wholly rejects amount to the same thing, the difference being that, in the first case, non-life conceals itself from consciousness until it is too late, while in the second, one voluntarily renounces any attempt at real living. Living death, i.e., a subconscious existence, can reinforce itself into suicide, a conscious gesture if ever there was one, not actual and punctual, but latent and permanent in the resignation to merely exist—an absolute foil to the death Thoreau brushes with by looking life in the eye. "Resignation," however, could become "necessary," necessity being that which you cannot (*ne-*) draw back from (*cedere*). Thoreau accepts the possibility that he, whose life he examines, might find himself boxed in and forced to resign. There is such a thing as painting oneself into a corner.

Against half-life, whether undergone or consented to, against the pitfalls of unconsciousness and fatalism, Thoreau chooses to try and live barely, an experimental existence proper, i.e., a perilous one. Prudence and the fear that recommends it are the symptoms of his contemporaries' renouncing to live: "The old and infirm and the timid, of whatever age or sex, thought most of sickness, and sudden accident and death; to them life seemed full of danger,—what danger is there if you don't think of any?" (153) Parallel to his Stoic *praemeditatio malorum*, Thoreau advises what Cicero calls Epicurus's *avocatione a cogitanda molestia*:[18] one should avoid thinking of bad things. Death is emphatically not one of those, Thoreau says, if it proceeds from reality. Unlike despair, it is even ecstatic, in both the ordinary and etymological sense, a transport, both a climax of joy ("you will happily conclude your mortal career") and a conveying. Hence the "next excursion" of life after death. If the word "sublime" involves a going past, or beyond (*sub*) a threshold (*limen*), a movement upwards and through, "knowing [life, or that life is sublime] by experience" is a euphemism for *passing on* to the other side, a fatal trespassing. Through books, one delivers oneself from death—or one's words from the temporal, material limits of individual, biological existence, at any rate.

Conclusion

Time to conjecture the real and poetic etymologies, the *libra* and the *libers*; the scales and the bark/book. First, under the static aspect, "living deliberately" captures the duality of life as the object to be weighed and the weighing instrument. Stripping life down to its essentials, shaving its layers and libers, amounts to fine-tuning one's equipment—for Thoreau, one's ethics *are* one's physics. The same goes for one's physics and one's *logic*: weighing, in this case, means writing the equations. Thoreau's wish is to live measuredly, as a universal economist, marking in dollars the costs necessary for bare life to sustain itself in a cosmos. *Walden* opens on the rules of the cosmic *oikos*, practicing not "*political* economy" but "that economy of living which is synonymous with philosophy" (52)—already, econom*ical* living is proximal to death, upon which Thoreau knows from Socrates that "the chief office of a Philosopher is to meditate" (Stanley 43). This is why his fastidious summations matter. Cavell interpreted them as both barbs against "America's methods of evaluation" and the symbol of the integrity inherent to Thoreau's elect mode of writing, the official, verifiable account, against the narrative as work of fantasy (30) and, I add, the theoretical treatise. The fiduciary dimension of these notations, in their accuracy, acts as a warrant for the reader's trust, or con*fidence*, in a near-death experience—as all real life is—for which Thoreau stills delivers, post-mortem, all the substantiating documents—as all real writing does. Beyond that, in their authentic mediocrity or "meanness," these pages of additions and subtractions not only counterbalance the more grandiose which touch to the "sublime" of revelation but establish that they are of the same stuff, continuous—or contiguous, as the leaves that constitute both folio and world. "Living deliberately" means working towards a new understanding of the connection between the ordinary and the sublime, not only taken as complementary—and requiring the via media of the tension between high and low—but as ontologically identical: "the true *medium* is not contained within any *bounds*, but is as wide as the ends it connects" (July 8, 1840; 1: 153). Yes, "we live meanly, like ants" (91), but it takes a philologically deliberate philosopher to turn ants back into myrmidons (229). Thoreau's apothecarial listing of items is no different: more than just equilibrating the heroism of ideas, meticulous fidelity to his life experience and experiment in life anchors these to a tangible ground. Entrusted with the mean and sublime—two fish with one hook—, we are left, in our deliberate reading, to carry out the axiological revolution at the heart of all *askesis*: the recognition that the prosaic is prodigious, and vice versa.

Notes

---

[1] See Barral, "Reading(s of) "deliberately": Thoreau's Acetic *Libra*."

[2] See Hadot, Pierre, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*. Translations from the French are mine.

---

[3] Although he does not venture into dendrological territory, Stanley Cavell does note, anticipating Michael West's remark that "puns are pointed words" (218), that "this writer's . . . writing them down is only literally, or etymologically, a matter of style, scratching them in" (28). Thomas Dumm, following Cavell, writes: "Thoreau went to the woods to read, so his life as a writer was to be deliberate, to deliberate, and he went to the woods to read—not only books, but sounds, plants, ice, even the raw earth exposed by railroad cuts" (130). Although Dumm elaborates on the "bio-graph of the self . . . this inner writing . . . this inner bark, this liber" (132-133) and describes Thoreau as "embed[ding] himself in the liber, building that house of words and wood" (144), he does not explicitly refer to the Latin "*book*" or the English "volume of deeds." Conversely, Stephen Conde recognizes that within the "word 'deliberately' hide 'liberate,' and *liber* (which is Latin for book)" (6) but does not mention Thoreau's own use in *Walden* of the word *liber* as "true bark." Although commentaries of *Walden*, in Cavell's wake, note the "economic" nature of Thoreau's "accounts," none, to my knowledge, explicitly traces "liber" to its administrative sense as an "an inventory, a register" (in Latin) or as a "book of deeds" (in American English); nor do any tackle the quasi-homophone *delibro*, "to peel, or pull off the bark" (Ainsworth 567).

[4] See Cafaro 18, Bergmann 15.

[5] On 9 March 1858, Thoreau jokes: "if anybody neglected his civil duties during the last war, he is privileged to cut and slash [in the forest], — he is let loose against one hundred and sixty acres of well-behaved trees, as if the liberty he had defended was derived from *liber*, bark, and meant the liberty to bark the trees (10: 297).

[6] See Stiegler.

[7] Whiter's 1822 *Etymologicon Magnum*, for instance, contains a presentation of the arboreal roots of the word "book" (*EM* 153).

[8] See West (34-47). *Pace* West, Thoreau does not "faithfully summariz[e] the entry 'Bal' in Court de Gébelin's *Dictionnaire étymologique François-Celte*" (34-35) but fully translates section IV of Court de Gébelin's *Discours Préliminaire* (5: viii-ix).

[9] See Hadot 340-42.

[10] The Latin *experiri* (Ainsworth 620) is composed of *ex-*, "out of," and *peritus*, "skillful, expert," which is related to *periculum*, "Peril, danger, jeopardy" (Ainsworth 821).

---

[11] On June 24, 1840, the Journal quotes another instance of Cudworth using the phrase to qualify Epicurus's gods (1: 140-41).

[12] In Thomas Stanley, Thoreau could have read that Socrates "proceeded in a large discourse to declare that the chief office of a Philosopher is to meditate on death; therefore he ought not to fear the approach of it; That as death is the solution of the Soul from the Body, so is it the office of a Philosopher to free the soul from corporeall affections; That if we understand the better, the more the soul is disengaged from sense, we shall understand most perfectly when she is wholly freed from the body by death, which perfection of knowledge is the sole end of Philosophy" (43).

[13] Minimally, Thoreau had access to Emerson's own formulation of the expanding of "appropriation" in "Love," "Circles."

[14] See Johnson.

[15] See Cavell, Stanley, *Emersons's Transcendental Etudes* (146).

[16] "So an object or action, which expresses free outward motion, or that in thought, which is naturally symbolized by free outward motion, will need labials and the liquids, thus: *lb, lv, lp, lf, fr, f, pl, pr*, are roots, (or different forms of a root,) which vegetate into the words *labia*, *live*, *lip*, *liber*, *love*, *laub*, *life*, *free*, *flow*, *blow*, *bear*, *fare*, *plane*, *flat*, *pluvia*, *flamma*, *fire*. If the object or thing moves from within its own being, which implies deep, internal, essential action, we have a guttural and the liquid, thus *gl, ql, cl, gr, cr*, which are roots of *glide, globe, glare, glance, vogel, cagle, volucris, creo, gradior, cylinder columna, columba, aquila, circle*, *&c.*" (Kraitsir 29-30).

[17] To "live deliberately," Thoreau suggests we "look over the old day-books of the merchants" (11-12). However, there is another proper account book in *Walden*, the "'Wast Book' of an old trader of this town," of which Thoreau, in a metaliterary gesture, reproduces a passage (279).

[18] Cicero, Tusc., 3: 33.