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LETTING NATURE RUN ITS COURSE: THOREAU'S WALDEN AS EXPERIMENTAL CURE

by

DONNA KESSLER-ENG

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

LETTING NATURE RUN ITS COURSE: THOREAU'S WALDEN AS EXPERIMENTAL CURE

by

Donna Kessler-Eng

Adviser: Professor William P. Kelly

Many readers have interpreted Henry David Thoreau's Walden as nature writing, as an anti-capitalist treatise, as a philosophical text influenced by Eastern philosophers or Emerson and the Transcendentalists or as a social critique. In this dissertation, I argue that one way of reading Henry David Thoreau's Walden is as a health narrative that reflects American cultural concerns during the 1840s and early 1850s. I read Walden from the viewpoint of a medical historian, and show that Walden and contemporary medical texts reveal similar cultural beliefs, such as the association of immigrants with contagion and nature with health.

I propose that one of the reasons why Henry David Thoreau isolated himself at Walden Pond was to arrest the development of his tuberculosis and that his invalidism was at the core of Walden, controlling his narrative voice. I place Walden into a medical and cultural context to show that Thoreau's discussions of individualism, self-reliance, and nature are discussions of self-cure and the individual's responsibility for his own health, mirroring the larger social dialogue regarding individualism and self-reliance. The associations of personal behavior with health or disease and of capitalism with illness are themes that are apparent in Walden and contemporaneous issues of the Water-Cure Journal.

Instead of utilizing therapeutic intervention to stem the course of his illness, Thoreau allowed nature to run its course in terms of his disease development. Nature and the natural were his remedies. It is my position that his therapeutic regimen was part of the nature-trusting movement taking place within the culture and regular medical practice during the 1840s.

In a culture where death from infectious disease was commonplace, Transcendentalism allowed for the healing of both body and soul and had strong affiliations with the philosophies of the nature trusting movement within hydropathy. Hydropaths and Thoreau focused upon the natural and the spiritual. I explore the thematic connections between Walden and the Water-Cure Journal and also examine how self-awareness leads to physical and spiritual well being in Walden.

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Letting Nature Run Its Course: Thoreau's Walden as Experimental Cure

Introduction

When one of my friends was reading early drafts of my dissertation, she told me that she used to like Thoreau and she used to enjoy reading Walden. As a Buddhist, she enjoyed his mix of Eastern philosophy and nature writing, and she also liked his fierce defense of the individual and individual rights. After she read my dissertation, she said that she would never be able to read Walden again. I had destroyed her good opinion of Thoreau by presenting Thoreau as a "misogynist and racist." Worse yet, I had reduced the robust Thoreau to an invalid.

In this dissertation, I will argue that Walden is a health narrative that reflects American cultural concerns during the 1840s. I will read Walden from the viewpoint of a medical historian and show that Walden and contemporary medical texts reveal similar cultural beliefs, such as the association of immigrants with contagion and nature with health.

Readers have interpreted Henry David Thoreau's Walden as nature writing, as an anti-capitalist treatise, as a philosophical text influenced by Eastern philosophers or Emerson and the Transcendentalists or as a social critique. As is true of any engaging text, there are as many interpretations of Walden as there are readers. Two key elements of Thoreau's Walden that are frequently discussed are his views of nature and the individual in society. For many readers Thoreau's work embodies what it means to be an American: self-sufficient, and independent. Thoreau's viewing of nature has been defined as scientific, philosophical, metaphysical, transcendental. Literary critics have labelled Thoreau himself as an ecologist, "America's

greatest philosopher," a "Romantic naturalist," to name a few. Some readers have discussed Thoreau's isolation at Walden Pond as an opportunity for him to meditate and write.

I will argue that Thoreau was an invalid and that his invalidism was at the core of Walden, controlling his narrative voice. I will place Walden into a medical and historical context to show that Thoreau's discussion of individualism, self-reliance and nature are discussions of self-cure and the individual's responsibility for his own health, mirroring the larger social dialogue regarding individualism and self-reliance. The association of personal behavior with health or disease and of immigrants with disease were important cultural themes that are apparent in Walden and contemporary medical journals.

In this study I propose that Henry David Thoreau isolated himself at Walden Pond to arrest the development of his tuberculosis, and that Walden is a record of Thoreau's curative living experiments while at Walden Pond. Instead of utilizing therapeutic intervention to stem the course of his illness, Thoreau allowed nature to run its course in terms of his disease development. Nature and the natural were his remedies. It is my position that his therapeutic regimen was part of the nature-trusting movement taking place within medical practice during the 1840s.

In Chapter One, I discuss Thoreau's invalidism, the tuberculosis epidemic in the New England area during the first half of the nineteenth century, and relevant contemporary medical beliefs. Discussions of the nature-trusting movement within regular practice, hydropathy, and the Water-Cure Journal lay the groundwork for subsequent chapters. In Chapter Two, I discuss nature as cure in Walden and regular medical practice.

Setting Walden against contemporary issues of the Water-Cure Journal in Chapter Three is not to suggest that Thoreau was a proselyte of the water-cure cause, but to suggest

that he defined health and how to achieve health in ways that were similar to followers of the water-cure. The Transcendentalist and water-cure communities had strong interpersonal ties and Thoreau would be familiar with the hydropaths' ideals. I will show that Thoreau's belief system regarding health and the individual and those of contributors to the Water-Cure Journal were similar. Both believed that capitalism caused illness. "The Economy" chapter of Walden and the Water-Cure Journal outline how to achieve physical well-being by avoiding the snares of the capitalist system. Thoreau and contributors to the Water-Cure Journal believed that living according to the laws of civilization caused mental and physical illness. Their aim was to promote health by defining what they termed the natural laws of life. Individuals would be healthy if they were self-reliant and lived according to the dictates of their own inner natures.

Thoreau believed that physical health and spiritual health were inseparable, and in Chapter Four I discuss Thoreau's purification of body and soul at Walden Pond. At the time, filth was associated with disease and Thoreau's preoccupation with the clean and the unclean in Walden is a logical outgrowth of contemporary disease etiology.

In Chapter Five I will argue that immigrants were defined as being intemperate by nature and incapable of reform. In Walden and medical journals, immigrants are presented as irredeemable sources of contagion. When discussing reform, Americans spoke of morality. Americans associated immorality with disease. They believed disease was the end result of having predisposed oneself to illness by leading an intemperate lifestyle. Americans, medical practitioners, Thoreau and reformers, all associated health with moral worth.

Walden and medical journals outline the objectives of temperate living to promote individual health and community well-being. They do so by stressing the importance of leading a moral, spiritually grounded life. Invalids not only saw themselves as responsible for finding a

means of obtaining health for themselves, they also felt that they were responsible for helping the larger social community. In Chapter Six I will discuss the temperate ideal as a model of health for the American born.

The medical journals of the period and Thoreau's Walden reveal the culture's preoccupation with health. Tuberculosis is the disease of societies which are undergoing rapid industrialization and urbanization. Walden, Thoreau's treatise against capitalism, may also be read as a treatise against disease, specifically tuberculosis. Instead of waiting to die from consumption, Thoreau decides to live his life as fully as possible. He also tries to heal his physical ailments by isolating himself at Walden Pond.

Chapter One: "Thoreau, Tuberculosis and Antebellum Medical Culture"

Thoreau the Invalid

In the Days of Henry Thoreau, Walter Harding writes that in the spring of 1836 Thoreau had to withdraw from Harvard because of illness. As Sheila Rothman argues in Living in the Shadow of Death, the enclosed spaces of college dormitories increased the likelihood of infection, and the "Spartan" student lifestyle in terms of diet and living conditions along with the long hours of study all contributed to the contraction of tuberculosis (26). The predominant New England belief was that only the "most robust" individuals should attend college (S. Rothman 28). The student life, with its long hours of study confined in dusty spaces, was believed to be one of the most dangerous occupations in terms of disease development (S. Rothman 4). While "there seem to be no contemporary reports detailed enough to tell us the exact nature of his illness" Thoreau's illness in the spring of 1836 while attending Harvard was most likely "the first attack of the tuberculosis of his lungs that was to plague his adult life" (Harding 44).

In his biography of Thoreau, Harding provides specific dates for Thoreau's active bouts of tuberculosis. Harding remarks that "The remarkable thing is that Henry recovered from his first attack and from several later ones. His penchant for an outdoor life was unquestionably a factor in prolonging his days" (44). In 1841, when Thoreau began to look for a place to live in retirement so he could rest and write, Thoreau's lungs were once again bothering him (Harding 122). The impetus for Thoreau's search for a place to retire in isolation was his failing health.

After a stay in New York City, Thoreau decided to move back to Concord in the spring of 1843 where he worked in his father's pencil factory. That the Thoreau family's "occupation" was a source of disease is well documented. Thoreau's father, John, owned a pencil making factory where Henry David intermittently worked (Norton 1589). In the 1850s, the Thoreaus stopped making pencils and began grinding graphite for printers (Howarth 59). The graphite dust inhaled during this grinding process only aggravated the Thoreaus' consumptive conditions. Antebellum physicians believed occupation and climate were the major environmental irritants responsible for an active case of tuberculosis. The New England climate, with its harsh winters and frequently cold, damp weather, was believed to be particularly conducive to the development of tuberculosis.

Henry David Thoreau's family history reveals that the immediate members of his family suffered from tuberculosis. Thoreau's paternal grandfather died from the disease in 1801 (Dubos 41). In 1841, Thoreau's brother John "showed signs of severe pulmonary disease, but died the following year from lockjaw" instead (Dubos 41). Thoreau's sister Helen died of tuberculosis in 1849 (Harding 44), followed by Thoreau's father in 1859. Thoreau himself died of tuberculosis in 1862. This was a common family pattern during the nineteenth century. In North America, tuberculosis was believed to be a hereditary disease and noncontagious, which would explain why infected individuals lived with loved ones without taking any precautions. Indeed, during the 1840s, women suffering through even the tertiary stages of tuberculosis were expected to marry and have children (S. Rothman 7).

Thoreau moved back to Concord in the spring of 1843 because his lungs were bothering him (Harding 152). He had been suffering from bronchitis, a likely indication of an active bout of tuberculosis (Harding 152). As in 1841 when his lungs were congested,

Thoreau was again looking for a place to rest and recuperate. In 1845, Thoreau successfully retired to his cabin at Walden Pond. Here he "conduct[ed] his living experiments" in order to regain his health.

Antebellum Tuberculosis Epidemic

Before Robert Koch discovered the tubercule bacillus in 1882, tuberculosis was frequently referred to as phthisis, a Greek word meaning "to waste away," or consumption (Rosner and Markowitz 15). During this pre-germ theory era, diseases were not identifiable according to their microbial agents, and were not characterized according to specific disease entities. Since symptoms were used as a means of classification, the early stages of tuberculosis were frequently diagnosed as other respiratory infections, and diseases other than tuberculosis were often identified as being tuberculosis. Regardless of these inaccuracies, it is clear that during the first half of the nineteenth century there was a sharp increase in the number of deaths caused by tuberculosis. In Living in the Shadow of Death, Sheila Rothman uses medical records as well as contemporary diaries to show that by the 1830s, Americans, particularly New Englanders, were "convinced that death from consumption had increased dramatically" during the nineteenth century (15).

During the 1830s, the incidence of tuberculosis in America was reaching epidemic proportions for the first time, and one out of every four deaths was attributed to the disease (S. Rothman 131). Actual statistics and reports of deaths due to consumption varied. The First Annual Report of the Boston City Registrar released on February 6, 1850 states that of 5,079

annual deaths for a city of 132,000, 644 deaths were due to consumption, or approximately 13% of all deaths. The overall mortality for that year was reported as 1 in 26.[1]

A study of the mortality rates of Providence, Rhode Island between 1842-1849 was published in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.[2] The overall mortality rates were calculated "on an average" at "2.43 per cent, or about one death to every 41 inhabitants. Counting stillborn [births], the ratio would be about 2.6 per cent yearly" (32). Three of the disease categories listed as causes of death were linked to childbirth and children, and were entitled "Causes Peculiar to Females," "Premature Birth," and "Stillborn" (34-35). Most causes of death were listed under the heading "Zymotic, Epidemic, Endemic, and Contagious Diseases" (33). Included here were diseases such as chickenpox, cholera, influenza. Even though tuberculosis was a contagious disease and epidemic at this time, the report had a separate heading for TB entitled "Disease of the Respiratory System". Listed under this heading were consumption, inflammation and congestion of the lungs and apoplexy of lungs as well as other respiratory ailments. Consumption was listed as accounting for 1,154 out of 1,525 deaths caused by respiratory ailments, and perhaps TB was the cause of other categories of respiratory ailments listed as well. Of the 6,603 deaths recorded, 1,525 were recorded as caused by respiratory diseases, or approximately 23% of all deaths.

In another mortality report entitled "Reports of Deaths in Boston, the week ending June 24, 1848," 29 of the 77 deaths reported were due to lung problems, with 13 of these

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[1] "Boston, City Registrar's Report February 6, 1850 Report of the City Registrar of Boston The First Annual Report of Our City Registrar of Births, Marriages and Death" Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 42(1850): 26, 27.

[2] "Mortality of Providence, R.I." Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 42 (1850): 32-35.

deaths caused by consumption and 16 by lung fever.[3] It is important to note that cases diagnosed as consumption and other cases diagnosed as other pulmonary ailments may or may not have been tuberculosis. Also, many cases of tuberculosis remained undiagnosed and frequently deaths were attributed to other illnesses. For example, the death of actively consumptive women who died soon after having given birth were noted as having died from childbirth complications, not tuberculosis, or vice-versa (Dubos 6; Hedrick 7).

Sheila Rothman writes that "during the first half of the nineteenth century consumption was America's deadliest disease, responsible for one out of every five deaths" (14). While consumption was responsible for deaths earlier than this, "it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that consumption became pervasive and feared in the United States" (Rothman 14). In "Sickness and Health in America: An Overview," Leavitt and Numbers note that tuberculosis

> was the greatest killer of 19th-century Americans. Although present in America since the settling of Jamestown, it did not acquire its deadly reputation until it attacked heavily crowded cities. As early as the 1810s Boston, for example, experienced a tuberculosis mortality rate of 472 per 100,000 inhabitants. (4)

This increase in the incidence of the disease was a direct result of industrialization and urbanization. As Barbara Gutmann Rosenkrantz notes in her introduction to Rene and Jean Dubos' social history of tuberculosis, tuberculosis "is emphatically a disease of the nineteenth century, with social and medical symptoms that typify cultures in the midst of industrialization" (xvi).

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[3] "Reports of Deaths in Boston, Week Ending June 24, 1848" 38(1848): 451.

In their social history of tuberculosis, The White Plague, Dubos and Dubos argue that tuberculosis is a social disease. Sounding like Thoreau, the Dubos write that the history of theories regarding the etiology of tuberculosis reveal that "A disease can be described and analyzed in terms of many unrelated theories, each true on its own level, each fruitful in understanding and practical results. To him who follows her way, Nature reveals many roads that lead in the direction of truth" (70).

Disease Theories

During the antebellum period, disease was understood in "highly personal and idiosyncratic terms" (Rosner and Markowitz 15). Medical practitioners defined disease in environmental terms; they believed that "health or disease resulted from a cumulative interaction between constitutional endowment and environmental circumstance" (Rosenberg, "The Therapeutic Revolution" 5). Physicians felt that individual life style, personal habits and morality were the major predisposing causes of illness; these predisposing factors explained why some individuals became ill and others did not. During the nineteenth century, the ways in which the public perceived those who suffered from tuberculosis was largely due to class affiliation (Rosner and Markowitz 15). Middle-class sufferers were often viewed as beautiful or intellectually gifted because of their tuberculosis (Dubos 44-66) while those who were members of the laboring classes were seen as suffering from illness because of their moral depravity and affinity for vice (Rosner and Markowitz 14).

Disease etiologies of the first half of the nineteenth century focused on the environmental causes of disease. Medical practitioners assumed that a contaminated

environment caused constitutional imbalance. Physicians frequently discussed disease etiology in moral terms, and they accredited the following of immoral/unhealthy life styles to the environment as well. Physicians thought that heredity played a role in disease, but believed the environment was the catalyst for disease development. The environment would interact with the individual's hereditary disposition or constitution and disease would result if an individual had a hereditary predisposition for the illness. Physicians did believe that some illnesses were the result of hereditary predisposition; one physician wrote that "scrofula, consumption, gout, insanity, asthma, epilepsy, apoplexy" arise "most commonly from hereditary predisposition."[4] But physicians accepted the idea that "there should be some exciting cause to develop the disease to which a predisposition already exists, which cause probably no effect on the individual with no predisposition."[5] Physicians believed an environmental stimulus triggered the development of a disease an individual was already genetically predisposed to.

Health reformers accepted the idea that a compromised environment fostered disease. They frequently discussed the environment in moral terms, and they wrote of how vice ridden environs would put the individual's health at risk. A pernicious environment would encourage immoral or unhealthy habits. When physicians treated illness, they took "locality, station, hygiene, occupation, habit, diet and accident" into consideration (Warner 64). If an individual lived in an immoral environment, they would be more likely to develop immoral habits. Medical practitioners linked what they considered immoral behaviors to ill health. The ideas that temperance and moderation ensured health while excess and indulgence led to disease were reinforced by the period's disease etiology.

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[4] "Hereditary Predisposition," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 39 (1848): 11.
[5] "Hereditary Predisposition," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 39 (1848): 11.

An individual's constitution was the sum total of an individual's heredity, life experiences and temperament (Warner 64). Physicians frequently explained constitutional imbalance and individual illness by utilizing the humoral concept of disease (Duffy 67). Medical practitioners divided temperament into the four categories of sanguineous, choleric, melancholic and phylmatic (Warner 64). During the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, most doctors defined disease as systemic imbalance (Warner 85).

As Charles E. Rosenberg discusses in "The Therapeutic Revolution" disease was primarily defined as the imbalance between the individual and his environment. Health reformers and physicians thought a vitiated environment, be it the stimulating environment of capitalist enterprise or the noxious vapors of miasma, was the root cause of illness. The interaction between the individual and his environment was of primary importance and could create either well-being or a diseased state.

Some physicians considered epidemics to be the product of particular environmental influences. Medical practitioners offered miasmic/atmospheric theories of disease to explain why there were sudden epidemics. Health reformers felt epidemic diseases, such as cholera, typhus, yellow fever, even neuralgia arose from specific environmental conditions of which season, locale, and climate played an important role (Warner 71). They assumed these epidemic influences arose from a vitiated atmosphere caused by "the decomposition of vegetable and animal substances or concentrated human effluvia,"[6] and rotting corpses[7]

[6] "On Epidemic Influence," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 28 June, 1848 and 5 July, 1848: 433-441; 461-464.
[7] "Burial of the Dead" Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38 (Feb-Aug 1848): 468.

creating miasma. Physicians accepted the idea that "location has an influence on modifying the type of disease."[8]

Some physicians speculated that certain predisposing environmental "influences" changed one disease into another, which undermined the idea that illness was caused by specific disease entities. For example, if a ship was filthy, typhus could result, and if a ship was filthy and cholera "influence" was present, cholera resulted instead of ship fever (Rosenberg and Smith-Rosenberg, "Pietism" 395).

Anticontagionists argued that disease was the result of environmental conditions and influences, not specific disease entities passed from one person to another. The anticontagionists believed that "environmental influences" caused disease. One anticontagionist reasoned that

> when the atmosphere contains virus, like gases or other poisons, the inhabitants of a city or a country may suffer from the prevailing disease, as I conceive to be the manner in which plague, typhus, and etc. become prevalent - not from their contagiousness, but because there is a predisposing influence acting upon all who live within certain boundaries, the majority of whom suffer, constituting an epidemic. If this reasoning is correct, plague is not contagious.[9]

The contagionist vs. anticontagionist debate lasted until the 1860s.[10]

Medical practitioners defined contagious diseases literally as those diseases which were spread by direct physical contact. The fear of contagion was also frequently expressed in moral

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[8] "On Epidemic Influence," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38 5 July, 1848: 461-464.
[9] "On Epidemic Influence," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 28 June, 1848: 433-441.
[10] See Erwin H. Ackerknecht, "Anticontagionism between 1821 and 1867," Bulletin of the

terms. Physicians accredited health to physical, moral, mental and spiritual well-being. They labeled behaviors as moral or immoral to distinguish between healthful and diseased behaviors. Those living in an immoral environment were more susceptible to illness than those who lived in a healthful, moral environment. Immoral behaviors could be passed on to and imitated by others. Imitation was seen as a means of spreading moral contagion, which frequently was written about as the cause of mental disorder in medical journals.[11] As John Duffy writes in The Sanitarians,

> While the medical profession in general did not accept the specificity of disease, being convinced that diseases were merely symptomatic of some constitutional imbalance, a good many physicians paradoxically believed, along with the public, that certain diseases could be kept out of the community by quarantine.(68)

Public fears of moral compromise and contagion eventually led to the transformation of mental asylums from rehabilatory to custodial institutions.[12]

For the most part, physicians believed infectious disease was spread through the contaminating influences of the environment, and that individuals "predisposed" themselves to illness because of immoral behaviors. For most, immorality and sin were believed to be the major predisposing causes of disease. As one regular physician wrote: "Cholera needs a peculiar predisposition: intemperate and exhausting habits. Hence drunkards, and those of

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History of Medicine 22 (1948): 569-593.

[11] For example, superintendents believed "instinctive monomania can be transmitted by imitation." A person may want to kill someone after witnessing a hanging, and a person may be overcome by the urge to kill someone he was standing at a murder site. See American Journal of Insanity 1 (1844-1845): 116-122.

[12] See David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum. Boston: Little, Brown and

broken constitutions from any cause are most liable to it."[13] Rather than viewing poor living conditions and contaminated water supplies as "predisposing factors," the focus in medical journals was on immoral behaviors and pernicious habits.

Filth and Miasma

Those who were unclean both morally and physically were believed to be susceptible to disease. During the nineteenth century "filth was the premier public health problem" (Leavitt and Numbers, "Overview" 9). Physicians and reformers believed that "dirt caused disease" (Leavitt and Numbers, "Overview" 9). Garbage or "decaying organic matter" created a miasmic atmosphere, which spread infectious disease (Smith-Rosenberg, Mission 168-171). The public health movement was at first a response to the filth that was accumulating in quickly expanding urban areas.

As the Rosenbergs argue in their article "Pietism and the Origins of the American Public Health Movement: A Note on John H. Griscom and Robert M. Hartley," the early public health movement of the 1840s was linked to evangelical religion. Health reformers discussed cleanliness in physical and spiritual terms. Following hygienic practices was a "religious duty" (387). The connections between moral, spiritual and physical purity or cleanliness and health and moral taint and spiritual and physical impurity with illness were central to physicians and reformers understanding of disease during the 1830s and 1840s.

Company, 1971.

[13] "On the Contagiousness of Cholera," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 27 Dec, 1848.

The idea that diseases were caused by a contaminated environment was more widely accepted than the idea that diseases were caused by specific disease entities. Most physicians believed diseases were not caused by specific disease entities until the last third of the nineteenth century (Warner 58-80). In terms of therapeutics, physicians who used specifics or universal cures for specific diseases were considered to be quacks (Warner 60). Instead, physicians would diagnose the disease and then the therapy prescribed would depend upon the individual patient's constitution and environment (Warner 59, 64). This theory of medical therapeutics, hereafter referred to as what John Harley Warner has termed the principle of specificity, was the belief that treatment should be specific to patient and environment and not the disease itself. Diseases were believed to be changeable, fluid and dependent upon environmental conditions and locale.

> Until the 1860s, disease-specific treatment was in most instances professionally illegitimate. Beginning in the 1820s physicians did increasingly recognize the existence of specific diseases characterized by distinctive congeries of symptoms, but they believed that a host of environmental influences could nudge one disease into another and that a single disease could take on a variety of forms. (Warner 62)

The focus upon the principle of specificity was in part a reaction against eighteenth century rationalistic systems (Warner 58).

Therapeutics

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, American medical therapeutics were based on a rationalistic system, which defined disease as an imbalance between the individual and his environment. Depletive and stimulative therapies were used to restore the body's equilibrium with its surroundings. Benjamin Rush (1745-1813), founder of the College of Philadelphia, is credited with "promoting the heroic medicine used during this period" (Berman 77). "Heroic medicine," so termed because undergoing such treatment required stoicism on the patient's part, was the stringent employment of therapies such as bloodletting and the ingestion of mercury compounds to treat disease.

Heroic practice is consistent with the tenets of eighteenth century rationalism. Medical practice did not necessarily base its therapeutic decisions upon observation and experimentation. Physicians like Benjamin Rush would purge or bleed patients without taking into consideration whether or not this intervention actually helped the individual patient recover. Like the humoral notions of disease etiology from antiquity, bleeding and purging were supposed to alleviate imbalance and restore health, regardless of observation, which would seem to support contrary conclusions in individual cases. Physicians thought that if disease was caused by an overstimulated state, then the remedy would be to deplete the bodily system. Rush followed "a monistic theory of disease causation" (Brieger 90), a belief system that easily fit into eighteenth-century frameworks of rational thought. While bloodletting and the ingestion of mercury compounds may sound barbaric or at least ineffective, John Harley Warner notes that "19th century medical therapeutics did work, though perhaps not when judged by criteria of efficacy satisfying to a 20th century pharmacologist" (Warner 4).

During the 1830s - 1860s, medical practitioners denounced earlier rationalistic systems on the grounds that such treatments ignored the principle of specificity and empiricist observation (Warner 61). American medical practitioners believed that treatment should be specific to the patient and the patient's environment. Therapies, therefore, were designed to create visible alterations in the symptoms of a particular patient.

Therapeutic skepticism and the nature-trusting movement in the New England area was in part indebted to the Paris clinical school. Many of the elite Boston physicians were educated at the Paris clinical school where therapeutic moderation and empirical observation were encouraged (Warner 22). The leaders of medical skepticism were frequently affiliated with Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts General Hospital (Warner 22). Well-educated, these men believed in therapeutic moderation, and the need for experimentation and observation in order to validate medical practices and therapeutics.

The Numerical Method

New England medical practitioners who had received their medical education in France came back to the United States as followers of Louis' numerical methodologies, and the clinical school's beliefs in observation, experimentation, and the scientific method. Pierre Louis was a French clinician and a "mentor . . . to Boston physicians" who studied "abroad in the 1830s" (Warner 24). Louis argued that nature and the nature of disease should be studied closely to gauge the efficiency of medications and to validate medical practices. The numerical method was the use of statistics in the clinical evaluation of therapeutic practices (Warner 200). Jacob Bigelow supported Louis' numerical method and encouraged American practitioners to use his

methods when evaluating and treating illnesses. Jacob Bigelow and his medical contemporaries credited Louis for the movement away from heroic medicine (Warner 24). Bigelow said that physicians believed that medicine would cure diseases, and had routinely "prescribe[d] a certain round of medicine in every disease" (qtd. in Warner 24). Instead, Louis and his followers studied the nature of the disease and clinically analyzed the therapeutic efficiency of different treatments using statistical analysis. They believed that medical practices should be backed by scientific proof which validated their effectiveness.[14] The numerical method allowed for the statistical analysis of results which would eventually support a universal claim about the effectiveness of therapeutic practices and the validity of particular disease theories.

Principle of Specificity

One of the deterrents to the employment of the numerical method to medical observations and experiences was the medical profession's belief in the principle of specificity, or that disease in one person was different from the same disease in another because of their differing circumstances. A rational or universal medical system of therapeutics and cure was associated with old, traditional medical practices such as bloodletting and the prescription of mercury compounds. While empiricism allowed for experimentation and observation in

[14] This is not to say that those who employed the numerical method did not fudge their results in order to maintain that their hypothesis held true. For example, in The Discovery of the Asylum, David S. Rothman shows that when medical institutions collected numerical data of their case studies' success rates, the results were manipulated to show that the mental institutions invariably cured their patients. The employment of the numerical method alone does not guarantee "truth".

medical practice, the principle of specificity did not allow for a rational standardization or universal approach to medical practices.

The idea that there could be a universal cure for a disease met with opposition in part because of the Republic's preoccupation with individualism. At the same time that empiricism was replacing old schools of rational thought, the principle of specificity, as Warner calls it, was employed in the treatment of patients during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. The practitioner focused upon the particular patient's symptoms and personal medical history. A person's habits, constitution, temperament, environment, age and ethnicity were all considered before prescribing treatment (Warner 64). There could not be a universal cure for an illness because treatment was dependent upon the physician's subjective evaluation of the individual patient's specific constitution and physical environment.

Therapeutics were not only tailored to the individual patient, but also to the particular environment in which the patient lived. American physicians believed disease was distinct to place and subject to environmental variables, such as climate, topography, and meteorological events (Numbers and Warner 121). As Numbers and Warner point out, "the beliefs that therapeutic knowledge gained from experience with European patients and disease might not be suitable for American practice" is "based in part on cultural nationalism" (119). The implementation of the French clinical school's numerical method would be held suspect. How could a European practice be effective in an American setting? American diseases were uniquely American and called for uniquely American therapeutic practices.

Nature vs. Art

During the first two-thirds of the nineteenth-century, disease was defined as a systemic imbalance (Warner 85). Practitioners employed therapies intended to restore the body's equilibrium with the environment. Diseases were classified as being either caused by overexcitement or exhaustion of the bodily system; in the early nineteenth-century, most diseases were classified as being caused by overstimulation (Starr 42).

Benjamin Rush and his followers believed in active, stringent intervention on the practitioner's part, and rejected the "ill directed operations of nature" (Brieger 90). Therapies such as bloodletting and mercury ingestion were thought to restore the body's equilibrium and stem the course of the illness. The degree to which these therapies were used varied from physician to physician, but Rush himself called for high dosages of mercury and strenuous bloodletting. By using cathartics and emetics, the physician would calm the body's overstimulated state and thus produce a state of equilibrium with the environment (Rosenberg "Revolution" 8). Despite the fact that the overzealous application and ingestion of mercury compounds caused the loosening of teeth, loss of hair, blistering and bleeding of gums, and even death, the patient expected the physician to produce visible therapeutic results when administering a "cure" (Rosenberg "Revolution" 8, 10).

A movement against strenuous therapeutic drugging and bleeding of patients and unquestioned medical intervention or "art" was strongest in the New England area, and weakest in the South and West (Warner 21). Jacob Bigelow's 1835 lecture on "Self-limited

Diseases" to the Massachusetts Medical Society represented the "nature" side of the debate.[15] Bigelow believed that some diseases should be allowed to run their course without depletive intervention because the medical practitioner did not have enough knowledge about certain diseases to stem their courses (Warner 28). The physician should make the patient comfortable, provide him with a healthful environment, and strengthen the patient with nutritious food and rest. Equally influential in the American nature trusting movement was the British physician John Forbes (Berman 81). In "Homeopathy, Allopathy, and 'Young Physic,'" published in the British and Foreign Medical Review in 1846, Forbes argues that patients would be better off if their illnesses "were cured by nature" and if physicians did not prescribe any of their remedies, particularly drugs (Berman 81).

Bigelow did believe that successful intervention was possible when treating diseases he categorized as "curable," as opposed to "self-limited" and "incurable" diseases. Self-limited diseases, as defined by Bigelow, were those which cannot be "eradicated or abridged by art" (99).[16] Even though Bigelow and other advocates of therapeutic moderation and/or nature as cure did believe there were times when "art" was appropriate, they were perceived as a threat to regular medical practitioners because practitioners based their professional identities upon intervention. During the first half of the nineteenth century regular practitioners responded to the nature vs. art debate by either vilifying those who believed that nature should run its course in terms of disease development and accusing them of "therapeutic nihilism" or by agreeing

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[15] Jacob Bigelow "On Self-limited Diseases," Ed. Gert H. Grieger Medical America in the Nineteenth Century (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972): 98-106.

[16] Jacob Bigelow "On Self-limited Diseases," ed. Gert H. Brieger Medical America in the Nineteenth Century (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1972) 98-106.

with the nature-trusting movement and calling for a more conservative approach to the use of bloodletting and mercury compounds in the treatment of patients.

Medical Sects

The status of the medical profession during the antebellum period was extremely low. This was due in part to the low status of all professions in a self-consciously egalitarian society, and also because medical education was not regulated or unified. Aside from the medical elite, most notably those of the Boston region, most practitioners were poorly educated, having gone to a proprietary medical school for a year or so, or having served an apprenticeship with an established practitioner (Starr 114). Since educational standards were so low it was relatively easy to obtain a medical degree. This made it easy for a person to become a physician and, therefore, there was fierce competition among practitioners. Lacking education, practitioners focused on their bedside manner and the individual patient's needs when trying to establish a medical practice (Starr 81).

The sovereignty of the common man also undermined medical practitioners' authority. As Paul Starr points out, the proliferation of how-to books encouraged individuals to believe that they were capable of being their own doctors. Domestic manuals such as Buchan's Domestic Medicine were used as guidebooks for medical treatment at home, and here practitioners were usually women. These medical how-to books stressed the idea that if an individual used her common sense, she could cure the sick.

The repeal of the licensing laws in the 1840s - 1860s, and the lack of a unified medical educational system did not allow for the formation of a unified medical profession (Starr 58).

By mid-century, medical sects were actively competing with regular practitioners, challenging their methods of treatment, and their status within the society. Medical sects were those groups which challenged regular practitioners.

Paul Starr writes that nineteenth-century American society was "not just pluralist, but "'pluralizing'" (95). Religious and medical sectarianism were on the rise, and often particular medical sects were affiliated with particular religious sects. Sectarianism was also a response to social restrictions. Medical sects, for example, would more likely embrace and support members of particular ethnic groups or women than regular practitioners would (Starr 95).

Medical sects argued that licensing laws should be repealed. As Paul Starr notes "the suspicion was that licensure was an expression of favor rather than competence" (58). Why should regulars get licenses and not sectarian practitioners? Sectarian practitioners reduced the regular profession to a sect itself by labeling regular practitioners allopaths, or those who use dissimilars to cure disease.

The three most prominent medical sects were regular practitioners, the homeopaths and the eclectics. All three groups believed in scientific medical training and only differed in terms of therapeutics (Starr 97). Even at the height of medical sectarianism, medical sects only accounted for 20% of the medical trade (Starr 99).

Thomsonians and Eclectics

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the most prominent medical sect was the Thomsonians, whose founder was Samuel Thomson, a man who had not received a formal medical education (Starr 51). Thomsonians believed all diseases were caused by cold

and that heat was the remedy for illness (Starr 51). Thomsonians were botanists and Thomson's New Guide to Health (1822) was their self-help manual. Politically, Thomsonians were populists who opposed privilege. Thomsonians were the champions of the common man and laboring classes(Starr 52). Like most medical sects, the Thomsonians tried to convert people to their causes and medical beliefs in order to compete in the medical marketplace. Thomson himself obtained a patent for his botanic cures (Starr 51) and so this populist was accused of only being interested in making money by other sectarian rivals and by regular practitioners. As a group, the Thomsonians were absorbed by the Eclectics during the second half of the nineteenth century (Starr 96). The Eclectics were followers of Wooster Beach and also practiced botanic medicine (Starr 96). Like regular practitioners, the eclectics used "heroic" doses of their herbal remedies and frequently prescribed powerful vegetable emetics (Donegan 13).

Homeopathy

The rise in the number of sects in the 1840s and 1850s was in part "a reaction against the agonies attributed to heroic" medical practices (Pernick 104). Homeopathy offered a "more natural, less painful route to health" (Pernick 104). Homeopathy is credited with influencing the nature-trusting movement within regular practice. In his article "The Heroic Approach in 19th-Century Therapeutics," John Berman emphasizes how much John Forbes' 1846 essay, "Homeopathy, Allopathy and 'Young Physic'" influenced contemporary medical therapeutics. The following excerpt from Forbes' article criticizes allopathic practice and highlights the benefits of homeopathic practices:

> 1. That in a large proportion of the cases treated by allopathic physicians, the disease is cured by nature, and not by them.
>
> 2. that in a lesser, but still not a small proportion, the disease is cured by nature, in spite of them; in other words, their interference opposing, instead of assisting nature.
>
> 3. That, consequently, in a considerable proportion of diseases, it would fare as well, or better with patients, in the actual condition of the medical art, as more generally practiced, if all remedies, especially drugs, were abandoned. (qtd in Berman 81)[17]

Forbes acknowledged the positive aspects of homeopathic practice, namely that homeopathy's infinitesimal doses allowed nature to run its course in terms of disease development while allopaths often harmed their patients by the use of excessive drug therapy.

The homeopaths were founded by the German physician Samuel Hahnemann (Starr 96). They defined disease as a spiritual rather than physical disorder. They also believed "all diseases were the result of a suppressed itch, or 'psora'" (Starr 97). In terms of therapeutics, they believed that "like cured like" (similibus curantur) and therefore would treat disorders by using diluted doses of the original poison that they believed caused an illness. Their "law of infinitesmials" was the belief that "the smaller the does" of poison, "the more effective its action" (Donegan 13). This diluted form of a poison created symptoms in a patient that were

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[17] John Forbes, "Homeopathy, Allopathy, and 'Young Physic,'" British and Foreign Medical Review, 1846, 21: 225-265. qtd. in Alex Berman "The Heroic Approach in 19th-Century Therapeutics" Sickness and Health in America ed. Judith Walzer Leavitt and Ronald L. Numbers (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) 81.

similar to the disease symptoms. This induced illness would displace the original disorder and since it was weaker, the body would be able to overcome the illness more easily (Starr 97).

Homeopathy was most popular among the wealthy classes. Homeopaths were very attentive caregivers in order to note patients' symptoms (Starr 97). Also their experimental testing of drugs on healthy people to create symptoms similar to those of the diseased person made homeopathy appear more "scientific" than regular medicine (Starr 97). These characteristics of homeopathy were attractive to wealthy patients (Starr 97).

Nature-Trusting and Hydropathy

Hydropathy was most popular in the United States from 1843 until the Civil War (Donegan 7). Hydropaths did not believe in the therapeutic drugging of patients. Instead, water was their prescription of choice as well as healthful living. Hydropaths advocated "noninterventionist, natural methods of cure," and "hydropathy emphasized temperate eating, abstinence from all drugs (including alcohol), abundant fresh air and exercise, and - its centerpiece - liberal internal and external applications of water" (Hedrick 173). Water, steam and ice were used to assist nature in the healing process (Pernick 104). Proper diet, regular exercise and proper hygiene were important parts of the hydropathic regimen. In the 1830s, followers of Sylvester Graham or Grahamites believed that adhering to minimalist vegetarian diets insured sustained good health. During the 1840s, many adherents of the Graham system of health were absorbed by the hydropathic movement. Hydropaths believed that individuals could cure themselves and be free from doctors and illness if they lived according to the natural laws of life (Hedrick 173).

While regular practitioners frequently drugged their patients to treat their illnesses "hydropathy taught that hygienic living was the best prevention of illness, and that through self-care [one] could enjoy good health and freedom from drugs and doctors" (Hedrick 174). Patients were attracted to hydropathy after having suffered ill health because of allopathic medical treatments. Frequently lead and mercury based, the drug compounds that allopaths used debilitated their patients for the remainder of their lives.

The Water-Cure Journal, the official publication of the hydropaths, frequently parodied and attacked allopathic treatments. In a column of the journal entitled "The Laughing Cure," allopaths are lampooned:

> A physician having been out gunning a whole morning without killing a single bird, his servant begged leave to go into the next field, for he was sure there were some birds there - - and, adds he, "If there are, I'll doctor them." "Doctor them?" said the master - "what do you mean by that?" "Why, kill them, to be sure, sir."[18]

Also in the same segment in a section entitled "A Complication of Disorders," a neighbor asks a friend what a man died from. His friend replied "a complication of disorders". The neighbor asks, "'How do you describe this complication?' 'He died,' answered the other, 'of two physicians, an apothecary, and a surgeon!'"[19] The journal deprecates regular physicians while supporting hydropathic physicians and practices. Followers of the water-cure believed that the use of therapeutic drugs destroyed the salubrious effects of nature and natural remedies.

In the Water-Cure Journal, hydropaths extolled nature as the best medicine of all:

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[18] "The Laughing Cure," Water-Cure Journal 7: 191.
[19] "A Complication of Disorders," Water-Cure Journal 7: 191.

> We propose, with your approbationed company, reader, to travel onward, under the guidance of the great Teacher and unerring physician, NATURE, acquiring and disseminating more and more knowledge of the laws of life, and greater and still greater skill in the administration of natural remedies - air, light, water, food, temperature, exercise, sleep, clothing, and the passions, which we contend and flatter ourselves we shall be able to prove to a drug-taking community, are the ample and only true medicines."[20]

During the 1840s, many New Englanders trusted that the salubrious effects of nature and the natural would treat illness best.

Water-Cure Journal

The Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms was first published in 1845. In 1849, Joel Shew, Russell Thacher Trall and Samuel Wells founded the American Hydropathic Society (Nissenbaum 149). In 1848, Orson and Lorenzo Fowlers published the Water-Cure Journal, which became "the organ of the American Hydropathic Association" once this organization was established (Stern 51). In 1850, the American Hydropathic Association became the American Hygienic and Hydropathic Society, which discussed hygiene as well as water-cure. In 1859, "all reference to water treatment was dropped. . . when the Hydropathic Society was . . . superseded by the National Health Organization" (Nissenbaum 149).

Samuel Wells and Lorenzo and Orson Fowler, publishers of the Water-Cure Journal, were health reformers who were interested in phrenology, water-cure, the advancement of

[20] Water-Cure Journal 13.1:13.

mankind and the advancement of their business firm, Fowlers and Wells. Like regular practitioners, the sectarian hydropaths were struggling in a competitive medical marketplace and were trying to make sure that their business interests and water-cure establishments would financially prosper. During the 1840s and 1850s, the Water-Cure Journal contained all of the current medical and social reforms of the period: phrenology, vegetarianism, Bloomerism, anti-tobacco and alcohol tracts, women's rights and women's health concerns. The journal promoted societal reform and health by encouraging individual self-improvement through the practice of the water-cure. Hydropathic physicians considered themselves to be "secular saviors attempting to lead the medically unregenerate toward 'the great hygienic revival'" (Donegan 59). Joan Hedrick states that "like religious perfectionists, water-cure enthusiasts were narrowly focused on the self" (173). By perfecting the individual, the water-cure would redeem and purify the society at large.

Stephen Nissenbaum argues that the "principles of Grahamism reached an even wider and more heterogeneous public during the 1840s through a pair of connected reform movements: phrenology and the water-cure" (147). The Austrian Vincent Priessnitz developed the water-cure, a therapeutic system which relied upon the external and internal use of water to treat illnesses, in the 1820s (Nissenbaum 149). The water-cure was most popular in America in the 1840s and was "superimposed on [the] well-formulated theory of Grahamite physiology and regimen" (Nissenbaum 149). Sylvester Graham, health reformer and lecturer, had a profound impact upon the water-cure. Graham believed in leading a moderate lifestyle. Individuals should regulate their diets, avoid meat, alcohol, tobacco, and stimulants of any kind, and they should limit their sexual activities. Austerity was the mainstay of the Graham system. Sylvester Graham's career was at its height during the 1830s. In the mid-1830s, Graham's

followers established boardinghouses in Boston and New York where individuals lived according to rules of the Graham system of health (Nissenbaum 14). Many of the individuals who were active hydropaths and contributors to the Water-Cure Journal also advocated Graham's health regimen.

Many of Graham's followers became water-cure advocates and helped found water-cure establishments. Nissenbaum writes that "the water-cure of the 1840s and 1850s was, in fact, a direct successor to the Graham boardinghouse of the 1830s" (150). For example, in 1845 the abolitionist David Campell went from managing a Graham boardinghouse in Boston to becoming the general manager of Joel Shew's water-cure establishment at New Lebanon Springs in upstate New York (Nissenbaum 150). David Campell was also the editor of the Graham Journal, which was published between 1837-1839 (Nissenbaum 143). The Graham Journal was the unofficial organ of the American Physiological Society, which was founded in 1837 by Grahamites, including Dr. William Andrus Alcott (Blake 360), the cousin of Thoreau's close friend, Bronson Alcott (Donegan 21). This journal was superseded by the Worcester Health Journal and Advocate of Physiological Reform in the early 1840s, which was edited by Mary Gove Nichols (Blake 361), who later became a regular contributor to the Water-Cure Journal.

Mary Gove Nichols was known as the "female Sylvester Graham" in the late 1830s (Nissenbaum 164). At the time, Nichols was trapped in an abusive marriage to Hiram Gove, and was suffering from physical and mental ailments (Blake 360). In 1837, Mrs. Gove read about the Graham system and began teaching women about the Graham system on behalf of the American Physiological Society (Blake 360). Because it was deemed inappropriate for Sylvester Graham to discuss physiology with female audiences, Mary Gove did it for him

(Nissenbaum 164). Mary Gove Nichols became the first female lecturer to spread Graham's beliefs to female audiences. In addition, in 1838, she established a Graham boardinghouse in Lynn, Massachusetts where women followed the Graham regimen of "plain diet, plenty of fresh air and exercise, cleanliness and daily cold bathing, whole wheat bread and abstinence form flesh, tea, coffee, and alcohol" (Blake 362).

Mary Gove Nichols had been introduced to the water-cure when it first became popular in America in 1844 (Nissenbaum 164). Henry Gardiner Wright, Amos Bronson Alcott's friend, introduced Gove to the work of Vincent Priessnitz and the water-cure for all ailments (Blake 363). In 1844-1845, she "studied hydropathic technique . . . with Joel Shew" (Nissenbaum 165). In June 1845, Gove had gone to "Dr. Robert Wesselhoeft's newly established water-cure establishment in Brattleboro, Vermont" (Blake 363). Gove saw the water-cure as a means for women to learn about health and individual happiness. Since Gove suffered during her first marriage, she saw water-cure practices and principles as a way for women to gain control over their health, sexuality, and lives.

In 1847, Mary Gove married Thomas Low Nichols, a follower of Graham doctrines since 1834 (Nissenbaum 163). Nichols received a medical degree from New York University, and he cofounded the American Vegetarian Society and became co-editor of the group's publication, The American Vegetarian and Health Journal in 1850 (Donegan 30; Nissenbaum 164). Thomas Nichols was an active hydropathic physician. During the 1850s, Nichols and his wife were major contributors to the Water-Cure Journal, and Nichols was one of the journal's editors.

Grahamites and water-cure advocates also believed that sexual excess caused disease. For the most part, procreation seemed to be the only sexual activity that was not excessive.

The Nichols, however, were advocates of free love mainly because they believed that marriage encouraged abuse and created greater opportunities for vice and disease. Nissenbaum states that while Sylvester Graham discussed sexuality in negative terms, Thomas Nichols discussed sexuality positively. But Nissenbaum makes clear that "figures such as Thomas Low Nichols and Mary Gove Nichols present a real problem. On the same page they were capable of rhapsodizing about sexual life and castigating it, of condemning marriage in the name of sexual freedom and condemning the exercise of sexual freedom in the name of health" (Nissenbaum 165). The Nichols advocated free love because they felt that marriage lead to spousal abuse, yet they themselves were happily married and monogamous. Although Thomas Nichols spoke positively of sexuality activity, he believed it should be strictly regulated, and like Graham, limited to no more than once a month (Nissenbaum 162). He, like all water-cure advocates, believed that sexual excess caused nervous exhaustion, which in turn created a diseased state.

Dr. Joel Shew was America's first prominent hydropath. Shew was known as the "American Priessnitz" (Donegan 20). Dr. Shew founded a water-cure establishment on Bond Street in New York City and advocated a "therapeutic system which emphasized exercise and an extreme version of the Graham diet as firmly as it did the water treatment itself" (Nissenbaum 149). Dr. Shew was the editor of the Water-Cure Journal when Lorenzo Fowler and Orson Fowler, a Grahamite (Nissenbaum xi), took over the publication of the Water-Cure Journal in 1848 (Stern 51).

Russell Thacher Trall succeeded Shew as the most prominent American hydropathic physician in the late 1840s (Nissenbaum 149), and became editor of the Water-Cure Journal. Before proselytizing for hydropathy, Trall participated in the temperance movement and worked with Wells to found the American Anti-Tobacco Society in 1849 (Nissenbaum 150).

In 1850, Wells and Trall founded the American Vegetarian Society; William A. Alcott was the organization's president (Nissenbaum 150). William Aldrus Alcott's "hygienic principles were even more extreme than Sylvester Graham's" (Nissenbaum 146). Alcott founded the American Physiological Society and wrote many tracts on health, chastity, vegetarianism, tobacco, tea, and coffee (Nissenbaum 146). When the American Vegetarian Society's journal, American Vegetarian and Health Journal, failed in 1854, "Trall agreed to reserve for the organization's exclusive use two full pages in each issue of his own magazine, the Water-Cure Journal" (Nissenbaum 150).

Dr. Trall studied under a regular physician and attended regular medical lectures as part of his medical training (Stern 50). He received a medical degree from Albany Medical College in 1835 (Donegan 24). Trall founded a water-cure establishment in New York in 1843 (Stern 50). According to Lorenzo Fowler, publisher of the Water-Cure Journal, Trall was trying to reform society so that there would be "universal health" (Stern 51). He was also preparing for the "earthly millennium" by freeing mankind from dependency upon physicians and drugs (qtd in Stern 51). Trall's aims voiced the overall goals of most hydropaths. Hydropaths were preparing the populace for the millennium and were doing so by freeing mankind from the tyranny of regular physicians and their therapeutic "poisons". These concerns and goals were presented repeatedly in the Water-Cure Journal. As Paul Starr discusses in the Transformation of American Medicine, medical sects were frequently aligned with particular religious sects. The Millerites were often attracted to the hydropaths' principles and the Water-Cure Journal's attempt to perfect its reading audience in preparation for the millennium is similar to the Millerites' own rhetoric (Starr 95-97).

The War of the Medical Journals

As John Harley Warner, Paul Starr and other medical historians have shown, the differences between medical sects and regular practitioners were not differences in medical theory, but differences in therapeutics. The depletive therapies of some regular practitioners were being challenged by medical sects, such as the homeopaths, hydropaths, and eclectics. Each sect accused the others of being responsible for the deaths of patients while claiming that only their therapeutic methods saved lives. Regular practitioners were labelled "allopaths," those who used "dislikes" or "poisons" to cure, or as other sects would say, "kill" their patients.

The tensions between medical sects and regular practitioners and among sects themselves were apparent in contemporary medical journals. Sectarian and regular publications testify to the importance of the nature vs. art debate. Therapeutics and medical intervention were the cornerstones of a medical practitioner's identity and the therapies used aligned a practitioner with a particular medical camp so to speak. It is also important to realize that in an emerging medical marketplace, the journals served as advertisements for their particular medical sect. Founders and leaders of medical sects were often charismatic personalities who encouraged people to adhere to their particular model for a healthful life, decreasing the individual's freedom of choice. Regular practitioners denounced sectarian leaders as charlatans who were trying to take money from their vulnerable followers.

Lively parodies of rival sects appear in the medical journals of the period. The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, a publication of the medical mainstream, attacks all other sects. For example, in a review of homeopathist's, C.F. Hoffendahl's recently published pamphlet, a regular practitioner accuses homeopaths of being "worshippers of strange gods". When

discussing the pamphlet's claim that only 10% of cholera patients died when being treated by using homeopathy and ½ - 2/3 of all patients died when treated by regular practices the author writes: "Does the pamphlet show the author to be a homeopathic any more than an allopathic practitioner?" After saying that there is no real difference in terms of therapeutics between regulars and homeopaths, the author attacks the homeopaths and hydropaths by saying: "We are not at war with individuals, but with the medical moonshine of the day, which is prized by a certain part of society just in proportion to the distance between their own homes and Germany. Dr. Shew of water-cure celebrity, is out with his decoy duck too".[21] Dr. Shew was the most prominent water-cure advocate in America and is credited with establishing hydropathy in the U.S.

In the article "Relations between the Clerical and Medical Professions," a regular practitioner denounces an article in the Christian Examiner that praises hydropathic practices. The regular practitioner accuses the hydropaths of being quacks who kill their patients.

> Were this miserable cold-water humbug - this poor quackery of using water 'as his stimulant, his tonic, his purgative, his counter-irritant, to the worn-out, nervous, hypochondrical, hysterical cases even in search of something new, or were it like homeopathy or Broussaism only guilty of murder by omission, its responsibility . . . [would be] trifling. The fatal effects of the use of cold water in acute visceral inflammations are being covered up like Thomsonians cover up their blunders (517)[22].

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[21] Boston Medical and Surgical Journal (Jan 1849): 544.

[22] "Relations between the Clerical and Medical Professions. The Christian Examiner and the Hydropathic Delusion" Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38.26 (1848): 513-520.

The killing of patients would be acceptable if "only the enervated, exhausted transcendental victims of excesses and indolence, prostrated by pernicious personal practices [were] the only subjects sent to these cold water seminaries, no great harm might result" (517).[23]

Most regular attacks against the sectarians had to do with their unsound medical therapeutics and reasoning. In the article "Influence of Quackery on Health and Morals Remarks of Mr. Sanborn of Hanover, in the N.H. Legislature, upon the Bill Incorporating the New Hampshire Medical Botanic Society," Sanborn acknowledges that regular practitioners should follow therapeutic moderation, particularly when treating "imaginary" diseases:

> The most scientific physicians of the age admit that, in past ages, too much medicine has generally been administered to the sick. Excessive medication has been a fault of many practitioners and why? Simply because a large proportion of the diseases for which physicians are called upon to prescribe are imaginary, and the patients really need no medicine. All physicians and metaphysicians agree on this point, that the imagination has an important agency both in the productions and cure of disease. The mind and body are so intimately associated that they mutually affect each other. Moreover, many real diseases are merely functional and not organic in their nature. They belong rather to the movement of the vital machinery than to its separate organs. Only needs a change of diet or place or increased exercise etc. (472)

What is interesting in both regular and sectarian medical writing is that during this period physicians acknowledged that disease was in large part affected by the mind-body connection.

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[23] "Relations between the Clerical and Medical professions. The Christian Examiner and Hydropathic Delusion" Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38.26 (1848): 513-520.

Discussions of the role of the imagination in illness and the mind are in regular publications as well as those labeled by regulars as being "transcendental". Regular practitioners, like their sectarian rivals, were also advocating therapeutic moderation and the idea that nature should be allowed to run its course in terms of disease development.

Even though their medical beliefs and practices were frequently similar, physicians from different medical sects vehemently attacked one another. In the August 9 1848 edition of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal[24], one of the editors acknowledged the publication of the first number of the 6th volume of the Water-Cure Journal, published under the editorial supervision of Joel Shew, M.D. of New York. Contributors to the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal were typically regular practitioners or "allopaths." The editors of this journal were usually members of the medical elite, the well-educated Boston Brahmins who were also trying to establish the medical profession. The journal's review of the new issue of the Water-Cure Journal was, not surprisingly, unfavorable. The writer states that the water cure "is a specimen of the one-ideaism in medicine with which the world now abounds. All the while, water is water still. . . . While the active imaginations of those who live in wet sheets, and fancy that their days have been prolonged by a skillful application of the douche and plunge" (45). While this medical doctor accuses the water-cure regimen of being "one-ideaism" gone mad, the medical historian Bert Brieger has pointed out that regular practitioners of the first decades of the nineteenth century followed a similarly "monistic theory of disease causation" and believed in their practices as "moniacally" as water-cure advocates followed theirs.

Despite these similarities, regulars still denounced sectarian practices as ill-informed at best, lethal at worst. One regular practitioner writes that "Hahnemann is a deceiver and an

impostor" (473) while "Thomson's system discourages study and encourages empiricism" (478). This regular practitioner writes that "The greatest impostors living" are "Indian 'medicine men'" (478). And "of all the gross and palpable impositions upon the public credulity, the pretense that Indians understand the healing virtues of roots and herbs is the most absurd and monstrous" (478). "Civilized and Christian men" should not have "recourse to savages to learn science" (478). The writer concludes his argument by saying all sectarian practitioners and Indian medicine men are a "plague of frogs" who "all claim to assist nature" (478)[25]. During the 1830s - 1850s, allowing nature to run its course in terms of disease development instead of stringent intervention was becoming the watchwords for all medical practitioners, regular and sectarian alike.

Sectarian practitioners attacked regulars or allopaths on the grounds that they impeded nature because they drugged their patients. One hydropath writes of how a doctor's medications were useless and the water-cure helpful in curing a sick child:

> I have just been told of an interesting case of nature vs. art, which occurred not long since, in the neighboring city of Charleston: - a child of Mrs. - , was taken sick during her absence. and a neighbor of hers, who kindly supplied her mother's place, as probably more others could better do, was requested by the doctor to give one of certain little white powders every hour - she gave one of them, and being convinced that it but hurt the child, she persuaded the friends to let her manage it. This they did, as the doctor had said it was very doubtful

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[24] Boston Medical and Surgical Journal. 9 August 1848: 45.

[25] "Influence of Quackery on Health and Morals Remarks of Mr. Sanborn of Hanover, in the N.H. Legislature, upon the Bill Incorporating the New Hampshire Medical Botanic Society" 39(1848): 471-480.

> if the child got well, even with his medicine. She accordingly washed it over in warm water occasionally, and once an hour "tucked the powder under the grate" and nursed the child up in her own motherly way! and, very much to the surprise of the doctor, the next day the child was greatly relieved; and the doctor boasted considerably of his having had the tact to "hit upon the right medicine!" and wrote for another batch of powders, which, I need not add, went the same way as their "illustrious predecessors" had done, and with the same happy effect! they were indeed grate-ful to the patient, "going to the right spot" truly! though the doctor little dreamt where that spot was till after the mother got home and the child got well, and he was told by her the disposition made of his powders. He didn't feel particularly pleased, but couldn't well say anything, as the child, contrary to his frequently declared opinion at first, got well![26]

Hydropaths strongly believed in the healing powers of nature and did not advocate the use of any medications. When discussing the use of the water-cure for curing typhus, hydropaths denounce allopaths and praise their water-cure regimen:

> It was but a few months since that the Medical Faculty of Boston came to the grave conclusion that Homeopathy had been of some advantage to the world, since it had taught the Allopathic physician to trust more to the healing powers of nature than to their large doses. We must conclude that the next important information which they gain will be that pure water has healing powers which their poisonous drugs do not possess or that nature alone, not blinded in her

[26] "Gossip from Boston by Noggs" Water-Cure Journal (February 1851): 48.

> operations by allopathic or homeopathic doses, will effect more than all else besides. Hygienic and dietetic rules, faithfully observed, with a judicious application of water, will seldom demand the use of any other remedial agent.[27]

Regular practitioners of the old school frequently drugged their patients to excess while homeopaths used many-fold dilution's of their drugs. The hydropaths' remedy, water, was the least toxic of all.

The nature-trusting impulse was part of the larger cultural theme of nature as health, and the natural as a means to well-being. These beliefs are apparent in all of the medical writing of the period regardless of sect. All medical practitioners centered their beliefs around one main idea of disease causation: the notion that disease was the result of imbalance between the individual and his environment. The differences between sects and regulars were differences in therapeutic practice, but regardless of therapeutic commitment, during the 1840s-1850s, New England physicians were placing their trust in nature when treating illness.

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[27] "Water-Cure in Typhus" Water-Cure Journal 13.1 : 16.

Chapter Two: "Nature as Cure"

The Nature-Trusting Movement

As a resident of Concord, Thoreau lived and wrote where the nature vs. art debate was taking place among medical practitioners. Those physicians who aligned themselves with the nature-trusting movement advocated therapeutic moderation when treating illnesses and questioned whether medical intervention or "art" was appropriate in all cases. In some instances, physicians such as Jacob Bigelow, his colleagues at Harvard Medical School, and elite physicians trained at the Paris clinic school, believed that some diseases should be allowed to run their course without depletive intervention (Warner 28). Some regular practitioners perceived advocates of therapeutic moderation and/or nature as cure as threats to regular medical practice because practitioners based their identities upon intervention (Warner 11-36). Thoreau's isolation at Walden Pond can be seen as an individual's attempt to place himself in a healthful environment to arrest the development of his tuberculosis and to allow "nature" to run its course.

In "Where I Lived, What I Lived For" Thoreau writes of his search for a place to rest and recover from his illness. In 1845, Thoreau successfully found a place to recuperate at Walden Pond. At this time, Americans believed that intemperance and occupation were major predisposing causes of illness. While at Walden, Thoreau led a temperate lifestyle and provided himself with a healthful occupation to stem the course of his tuberculosis. Thoreau's

indulgence of his senses via nature, and nature alone, was curative, as was his abstemious lifestyle.[28]

In Living in the Shadow of Death Sheila Rothman writes:

> The dictates of invalidism manifested themselves with particular clarity in the life choices of educated men and women of New England. To judge by the surviving medical and biographical materials, its residents were the most apprehensive about contracting [tuberculosis], the most preoccupied with preventing and curing it, and the most articulate in writing about life with it. (24)

During the 1840's, the invalid's first priority was to discover ways to improve his health. The consumptive's entire life became a quest for health, and all daily activities and life choices were predetermined accordingly. As an invalid, Thoreau adhered to the cultural expectations of the diseased. Thoreau's stay at Walden was his attempt to find a cure for his consumptive condition; Walden is his record of those curative living experiments.

Thoreau's Farming Experiment

Thoreau's experiments at Walden Pond are similar to those prescribed by New England medical practitioners for male consumptives. As Sheila Rothman notes, regimens of cure were gender specific. As a male invalid, Thoreau could leave his home and seek a cure at Walden Pond. Consumptive women, on the other hand, would stay at home, in large part

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[28] Michael Branch and Jessica Pierce also write that Thoreau believes nature is curative. See their article "' Another Name for Health': Thoreau and Modern Medicine" Literature

because of their domestic responsibilities.[29] Women remained in their homes, calling upon community members to help them when they were sick (S. Rothman 116). Physicians often prescribed travel to a warmer climate as a means of cure for consumptive men. Travel and outdoor exercise were encouraged. Many male consumptives became "gentleman" farmers because fresh air and physical exertion were believed to strengthen and ameliorate the consumptive's constitution (S. Rothman 46).

In "Economy," Thoreau writes about his "farming" experiment: "the short time occupied by my experiment, nay, partly even because of its transient character, I believe that that was doing better than any farmer in Concord that year" (37). But Thoreau is more of a "gentleman" farmer; his farming was more therapeutic than anything else, as was his bland vegetarian diet of mostly rye bread and water. In Living in the Shadow of Death, Sheila Rothman discusses the exploits of antebellum gentleman farmers. Frequently, wealthy parents would purchase farms so that their consumptive sons would be able to participate in the farming cure. Male invalids were encouraged to "undertake the labors, privations and hardships of farmers" (qtd in S. Rothman 28)[30] to improve their physical strength. Physicians and patients alike also believed that the fresh air of the outdoors would help improve their conditions. Many of these therapeutic farming establishments failed financially, and frequently they did not elicit a cure. While Thoreau presents farming as the possible means of leading a

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and Medicine 15.1 (Spring 1996) 129-145.

[29] An exception to this would be women who went to water-cure establishments to cure themselves.

[30] John Gould, Private Journal of a Voyage from New York to Rio de Janeiro, ed. Edward S. Gould (New York: no publisher, 1839) 3-4. qtd in Sheila Rothman Living in the Shadow of Death (New York: Basic Books, 1994) 28.

frugal and balanced existence in "Economy," in "The Bean-field" chapter, Thoreau presents farming as his therapeutic communion with nature.

Thoreau devotes an entire chapter of Walden to a discussion of his exploits as a gentleman farmer. In "The Bean-field" Thoreau writes: "It was a singular experience that long acquaintance which I cultivated with beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting, and threshing, and picking over, and selling them" (108). Thoreau plants and harvests his beans by himself, without the use of animal labor. The "labor of the hands, even when pursued to the verge of drudgery, is perhaps never the worst form of idleness. It has a constant and imperishable moral" (105). Here farming is therapeutic, "moral" outdoor exercise. Thoreau cultivates his beanfield himself, and he uses martial language to discuss his battles with weeds, woodchucks, skunks. Thoreau develops an intimate relationship with nature, and he fights to protect his bean field from varmints. Thoreau writes: "I came to love my rows, my beans . . . They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antaeus" (103, 104). Thoreau's farming, his physical contact with nature, allows him to gain "strength" from nature. His farming experiment is part of his nature cure.

Nature as Cure at Walden

Some New England physicians believed that in many cases of illness they "could do little more than follow in the train of disease and endeavor to aid nature in her salutary intentions, or to remove obstacles out of her path" (Bigelow 106). In his essay "Nature and Art, Their Relative Influence in the Management of Disease. Are They Antagonistic of Co-Operative?" (1861) the regular practitioner Nathan S. Davis writes that "During the last ten or

fifteen years much has been said and written concerning the curative powers of Nature; as though she was an actual entity - a fair Goddess of health, ruling over the animal economy with the ubiquitous power to meet disease at every point" (128).[31] Like those of the regular medical profession who place their trust in the curative powers of nature, Thoreau deifies and advocates nature as cure in Walden.

The mainstay of Thoreau's curative regimen, in addition to leading a moderate lifestyle, was living in isolation in a natural environment. In 1845, rather than traveling south or west, Thoreau finds solitude in the "wilds" of Concord:

> I have my horizon bounded by woods all to myself; . . . . for the most part it is as solitary where I live as on the prairies. It is as much Asia or Africa as New England. I have, as it were, my own sun and moon and stars, and a little world all to myself. (87)

In the "Solitude" chapter of Walden, Thoreau discusses his experience with isolation, and the advantages and disadvantages of solitude. He wonders if he can live without human contact. In the "Visitors" chapter of Walden, Thoreau states "I think that I love society as much as most, . . . I am naturally no hermit . . ." (94). If Thoreau is "naturally no hermit," then why does he isolate himself at Walden Pond?

Sheila Rothman argues that "to be classified an invalid was by definition to be excused from fully complying with social expectations" (22). The invalid's duty was "to do everything possible to reverse the course of the illness, to rid themselves of the malady" (22). Thoreau suppresses his more "social" nature and isolates himself at Walden Pond to "rid himself" of the

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[31] Nathan S. Davis "Nature and Art. Their Relative Influence in the Management Of Disease. Are They Antagonistic or Co-operative?" ed. Gert H. Brieger Medical America in

source of his illness. As I will discuss shortly, Thoreau avoids physical contact with other human beings arguably because he fears that this contact with humanity is the source of disease, while, on the other hand, isolating oneself in a natural environment is curative.

When Thoreau first lives in the woods, however, he is lonely. He wonders if health is dependent upon human interaction. But soon the "beneficent society" he finds "in nature" comforts and sustains him.

> I have never felt lonesome, or in the least oppressed by a sense of solitude, but once, and that was a few weeks after I came to the woods, when, for an hour, I doubted if the near neighborhood of man was not essential to a serene and healthy life. To be alone was something unpleasant. But I was at the same time conscious of a slight insanity in my mood, and seemed to foresee my recovery. In the midst of a gentle rain while these thoughts prevailed, I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me, as made the fancied advantage of human neighborhood insignificant . . . . (88, 89)

The gentle rain, the friendly "pattering of the drops" makes Thoreau feel as if he were part of the natural community. Nature's raindrops and nature itself create an atmosphere that dispels Thoreau's loneliness, and cures him of his melancholy.

In the "Solitude" chapter, Thoreau repeatedly speaks of himself as if he were a member of the natural community: "I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself"

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the Nineteenth Century (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1972) 127-142.

(86-87). "I am no more lonely than a single mullein or dandelion in a pasture, or a bean leaf, or sorrel, or a horse-fly, or a humble-bee . . . ." (92). The rain drops symbolically cleanse and baptize Thoreau so that he can commune with nature.

> While I enjoy the friendship of the seasons I trust that nothing can make life a burden to me. The gentle rain which waters my beans and keeps me in the house to-day is not dreary and melancholy, but good for me too. (88)

Again, it is the "gentle rain" which acts as the curative agent, a rain which "waters" both Thoreau and his beans and allows Thoreau to feel like a natural object within a larger natural community. Rain is nature's water-cure, and it is "good for" Thoreau.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the humoral theory of disease causation was still in place, although discussed under the guise of "systemic imbalance". Systemic imbalance was treated by trying to restore balance via bloodletting and other "heroic" medical practices. In antiquity, melancholy was believed to be caused by an imbalance of one of the four bodily humors. In the early nineteenth century, the body was viewed holistically, but disease was still defined as disequilibrium between the body and the environment, or within the body itself (Rosenberg "Revolution" 40). By the time Thoreau was writing Walden, such theories of disease etiology were beginning to be replaced. Nevertheless, it is significant that Thoreau sees nature as the cure for melancholy, as melancholia was strongly associated with a diseased state, both physically and mentally, and with systemic imbalance.

> Yet I experienced sometimes that the most sweet and tender, innocent and encouraging society may be found in any natural object, even for the poor misanthrope and most melancholy man. There can be no very black

> melancholy to him who lives in the midst of Nature and has his senses still . . . . (88)

Nature can cure both physical and mental ailments. The use of depletive therapies, such as bloodletting and calomel ingestion, or stimulative therapies, such as alcohol or opiates, to cure systemic imbalance - - and melancholy would be included in this category - - was being replaced, especially in the New England area, by the idea that the nature of disease itself should be studied. Empirical observation was replacing older rationalistic systems of medical thought. Physicians were beginning to think that not all diseases required swift medical intervention. They also felt that stringent medical therapies such as bloodletting should not be routinely employed. Instead, allowing nature to run its course in terms of disease development was becoming a predominant New England medical belief. The belief in the curative powers of nature, and the association of the natural with health, is apparent in medical discourse during the first half of the nineteenth century (Warner 89), and in literary discourse as well.

Thoreau ends the "Solitude" chapter by extolling the benefits of isolating oneself in a natural environment. "The indescribable innocence and beneficence of nature - of sun and wind and rain, of summer and winter, - such health, such cheer, they afford forever!" (93). Given the emphasis upon health and nature as cure in the "Solitude" chapter, the way in which the chapter comes to a close is not surprising. Thoreau concludes by stating that nature is the best medicine of all.

> What is the pill which will keep us well, serene, contented? Not my of thy grandfather's, but our great-grandmother Nature's universal, vegetable, botanic medicines, by which she has kept herself young always, outlived so many old Parrs in her day, and fed her health with their decaying fatness. For my

> panacea, instead of those quack vials of a mixture dipped from Acheron and the Dead Sea, which comes out of those long shallow black-schooner looking wagons which we sometimes see made to carry bottles, let me have a draught of undiluted morning air. Morning air! If men will not drink of this at the fountainhead of the day, why, then, we must even bottle up some and sell it in the shops, for the benefit of those who have lost their subscription ticket to morning time in this world. But remember, it will not keep quite till noonday even in the coolest cellar, but drive out the stopples ere that and follow westward the steps of Aurora. (93)[32]

Great-grandmother nature's prescriptions and nature's own morning air are the remedies Thoreau endorses.

Isolation/Fear of Contagion

Thoreau's discussion of isolation in the "Solitude" chapter of Walden adopts the discourse of disease and cure, revealing Thoreau's preoccupation with his own health. Thoreau's solitude or self-imposed isolation is part of his individual regimen of cure. In "Solitude," Thoreau describes nature as curative. A person can regain his health if he lives in a natural environment and communes with nature. If a person can live healthfully in a natural environment, then why would he want to live at risk within human society?

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[32] The morning air, Aurora, and chanticleer have special meaning for Thoreau, as I discuss in Chapter Six.

> What do we want to dwell near to? Not to many men surely, the depot, the post-office, the barroom, the meeting-house, the school-house, the grocery, Beacon Hill or Five Points, where most men congregate, but to the perennial source of our life, whence in all our experience we have found that to issue, as the willow stands near the water and sends out its roots in that direction. This will vary with different natures, but this is the place where a wise man will dig his cellar . . . . (89, 90)

Thoreau does not wish to "dwell near" the places "where most men congregate." Instead, "like the willow" he seeks the "perennial source of life" - water. In "The Ponds," Thoreau, using Emerson's term, refers to Walden Pond as "God's drop" or medicine (130). In Walden, water is nature's ultimate curative.

Thoreau's communion with nature, particularly with Walden Pond, is complete. Thoreau's individual identity and Walden Pond are, at times, inseparable, at least in his creative imagination. In "The Ponds," he speaks of the pond as if he were speaking of himself:

> If by living thus reserved and austere, like a hermit in the woods, so long, [Walden Pond] has acquired such wonderful purity, who would not regret that the comparatively impure waters of Flint's Pond should be mingled with it, or itself even go to waste its sweetness in the ocean wave? (130) The purity of Walden Pond would be compromised if it mingled with other waters, just as Thoreau's purity would be compromised it he became too intimately involved with his fellow man.

In the "Solitude," Thoreau writes: "I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone" (91). Solitude is "wholesome" and healthy, while being with others is debilitating, both

mentally and physically. At times in "Solitude," Thoreau also speaks of solitude and "being in company" in religious terms, as cut and dry examples of good and evil: "God is alone, - but the devil, he is far from being alone; he sees a great deal of company; he is legion" (92). Underlying Thoreau's aversion to "being in company" is his fear of contagion.

In "Solitude," Thoreau discusses his interpretation of optimal building ordinances and zoning laws: "It would be better if there were but one inhabitant to a square mile, as where I live. The value of a man is not in his skin, that we should touch him" (92). Thoreau abhors physical contact with other people, perhaps because he associates this contact with disease. In "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," we see again that physical isolation is important to Thoreau during the early 1840's when he is deciding where he should live to conduct his "living experiments."

> The real attractions of the Hollowell farm, to me, were; its complete retirement, being about two miles from the village, half a mile from the nearest neighbor, and separated from the highway by a broad field; its bounding on the river, which the owner said protected it by its fogs from frosts in the spring, thought that was nothing to me; the gray color and ruinous state of the house and barn, and the dilapidated fences, which put such an interval between me and the last occupant; (56)

In the above passage, Thoreau clearly states that the "real attractions" of Hollowell farm were its "complete retirement" and the "ruinous state" of its buildings, which signaled to Thoreau that there was "an interval between [him] and the last occupant." Since no one has lived in the Hollowell home for a long period of time, nature has restaked its claim, dispelling the effluvia of earlier inhabitants.

In 1841 when Thoreau was trying to purchase Hollowell farm, he was still recovering from another active bout of his tuberculosis (Harding 122, 123). Harding writes: "for some time [Thoreau] had been thinking of retiring to some lonely spot where he might rest and devote himself to writing" (Harding 122). Thoreau's looking for a place to "rest" immediately after being ill is a direct result of his wanting to gain strength, recover, and possibly arrest the development of his consumptive condition. Thoreau was unable to purchase Hollowell farm or build a cabin near Sandy Pond (Harding 123), and it was not until July 4, 1845 that he was able to move into the cabin he built at Walden Pond. Thoreau spends a considerable amount of time planning his "retirement" from humanity. His long search for a place to retire is rewarded for Thoreau does manage to find a building site that has not been contaminated by humanity.

In "Winter Visitors," he emphasizes how happy he is to live on a site that has never been inhabited:

> I am not aware that any man has ever built on the spot which I occupy, Deliver me from a city built on the site of a more ancient city, whose materials are ruins, whose gardens cemeteries. The soil is blanched and accursed there, and before that becomes necessary the earth itself will be destroyed. With such remniniscences I repeopled the woods and lulled myself asleep. (175)

Thoreau can sleep soundly in his cabin at Walden Pond knowing that the only people near are those in his dreams. At the time Thoreau was writing Walden, articles such as "On Epidemic Influence" were appearing in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal which discussed environmental causes of disease. Physicians believed that "the atmosphere may become

impure" because of "concentrated human effluvia," which "causes diseases, which would otherwise be non-infectious, to be communicable from one to another"[33].

"Solitude" is of paramount importance to Thoreau in the mid 1840s. This is most commonly read as Thoreau's desire to be alone with his creative muse, nature, so that he can write. But as an invalid, Thoreau's primary concern, at all times, is his health. His "life in the woods" is more than a yearning for "solitude"; it is self-imposed isolation from contagion/human contact.

Of course, Thoreau had many visitors while he was at Walden Pond. In "Visitors," Thoreau writes that as many as twenty-five or thirty people were crowded into his small cabin at one time (94). Thoreau says that he and his guests were never aware of having "come very near to one another," and that it is indeed the inhabitants of larger homes who were often like "vermin" which "infect" their habitats (94). But Thoreau is concerned about the proximity between his guests and himself. He expresses that fear as the need for space for thoughts and ideas.

> If we were merely loquacious and loud talkers, then we can afford to stand very near together, cheek by jowl, and feel each other's breath; but if we speak reservedly and thoughtfully, we want to be farther apart, that all animal heat and moisture may have a chance to evaporate . . . . As the conversation began to assume a loftier and grander tone, we gradually shoved our chairs farther apart till they touched the wall in opposite corners, and then commonly there was not room enough. (94, 95)

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[33] "On Epidemic Influence," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 28 June 1848: 438.

Thoreau does not want to feel another's breath on his cheeks, he does not want to absorb the animal heat and moisture of a potentially contaminated other. The breath of the possibly infected, the animal heat and moisture of conversing others, can create a vitiated atmosphere and a miasmatic environment.

Ideally, Thoreau believes that the best place for his visitors to congregate is out-of-doors. "My 'best' room, however, my withdrawing room, always ready for company, on whose carpet the sun rarely fell, was the pine wood behind my house" (95). Entertaining his visitors in his "best room" alleviates Thoreau's fear of contamination. In the open air, Thoreau does not have to worry about breathing in the moisture of another's breath. The vast outdoors furnishes his visitors with an endless amount of room, allowing all to keep a healthy, safe distance from one another. Thoreau's "withdrawing room" is "always ready for company" for here one may visit and withdraw simultaneously, and converse from a safe distance.

Thoreau's association of villagers with disease is evident in "The Village." Thoreau writes of how visiting the village is like running "the gauntlet" (113). He has to avoid the attractions of the village "by keeping [his] thoughts on high things, like Orpheus, who, 'loudly singing the praises of the gods to his lyre, drowned the voices of Sirens, and kept out of danger'" (113). The attractions of the village, material goods, "the tavern and victualling cellar," clothiers, had the potential to contaminate the ascetic Thoreau, but the most "terrible" threat of all was "the standing invitation" to visit people at their homes (113). Thoreau does not want to visit people in the closed spaces of their homes. Physicians advised that "living areas" be well ventilated "to prevent disease of the respiratory organs."[34] Thoreau knows that

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[34] Book review of Lungs and Their Diseases by James Stewart, M.D.. Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38 (1848): 489.

his cabin at Walden Pond is well ventilated. In "Where I Lived, What I Lived For," he writes: "I did not need to go out of doors to take the air, for the atmosphere within had lost none of its freshness" (57). But when visiting people's homes in the village, Thoreau cannot be so sure.

The village is dangerous because Thoreau sees humanity as a source of contagion. In the opening of "The Village," Thoreau writes:

> Every day or two I strolled to the village to hear some of the gossip which is incessantly going on there, circulating either from mouth to mouth, or from newspaper to newspaper, and which taken in homeopathic doses, was really as refreshing in its way as the rustle of leaves and the peeping of frogs. As I walked in the woods to see the birds and squirrels, so I walked in the village to see the men and boys; instead of the wind among the pines I heard the carts rattle. (112)

Thoreau equates the village gossip, circulating from mouth to mouth, with his homeopathic dose. Homeopaths believed that dilutions of the original "poison" that created disease should be used to cure disease. They prescribed dilutions of compounds which recreated the symptoms of the physical disorder that was affecting the patient. As Paul Starr observes, "The rationale for homeopathic treatment was that a patient's natural disease was somehow displaced after taking a homeopathic medicine by a weaker, but similar, artificial disease that the body could more easily overcome" (Starr 97). When Thoreau describes the villagers' circulating gossip as his homeopathic dose, he is isolating the cause of his illness, or, more specifically, he is identifying a "diluted form" of the original cause of his illness.

At the time Thoreau was writing Walden, consumption was believed to be a hereditary disease and noncontagious. And yet, the two most prevalent theories of disease etiology were

miasmatic theories of disease and contagious theories of disease. The debate between contagionists[35] and anticontagionists[36] continued throughout the nineteenth-century. During the antebellum period, the lack of a scientific (microbial) basis for the etiology of disease created ambiguity about the true causes of illness. Even when a specific cause or classification was offered, as in the case of defining tuberculosis as a hereditary and noncontagious disease, it was incorrect.[37]

Health reformers of Thoreau's period duly noted the pernicious effects of urban living on individual health. Early sanitary and health reformers such as John H. Griscom believed that city life was unnatural and unhealthy while the natural life of uncivilized man was healthful (Rosenberg and Smith-Rosenberg "Pietism" 387). As John Warner discusses in The Therapeutic Perspective, the diagnosis and treatment of disease were dependent upon specific factors of individual constitution and place. The urban setting was associated with filth and disease. Just as an individual had a particular temperament, physicians believed that a particular locale had a particular temperament (Warner 65). The urban environment was particularly

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[35] Support the idea that contact leads to disease. This way of thinking more readily lends itself to the belief that there are discrete disease entities.

[36] Believe in the atmospheric causes of disease.

[37] I do not mean to suggest that all of antebellum medical theories and practices were absurd, or that due to the scientific "march of progress" forward that all current medical theories or therapies are infallible or unilaterally "better" than those offered earlier. As I have discussed in Chapter One, many of a period's scientific and medical beliefs and practices are culturally determined. The holistic approach to illness, the recognition of the importance of environmental causes of disease, and the questioning of medical authority in antebellum America, as well as the proliferation of "sects" (or alternative medicine as we call it today) in antebellum America play significant roles in our contemporary medical culture. This is in large part a counter reaction to the twentieth century fascination with and privileging of microbes as the sole cause of disease, and the earlier lionization of the medical scientist and practitioner as the discoverers and providers of the "magic bullets"(antibiotics) that could cure all.

noxious because it had been "'vitiated by human respiration'" (qtd in Warner 66)[38]. Urban therapeutics should therefore differ from rural medical practices.

The differences in the "therapeutic needs of the city and those of the country" were due to differences in "social behavior and physical environment" (Warner 66). Urban and rural lifestyles and occupations differed and so too did the healthfulness of the physical environments. With the change from a largely agrarian society to an industrial one came a change in the humoral notion of imbalance. In addition to the original four humors, sanguineous, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic, which determined an individual's temperament and thus affected an individual's constitution, a fifth was added, the nervous temperament (Warner 64, 68). This nervous temperament was the product of the demands of modern civilization (Warner 68). Those suffering from illness due to their nervous temperaments needed stimulating therapies (Warner 68). Those who suffered from nervous disorders were usually upper middle class urban dwellers. Rugged rural dwellers and frontiersmen would still need depletive therapies because they had not been contaminated by "'that enervating influence of luxurious habits'" (qtd. in Warner 68). At this time, medical treatment was based upon an individual's class and occupation as well (Warner 66). Laborers were believed to have "robust" constitutions; physicians believed their systemic imbalances were caused by overstimulation (Warner 66). Physicians thought members of the wealthier classes became ill because they lead lives of "indolence and luxury" (Warner 66); their treatments were, therefore, more stimulative than depletive.

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[38] W. Taylor, "Changeability of Disease," Proceedings of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, at Its Sixth Annual Meeting, Begun and Held in the City of Selma, Dec. 13-15, 1852, with an Appendix and List of Members (Mobile, 1853) 79. Qtd. in John Harley Warner The Therapeutic Perspective (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

During the 1840's, medical practitioners defined health as a balance between the individual and his environment. "Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the term *natural* was commonly used to describe the model state of well-being" (Warner 85). During the 1830s-1850s, medical practitioners reacted against the universalism of rationalistic systems (Warner 74). Therefore, physicians considered an individual's natural state to be dependent upon the principle of specificity (Warner 85). Physicians took factors such as "ethnicity, gender, family background, and moral status" into consideration when determining what constituted an individual's natural state (Warner 85). John Harley Warner argues, "Moreover, what was natural for a person during one season, in one physical or social environment, at one age changed as that person grew older, altered his or her social position, or moved to a different part of the country" (85).

During the first decade of the nineteenth century, most Americans earned their livings from the land (Levine, et al. 222). Most farmers were self-sufficient and could supply themselves with all of the goods that they needed. But as commerce expanded, people began to sell and then purchase goods rather than make them for themselves. The shift from a self-sufficient agrarian society to a commercial industrial economy created drastic changes in the ways Americans, particularly those living in urban centers of the Northeast, lived their lives. In medical journals, physicians wrote about the urban environment and lifestyle as unnatural and potentially harmful while the rural environment and lifestyle were defined as natural and healthful.

Thoreau believed that participating in capitalist enterprises made people physically ill. He argues that workers are "making [themselves] sick, that [they] may lay up

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1986) 68.

something against a sick day" (4). Workers' "fingers, from excessive toil, . . .tremble" (30). Men work and make themselves ill to no end. They

> labor under a mistake. The better part of man is soon ploughed into the soil for compost. By a seeming fate, commonly called necessity, they are employed, as it says in an old book, laying treasure which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break in and steal. It is a fool's life, as they will find when they get to the end of it, if not before. (3)

Men are dead before they know it and what are they left to think about on their deathbeds? How hard they worked to accumulate material possessions that will soon be dust as well? Thoreau wants to prevent others from leading foolish, materialistic and unhealthy lives. He wants to "say something about [their] condition, especially [their] outward condition or circumstances in this world, . . . whether it cannot be improved or not" (2). He tries to achieve this end in "Economy" by defining necessity, and in later chapters "what is necessary for the soul" (218).

Thoreau defines necessity to ensure physical health. He begins by saying that "It would be some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization, if only to learn what are the gross necessities of life and what methods have been taken to obtain them" (7). Civilization creates artificial demands; people are socialized to believe that they have to work to acquire material comforts. But Thoreau writes that "Most of the luxuries, and many of the so called comforts of life, are not only indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind" (9). Instead of living their lives according to their natural instincts and needs, individuals live according to the dictates of society. Thoreau believes that if a person isolates himself in a natural

environment, he will "learn what the grossest necessities of life are" (7). An individual will be healthy if he leads an austere life governed by necessity.

In The Environmental Imagination, Lawrence Buell says Thoreau created the prototype for "voluntary simplicity" as "reduced material wants, rustic habitation, self-sufficiency at every level, and the cultivation of self-improvement through a disciplined life largely led in solitude" (145). Thoreau created a model for communal life, but Walter Harding argues that Thoreau himself was "too much of an individualist to believe that the problems of life could be solved on a community basis" (126). Thoreau focuses on his own self-improvement while living in isolation. Stephen Nissenbaum states "that Jacksonian Americans, particularly Grahamites, located the utopian ideal within the inner sanctum of the 'individual human body'"(129). Living in a natural environment and satisfying necessity rather than the artificial desires created by civilization promotes physical health and well-being for the community and the individual.

Thoreau argues that men have to live outside of the dictates of society, and live according to the rules of their own natures. He writes: "What a Man thinks of himself, that is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate" (4). Every person's life is his own to live. But "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" (Thoreau 5) because they do not work to live but live to work. They labor under a set of false assumptions because their value systems have become inverted; civilization makes luxury a necessity. What a person thinks of himself is dependent upon how much "Spaulding furniture" he owns (44). And those men "who are discontented . . . idly complain of the hardness of their lot or of the times, when they might improve them" by leading healthful lives of austerity and

simplicity (10). Men have to free themselves from the ruts of civilization, and listen to the voices of their natural selves.

In "Economy" Thoreau offers the ideal of the philosopher as a means of emancipation. "To be a philosopher is . . . to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity and trust" (9). A person has to put an end to their mindless laboring for material goods. Men should simplify their lives. In "Economy", leading a simple life means becoming a subsistence farmer:

> That if one would live life simply, and eat only the crop which he raised, and raise no more than he ate, and not exchange it for an insufficient quantity of more luxurious and expensive things, he would need to cultivate only few rods of ground, and that it would be cheaper to spade up that than to use oxen to plough it . . . . I was more independent than any farmer in Concord, for I was not anchored to a house or farm, but could follow the bent of my genius, which is a very crooked one, every moment. (37)

Thoreau believes that being a subsistence farmer allows a man to follow his inner genius. Because Thoreau works for himself he is independent and can think for himself. He writes "a simple and independent mind does not toil at the bidding of any prince" (38). He then talks of one of the great mysteries and accomplishments of human civilization, the pyramids, in terms of degraded labor:

> As for the Pyramids, there is nothing to wonder at in them so much as the fact that so many men could be found degraded enough to spend their lives constructing a tomb for some ambitious booby, whom it would have been

> wiser and manlier to have drowned in the Nile, and then given his body to the dogs. . . . Many are concerned about the monuments of the West and East, - to know who built them. For my part, I should like to know who in those days did not build them - who were above such trifling (37)

Men sacrifice their lives to build monuments to dead men. Thoreau sees no change in man's condition; men are still degraded. A laborer in Thoreau's time "has no time to be anything but a machine" (3). People blindly follow and listen to artificial authorities, be it Pharaohs or fashions.

Thoreau is telling his readers not to be creatures of habit who blindly following "the modes of living" that are dictated by society.[39] Thoreau encourages his readers to change their habits and to think for themselves. He argues:

> When we consider what, to use the words of the catechism, is the chief end of man, and what are the true necessities and means of life, it appears as if men have deliberately chosen the common mode of living because they preferred it to any other. Yet they honestly think there is no choice left. But alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear. It is never too late to give up our prejudices. (5)

Men live the way that they do not because they choose to, but because they feel there is no other way. But every morning offers man the new opportunity to rediscover his inner natural being. A man who listens to his own inner voice is a healthy man. A man who does as society dictates will be repaid with ill health.

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[39] See Joan Burbick, Healing the Republic (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 57-58. Burbick says that "Thoreau equates common sense with custom throughout

The cycle of illness has to be broken by each individual following his own path in life. Thoreau specifically says that a person should not listen to the advice of elders; they will most likely instruct others in the depraved ways of civilization.

> Age is no better, hardly so well qualified for an instructor as youth, for it has not profited so much as it has lost. One may almost doubt if the wisest man has learned any thing of absolute value by living . . . . I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell me any thing, to the purpose. Here is life, an experiment to a great extent untried by me; but it does not avail me that they have tried it. (5)

Each person should learn from his own life experiences. Such a view is similar to the period's medical focus upon the principle of specificity. An individual's particular constitution determines his health and well-being. Each individual has to develop their own particular regimen or way of life in order to ensure well-being. Thoreau writes: "Nature and human life are as various as our several constitutions. Who shall say what prospect life offers to another?" (6) Each individual has to find his own way to achieve well-being. There is no universal regimen of cure.

Walden, challenging the ways in which ordinary Americans exercise their freedoms" (58).

Chapter Three: "Water as Cure"

The nature-trusting movement affected regular and sectarian medical practices as well as the lifestyles of followers of the water-cure and Thoreau. For the most part, Walden and the Water-Cure Journal share similar approaches to health. Both Thoreau and followers of the water-cure believed that individuals were responsible for their own well-being. The premise of this chapter is not that Thoreau actively participated in promoting the water-cure cause, but to suggest that his lifestyle at Walden was curative in ways that were similar to the water-cure regimen of health.

Evidence of sectarian medical beliefs other than the water-cure appears in "The Village," "Economy" and "Housewarming" chapters of Walden. In "The Village" chapter, Thoreau refers to homeopathy when labeling contact with humanity as his "homeopathic dose". Also, in "Economy" Thoreau sounds like the Thomsonians when he emphasizes the importance of maintaining the body's "vital heat" for survival (8). He discusses "vital heat" while referring to Justus von Liebig, a German chemist who thought of the body as a furnace that had to be fueled (Burbick 80-81). Joan Burbick writes that "Justus Liebig's Animal Chemistry or Organic Chemistry in Its Application to Physiology and Pathology became popular in nineteenth-century America because "Liebig asserts that the body creates heat by the chemical process of combustion" (61). In "Economy," Thoreau discusses Liebig's theories:

> According to Liebig, man's body is a stove and food the fuel which keeps the internal combustion in the lungs. In cold weather we eat more, in warm less. The animal heat is the result of slow combustion, and disease and death take place when this is too rapid; or for want of fuel, or from some defect in this

> draught, the fire goes out. Of course the vital heat is not confounded with fire; but so much for the analogy. It appears, therefore, from the above list, that the expression, animal life, is nearly synonymous with the expression, animal heat; for while Food may be regarded as the Fuel which keeps up the fire within us, - and Fuel serves only to prepare the Food or to increase the warmth of our bodies by addition from without, - Shelter and Clothing also serve only to retain the heat, thus generated and absorbed. The grand necessity, then, for our bodies, is to keep warm. To keep the vital heat in us. (8)

Burbick notes that Thoreau takes from Liebig's writing his central contribution to biochemistry: "the sole source of 'force' for animals is the chemical force obtained from their food" (61). In addition to responding to Liebig's ideas, Thoreau also sounds a bit like the Thomsonians when he discusses the importance of heat and health in "Economy" and "House-Warming." In "House-Warming," Thoreau says "I lingered most about the fireplace, as the most vital part of the house" (160). Like the Thomsonians, Thoreau seems to be saying that disease was the result of the loss of body heat. Yet of all of the medical practices and beliefs of the period, Thoreau's health regimen at Walden most closely resembled the water-cure.

Before I begin my discussion of the water-cure, the Water-Cure Journal, and Walden, there are several points that I want to make at the outset. First, both Walden and the Water-Cure Journal offer specific outlines of how to live, and, at the same time, both texts encourage their readers to think and do for themselves. In Walden, Thoreau encourages his readers to find their own paths in life rather than adhering to the customs and demands of civilized society. Yet it is clear that Thoreau expected his readers to look at his life and the way he lived at Walden as a model of sorts. In Walden, Thoreau encourages individuals to define their lives

themselves while offering his own way of life as an example of healthful living. Clearly, Thoreau's model of healthful living cannot be disregarded as such because Thoreau also tells his audience "this way of living worked for me, now go find your own way". The Water-Cure Journal directly tells its readers to adhere to their prescriptions for healthful living while Thoreau indirectly does the same thing.

In addition, when discussing the water-cure as a rival of regular practice, it is important to emphasize that the water-cure fit neatly into the larger nature-trusting movement. Just like Bigelow and those who practiced therapeutic moderation within regular practice, the hydropaths took nature-trusting a step further by only prescribing water as a remedy and healthful living as preventative medicine. Also, the water-cure and regular medical practice were interested in the empirical truth. At this time, radical empiricism was replacing earlier rationalistic systems of thought. Medical practitioners, sectarian hydropaths, and regulars alike, were searching for empirical truths.

Thoreau's efforts to situate Walden in a competitive literary marketplace were similar to the hydropaths' struggle to situate themselves in a competitive medical marketplace. The Prospectus of the Water-Cure Journal makes clear that the journal was promotional literature for the hydropaths. The section of the prospectus entitled "To Our Physicians" encourages hydropathic physicians "in all parts of the country . . . [to extend] circulation of the Journal."[40] The publishers "assure them that all favors of this kind will be appreciated, and as far reciprocated."[41] The publishers of the Water-Cure Journal wanted to increase their subscription rates, and those physicians who helped increase these rates would in turn be able

[40] "Prospectus," Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (January 1851): 1.
[41] "Prospectus," Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (January 1851): 1.

to strengthen their own private practices by publishing articles or advertising themselves in the journal.

Transcendentalism and the Water-Cure

From the 1820s to the 1850s, the American mortality rate due to infectious disease was extremely high. Infants and children frequently did not reach adulthood, and infectious disease was responsible for many adult deaths. In order to cope with the loss of loved ones, the culture focused upon spiritual concerns. Death caused only a temporary separation; there would be a reunion in the after-life. Many Americans emphasized the spiritual rather than the temporal.

The period's focus on spiritual well-being also affected the culture's definition of physical health. Thoreau and followers of the water-cure defined health as having a physical, moral, and spiritual component. Nature and things associated with nature were defined as salubrious. The natural, as opposed to the civilized, was associated with goodliness/Godliness and the healthful.

In "Solitude" Thoreau says that he can completely remove himself from both human and natural communities. Perhaps this removal or "doubleness" places Thoreau on a more cosmic or spiritual plane and thus serves as a mechanism for coping with death and loss. Thoreau writes:

> We are the subjects of an experiment which is not a little interesting to me. Can we not do without the society of our gossips a little while under the circumstances, - have we our own thoughts to cheer us? . . . . With thinking we may be beside ourselves in a sane sense. By a conscious effort of the mind we

> can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent. We are not wholly involved in nature . . . . I only know myself to be a human entity; the scene so to speak, of thoughts and affections; and am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote from myself as from another . . . . When the play, it may be the tragedy, of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, so far as he was concerned. This doubleness may easily make us poor neighbors and friends sometimes. (90)

Here Thoreau is writing of his ability to transcend both the natural and human communities of this world. "Thinking" allows Thoreau to distance himself from the realities of loss and his own impending death from consumption. Thoreau emphasizes that life is a tragic play, which reinforces the idea that it is the painful experience of loss that creates the need for transcendence. Perhaps Transcendentalism and its affinity for the spiritual arise from the need to develop coping mechanisms for loss within a culture of death. Transcendentalism allows for the healing of both body and soul and has strong affiliations with the philosophies of the nature-trusting movement within homeopathy and hydropathy. These sects focused upon the natural and the spiritual. For example, homeopathy defined systemic imbalance as a displacement of a spiritual element that had to regain homeostasis. The personal associations between Grahamites, health reformers, and the Transcendentalists may also play a part in the disseminating of ideas between the two groups. The period's focus on nature, God-in-nature, God-in-man, and the definition of the natural as the normal, healthful state of an individual help explain why well-being was discussed in spiritual and physical terms. For water-cure advocates

and Transcendentalists, the body was "a temple" "to the god [a person] worships" (147). Physical well-being signaled spiritual well-being.[42]

Social and literary historians and critics have differentiated Thoreau from health crusaders on the grounds that Thoreau was more interested in the spiritual and the natural than the health reformers were. Stephen Nissenbaum and Joan Hedrick argue that the health regimen of Sylvester Graham and his followers focused on the physical alone. Stephen Nissenbaum also argues that Sylvester Graham's health regimen was created to oppose the capitalist marketplace and that Thoreau adopted a Grahamite-like lifestyle to oppose capitalism as well. However, many health reformers, including the hydropaths, focused on spiritual, not just physical, health.

In the 1840s, many of Sylvester Graham's followers became water-cure advocates and contributors to the Water-Cure Journal. Like Thoreau, hydropaths firmly believed that spiritual well-being insured corporeal well-being. In his article "Mary Gove Nichols, Prophetess of Health," John B. Blake argues that spirituality was an important element of the water-cure belief system. Contributors to the Water-Cure Journal felt that physical health was dependent upon spiritual well-being. Thoreau and hydropaths defined health to include the physical, mental, and spiritual. When a Water-Cure Journal contributor like Dr. Kittredge discussed health, for example, he argued that the well-being of the soul was linked to physical and mental health.[43] Yet there are, of course, differences between Walden and the Water-Cure Journal. Most obviously, Thoreau focused on the spiritual more than water-cure advocates

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[42] For a similar discussion, see Michael Branch and Jessica Pierce, "Thoreau and Modern Medicine," Literature and Medicine 15.1 (Spring 1996) 130-131.

[43] This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six. See E. A. Kittredge "The Water Cure, How Far Useful," Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 11.3: 66.

did. Second, Thoreau saw living in isolation in nature as necessary for well-being. His communion with nature enables him to discover and purify his inner being, and to achieve a communion with the larger universe.

Thoreau emphasizes that the physical body is a temple that should be revered (147). Water-cure advocates think along these lines as well, but the Water-Cure Journal does not suggest that individuals live in isolation from humanity in a natural environment. The Journal tries to regulate human interaction, but does not promote isolation from humanity or equate humanity itself with disease. Instead, the Journal suggests that civilization can be debilitating if a person does not live naturally according to the rules of the water-cure. The journal focuses on how an individual can function healthfully within civilization. Thoreau rejects civilization as a cause of illness.

When reading the Water-Cure Journal against Walden, the language and meaning of the journal are much more straightforward and two dimensional. Thoreau's text is more complex and more provocative in terms of man, the spiritual, the universe, the cosmic order. Yet, when T. L. Nichols wrote about the human body as a model for the social organism in the Water-Cure Journal, his language works well as metaphor just as Thoreau's discussions of the body and health, illness and well-being in Walden do. Moreover, the themes presented in the Water-Cure Journal and Walden regarding contemporary social issues and health are similar. It is clear the Thoreau's circle and water-cure enthusiasts were discussing the same issues in similar ways. There was a cross-germination of ideas among the Transcendentalists, literary and medical alike.

Regular medical practitioners labeled Transcendentalism as a medical sect or at the very least a belief system aligned with that of the water-cure, conspiring to prevent regular

practitioners from establishing professional identities. Strong ideological and personal connections existed between the Transcendentalist and hydropathic communities. Thoreau's mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, was a friend of Sylvester Graham's, the founder of the Grahamite movement (Nissenbaum 3), which was absorbed by the water-cure in the 1840s. Thoreau's other close friend, Bronson Alcott, was the cousin of William Alcott (Donegan 21), a Grahamite and health reformer (Nissenbaum 28) whose vegetarian practices were also absorbed by water-cure advocates (Donegan 21).

Contributors to the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, a publication of the well-educated medical elite, referred to homeopathic and hydropathic practices as "medical transcendentalism."[44] One regular practitioner wrote that "These emanations of medical transcendentalism are well enough to amuse the fanciful theorist in his study, but should not be in the hands of a practical physician at the bedside, especially in diseases that threaten life."[45] Regulars were not solely concerned with the impracticality of medical sects' practices; they also perceived homeopathy and hydropathy as threats to their professional authority. Regular practitioners complained when "transcendental clergymen" supported hydropathy and the "many cold-water hotels" that were establishing themselves in the Boston region.[46] They felt that there should be solidarity among the professions. When some clergymen supported the hydropaths, they perceived this support as a form of betrayal.

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[44] Boston Medical and Surgical Journal (Jan 1849): 544.
[45] Boston Medical and Surgical Journal (Jan 1849): 544.
[46] "Relations between the Clerical and Medical Professions. The Christian Examiner and the Hydropathic Delusion." Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38.26 (1848): 519.

Walden and the Water-Cure

Hydropathy and water-cure establishments were most popular during the 1840's and 1850's, the same time period in which Thoreau began a search for a cure for his consumptive condition at Walden Pond.[47] Hydropaths believed that health could be obtained by leading a temperate lifestyle. Consuming stimulating beverages such as alcohol, tea, or coffee, and eating large quantities of meat were defined as intemperate behaviors that caused disease. Hydropaths did not believe in the therapeutic use of drugs to treat illnesses. Instead, water was their cure-all, and they prescribed frequent bathing and water drinking.

In "Directions in Water-Cure," a "letter sheet" that the Nichols gave to their patients and distributed at their lectures, T.L. Nichols and Mrs. Mary Gove Nichols defined the water-cure as "the scientific application of water, at various temperatures, externally and internally, by various processes, to remove obstructions, relieve congestions, excite reactions, and bring particular organs and the whole system into healthy conditions. It includes an attention to clothing, exercise, diet, and all personal habits."[48] These directions were "to be strictly followed, and never varied from, except by permission". As I will discuss, while advocating prescribed ways of living to their readers, the Water-Cure Journal and Walden simultaneously encouraged individuals to "think for themselves" and to "find their own paths" in life. Walden and the Water-Cure Journal advocated rigid and uniform regimens of health and cure, yet they

[47] Thoreau lives at Walden Pond from July 4, 1845 to September 6, 1847. Walden is written and revised until publication in 1854.
[48] Dr. T.L. Nichols and Mrs. Mary Gove Nichols, "Directions in Water-Cure," Water-cure Journal 11.3: 71.

are also proponents of individualism. These two seemingly contradictory aims were integral parts of both discourses.

To practice the water-cure, "every patient must be furnished [with] pure soft water, for drinking and ablutions; a cotton comforter, four blankets, and a medium-sized sheet for a pack; toweling for bandages, and syringes for injections."[49] The water-cure regimen also required "pure" air, light, "loose, comfortable and clean" dress, and "daily, varied, outdoor exercise." Individuals were instructed to sleep "on a mattress of hair, wool straw, etc. - not on feathers" and to cover themselves with "blankets - not cotton comforters."[50] In the Water-Cure Journal, luxury was synonymous with excess and disease.

Specific instructions for "the habits" encouraged readers to avoid excess. The water-cure diet was strictly regulated to avoid excess and self-indulgence. Diets were classified as strict, moderate, and full. In "Directions for Water-Cure" a "strict diet" consisted of "farinacea, fruit, vegetables, and milk", prescribed "in a quantity not exceeding six ounces of solid nutriment a-day, at three meals, six hours apart." Diets classified as moderate and full could include eggs, fish, and lean or "wild" meat. "A moderate diet may include a greater variety, and a quantity not exceeding ten ounces a day. A full diet is suited only to a state of health, and may vary from twelve to sixteen ounces a day". Even the least restrictive diet of the water-cure as outlined here had moderation in mind; a temperate diet with as few "stimulating" foods as possible insured health. The water-cure diet "Strictly prohibited tea, coffee, spirits, tobacco, and all medicinal drugs," and excluded "all fat, greasy, oily substances,

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[49] Dr. T.L. Nichols and Mrs. Mary S. Gove Nichols, "Directions in Water-Cure," Water-Cure Journal 11.3: 71.

[50] Dr. T.L. Nichols and Mrs. Mary Gove Nichols, "Directions in Water-Cure," Water-cure Journal 11.3: 71.

except a small quantity of good butter; all smoked, very salty or preserved meats, and fish, pickles and preserves; all pork, lard, sausages, mince pies, geese, ducks, veal, eels, and all oily fish all high-seasoned made-dishes, or condiments, except a moderate use of salt and sugar, honey or molasses."[51]

Contributors to the Water-Cure Journal classified water according to type and temperature. Drinking water must be "fresh, pure, and soft" while bathing water may be hard or salty. "All water should be as freshly drawn as possible." In addition to classifying the types and uses of water, temperature was also important. Hydropaths classified water by temperature and these definitions varied according to season. Ice water was 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Cold water was water that was "60 degrees in the summer" while "water with the chill off" was a few degrees "above its natural temperature" or "50 to 60 degrees in the winter."[52] Cold water was used in all water-cure treatments except when directed otherwise.

The "Water-Cure Processes" were also strictly regulated. The Journal included directions for using water as a cathartic: patients drink and/or inject water with a syringe. Contributors to the Journal explained how to wash and bathe: they discussed the different merits of plunge, pouring, sponge or towel baths, sitz baths, douches, head, hand, feet baths. They also explained how to use a dripping sheet, compresses, wet bandages, wet sheet packs, partial wet sheet packs and sweating blankets.[53] Followers of the water-cure bathed, soaked, and purified themselves to prevent and cure illness.

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[51] Dr. T.L. Nichols and Mrs. Mary S. Gove Nichols, "Directions in Water-Cure," Water-Cure Journal 11.3: 71.
[52] Dr. T.L. Nichols and Mrs. Mary S. Gove Nichols, "Directions in Water-Cure," Water-Cure Journal 11.3: 71.
[53] Dr. T.L. Nichols and Mrs. Mary Gove Nichols, "Directions in Water-Cure," Water-Cure Journal 11.3: 71.

Thoreau's lifestyle while at Walden Pond was similar to those prescribed by the hydropaths. The "Economy" chapter of Walden and Water-Cure Journal advocated temperate lifestyles. In "Economy," Thoreau discusses his diet while at Walden Pond. He analyzes his diet in terms of monetary cost and physical gain, and argues that "a man may use as simple a diet as the animals, and yet retain health and strength" (41). Thoreau's list of foodstuffs in "Economy" is similar to the list provided for a moderate or full diet in "Directions for the Water-Cure". Thoreau's diet included: rice, molasses, rye meal, Indian meal, pork, flour, sugar, lard, apples, dried apple, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, watermelon, salt (40). In "Brute Neighbors" Thoreau also writes of his food stores: "I had in my cellar a firkin of potatoes, about two quarts of peas with the weevil in them, and on my shelf a little rice, a jug of molasses, and of rye and Indian meal a peck each" (161). In "Economy" Thoreau writes that he enjoyed meals of pursulane (boiled and salted corn), which he praised for their simplicity and healthfulness, and he drank water only (41). Excluding pork and lard, Thoreau followed a water-cure diet.

Thoreau made his own bread and experimented with different, yet simple, ingredients until he made a "'good, sweet, wholesome bread,' the staff of life"(42). Thoreau's bread and diet were "wholesome" and revitalizing. Thoreau's aim here was also to free men from the capitalist system. Thoreau argues: "Every New Englander might easily raise all his own breadstuffs in this land of rye and Indian corn, and not depend on distant and fluctuating markets for them" (43). Thoreau's ideological basis for breadmaking is similar to his predecessor's, Sylvester Graham, who wrote a treatise on breadmaking and encouraged people

to shun public breadmakers (Nissenbaum 7).[54] In the preface to Sex, Diet and Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform, Stephen Nissenbaum states that Sylvester Graham "devised a physiology of subsistence" to oppose the capitalist marketplace (xi). Nissenbaum also states that "It is no accident that Henry David Thoreau lived by a close approximation of the Graham System during the two years he spent at Walden Pond" (xi). Like the Grahamites, Thoreau was trying to free the individual from the enslavement of the capitalist system; simplicity, frugality, and self-reliance were the cornerstones of their common plan for opposition.

Walden Pond provided Thoreau with the drinking and bathing water that he needed to conduct his water cure. Like the instructions found in "Directions in Water-Cure," Thoreau monitored water temperatures before using the Pond's water. He kept a record of the Pond's water temperature during different seasons as well. In "The Ponds" Thoreau writes:

> The pond was my well ready dug. For four months in the year its water is as cold as it is pure at all times; and I think that it is good as any, if not the best, in the town. In the winter, all water which is exposed to the air is colder than springs and wells which are protected from it. The temperature of the pond water which stood in the room where I sat from five o'clock in the afternoon till noon the next day, the sixth of March 1846, the thermometer having been up to 65 degrees or 70 degrees some of the time, owing partly to the sun on the roof was 42 degrees, or one degree colder than the water of one of the coldest wells in the village just drawn. The temperature of the Boiling Spring

[54] See also Joan Burbick, Healing the Republic (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 64.

> the same day was 45 degrees, or the warmest of any water tried, though it is the coldest that I know of in summer, when, beside, shallow and stagnant surface water is not mingled with it. Moreover, in summer, Walden never becomes so warm as most water which is exposed to the sun, on account of its depth. In the warmest weather I usually place a pailful in my cellar, where it became cool in the night, and remained so during the day; though I also resorted to a spring in the neighborhood. It was as good when a week old as the day it was dipped. And had no taste of the pump. Whoever camps for a week in summer by the shore of a pond, needs only bury a pail of water a few feet deep in the shade of his camp to be independent of the luxury of ice. (123)

Thoreau's other source of water, in addition to Walden Pond, was a nearby spring, referred to above and referred to again in "Brute Neighbors":

> There in a very secluded and shaded spot, under a spreading white-pine, there was yet a clean firm sward to sit on. I had dug out the spring and made a well of clear grey water, where I could dig up a pailful without roiling it, and thither I went for this purpose almost every day in midsummer, when the pond was warmest. (151)

When the water from Walden Pond was too warm for him to use, Thoreau got his water from this spring.

In "House-Warming," Thoreau keeps an annual record of the dates on which Walden Pond and neighboring ponds freeze (165), and in "Spring," Thoreau records when the ponds thaw. In "Spring," as elsewhere, he monitors water temperature with a thermometer:

> A severe cold of a few days' duration in March may very much retard the opening of the former ponds (Flints' and Fair-Haven) while the temperature of Walden increases almost uninterruptedly. A thermometer thrust into the middle of Walden on the 6th of March, 1847, stood at 32 degrees, or freezing point; near the shore at 33 degrees; in the middle of Flints' Pond, the same day, at 32 ½ degrees; at a dozen rods from the shore, in shallow water, under ice a foot thick, at 36 degrees. This difference of three and a half degrees between the temperature of the deep water and the shallow in the latter pond, and the fact that a great proportion of it is comparatively shallow, show why it should break up so much sooner than Walden. (198)

Thoreau bathed frequently while at Walden Pond. When the weather permitted, he bathed when he awoke and after he labored. In "Where I Lived, What I lived For," he writes of how he "got up early" every morning and "bathed in the pond" (60). In "The Village," he writes of his forenoon baths:

> After hoeing, or perhaps reading and writing, in the forenoon I usually bathed in the pond, swimming across one of the coves for a stint, and washed the dust of my labor from my person, or smoothed out the last wrinkle which study had made, and for the afternoon was absolutely free. (112)

His monitoring of his habits and his cleanliness were part of his health regimen, and bathing was an essential element of that "purifying" ritual.

The water-cure encouraged simple and frugal habits and labeled these behaviors as healthful. One theme of "Economy" is that excessive physical expenditure in the name of

money making or spending would cause illness. Thoreau is at Walden Pond to make himself well and he promotes his well-being by limiting his expenditures.

Capitalism

In response to a stimulating, intemperate, disease-causing environment, the "Economy" chapter of Walden and the Water-Cure Journal outline how people can lead healthful lives. Thoreau and contributors to the Water-Cure Journal attempt to simplify their readers' lifestyles. The purpose of their call for simplicity was to preserve the health of the individual and to cure illness. Simplifying habits allowed for the recreation of the intellectual man. People who lived according to the natural laws of life would be rewarded with mental and moral health.

Joan Burbick argues that Thoreau was unique among health reformers in that he attacked capitalism by challenging middle class common sense (57-58).[55] In Walden, Burbick writes, "common sense is reduced to custom that . . . sustained the status quo" (58), or as Thoreau and water-cure advocates would put it, capitalism prevents men from thinking for themselves. Stephen Nissenbaum, on the other hand, does not think that Thoreau's means of opposing the capitalist marketplace differs from those of the health reformer Sylvester Graham. He states that Thoreau "adopted something close to Graham's regimen of temperance, vegetarianism, sexual abstinence, and (above all) minimal consumption" (138). Stephen Nissenbaum presents Sylvester Graham's plan for

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[55] See Joan Burbick, Healing the Republic (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

health reform, a plan that Thoreau endorses, as strategic opposition to the capitalist marketplace. Health was the grounds on which the battle was fought.

Health reformers frequently argued that capitalism caused illness. As narratives of reform, Walden and the Water-Cure Journal argue that industry breeds disease. Participating in free market enterprises prevents individuals from discovering their own true inner natures, a process which Thoreau and water-cure advocates defined as essential to health. Capitalism encourages material self-indulgence rather than austerity, and, therefore, morally compromises the individual. Materialism also destroys mental well-being. In a marketplace of equal opportunity, wealth and social class were not, theoretically, predetermined by birth, but determined by individual effort and hard work. Each individual was responsible for his own financial destiny. Therefore, many individuals worked hoping to become wealthy. Mental anguish resulted when these hopes were not actualized (D. Rothman 111-113). Medical superintendents of insane asylums held the social mobility capitalism offered responsible for mental illness (D. Rothman 111-113). Of course, superintendents and those of social standing also feared social mobility because the social order, theoretically, could be in a state of constant flux. Thus, social mobility and individual ambition were labelled as causes of illness.

Thoreau and the hydropaths denounced individual ambition and the drive to succeed and accumulate material wealth because these motives caused disease. Men overwork themselves to move up the social ladder. A major theme of both Walden and the Water-Cure Journal is that the individual blindly follows the man-made "laws of civilization" rather than the natural laws of life. Thoreau discusses how the desire to acquire material goods and financial security, a desire that Thoreau presents as unnatural and the result of societal

pressure rather than necessity, leads to degeneracy and illness. Thoreau's underlying message is that overwork will lead to ill health. Physical degradation, moral depravity and spiritual blight result from a lack of self-awareness. Men die working for baubles instead of discovering the divinity within themselves. They die listening to factory bells instead of the voices of their own divine natures. They do so to advance materially rather than spiritually.

Walden and the Water-Cure Journal define health as physical and spiritual well-being. In these texts, capitalism destroys both. Within the national discourse, the rhetoric of capitalism and democracy were often one. Most Americans saw participation in free market enterprise as an expression of individual self-destiny. Thoreau and water-cure advocates, on the other hand, felt individual ambition and the individual's participation in the marketplace were not forms of self-expression. Indeed, they felt that ambition and the desire to advance materially were unnatural, artificial impulses that denied men the freedoms of self-discovery and individual self-knowledge. Again, they argued that men became diseased when they tried to satisfy the artificial desires that the laws of civilization created.

Thoreau and the hydropaths encourage men to live according to the natural laws of life. In Walden, Thoreau argues that living simply and working to satisfy the basic needs for survival promote physical and moral health. In "Economy," Thoreau makes "haste to [his] own experiment"(27) telling his reader how he decided to live his life at Walden Pond. He outlines his life of "voluntary simplicity" in "Economy," defining the necessities of life as simply "food, clothing, shelter, and fuel" (8). Thoreau discusses his diet of mostly rye and Indian meal (40-44) and his water-drinking. There is not much variety to Thoreau's diet, but Thoreau sees variety, even the use of a little salt, as "a yielding to the demands of appetite, and not of health" (41). Diet and how a person lives his life helps determine

character. People ask Thoreau if he thinks he can "live on vegetable food alone" (44) and Thoreau answers "he can live on board nails"(44). Thoreau does not yield to appetite and thus purifies his physical and moral being. Thoreau also likes his diet because it is inexpensive. He outlines his costs in detail and says he spent $8.74 on food while living at Walden (40). Frugality and simplicity guarantee health.

Like Walden, the Water-Cure Journal discusses how a simple diet promotes well-being. For example, the journal contains articles as to how the "potato diet" builds character, is inexpensive, and does not encourage intemperance. In the article "Potato Diet," a journal contributor writes that the "potato diet" - a diet of "good bread" made of "wheat, rye, barley", and potatoes is of "great value." While following this diet, a person should "eat no salt or condiment of any kind." The editors encourage their readers: "Our word for it, the experiment will prove a good one; and the prescription costs no money. This experiment for one week will greatly increase the self-denial and perseverance of those who go through with it."[56] Like the potato diet in the Water-Cure Journal, Thoreau's bread does not stimulate appetite; it is inexpensive and builds moral fiber.

Satisfying basic needs and living simply conserve energy as well. Both Thoreau and contributors to the Water-Cure Journal did not want people to overwork themselves. In "Potato Diet" the editor notes that only those "who do not [have to] labor too hard" can adhere to the diet. Thoreau writes of how little time he has to spend working to support himself. He found "that by working about six weeks in a year, [he] could meet all the expenses of living" (46). His diet and lifestyle allowed him to lead a life of "leisure independence" and health (9). He "did not wish to spend his time in earning rich carpets

or fine furniture" (47). The Water-Cure Journal also directly attacked overworking as a cause of disease. Dr. Jackson writes that "people kill themselves by eating, drinking, by labor, . . . by money-making and spending, by extended violation of physical law". He writes that the aim of the "water-cure reformation" is to "rectify" "the general habits of the people in all cases where correction is needful"[57] The Water-Cure Journal and the "Economy" chapter of Walden encourage people to free themselves from the physical degradation of capitalism.

The goal of the Water-Cure Journal and Walden was to make men aware. Men did not know what healthy behaviors were; they were in need of instruction. Thoreau argues "Yet men have come to such a pass that they frequently starve, not for want of luxuries; and I know a good woman who thinks that her son lost his life because he took to drinking water only" (41). People are so confused that they label healthful behaviors such as water-drinking as unhealthy, and mistake luxury as necessity. In "Economy," Thoreau provides another example of a neighbor's misguided reasoning.

> One farmer says to me, "You cannot live on vegetable food solely, for it furnishes nothing to make bones with;" and so he religiously devotes a part of his day to supplying his system with bones; walking all the while he talks behind his oxen, which, with vegetable-made bones, jerk him and his lumbering plough along in spite of every obstacle. Some things are really necessaries of life in some circles, the most helpless and diseased, which in others are luxuries merely, and in others still are entirely unknown. (6)

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[56] "Potato Diet," Water-Cure Journal 7 (April 1849): 53.
[57] Dr. Jackson, "Reformation" Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (Jan 1851): 1.

This farmer is breaking two of Thoreau's natural laws. He is not a vegetarian, and he uses animal labor. What is worse is that the farmer defines animal labor and meat eating as necessities, when they actually cause disease and degradation. This farmer's value system is presented as an absurdity. He is in need of moral instruction. Water-cure advocates were trying to save their countrymen from themselves by explaining to them the natural laws of life.

Hydropaths defined necessity so that men could lead lives of simplicity. If men worked to fulfill their basic needs, they would not become ill from overwork. Thoreau writes: "I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if we live simply . . . It is not necessary that man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow" (48). He "learned from two years of experience that it would cost incredibly little trouble to obtain one's necessary food" (41). Men spent their lives working, and their reward was ill health. Thoreau spent his time living, and the result was health and strength.

The central tenet of hydropaths' writing was the notion that individual self-improvement could cure all. Integral to this belief was the idea that when the individual improved, the society as a whole improved. And if the social environment were wholesome, more individuals would lead healthful lifestyles because of the regenerative environment. The health of society and the health of individuals were an organic whole. Thus, water-cure advocates not only wanted to ensure the health of individuals, but also the health of the nation. This is evident in Walden and the Water-Cure Journal. Nations which defined luxury as necessity were diseased. Their social systems were choked by the filth wealth created. In

"Where I Lived, What I Lived For," Thoreau comments on the degraded and polluted German Confederacy:

> The nation itself, with all its so called internal improvements, which, by the way, are all external and superficial, is just 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 millions of households in the land; and the only cure for it is in rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity and elevation of purpose. (62)

The cure for a nation suffering from congestion caused by luxury is Spartan simplicity. The cure for diseased states is a citizenry made up of frugal, self-reliant people.

Self-reliance

Thoreau and contributors to the Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms outlined the means by which the American-born could cure themselves and subsequently advance national well-being. Thomas L. Nichols, editor of the Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms, states that if individuals practice and follow the principles of the water-cure, social reform will follow.[58] Nichols also believed that urban America was in a diseased state:

> Society has its false conditions and its diseases, like individuals, and it needs similar curative treatment. The causes of social disease bear close and startling

[58] T.L. Nichols "Human Physiology - the True Basis of Reform," Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 13.1 (1852): 1.

> resemblance to those of individuals. There are congestions of wealth and luxury, and atrophies of poverty and starvation. Society has its inflammations and eruptions, its ulcers, and spots of hideous gangrene. It was long ago said that a great city was a great sore. The fact is, that our great cities are organs in a state of hypertrophy, irritation, and diseased action and condition.[59]

Nichols saw wealth and luxury as the causes of societal "congestion," and poverty and starvation as the cause of societal "atrophy." In Walden, Thoreau writes that the wealthy as well as the poor are degraded. Thoreau saw wealth as the source of inherited discontent passed on from generation to generation.

Reform in Jacksonian America was directed toward all classes, the wealthy included. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg discusses in Religion and the Rise of the American City, the New York City Mission Movement's first priority was to convert and reclaim the souls of the lost by helping them find Christ. Taking care of the poor's temporal needs was of secondary importance. The mission here was to rid the nation of sin and to create a moral environment for all citizens, and in the case of the evangelists, to prepare for the impending millennium. Smith-Rosenberg writes:

> Moral virtues were economic virtues, and men deeply committed to the need for universal salvation could not but assume that a secular by-product of this spiritual change would be universal thriftiness, temperance, prudence - and hence social stability. (8)

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[59] T.L. Nichols "Human Physiology - the True Basis of Reform," Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 13.1 (1852): 1.

In antebellum cultural discourse spiritual well-being and economic prosperity were interrelated. Frugality was associated with morality. Americans frequently believed that individuals were poor because they were intemperate spendthrifts who lacked moral character. Antebellum Americans felt that wealthy people who spent their money frivolously were immoral as well. Missionaries argued that wealthy and poor alike had to lead moderate and frugal lives to ensure spiritual well-being and social stability. Thoreau and followers of the water-cure believed that temperance, thriftiness, and "economy" were necessary for both physical, spiritual and social well-being as well.

The ideals of the missionary movements of the 1830s and the middle class were not necessarily at odds with one another. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg argues, middle class Americans believed that an individual could not advance economically if he were not a good, moral Christian. Salvation and financial security were the results of leading a pious life (Smith-Rosenberg 8). Thus, middle class capitalists and the preaching of missionaries did not contradict one another. Capitalism was not a threat to spiritual well-being, and indeed most Americans believed spiritual well-being lead to financial well-being. Thoreau and the Grahamites,[60] on the other hand, opposed larger antebellum notions of economic prosperity. They believed that capitalism and material wealth put the individual at risk, and, therefore, the society as a whole at risk. Individuals, they argued, should live according to the natural laws of life, laws which called for the close scrutiny of individual habits to determine what was

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[60] See Sex, Diet, Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform. Nissenbaum argues that Graham sets up his system in opposition to capitalism. He also says that Thoreau followed "a close approximation of the Graham system during the two years he spent at Walden Pond' (xi) to oppose capitalism as well. Nissenbaum points out that Thomas Nichols and Mary Gove Nichols were Grahamites who contributed to the Water-Cure Journal.

necessary for survival and what was not. Thoreau claims that physical and spiritual elevation is most easily accomplished by leading a life of voluntary poverty. Leading a life of voluntary poverty would directly oppose larger cultural beliefs in the accumulation of wealth as a means to social advancement. The underlying cultural assumption was that economic advancement was linked to morality, as if wealth were the temporal reward of the spiritually saved (Smith-Rosenberg 8). Thoreau and water-cure enthusiasts opposed this way of thinking. In fact, followers of the water-cure and Thoreau saw the accumulation of wealth as the cause of both spiritual and physical decay.

Thoreau frequently links material wealth to filth and disease. In the "Economy" chapter of Walden, for example, Thoreau argues that the accumulation of possessions should be avoided (45). He writes of how the material possessions of the deceased are auctioned off to successive generations, passed on like hereditary disease. He praises the Mucclasse Indians who annually cleanse their community by gathering together all of their material possessions and burning them. After this community-based purification process is complete, they purify themselves by taking medicine, fasting for three days, and by abstaining "from the gratification of every appetite and passion whatever" (46). Thoreau says that he has "scarcely heard of a truer sacrament" and that these people must have been "originally inspired from Heaven to do thus" (46).[61]

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[61] It may seem odd that Thoreau embraces the customs, habits, and beliefs of North American Indians, South Asian Indians, and the Chinese throughout Walden, and denigrates the customs, habits and beliefs of Europeans. While the Water-Cure Journal and antebellum culture as a whole are equally wary of the European immigrant and Asian other, Thoreau emulates what he believes to be Asian philosophies and disparages the European. Asian philosophies instruct and reinforce Thoreau's spiritual beliefs. While Thoreau was a champion of the downtrodden who frequently spoke out against oppression there are moments in Walden, particularly in the "Baker Farm" chapter, where Thoreau, like the Water-Cure Journal and antebellum society as

Again and again in the Water-Cure Journal luxury is linked with disease. As in Thoreau's discussion of clothing in the "Economy" section of Walden, the following of the dictates of fashion is more than foppery; it is a pestilence that creates physical degradation. The Bloomerism movement, a movement championed by water-cure followers, called for women to wear loose fitting clothing instead of tight fitted corsets, or flimsy, sheer garments. There are endless diagrams of deformed spines in the journal, as well as tales of women dying from consumption because they wore fashionable, but transparent clothing in cold or rainy weather. Diagrams of the "Bloomer" fashions that advertise sensible, warm, loose fitting clothing worn by women with thicker, more natural waistlines appear in almost every issue of the Water-Cure Journal in the late 1840s and early 1850s. In the Water-Cure Journal and Walden, the styles and life styles of the wealthy were represented as the causes of disease.

Inheritance and wealth removes the individual from nature and decreases his ability to be self-reliant. Both Thoreau and followers of the water-cure believed that inherited wealth prevented the individual from following his own path in life, and fostered a disease-like dependency. The following passage appeared in the "Varieties" column of the Water-Cure Journal under the title "Self-Reliance".

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a whole, expresses anti-immigrant sentiments. Given Thoreau's own political and ideological beliefs, beliefs that are shared by other members of the new republic as well, it is not surprising that he would be critical of the lifestyles of immigrants from the Old World. Immigrants follow their "old modes of living" in America, and Thoreau sees these habits/behaviors as products of the political tyranny and oppressive governments of Europe. Immigrants allow themselves to become the tools of capitalist enterprises. Native American Indians, on the other hand, are romanticized as being one with nature. They do not lead lives of luxury or accumulate wealth. They do not participate in capitalist enterprises. And of course, American Indians are not a comparable threat to American ideals and America's social structures; they have been exterminated or isolated from the rest of society while immigrants have not.

> The success of individuals in life is greatly owing to their early learning to depend upon their own resources. Money, or the expectations of it by inheritance, has ruined more men then the want of it ever did. Teach young men to rely upon their own efforts, to be frugal and industrious, and you have furnished then with a productive capital which no man can ever wrest from them.[62]

Thoreau, like the contributors to the Water-Cure Journal, believed that inheriting money is similar to inheriting disease; both are debilitating. He writes, "I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of" (2). Inheritance encourages dependency just as hereditary disease causes illness.

To cure disease and to prevent dependency, Walden and the Water-Cure Journal encouraged individuals to lead frugal and industrious lives by relying upon their own efforts. Thoreau and the followers of the water-cure encouraged individuals to develop their own ways of living by looking more closely into their own natures. Thoreau characterizes inheritance as encouraging both dependency and imitation.

> One young man of my acquaintance, who had inherited some acres, told me that he thought he should live as I did, if he had the means. I would not have any one adopt my mode of living on any account; for beside that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire there be as many different persons in the world as possible; but I would have each one by

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[62] "Self-Reliance" Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 7 (1849): 157.

> very careful to find out and pursue his own way, and not his father's, or his mother's, or his neighbor's, instead. (48)

Like Thoreau, the Water-Cure Journal encouraged readers to chart their own life courses. Mrs. Gage, a subscriber to the Water-Cure Journal, writes to Dr. Jackson that she is "fully convinced that we all need to simplify habits, and to look more closely into our own natures, and when we have found what to us seems to be the right way, to live up to it unflinchingly."[63]

Conscientious antebellum philanthropists worried that their charitable efforts would foster dependency and weaken the moral fabric of society. As Charles E. Rosenberg writes in the Care of Strangers: The Rise of America's Hospital System, during the nineteenth century, "American philanthropists were haunted by the specter of 'pauperization' - the fear that the provision of aid in any form would inevitably sap the moral capacity of those receiving it" (21). Rosenberg argues that in antebellum America, hospital care itself was seen as "unnatural" and "potentially demoralizing" (22). In short, most Americans feared that philanthropic efforts of reform and the creation of charitable institutions[64] such as hospitals would create dependency and foster immorality. Philanthropists and health reformers disapproved of the establishment of hospitals because they wanted to avoid creating a dependent class of invalids. Instead, antebellum humanitarians enthusiastically supported the establishment of dispensaries and out-patient medicine for the needy (Rosenberg, Care of Strangers 22) because the threat of creating permanent dependency was lessened by such means of medical treatment. Self-reliance and

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[63] See "Letter from Mrs. Gage to Dr. Jackson," Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms (July 1852) 14.1: 60.

[64] See David Rosner, A Once Charitable Enterprise (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

health, the placing of responsibility upon the individual to cure his own ails, were mainstays of antebellum belief.

As Mrs. Gove Nichols, editor of the Water-Cure Journal writes: "we are responsible for our illnesses", and in her case she believed that illness was in large part caused by ignorance of the laws of the "conditions of health" as outlined in the Water-Cure Journal.[65] The individual was responsible for his or her own health. If a person were sick then that person's individual habits were to blame. The "19th-century charity notion" was "that illness was a reflection of the personal worthiness of the sufferer" (Rosner and Markowitz, "Early Movement for Occupational Safety" 516) rather than the result of poor social or living conditions.

In the "Visitors" chapter of Walden, Thoreau writes:

> I had some guests from those not reckoned commonly among the town's poor, but should be; who are among the world's poor at any rate; guests who appeal, not to your hospitality, but to your *hospitalality*; who earnestly wish to be helped, and preface their appeal with the information that they are resolved, for one thing, never to help themselves . . . . Objects of charity are not guests. (102)

Thoreau changes the word hospitality to hospital-ality to say that those who rely on the help of others are seeking charity and are not self-reliant. He is participating in the larger cultural discourse which associated hospitals with dependence and illness. Thoreau as consumptive was self-reliant. He did not go to a charity hospital to ask for help; he tried to cure himself of

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[65] "Mrs. Gove's Experience in Water Cure," Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 8 (1849): 8.

his own physical ailments at Walden Pond. That Thoreau's guests came to his home "wishing to be helped" was abhorrent to him, and to him signaled both a lack of self-reliance and moral worth.

The extent to which antebellum Americans adhered to cultural notions of self-reliance and individual self-improvement when responding to illness is remarkable. In the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, Mr. William Sherwin submitted a letter to the editor describing how he cured his own illness. Sherwin was suffering from an advanced stage of Phtisis (tuberculosis). He "got better by not taking any medicine," and by getting "abundant exercise" in the "free mountain air," and by "his tendency of mind to look on the bright side of things and hope for the best."[66] The editor of the journal comments on Sherwin's letter and says that Sherwin's purposeful collapsing of a diseased lung can also lead to the restoration of health.[67] The editor writes: "a current theory" is when the diseased lung is collapsed "respiration [can be] carried on by the sound" lung, and "a restoration of health would be possible, even in advanced phthisis."[68] The article, "Puncturing the Thorax in Disease of the Lungs," appeared in the journal as a response to the editor's discussion of how health can be restored by deflating a diseased lung, and this response is an example of the self-reliant approach to illness. The author of this response writes that when he was suffering from "pulmonary consumption" he collapsed his own lung by literally stabbing himself in the chest. As he removed the knife from his thorax "pure matter followed the blade with sufficient force to clear [his] body for several inches. A large quantity was discharged at the time." This man "cured himself" and was able

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[66] "Collapse of the Right Lung" Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38(July 5, 1848): 342.
[67] This was a means of treatment for tuberculosis through the 1950s.
[68] "Collapse of the Right Lung" Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38(July 5, 1848):

to stop the spread of his tuberculosis.[69] That these Draconian methods were presented as models of cure reveals the extent to which the society applauded self-reliant measures and abhorred dependency.

Philanthropists themselves were believed to foster dependency and unwittingly encourage the imitation of immoral behavior. The fear of imitation in antebellum America was based upon the fear of the spread of moral contagion, and both Thoreau and contributors to the Water-Cure Journal believed that philanthropists were sources of moral contagion. In the Water-Cure Journal a cartoon entitled "A Congregation of Tobacco Worshippers"[70] depicts a person preaching from a pulpit to an audience that is "going in" to the snuff and chewing "plugs." Spittoons and pocket handkerchiefs abound. The article that accompanies this cartoon, "The Ideal and the Actual" states

> We are assured by one experienced in the business (preaching), that a good "cud" or a "big pinch" will quicken the devotional principle, and enable the worshipper to pass through "the exercises" with much more energy, than it would be possible without. If some folks "who occupy high places," may hereby "see themselves, as others see them," our object will in part have been accomplished, and our labors not in vain. [71]

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[69] "Puncturing the Thorax in Disease of the Lungs, Letter to the Editor," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38(July 5, 1848): 342.

[70] "A Congregation of Tobacco Worshippers," Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 14.1(July 1852): 53

[71] "The Ideal and the Actual," Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 14.1 (July 1852):53.

As David Reynolds points out, "philanthropy and charitable reform had become so corrupted in the popular mind that humorists gleefully toyed with the inversion of values that tainted reform suggested" (473).[72]

In "Economy," Thoreau argues that reformers talk to others about their own "private ails" (53). He writes:

> The philanthropist too often surrounds mankind with the remembrance of his own cast-off griefs as an atmosphere and calls it sympathy. We should impart our courage, and not our despair, our health and ease, and not our disease, and take care that it does not spread by contagion. (52)

Here Thoreau equates the philanthropist with the reformed sinner. He argues that reformers are preoccupied with their own past transgressions, or "private ails" (53), be they "tobacco-chewers," alcoholics, or the like (53). Presented as reformed sinners, Thoreau feels that when a philanthropist or reformer elaborates on his drunken revels of the past, for example, he is actually serving as a model of immoral behavior. Yes, the reformed sinner tries to sympathize with the audience's sinful plights, but in actuality Thoreau says the reformer is "imparting disease" by discussing immoral behaviors in graphic detail. When the reformer/philanthropist lectures, his disease or immoral behavior can spread or be imitated by those who listen to him discuss the evils of alcohol or tobacco. The philanthropist is a disease reservoir, the source of moral contagion.[73]

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[72] David S. Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1989) 473.

[73] See David S. Reynolds, "Black Cats and Delirium Tremens," The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature ed. David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997) 46-47. Reynolds argues that Thoreau felt that "when people grouped together in reform societies, inevitably the reform became

At temperance meetings, alcoholics would speak about their struggles with alcohol. These confessional speeches, which were shared with a larger audience in the name of reform, could not only disturb the audience, but could also unsettle the speaker himself. The American Journal of Insanity reported in 1845 that a man was admitted into a mental institution because of his participation in a temperance meeting. The man became "deranged" while relating his own experiences with alcoholism at the meeting. The journal notes that the man was intemperate for many years, which predisposed him to mental illness. Nonetheless, participation in the temperance meeting is cited as the catalyst for his mental breakdown. The journal concludes that the "mental excitement" from "attending numerous temperance and religious meetings and attempting to lecture" caused his insanity.[74]

Thoreau believed philanthropists complained and "cursed" their lives by preaching about their own "private ails." Instead, Thoreau thought that the individual should isolate himself in natural surroundings, simplify his lifestyle, and allow nature to cure him of his individual ailments.

> There is nowhere recorded a simple and irrepressible satisfaction with the gift of life, any memorable praise of God. All health and success does me good, however far off and withdrawn it may appear; all disease and failure helps to make me sad and does me evil, however much sympathy it may have with me or I with it. If, then, we would indeed restore mankind by truly Indian, botanic, magnetic, or natural means, let us first be simple and well as Nature ourselves,

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diseased or unclean" (46). Reynolds notes that Thoreau felt philanthropists were "spreading contagion," while Walden "offered a reform of the spirit and body" or "healing" (47).

[74] "Insanity Illustrated by Cases, and by the Conversations and Lectures of the Insane,"

> dispel the clouds which hang over our own brows, and take up a little life into our pores. Do not stay to be an overseer of the poor, but endeavor to become one with the worthies of the world. (53)

Philanthropists should not concern themselves with the problems of the world. A "worthy" person is never a philanthropist, or "overseer of the poor". Philanthropic causes are the public announcement of individual and community "failures" and, like "disease," only do "the individual evil." Instead, mankind can "restore" itself by communing with Nature. By leading restorative, ascetic, natural lives, we all can be "as well as Nature ourselves." A self-reliant individual who lives in isolation in nature is "one with the worthies of the world"; a philanthropist who tries to help or offer charity to the poor is not.

Self-Reliance and the Professions

Thoreau's response to capitalism's division of labor and dehumanization of the workforce was to become a self-reliant jack-of-all trades. In "Economy," Thoreau writes:

> My purpose in going to Walden pond was not to live cheaply nor to live dearly there, but to transact some private business with the fewest obstacles; to be hindered from accomplishing which for want of a little common sense, a little enterprise and business talent, appeared not so sad as foolish. (13)

Even as an invalid, Thoreau will be self-sufficient at Walden Pond. He will be his own mason (159), plasterer (163), surveyor, carpenter (37), farmer, housekeeper and doctor.

American Journal of Insanity 1 (1844-1845) 57.

Thoreau says that he has "as many trades as" he has "fingers" (37), and it seems as if he should include his toes as well. Self-reliance was self-emancipation.

Thoreau argues that if men were to labor to support necessity alone, they would free their minds from the mindless toil of capitalist enterprises. In "Economy," he writes:

> Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands, and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough, the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sing when they are so engaged? But alas! we do like cowbirds and cuckoos, which lay their eggs in nests which other birds have built, and cheer no traveler with their chattering and unmusical notes. (31)

People who work for themselves can free and develop their "poetic faculties," faculties which Thoreau links to individual identity and spirituality. But instead of working for themselves, people now only perform limited tasks and relegate what they could happily and healthfully do for themselves to particular specialists or professionals. Thoreau argues:

> Shall we forever resign the pleasure of construction to the carpenter? What does architecture amount to in the experience of the mass of men? I never in all walks came across engaged in so simple and natural an occupation as building his house. We belong to the community. It is not the tailor alone who is the ninth part of a man; it is as much the preacher, and the merchant and the farmer. Where is this division of labor to end? and what object does it finally serve? No doubt another *may* also think for

> me; but it is not therefore desirable that he should do so to the exclusion of my thinking for myself.(31)

This for Thoreau is the crux of the matter. A man who does not think is not a man.

Like Thoreau, water-cure advocates defined health as independence, as men doing and thinking for themselves.

In the article "New-Year Reflections," Dr. R. T. Trall writes:

> Twelve months ago, in the name of the proprietors of the Water-Cure Journal, we reasoned with its patrons on temperance, health, and a reform to come . . . . "truth's a discovery made by travelling minds" We never suffered the misfortune of "getting an education;" and we devoutly pray that all our friends and readers will be spared the calamity of being turned out of a school-house or college.[75]

As I discuss in Chapter Four, Thoreau, like water-cure advocates, was concerned with the truth, imagined as the result of a man's individual life experiences. In both Walden and the Water-Cure Journal, the only true education is one which leads to the discovery of an individual's own truth. To be turned out of a school like a piece of furniture that has been manufactured is neither edifying nor enlightening. For Thoreau, life cannot be experienced in a school-house. A college education does not necessarily insure independent thinking.

During the 1840s, medical education did not encourage independent thinking or reasoning. At the time there was a proliferation of proprietary medical schools. Most medical practitioners who received medical degrees went to proprietary medical schools for two terms (Starr 82). There they would memorize medical materials, and take exams.

With the exception of those physicians who served apprenticeships, or attended elite medical schools, most practitioners received little clinical training while in school.[76] Most medical students did not learn from experience.

Thoreau says the same of students who attend "Cambridge College" (33). Instead of living in the college's dormitories, he argues, students should build houses of their own. They should take the tools out of the immigrants' hands and "lay the foundations" of their homes themselves (34). In "Economy," Thoreau outlines the cost of his building his own home at Walden Pond, and says students can save money by building their own homes (33). Even more important than being frugal, building a home will give students the practical experience that they lack. Life is not something that a student should read about in books. Life is to be lived.

Antebellum culture encouraged individuals to learn from experience, and to think and do for themselves. At the time Thoreau was writing Walden, cultural authority was in the hands of the individual, and the professions were struggling to establish themselves.[77] From 1826 - 1852, state medical licensing laws that had been set in place during the 1820s were being repealed (Starr 58) because the establishment of a medical profession was suspect. Which group of practitioners should receive licenses and why? Medical licensing was equated with privilege, "not competence"(Starr 58). Medical sects were responsible, in part, for the repealing of these laws. Sectarian practitioners argued that regular practitioners were just as

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[75] R.T. Trall, "New-Year Reflections" Water-Cure Journal 11.3: 71.
[76] See Paul Starr, The Social Transformation of American Medicine (New York: Basic Books, 1982) 84.
[77] See Lawrence Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Paul Starr, The Social Transformation of American Medicine (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

much a medical sect as they were. They labelled the regular physicians allopaths, or those who treated illnesses with dissimilars, as opposed to the homeopaths, who cured like with like (Starr 100). Why should the allopaths get licenses? Why not all medical practitioners, including sectarian practitioners? Regular practitioners did not want sectarian practitioners to become licensed. State legislatures decided not to privilege any medical sect or group over another because in a democracy all groups should be recognized and treated equally. Jacksonian Americans associated professional groups with privilege, which inhibited the development of the professions (Starr 57).

Sectarian rivalry reinforced the idea that regular practitioners were not the sole medical authorities. What prevented the medical profession from establishing itself perhaps even more than sectarian rivalry was the cultural belief in the rights of the individual in a democratic society. Antebellum Americans believed that medical knowledge, indeed all knowledge, should be accessible to all citizens (Starr 56). Individuals would not yield to so-called experts because self-reliant citizens can become experts in their own right. Starr writes that " the democratic claim of accessibility and universality prevailed in medicine" (59). The public did not "relinquish" their claim to being their own doctors until they were "convinced of the growing complexity of medical science and the limits of lay competence" (Starr 59).

Just as Thoreau encouraged students to build their own homes because of the monetary savings, and the benefits of practical experience, the Water-Cure Journal encouraged people to be their own doctors for the same reasons. In "The Home Practice of the Water-Cure," T.L. Nichols writes that he and his wife, Mary Gove Nichols, instruct

audiences on how they can cure themselves at home.[78] They distributed to their audience a broadsheet entitled "Directions in Water-Cure."[79] Nichols writes:

> Water-Cure principles are spreading rapidly among the people. For a time, all knowledge of Water-Cure was confined to people of wealth and fashion. It required time and money to go to Graefenberg, or any other Water-Cure establishment; but now the people are beginning to learn that every family may have the benefits of this mode of treatment, almost or quite without expense, at home. And our lectures have been given to teach the people everywhere, while everywhere there are people to be taught. I have thought, therefore, that a brief lecture in the Journal might answer the end I am aiming at - the instruction of mankind in the true principles and practice of medicine; in other words, the preservation and restoration of health.[80]

Dr. Trall of the Water-Cure Journal supports Nichols' view:

> If the people can be thoroughly indoctrinated in the general principle of hydropathy, they will not err much, certainly not fatally in their home application of the Water-Cure appliances to the common diseases of the day. If they can go a step further, and make themselves acquainted with the Laws of

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[78] Mary Gove Nichols was one of the first women to lecture publicly. For a brief biography of Mary Gove Nichols, See John B. Blake, "Mary Gove Nichols, Prophetess of Health," Women and Health in America. Ed. Judith Walzer Leavitt. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984) 359-375. At this time, women were discouraged from speaking publicly. For example, Harriet Beecher Stowe had her husband speak for her at public appearances. See Joan Hedrick, Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[79] T.L. Nichols and Mary Gove Nichols, "Directions is Water-Cure" Water-Cure Journal 11.3 (1851): 71.

[80] T.L. Nichols, "The Home Practice of the Water-Cure" Water-Cure Journal 11.3 (1851):

> Life and Health, they will well nigh emancipate themselves from all need of doctors of any sort.[81]

In the second half of the nineteenth century when they professions had established themselves, Americans began to defer to medical doctors when seeking treatment in part because of scientific discoveries and a shift in medical therapeutics. Some physicians began accepting the germ theory of disease in the 1860s; they suspected that specific diseases were caused by specific disease entities. Some practitioners began offering a universal cure for a specific disease. In 1882, Koch discovered the tubercle bacillus (Warner 278), and in 1883, he discovered the cholera vibrio (Rosenberg, Cholera Years 200).[82] By isolating specific organisms as the cause of specific diseases, Koch provided a microbial basis for disease etiology. Subsequently, physicians began prescribing a universal cure for a specific disease as opposed to basing patients' therapeutic regimens upon their individual constitutions. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, physicians had a firm hold over cultural authority. Because the body of scientific knowledge was growing, the public became convinced of the complexity of medical knowledge (Starr 59). Individuals no longer thought that they had the knowledge or ability to cure themselves; instead, they deferred to medical professionals. However, during the 1840s authority was still clearly in the individual's hands. Self-help manuals to be read at home, such as Walden and the Water-Cure Journal, were believed to be more beneficial than consulting a doctor. This was especially true of hydropaths and Thoreau

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[81] Dr. Trall, "Freedom From Doctors" Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (Jan. 1851): 1.

[82] See Lawrence Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard university Press, 1988), Paul Starr, The Social Transformation of American Medicine. (New York: Basic Books, 1982), and John Harley Warner, The Therapeutic Perspective. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1986).

who believed that health was dependent upon the individual's self-knowledge and independent thinking.

The editors of the Water-Cure Journal wanted the journal to be a self-help guide for its readers. They write that the journal "is published monthly, illustrated with engravings, exhibiting the Structure, Anatomy, and Physiology of the human Body, with familiar instructions to learners."[83] The prospectus of the journal states that it is a "FAMILY GUIDE" to health that provides instructions for the treatment of "all diseases".[84] Medical treatments and instructions were written in language that people could understand, and the journal was similar to the period's other popular "guides to domestic medicine" (Starr 34) in that they all encouraged people to be their own doctors. The most popular domestic medical guide in American was William Buchan's Domestic Medicine, first published in 1769 in Edinburgh (Starr 32). This medical guidebook was published in Philadelphia in 1771 (Starr 32). John C. Gunn's Domestic Medicine "Appeared in 1830 and by mid-century replaced Buchan's work as the popular favorite" (34). These guides were anti-profession and were written explicitly "to simplify the language of medicine" (Starr 34). Like the Water-Cure Journal, they outlined the importance of diet, fresh air, cleanliness, but they also supported heroic medical practice (Starr 34), which water-cure advocates did not. Like these popular guides, the Water-Cure Journal provides "Particular directions . . . for the treatment of ordinary cases at Home, which will enable all, who may have occasion, to apply it without the aid of the physician."[85] Thoreau practiced his water-cure in the environs of Walden. He did not consult a physician to abate his illness. Instead, he consulted nature and his own nature.

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[83] Prospectus Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (Jan 1851): 1.
[84] Prospectus Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (Jan. 1851): 1.

During the 1840s - 1850s, it was difficult for regular practitioners to establish themselves as medical authorities: sectarian rivalries made it seem that regulars were not the sole arbiters of medical knowledge; antebellum Americans believed they had access to medical knowledge and could be their own doctors; the professions were associated with privilege instead of expertise. In an attempt to decrease professional competition, regulars tried to oust sectarian and lay practitioners from the profession. Women were most commonly the lay practitioners within the home (Starr 32). As the medical profession was trying to establish itself, it tried to oust women from the profession. Women argued that they were the ones who should rightfully participate in the professions because they were morally superior to men.

> Women doctors hoped to reform society by feminizing it, a task that required the professionalization of "womanhood." Acknowledging that their goals required a broader interpretation of woman's sphere, they felt this a small price to pay for a morally righteous and civilized America. (Morantz-Sanchez 61)

Women were trying to maintain professional and cultural authority via "feminization" while men, included, were doing so via "masculinization". Women argued that they were natural caregivers and healers while men felt that the professions, knowledge and the public sphere were their domain. In Brought to Bed, Judith Walzer Leavitt states that men and women felt that it was indelicate for men to practice in the birthing room of the home. In the late nineteenth century, Victorian Americans felt that it was improper for male physicians to examine and treat women (Leavitt, Brought to Bed 124), which created

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[85] "Water-Cure at Home," Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (Jan 1851): 1.

a demand for female doctors. Nevertheless, the overwhelming impulse of regular practitioners was to expel women from the profession altogether (Starr 50).

Since regular physicians were trying to consolidate their profession by excluding women and sectarian practitioners, the sectarians and female practitioners became allies. Water-cure advocates were strong proponents for women's rights and their participation in the professions. The Water-Cure Journal published numerous articles about the rights of women and campaigned for their active participation in the medical profession. In an article entitled "Allopathy adversus Woman," the journal lampoons an article that appeared in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, which praised the publication of the book A History of the Art of Midwifery. A Lecture Delivered at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. This lecture attacked woman's participation in obstetrics. The allopath is quoted as saying: "Woman's rights! What an absurdity! Women have duties. The 'rights' belong to the stronger sex; the 'duties' to the weaker. Such is the order of the whole animal kingdom" (87). The allopath also attacks hydropathy for supporting women in the professions:

> At the present time there is a proposition mooted - springing from the same high source which advocates woman's rights, the Bloomer costume, and other similar nonsensical theories - to give again the portion of the healing art of which I am treating, if not the whole domain of medicine, to the females. (87)

Regular practitioners did not support women's participation in the medical profession just as they did not support sectarian practitioners. The Water-Cure Journal article concludes with the following synopsis from the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal:

> the dark ages seem to be again reviving. Hand in hand with the infinitesimals [homeopaths] and water wonder worker [hydropath], comes the hard-faced midwife (for theory means absurdity now, and professor is a term applied to mountebanks and quacks). We have lecturers and lecturesses, and female colleges, where the very large and highly intelligent classes are taught how to get children, especially how not to get them. The Women's Rights Convention cannot see why women should bear children more than men, and while writing some plan to equalize this matter, they refuse to bear them themselves. (87)

The hydropath writes that the readers "can die laughing" after having read what the allopath had to say.[86] Here, birth control, women's education, women lecturers, midwives, homeopaths, and hydropaths are portrayed as threats to the regular medical profession.[87]

In the Water-Cure Journal, women wrote articles asking why female participation in the medical profession was perceived as a threat. In the article, "The Position of Women in Regard to Medical Science," Mrs. Caroline Healey Dall wrote that at the moment the topic of interest was the "intellectual development of women." She wrote that it was "true women entered scientific arena through a breach in its wall," meaning through the practice of midwifery, and now "men want to take over and they know no better than women what they are doing." Dall argued that women were always midwives; they were "natural" midwives, and men only wanted to be midwives to make money

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[86] "Allopathy adversus Woman," Water-Cure Journal 12 (April 1852): 86-87.
[87] A reader cannot completely trust the hydropath's reading of "Dr. K's" work given the

(35).[88] Clearly, female practitioners were struggling to remain in the medical profession, and they found allies in the hydropaths who also were being pushed out of the medical profession by regular practitioners.

"The Possibility of Change"

Walden and the Water-Cure Journal offer a critique of contemporary society. Both discourses championed the rights of the common man, and encouraged independent thinking and self-reliance. In addition, Walden and the Water-Cure Journal may be read as health narratives. Thoreau and water-cure advocates opposed capitalism on the grounds that it caused ill health. They argue that capitalism causes physical and moral decay. They discuss how the common man must think independently, be self-sufficient and avoid the pitfalls of society in order to maintain physical and mental health. In addition to physical health, Thoreau and water-cure advocates were concerned with spirituality and health, how to cope with illness and death, how to prolong life, and how to promote happiness.

Throughout Walden, Thoreau's preoccupation with health, life, and death is evident. In "Economy" Thoreau writes:

> I think that we may safely trust a good deal more than we do. We may waive just so much care of ourselves as we honestly bestow elsewhere. Nature is well adapted to our weakness as to our strength. The incessant anxiety and strain of some is a well nigh incurable form of disease. We are made to

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animosity between the hydropaths and regular practitioners.

[88] Mrs. Caroline Healey Dall, "The Position of Women in Regard to Medical Science"

> exaggerate the importance of what work we do; and yet how much is not done by us! Or, what if we had been taken sick? How vigilant we are! Determined not to live by faith if we can avoid it; all the day long on the alert, at night we unwillingly say our prayers and commit ourselves to uncertainties. So thoroughly and sincerely are we compelled to live, reverencing our life, and denying the possibility of change. This is the only way, we say; but there are as many ways as there can be drawn radii from one centre. All change is a miracle to contemplate; but it is a miracle which is taking place every instant. (7)

Overwork and anxiety about our work is akin to "an incurable form of disease," but Thoreau is also emphasizing that we spend so much time working or worrying about our work that we do not truly live. And then when we do go to sleep, we are afraid we will not wake up the next day. We revere life when we fear we will die. Thoreau also relishes life[89] when faced with his own death from his consumptive condition. Thoreau offers a solution to the general fear of death.

In this passage, the fear of death is presented as the "denying of the possibility of change". Thoreau offers the possibility of change as the means of discovering eternity. "The possibility of change" has a dual meaning, one secular, one spiritual: people should and can change how they live their lives; they should not fear the change from life in this world to death. Likewise, the many radii drawn from one center is a diagram that has a dual meaning, one secular, one spiritual. One way of interpreting this diagram is that each individual can

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Water-Cure Journal 13 (Jan 1852): 34-35.

[89] See Thoreau's letter to his friend H.G.O. Blake in 1848: "I love to live" Joel Porte, Emerson and Thoreau: Transcendentalists in Conflict (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1965) 94.

follow many different paths in life, and an individual has to follow his own path(s), not someone else's. This is the message of "Economy." Another way of interpreting this diagram is more esoteric and is presented in "The Ponds," "The Pond in Winter," and "Conclusion." There Thoreau seems to be saying that the many radii drawn from one center are the many individual natures that emanate from the core of a collective humanity. This core is divine. Each individual has his own inner nature, his own radius, that emanates from a central source. At the center is the nuclei of the Waldenses, (189) the purified selves of those who discovered their true inner natures at Walden Pond. Once purified, individuals can become one with the larger, eternal universe, the kernel of divinity from which spiritual life emanates.

Thoreau and water-cure advocates believed that health was the result of a positive mind-body connection. The prospectus of the Water-Cure Journal states the journal's "Philosophy of Health" will include a discussion of "Food, Drinks, Clothing, Air, Exercise, showing their effects on both body and mind"[90]. Thoreau and water-cure advocates defined health as physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Like Thoreau, some water-cure advocates believed that the imaginative and the poetic were at least as important as the scientific in the cure of disease. An editor of the Water-Cure Journal addresses the medical trade and says that the poet knows that "teaching [people] how to avoid sickness" is a "nobler avocation" than "the business of doctoring folks" (13).[91] And diving into the waters of one's own inner nature leads to well-being, not following the dictates of science; science cannot provide all of the answers to well-being and health.

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[90] "Philosophy of Health," Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (Jan. 1851): 1.
[91] Water-Cure Journal. 13.1: 13.

In the section of the Water-Cure Journal entitled "Fragments from Home Practice,[92]" a reader of the journal submits his "facts and thoughts" about his, his wife's, and his two children's recent struggle to recover from "intermittent fever" (10). He and his son "took some medicine" but "fever still hung about" them (10). They "quit the medicine" and "took what nature craved": "some pleasant acid drink and some simple food"(10). They "got well in a short time"(10). The writer then says "Science" is "a creature of forcing instinct planted by Deity. Truly, man, you have left the fountains of living waters (instinct and intuition), and are trying to satisfy yourself in the turbid waters of science and reason" (10). This water-cure contributor is voicing the theme of "The Ponds" and "The Pond in Winter," indeed of Walden itself. Just like this contributor, Thoreau employs the scientific at Walden and says it is not enough. The "instinct planted by Deity" Thoreau refers to as the intellect in the ponds chapters. Thoreau fishes for his own inner nature, and then purifies his intellect in the living waters of Walden Pond. Like the Water-Cure Journal contributor who suffered from intermittent fever, Thoreau does not seek a cure for himself from the "turbid waters of science and reason" alone. The Water-Cure Journal and Walden encourage individuals to "find their own ways," to lead their lives.

[92] "Fragments from Home Practice." Water-Cure Journal 13.1: 10.

Chapter Four: "The Purifying Waters of Walden Pond"

Thoreau isolated himself in a natural environment to restore his physical health. In order to regain his corporeal equilibrium, he also had to regain his spirituality. He does so by cleansing his intellect. Thoreau associated the purified intellect with the spiritual. He also thought that the spiritual was housed in man, and that man's body was the temple of the divine (147). He followed his austere dietary regimen to "elevate the physical" and thus achieve well-being. In "The Ponds" and "The Pond In Winter," Thoreau writes about how he purified his intellect. Once the intellect is purified, the "mind [can] descend into [the] body and redeem it" (148).

Walden Pond is symbolic of Thoreau's search for a cure on the physical, moral, mental and spiritual planes. His direct physical contact with nature is not solely responsible for his regaining his health;[93] rather, his contact and communion with Walden Pond in particular were responsible for his well-being. Thoreau cleanses himself in the pure waters of Walden Pond and thereby follows his own water-cure. While "Economy" focuses on physical health, "The Ponds" and "The Pond in Winter" discuss spiritual well-being.

Filth, Civilization and Contagion

While the ponds chapters of Walden are arguably the most beautiful in Walden, Thoreau's preoccupation with filth and the unclean is a recurring motif. In the early nineteenth

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[93] See Michael Branch and Jessica Pierce, "'Another Name for Health': Thoreau and Modern Medicine," Literature and Medicine 15.1 (Spring 1996) 131.

century, filth accumulated because organized sanitation pick-up and disposal systems did not exist, and as a consequence, garbage was a major public health problem (Leavitt and Numbers 9). That Thoreau spent much of his time writing about pure water, open spaces far from urban centers, cleanliness, and dietary habits is not, therefore, surprising. These issues were being widely discussed by reformers as the causes of disease at the time Thoreau was writing Walden. Physicians and health reformers such as John Griscom and Lemuel Shattuck[94] believed that "cleaning up" urban areas was the best means of preventing and combating disease (Leavitt and Numbers "Overview" 9).

Like these sanitary reformers, Thoreau used statistical evidence to monitor his environment. In "The Ponds," Thoreau measures the level of the ponds water in all seasons (121); he records the ponds' water temperatures (123; 197-198); and in "The Pond in Winter," he surveys the ponds' lengths, widths, and depths (189). Thoreau is concerned with the purity of his water supply, and he equates a pure water supply with physical health and moral well-being, obviously aware on some level that a contaminated water supply causes disease.

Water is also the most important symbol of Walden. Walden Pond is Thoreau's well-spring of well-being. Indeed, Walden Pond was where Thoreau (and others if they take the time to go fishing in their own natures) purifies his intellect. Thoreau was literally, at least in his "active imagination," purifying his body and soul with the waters of Walden Pond.

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[94] See Charles E. Rosenberg and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Pietism and the Origins of the American Public Health Movement: A Note on John H. Griscom and Robert M. Hartley," Sickness and Health in America, 2nd ed., ed. Judith Walzer Leavitt and Ronald L. Numbers (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985) 385-398, and John Duffy The Sanitarians: A History of American Public Health (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) 98-99.

Numerical method

At the time Thoreau was writing Walden, New England's elite medical practitioners were beginning to employ the numerical method in their practices. Elite medical practitioners saw the need for scientific experimentation and observation. Thoreau too was a scientist in the new sense of the word. He employed the numerical method when observing the environment while at Walden Pond, but he used scientific method to show that ultimately science could not clarify all things. In "The Ponds" and "The Ponds in Winter," Thoreau combines scientific observation and metaphysical contemplation. He employs the scientific method to plumb the depths of Walden Pond. Symbolically, Thoreau becomes what he calls the pure waters of Walden Pond, and when he sounds the depths of the pond he is sounding the depths of his soul. Thoreau discovers himself by diving into the waters of own nature; self-awareness and well-being are inseparable.

In Walden, Thoreau encourages the individual to trust in himself and in nature to regain or maintain his health. Placing trust in nature when treating illness played a major role in New England medical culture during the 1830s, even before Jacob Bigelow's 1835 lecture on "Self-limited Diseases" (Warner 22). During the 1830s and 1840s, many of the elite Boston physicians were educated at the Paris clinical school where therapeutic moderation and empirical observation were encouraged (Warner 22). Thus, therapeutic skepticism and the nature-trusting movement of the Boston region were in part indebted to the Paris clinical school. New England medical practitioners who had received their medical education in France came back to the United States as followers of Louis' numerical methodologies, and the clinical school's beliefs in observation, experimentation and the scientific method (Warner 199-

205). Some practitioners felt that medical practices should be supported by scientific evidence (Warner 199-206). But most practitioners, even those who supported the numerical method, did not believe it could provide all the answers. James Jackson Jr., an American practitioner who was a firm believer in the numerical method argued: "though statistics are very valuable - yet we always find that a man who placed great reliance on them in any branch of science, physical, moral or political, is apt to make the mistake of thinking two and two always make four - which they do not" (qtd. in Warner 200).[95] Thoreau's position on the numerical method echoes that of most practitioners with a scientific bent: statistics are useful, but they are not sufficient. American medical practitioners on the whole were often ambivalent about scientific discoveries during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century (Warner 199). Indeed, some medical practitioners felt that a doctor's moral character would be destroyed by science (Warner 193); these men were afraid doctors would become "mad scientists," like Hawthorne's Aylmer, instead of empathic caregivers.

In his lecture "Self-limited Diseases,' Bigelow bemoaned the medical profession's ambivalence toward science. He felt medical practitioners were obsessed with establishing their professional identities so they could earn a living. They were not interested in discovering medical "truths". Bigelow wanted medical practitioners to use the scientific method to evaluate all medical practices so that the truth might be discovered. If physicians employed the scientific method, the failures and successes of medical practice would be recorded in order to determine the "whole truth" (Bigelow 104). The results of these unbiased accounts could

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[95] James Jackson, Sr., to James Jackson, Jr., Boston, 15 January 1832, in James Jackson Putnam, A Memoir of Dr. James Jackson (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1905) 332. qtd. in John Harley Warner, The Therapeutic Perspective (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986) 200.

create "a basis sufficiently broad to erect a superstructure in therapeutics on which dependence may be placed" (Bigelow 104). This scientific approach, Bigelow argued, "is part of the rigid method which characterizes the best examples of the modern French school" (104). Bigelow felt that large scale observations of pathologies, preferably in institutional settings, should validate medical practices:

> The aggregate of results, successful and unsuccessful, circumstantially and impartially reported by competent observers, will give us a near approximation to truth in regard to the disease of the time and place in which the experiments are instituted. The *numerical method* employed by Louis in his extensive pathological researches, and now adopted by his most distinguished contemporaries in France affords the means of as near an approach to certainty on this head as the subject itself admits. (Bigelow 105)

The call for the employment of the numerical or scientific method in the development of medical therapeutics did eventually provide a rational, scientific basis for medical practice by the twentieth century.[96] The numerical method allowed for the statistical analysis of reproducible results which would eventually support a universal claim about the effectiveness of therapeutic practices and the validity of particular disease theories (Warner 55-57; 252-253).

Thoreau employs the numerical method to discover a universal truth about human nature: man's inner nature is spiritual. In "The Pond in Winter," he plumbs the depths of

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[96] This is not to say that those who employed the numerical method did not fudge their results in order to maintain that their hypothesis held true. For example, in The Discovery of the Asylum, David S. Rothman shows that when mental institutions collected numerical data of their case studies' success rates, the results were manipulated to show that the mental institutions invariably cured their patients. The employment of the numerical method alone does not guarantee "truth". See David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the

Walden Pond to determine its depth and to "determine the shape of the bottom" of the pond (191). Many of the locals believed that Walden Pond was bottomless, but Thoreau proves otherwise. He writes: "As I was desirous to recover the long lost bottom of Walden Pond, I surveyed it carefully, before the ice was broke up, early in '46, with compass and chain and sounding line" (189). When he successfully "recovers" the bottom of the pond, Thoreau dispels the townspeople's myth that the pond cannot be measured. But, as he does throughout Walden, Thoreau transforms physical reality and the measurable into analogues for the imagination and the immeasurable. In Walden, the pond and water itself represent well-being. Walden Pond frees man's inner spiritual nature. Thoreau is "thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless" (189). The infinite is a quantity that can only be imagined, not quantified. Thoreau believes "the imagination dives deeper and soars higher than Nature goes" (190). Water cures bodily ailments and acts as a multi-mediumed mirror that leads to self-discovery, and to the liberation of the imagination.

Thoreau discovers that "the regularity of the bottom" of the pond "and its conformity to the shores and range of the neighboring hills were so perfect that a distant promontory betrayed itself in the soundings quite across the pond, and its direction could be determined by observing the opposite shore . . ." (191). Having determined that the pond's bottom is measurable, Thoreau

> mapped the pond by the scale of ten rods to an inch, and put down more soundings, more than a hundred in all, [he] observed this remarkable

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Asylum Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971.

> coincidence . . . the line of the greatest length intersected the line of the greater breadth exactly at the point of the greatest depth (191).

Because of his numerical evidence, Thoreau concludes that "Given, then, the length and breadth of the cove, and the character of the surrounding shore, and you have almost elements enough to make out a formula for all cases" (191). The result of Thoreau's numerical investigations and observations is the development of a universal formula. Thoreau proves his theory by testing his results and his universal formula by measuring White Pond.

Instead of using his results to study the ponds further, Thoreau says he wants to study ethics. He will "draw lines through the length and breadth of the aggregate of a man's particular daily behaviors and waves of life into his coves and inlets, and where they intersect will be the height and depth of his character" (192). Men, like inlets of water, can be sounded and their characters measured. Note the play on "waves" which doubles in sound as "ways" - the ways men decide to live their lives. Thoreau and followers of the water-cure were trying to develop a universal formula to clarify the "natural laws of life". Thoreau hopes that

> If we knew all the laws of Nature, we should need only one fact, or the description of one actual phenomenon, to infer all to particular results at that point. Now we know only a few laws, and our result is vitiated, not, of course by any confusion or irregularity in Nature, but our own ignorance of essential elements in the calculation. (192)

Thoreau and the hydropaths try to morally advise the individual. They advocate the following of a simple list of the natural laws of life while at the same time encouraging individualism, self-reliance, and the discovery of one's own path in life. But in Thoreau's case, he takes these laws

further by having them eventually lead to the spiritual truth, or what he terms the purified intellect.

The Remarkable Purity of Walden Pond

Everything about Walden is pure: the water itself; the creatures and plant life that live in the pond; and, ultimately, Thoreau himself. The pond's purity is not compromised "because it does not mingle with other waters" (117). Walden Pond "is a clear and deep green well, half a mile long and a mile and three quarters in circumference, and contains about sixty-one and a half acres; a perennial spring in the midst of pine and oak woods, without any visible inlet or outlet except by the clouds and evaporation" (118). Walden is Thoreau's well. The drinking water it provides is pure because it is a self-contained ecosystem.

Because the waters of Walden are pure, so is its plant life. Thoreau writes:

> a closer scrutiny does not detect a flag nor a bulrush, nor even a lily, yellow or white, but only a few small heart-leaves and potamogetons, and perhaps a water-target or two; all which however a bather might not perceive; and these plants are clean and bright like the element they grow in. (120)

Walden's fish are also of the purest

> The shiners, pouts, and perch also, and indeed all fishes which inhabit this pond, are much cleaner, handsomer, and firmer fleshed than those in the river and most other ponds, as the water is purer, and they can easily be distinguished from them. (124)

as are the amphibious creatures of the pond: "there are also a clean race of frogs and tortoises, and a few muscles in it" (124). Indeed, Walden Pond purifies even the heavens. It "obtained a patent of heaven to be the only Walden Pond in the world and distiller of celestial dews" (120).

It is no surprise then that men who swim in Walden Pond will purify themselves. When swimmers float in the local river or other regional ponds, they "impart to the body of one bathing in [them] a yellowish tinge" (119). Walden Pond, on the other hand, "is of such crystalline purity that the body of the bather appears of an alabaster whiteness" (119). Indeed, Thoreau goes so far as to say that all living creatures, men, animals, plants, who bathe in these waters become "Waldenses".[97] This is evident when Thoreau praises the pond's pickerel in "The Pond in Winter."

> Ah, the pickerel of Walden! . . . I am always surprised by their rare beauty, as if they were fabulous fishes . . . They possess a quite dazzling and transcendent beauty . . . They are not green like pines, nor gray like the stones, nor blue like the sky; they have, to my eyes, if possible, yet rarer colors, like flowers and precious stones, as if they were the pearls the animalized nuclei or crystals of the Walden water. They, or course, are Walden all over and all through; are themselves small Waldens in the animal kingdom, Waldenses. (188-189)

These beautiful and peerless pickerel are crystals of Walden Pond. It is as if Thoreau is saying that those who bathe and live in the pond become the solidified forms of the water itself. And all are pure.

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[97] While Thoreau clearly alludes here to the "Waldenses," a "sect of religious dissenters founded about 1170 by Peter Waldo in France" (189), I do not want to use this word in that sense here.

Thoreau swims in Walden Pond and is purified just like all of the other creatures. In "Where I Lived, What I Lived For," Thoreau writes that "Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. . . .I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did" (59, 60). In Walden, simplicity is purity. And Thoreau's bathing rituals are responsible for his spiritual renewal. In "The Village" chapter, Thoreau writes of his afternoon ablutions:

> After hoeing, or perhaps reading and writing, in the forenoon I usually bathed in the pond, swimming across one of the coves for a stint, and washed the dust of my labor from my person, or smoothed out the last wrinkle which study had made, and for the afternoon was absolutely free. (112)

Thoreau equated these bathing rituals with a purification process, and like the other creatures of the pond, considers himself a Waldenses, a pure crystallized form of Walden.

Throughout Walden, Thoreau emphasizes that he takes the time to purify and discover himself at the pond:

> many a forenoon have I stolen away, preferring to spend thus the most valued part of the day; for I was rich, if not in money, in sunny hours and summer days, and spent them lavishly; nor do I regret that I did not waste more of them in the workshop or the teacher's desk. (128)

Thoreau's occupation is to discover himself and increase his self-awareness and, therefore, his well-being at Walden. He writes that he is an idler by profession and that many citizens consider him to be indolent. But Thoreau is doing what all men should do to insure their physical, mental and spiritual well-being. "We spend more on almost any article of bodily

aliment or ailment than on our mental aliment" (73). Thoreau takes the time to nourish his inner being. In "Sounds" he writes: "Sometimes, in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a reverie amidst the pines and hickories and sumnates, in undisturbed solitude" (75). After cleansing himself, he sits in solitude recreating his "intellectual man" (147). Indeed, Thoreau concludes "Higher Laws" with John Farmer, a representative of the American citizen, sitting, contemplating and "recreating his intellectual man" (147). Thoreau wishes that all men would take the time to be idle so that they can discover their own inner natures and thereby find serenity and well-being. But Thoreau knows that this is not happening. He writes:

> The cars never pause to look at [Walden Pond]; yet I fancy that the engineers and firemen and breakmen, and those passengers who have a season ticket and see it often, are better men for the sight. The engineer does not forget at night, or his nature does not, that he has beheld this vision of serenity and purity once at least during the day, though seen but once, it helps wash out State-street and the engine's soot. One proposes that it be called "God's Drop". (130)

The purity of Walden's waters washes away the contamination of body and soul that "State-Street" or civilization has created.

But civilized men repress their true natures. They are so degraded that they do not want to come to Walden Pond to bathe, drink, and purify themselves; instead, they want to build an aqueduct from Walden to Concord:

> the villagers, who scarcely know where it lies, instead of going to the pond to bathe of drink, are thinking to bring its water, which should be as sacred as the

> Ganges at least, to the village in a pipe, to wash their dishes with! - to earn their Walden by the turning of a cock or drawing of a plug! (129)

The villagers are denying themselves the opportunity to heal themselves. Thoreau believes that the waters of Walden can only heal those who migrate to the pond in its natural setting. Making the waters of Walden an urban convenience removes their healing and purifying powers.

Thoreau believes you are what you drink. To become purified and well, you must drink water that comes from a "pure" source. Thoreau writes: "Walden has no visible inlet nor outlet" (130) and only evaporation and rain water or snow maintain the pond's water level. Walden stands as Thoreau's symbol of all that is pure and right in the world.

> Nevertheless, of all the characters I have known, perhaps Walden wears best, and best preserves its purity. Many men have been likened to it, but few deserve that honor. Though the woodchoppers have laid bare first this shore and then that, and the Irish have built their sties by it, and the railroad has infringed on its border, and the ice-men have skimmed it once, it is itself unchanged . . . all change is in me . . . it is perennially young . . . .

Walden Pond stands as a testament to purity. When Thoreau writes of it, he is also writing about what he thinks of himself:

> If by living thus reservedly and austere, like a hermit in the woods, so long, it [Walden Pond] has acquired such wonderful purity, who would not regret that the comparatively impure waters of Flints' Pond should be mingled with it or itself should ever go to waste its sweetness in the ocean wave? (130)

Why should Thoreau mingle with mankind and compromise himself and why should Walden mingle with Flint's Pond and become impure? Flints' Pond is "comparatively shallow" and "not remarkably pure" and is associated with men whom Thoreau labels as impure as well (130). Flints' Pond is named after an "unclean and stupid farmer" who was not a proper conservationist with a proper appreciation of nature (131). Flint "ruthlessly laid bare" the shores of Flints' Pond (131) for monetary gain. This "skin-flint" did not see his reflection in the pond, but in "the reflecting surface of a dollar, or bright cent" (131). Thoreau laments "such is the poverty of our nomenclature" that a pond is named after a farmer who has destroyed the environment for profit (131). Filthy Flint carved out his unclean pond.

Divining the Pure Waters of the Self

For Thoreau, the first step in reclaiming the spiritual is to locate the pure waters of the self. In material terms, a person should take divining rod in hand and search for pure water that may serve as a well. In Thoreauvian terms, this is also the first step in discovering one's own inner spring of well-being. The "divining" rod is a perfect image because in addition to finding water, it is also used to find the Divine in man's nature.

In "The Ponds," Thoreau retells the local legend about the creation of Walden Pond. Indians held a meeting on a hill at which they "used much profanity" (122). This language caused the hill to sink and create the landscape upon which Walden Pond now rests (122). Thoreau is more inclined to believe that Walden Pond was created by an "ancient settler" who, with "divining rod" in hand, "saw a thin vapor rising from the sward" (122). "The hazel pointed downward" and the settler "concluded to dig a well here" (122). Walden Pond was

originally "divined" and dug up to provide this ancient settler with drinking water. While Thoreau is living in the woods and writing Walden, Walden Pond is Thoreau's drinking well: "The pond was my well ready dug. For four months in the year its water is as cold as it is pure at all times; and I think that is then as good as any" (123). Thoreau suggests that Walden Pond is a man-made well (122-123). He says that the shores of Walden Pond are lined with stone collected and placed there by man: "I detect the paver. If the name was not derived from that of some English locality, - Saffron Walden, for instance, - one might suppose that it was called, originally, Walled-in Pond" (122). Thoreau uses the same imagery of the divining rod to describe the process by which man divines the pure waters of his own inner nature. Thoreau describes how he seeks drinking water from "The Pond in Winter":

> Then to my morning work. First I take an axe and pail and go in search of water, if that be not a dream. After a cold and snowy night I needed a divining rod to find it. . . .I cut my way first through a foot of snow, and then a foot of ice, and open a window under my feet, where, kneeling to drink, I look down into the quiet parlor of the fishes . . . there a perennial waveless serenity reigns . . . Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads. (187)

Like the ancient settler, Thoreau uses a divining rod to find drinking water. He discovers during his quest for water that beneath the ice serenity reigns. Here, as elsewhere, is the inverted imagery of the reflection of the upper atmosphere on the water's surface so that heaven and the watery underworld are merged at the interface of the lake and atmosphere.

The perennial serenity of the underwater world can be captured and become a part of an individual's nature. Thoreau uses a divining rod to find and dig into the vein of the waters of his own intellect. He concludes "Where I Lived, What I Lived For" with this passage:

> Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars. I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born. The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and fore-paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine. (66)

This conclusion is significant for in this chapter, Thoreau speaks of embracing life. As an invalid, he is concerned both with the enjoyment of life and the questioning of eternity. Thoreau fishes in the timeless stream of his own being. His purified intellect can "cleave through" the mechanical "busi-ness" of life to the truth or "secret of things." Ultimately, the timelessness of eternity remains. What is eternity? Thoreau's "instinct" tells him that his intellect will "cleave" and "burrow" to the pure waters of his own inner being. Call this inner being the soul or what you will, Thoreau believes that the discovery of one's own inner divine self leads to eternal serenity and peace. In the conclusion of "Where I Lived, What I Lived For" and in "The Ponds" Thoreau uses the same language to describe how the ancient settler first discovered the waters of Walden Pond. With "divining rod" and the evidence of the "thin

rising vapors" Thoreau will mine the infinite waters of his own eternal existence. His intellect will find "the richest vein" of the waters of his own nature.

Time is but a stream Thoreau goes fishing in. In "The Pond in Winter" Thoreau writes about men who are at one with nature who fish in Walden Pond:

> Early in the morning, while all things are crisp with frost, men come with fishing reels and slender lunch and let down their fine lines through the snowy field to take pickerel and perch; wild men who instinctively follow other fashions and trust other authorities than their townsmen. And by their goings and comings stitch towns together in parts where else they would be ripped. (187)

These "wild men" "instinctively" know who they are. They are apt fishermen who have already spent time fishing in the waters of their own natures. They do not listen to the mandates of authorities. The only authoritative voice they listen to is their consciousness.

These fishermen feast on the purified creatures of Walden Pond:

> They sit and eat their luncheon in stout fear-naughts on the dry oak leaves on the shore, as wise in natural lore as the citizen is in artificial. They never consulted with books, and know and can tell much less that they have done. The things which they practice are said not yet to be known. . . .His life itself passes deeper in Nature than the studies of the naturalist penetrate; himself a subject for the naturalist. . . .Such a man has some right to fish, and I love to see Nature carried out in him. The perch swallows the grub-worm, the pickerel swallows the perch, and the fisherman swallows the pickerel; and so all the chinks in the scale of being are filled. (188)

Thoreau loves to see "Nature carried out" in these wild men. They are one with nature. For Thoreau and members of the American vegetarian societies and water-cure advocates, man has to discover that his true nature is spiritual as opposed to bestial. Hunting and fishing impede spiritual development. Yet in Thoreau's worldview it is always better to be a wild man of nature than a civilized man of society whose true nature has been displaced by material concerns.

Townsmen do come to Walden Pond to go fishing, but unlike the men of nature and Thoreau, they cannot discover their true natures because they are too concerned with material gain. In "Higher Laws," Thoreau writes of how his townsmen squander the opportunity to discover and purify themselves while fishing at Walden Pond:

> I have been surprised to consider that the only obvious employment . . . which ever to my knowledge detained at Walden Pond for a whole half day any of my fellow- citizens . . . was fishing. Commonly they did not think that they were lucky, as well paid for their time, unless they got a long string of fish, though they had the opportunity of seeing the pond all the while. They might go there a thousand times before the sediment of fishing would sink to the bottom and leave their purpose pure; but no doubt such a clarifying process would be going on all the while. The governor and his council faintly remember the pond, for they went a-fishing there when they were boys; but now they are too old and dignified to go a-fishing, and so they know it no more forever. Yet even they expect to go to heaven at last. (142)

Thoreau's fellow citizens come to Walden Pond to go fishing for fish: when they do not catch any, they feel they have wasted their time. Thoreau says that these men had the opportunity to

discover their true selves. They could allow their material concerns, here symbolized by the desire to catch a string of fish, to sink to the bottom of the pond. Then their life's "purpose" would be pure. Thoreau says that even though they come to the pond to fish, the pond's "Clarifying process would [still] be going on all the while" (142). Even against their conscious wills, fishing at Walden Pond would allow for the discovery of the fishermen's natures.

In "Solitude" Thoreau writes of men who go fishing in the pond at night during the spring:

> At night there was never a traveller passed my house, or knocked at my door, more than if I were the first or last man; unless it were in the spring, when at long intervals some came from the village to fish for pouts, - they plainly fished much more in the Walden Pond of their own natures, and baited their hooks with darkness, - but they soon retreated, usually with light baskets, and left "the world to darkness and to me," and the black kernel of the night was never profaned by any human neighborhood.(87-88)

Thoreau says that these men are taking the time to fish in "the Walden Pond of their own natures." Yet even though these men are discovering themselves the underlying motif that humanity is synonymous with impurity and contagion remains. These men "baited their hooks with darkness" just like Thoreau does when he goes fishing at night, "but they soon retreated," leaving this night world to Thoreau. The true essence of the darkness "the black kernel of the night" is not to be defiled, "and was never profaned by any human neighborhood" (88). Thoreau alone can fish at night for a sustained period of time; he alone is one with Walden Pond.

Thoreau fishes at night and delves into his own nature. He travels and glides between the worlds of the waking and the dream state. The snap of the fishing line calls him back to the conscious world:

> At length you slowly raise, pulling hand over hand, some horned pout squeaking and squirming to the upper air. It was very queer, especially in dark nights, when your thoughts had wandered to vast and cosmogonal themes in other spheres, to feel this faint jerk, which came to interrupt your dreams and link you to nature again. It seemed as if I might next cast my line upward into the air, as well as downward into this element which was scarcely more dense. Thus I caught two fishes as it were with one hook. (117)

The two fishes symbolize the unconscious and conscious worlds: the unconscious dream-state and the fishes of the air versus the conscious state and the literal fish caught with hook in water. Thoreau's ideas are the result of casting his line of thought into the deep waters of the unconscious, and by casting his line of thought into the upper air of conscious thought. In a boat at night, with the darkness of the sky above and the same darkness beneath him, Thoreau contemplates "cosmogonal" themes. Floating on darkness and sitting in darkness, he floats in the skies of the universe, travelling in his mind past the stratosphere, contemplating the creation of the universe.

In "Solitude" Thoreau writes: "A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature" (124). While Walden Pond will reflect an observer's image, in Thoreau's writing water is much more than a mere mirror. Thoreau plays with the idea that water serves as an interface between land and sky, consciousness and the unconscious. Water is not only essential for the

water-cure, it also purifies the intellect. Water serves symbolically as the medium of the mind, the place where self-awareness, creativity, intellect are buoyed.

Thoreau writes that "Walden is a perfect forest mirror, set around with stones as precious to my eye as if fewer or rarer. Nothing so fair, so pure, and at the same time so large, as a lake perchance, lies on the surface of the earth. Sky water" (126). Thoreau contemplates "the expression" ""the glassy surface of a lake"" (125). Water is a mirror which reflects the heavens above. "As you look over the pond westward you are obliged to employ both your hands to defend your eyes against the reflected as well as the true sun, they are equally bright"(Thoreau 125). But mirrors only reflect. Water also refracts. Thoreau writes that the lake's surface "is like molten glass cooled but not congealed, and the few motes in it are pure and beautiful like the imperfections in glass" (125).

Water can also be in solid, liquid or gas form. These three states are synonymous with the states of consciousness that Thoreau's water imagery evokes. Water serves as an interface between sky and land, and in Thoreau's symbolic register, between the conscious and unconscious workings of the imagination.

> A field of water betrays the spirit that is in the air. It is continually receiving new life and motion from above. It is intermediate in its nature between land and sky. On land only the grass and trees wave, but the water itself is rippled by the wind. I see where the breeze dashes across it by the streaks or flakes of light. It is remarkable that we can look down on its surface. We shall, perhaps, look down thus on the surface of air at length, and mark where a still subtler spirit sweeps over it. (127)

Water, intermediate between land and sky, betrays the spirit that is in the air. The subtler spirit, the spirit of the self, the spirits of those who have left this world, will one day be made visible in the air as they are in the water. Water, in the ponds chapters, clarifies all - inner natures of men and perhaps the workings of inner spirits. Gazing at the water's surface allows for the contemplation of "cosmogonal themes" (117).

Water is a plural symbol in Walden. Thoreau writes in "The Pond in Winter": "I am thankful that his pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless" (189). Walden Pond, deep and pure, is a symbol of the deep and pure imagination, which runs deeper than Walden Pond. "The amount of it is, the imagination, give it the least license, dives deeper and soars higher than Nature goes" (190). Can the waters of the mind be chartered and measured? Is there a limit to the intellect?

In "The Pond in Winter" Thoreau discusses the difference between water and ice, the affections and the intellect:

> Ice is an interesting subject for contemplation. They told me that they had some in the ice-houses at Fresh Pond five years old which was as good as ever. Why is it that a bucket of water soon becomes putrid, but frozen remains sweet forever? It is commonly said that this is the difference between the affections and the intellect. (196)

Ice symbolizes cool and pure intellect. The affections, which may involve human interaction, soon become putrid and are akin to the other meaning of the word affection: disease. When the intellect, thought, and the imagination are rarefied they can last forever. The pure waters of Walden and Thoreau's imagination, unlike the impure waters of other ponds and people, guarantee health and well-being.

Walden Pond is more than a "perfect forest mirror": Walden Pond is Thoreau's Americanized Mecca. The pure waters of Walden Pond can purify pilgrims from all over the world.

> Nations come and go without defiling it [Walden Pond]. It is a mirror which no stone can crack, whose quicksilver will never wear off, whose gilding Nature continually repairs; no storms, no dust, can dim its surface ever fresh; - a mirror in which all impurity presented to it sinks, swept and dusted by the sun's hazy brush, - this the light dust-cloth, - which retains no breath that is breathed on it, but sends its own to float as clouds high above its surface, and be reflected in its bosom still. (126)

Here again are the recurrent themes of Walden. The notion that immigrants are a source of contagion,[98] but yet cannot defile Walden Pond; the idea that breath, such as human breath exhaled onto a mirror's surface[99] or in Thoreau's face, can be a source of contagion; and finally the theme of Walden Pond as ever pure. Walden Pond's breath, clouds of evaporation rising from the pond's surface, is pure. Thoreau breathes in the breath of Walden Pond and is purified. All impurity sinks to the bottom of the pond; Walden continually repairs and clarifies. At Walden Pond, the body is cleansed; thought is clarified; the spirit is divined and freed.

Thoreau celebrates his own divinity and that of Walden Pond:

> It is the same liquid joy to itself and its Maker, ay and it may be to me. It is the work of a brave man surely, in whom there was no guile! He rounded this water with his hand, deepened and clarified it in his thought, and in his will

[98] I discuss this in greater detail in Chapter Five.

[99] As I discussed in Chapter Two, Thoreau, in a sense, does not want to be breathed one

bequeathed it to Concord. I see by its face that it is visited by the same reflection; and I can almost say, Walden, is it you?

It is no dream of mine,

To ornament a line;

I cannot come nearer to God and Heaven

Than I live to Walden even.

I am its stony shore,

And the breeze that passes o'er;

In the hollow of my hand

Are its water and its sand,

And its deepest resort

Lies high in my thought. (129-130)

Who is the Maker Thoreau refers to? The original well-maker? God? Thoreau himself? Surely, he intends all of these referents. Walden reflects and purifies the divinity that is man. In his poem Thoreau places himself in the role of the Maker, of he who "rounded this water with his hand, deepened and clarified it in his thought". Water is purified thought. Walden Pond is not a dream, but Thoreau's dream made reality. He has, by living at Walden, purified his thought.

In a way, Thoreau has intellectualized and therefore dispelled his own fears. Dying from consumption is a slow, painful process. It takes years for the lungs to calcify to the point where a person can no longer breathe.[100] By intellectualizing death and life, Thoreau can face

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by others because he sees this as a source of contagion.

[100] For a discussion of the tertiary stages of tuberculosis. See Rene and Jean Dubos, The

his own demise. Thoreau feels that his purified intellect allows him to be a cosmogonal traveller, and a part of the larger universe and eternal universal being. Thus he is not a person to be ruled by putrid affections such as the fear of death, but rather by cool, purified intellect. Although a "scientific" naturalist, Thoreau's definition of intellect, just like his definition of truth, is one that includes the scientific and the imagined, the poetic, intuitive instinct and the Divine.

Thoreau becomes one with nature and the pond. His thoughts are the waters of the pond. "The Pond in Winter" ends with the following passage:

> Thus it appears that the sweltering inhabitants of Charleston and New Orleans, of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta, drink at my well. In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! There I meet the servant of the Bramin, priest of the Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the rot of a tree with his crust and water jug. I meet his servant come to draw water of the Ganges. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges. (197)

White Plague; Tuberculosis, Man and Society (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

Finally, a water supply that Walden can mingle with. Thoreau's intellect is pure and springs from the Ganges and Walden. His thought travels and mingles with those who also contemplate the meaning of existence and the universe.

In the "Conclusion" chapter of Walden, Thoreau writes that "the universe is wider than our view of it" (211). Man should "search" himself and "travel inwardly" to discover himself (122). "Obey the precept of the old philosopher," Thoreau insists, "explore yourself" (213). In "Conclusion," Thoreau encourages his readers to "open new channels of thought" within themselves (212). Again, water, symbolizes man's inner being. Thoreau encourages his readers to experience what he says he has experienced in the conclusion of "The Pond in Winter." He wants man to become a mind traveller whose thoughts mingle with all those who think and travel on the cosmogonal plane. Yes, "to the sick the doctors wisely recommend a change of air and scenery" (211). But "doctors prescribe for diseases of the skin merely" (211). Medical practitioners can try to cure physical ailments, but they cannot guarantee health and well-being. Like the fish Thoreau sees beneath the ice in the winter when he goes to draw a pail full of water, he is serene (187) because he is self-aware. Health and truth are the results of self-awareness.

What is the truth? Thoreau and the water-cure advocates argued that all individuals have their own unique truths that they must discover and live by. Water-cure advocates encouraged individuals to find their own ways to lead their lives while prescribing particular ways to purify the self. Nature is cure; self-knowledge is well-being. Common to both Thoreau and contributors to the Water-Cure Journal are their belief that mankind can be "redeemed". The editors of the Water-Cure Journal imagine that people are reading their journal and being redeemed, just as Thoreau imagines people will read Walden and wake up. The editors of the

Water-Cure Journal write: "We are now within a charmed circle. In imagination we see around us more than one hundred thousand persons, who are the constant readers of the journal. On them depends our hope of redeeming humanity from the curse of disease."[101] Who knows how many people were actually reading this journal, certainly not one hundred thousand. But the editors imagine a number, and then they try to make their imagining a reality. They will redeem mankind. This perspective is apparent in the "Conclusion" of Walden as well:

> I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with success in unexpected common hours . . . . In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put foundations under them. (214)

Dream and it will be so. In Thoreau's case, his weakness, his consumptive condition, is ameliorated because of his perspective. He lives the life he has imagined and thereby wins contentment and well-being.

The mind-body connection is an important element of health in Thoreau's writing. In Walden, perception is based on science and intuition.[102] Thoreau is a natural scientist

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[101] "The Present Volume." Water-Cure Journal. 13.1:13.

[102] For a discussion of the vital role intuition plays in scientific discovery sees Gerald Holton's discussion of what he terms S1 in the introduction to The Thematic Origins of Science. Gerald Holton, Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought: Kepler to Einstein

who imagined a world of well-being for himself and for others. Thoreau's positive mindset, self-awareness, nature-cure, and water-cure prolonged his life; he lived until 1862 when he finally died of tuberculosis.

Immediately after his death, Thoreau's friend Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote about him in the Atlantic Monthly:

> His virtues of course, sometimes ran into extremes. It was easy to trace to the inexorable demand on all for exact truth that austerity which made this willing hermit more solitary even than he wished. Himself of a perfect probity, he required not less of others. He had a disgust at crime, and no worldly success would cover it. He detected paltering as readily in dignified and prosperous persons as in beggars, and with equal scorn. Such dangerous frankness was in his dealing that his admirers called him "that terrible Thoreau," as if he spoke when silent, and was still present when he had departed. I think the severity of his ideal interfered to deprive him of a healthy sufficiency of human society (Emerson 278)

While Emerson said that Thoreau deprived himself of "healthy . . . human society," Thoreau believed that human society put the individual at risk. In addition to the risk of contagion, mingling with others could threaten the integrity of the individual's own inner voice.

Like Bigelow and those calling for scientific medicine, Thoreau searches for and tries to speak the truth, regardless of the social consequences of doing so. In Walden's

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(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

conclusion, he writes : "No face which we can give to a matter will stead us so well at last as the truth" (217). Thoreau's truth is the truth of the self.

Chapter Five: "Beyond Redemption: Immigrants as Sources of Contagion"

In the 1840s and 1850s, models for individual and national health were predicated on a belief that individual self-improvement and moderation were essential elements in attaining well-being. Medical journals of the period cultivated rules of hygiene, and argued that if citizens followed these laws, individual and national health would ensue.[103] In Walden, and the Water-Cure Journal, readers are told how to life a healthy life: do not eat meat, drink coffee, tea or alcohol; do not become a mindless laborer in the capitalist system; do not tax the body with overwork for the sake of material advancement; and do not accumulate material goods. Be self-reliant, drink water, and bathe frequently. Yet, in both discourses, immigrants are represented as incapable of following these guidelines.

The means of attaining health outlined in medical journals and in Walden were offered in the interests of the American-born. In Walden, immigrants are by nature intemperate, immoral, filthy, and beyond reform. In this chapter, I will compare and contrast Walden with contemporary medical discussions of immigrants, intemperance, immorality and disease. In particular, I will focus on Thoreau's presentation of the immigrant as an irredeemable source of contagion.

In Walden, Thoreau outlines the means by which the individual can find physical and spiritual redemption.

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[103] In Healing the Republic, Joan Burbick offers a study of health narratives written between 1820-1880. She argues that the rhetoric of health and nationalism were inseparable. See Joan Burbick, Healing the Republic: The Language of Health and the Culture of Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century America. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Like the larger missionary movements of the period, Thoreau's call for physical, moral and spiritual uplift was directed toward all classes. But as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg discusses in Religion and the Rise of the American City, by the end of the Jacksonian Era the idealism of the 1830s had waned, and the missionaries' focus was on the poor alone. And instead of writing about the "worthy" poor - widows, orphans, the aged, the sick, the seasonally unemployed - their focus shifted to the "vicious" poor - which as a group was frequently reduced to the image of the intemperate immigrant (93-95). Walden and the Water-Cure Journal reflect both the optimism of the earlier Jacksonian era, and the pessimism of a nation quickly incorporating a large number of what were believed to be "immoral" vectors of disease into its population.

In Walden, as in the larger cultural discourse, the immigrant other was figured as a source of the moral and physical contagion Americans believed was eroding social and individual life. Thoreau aligns disease, filth, and intemperance with the immigrant other, and health and well-being with the American-born. Cultural definitions of health and well-being were linked to larger spiritual notions of American moral superiority. Inherent in this discourse as well was the notion that the capacity for reform was limited to the native-born.[104] By the end of "Higher Laws," it certainly seems as if the native-born John Farmer can be redeemed, but it also seems - - at the end of "Baker Farm" - -that the immigrant farmer, John Field, is beyond renewal.

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[104] In The Discovery of the Asylum, David Rothman argues that prisons and asylums were transformed from reformatory to custodial institutions when the population changed from the native-born to the foreign-born. See David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971).

Cultural/Medical Response to Immigration

Thoreau, like most of his contemporaries, was concerned about an increase in immigration. This fear is evident in medical journals, which wrote of immigrants as sources of moral and physical contagion. It is particularly strong in the late 1840s and early 1850s when the Irish potato famine produced a large wave of immigrants.

In what seems a direct response to this human tide, cities began keeping for the first time statistical records about population growth and decline, and in these records distinctions were made between the native-born and the immigrant. In 1849 and 1850, the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal reports that the city of Boston began a registry of births, marriages, and deaths. The First Annual Report of the City Registrar of Boston was published in the journal; it stated that "the most remarkable feature in these returns is the birthplaces of the parents of the new-born children, of these parents, only 438 and 522 mothers were natives of Boston, while 2,540 fathers and 2,578 mothers were born in Ireland!"[105] One of the reasons why these statistics were collected was the nativist fear that soon the immigrant population would outnumber the American-born in Boston.[106] In Walden and the Water-Cure Journal anti-immigrant sentiments are clear. Articles in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal emphasized that the transport of immigrants to America presented particular health concerns.

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[105] "The First Annual Report of Our City Registrar of Births, Marriages and Death." 6 February 1850 Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 42 (1850): 26.

[106] While immigrants may have given birth to more children than the native born, their infant mortality was high. In 1860, for example, seven out of ten children who were born to immigrants died before the age of two. See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, The Rise of the American City (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971) 168.

Improper ventilation aboard immigrant cargo ships was frequently decried as a health hazard. Disease, particularly "ship fever," afflicted passengers who breathed "impure" air. "The infectious character of ship fever" was discussed in an article "On Epidemic Influence," in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.[107] "Persons who go into crowded and ill-ventilated apartments, where the beds and clothing of the patients are filthy," its writer proclaimed, "will be in danger of taking the fever".[108] In Ireland in 1847, ship fever was an "epidemic fever"; in New York, the same illness was described as "an infectious disorder, being in the air only transmissible through the medium of poisoned atmosphere."[109] If immigrants carried disease that was epidemic/endemic from their shores or if the impure air of passage to America caused outbreaks of ship fever, once in America, at least according to this article in 1848, the disease was infectious. A disease that was endemic/epidemic in Ireland then could contaminate the American environment.

Solutions to the problem of improper ventilation of ships were being discovered. Frederick Emerson of Boston had invented an "apparatus" for the "ventilation of passenger vessels."[110] The "Hon. Joseph Grinnell, a member of Congress from Massachusetts" proposed a bill before Congress that would require passenger vessels to use Emerson's ventilation apparatus.[111] The justification for the passage of this bill was "the great and criminal loss of

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[107] "On Epidemic Influence," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38 (28 June 1848): 438.
[108] "On Epidemic influence," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38 (28 June 1848): 438.
[109] "On Epidemic Influence," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38 (28 June 1848): 438.
[110] "Ventilation of Passenger Vessels," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38 (22 March 1848): 163.
[111] "Ventilation of Passenger Vessels," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38 (22 March 1848): 163.

human life in immigrant vessels." This loss was significant "since the importation of foreigners has become an extraordinary branch of mercantile business."[112]

While the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal discussed immigrants and disease and sought technological and scientific solutions to this problem, the portrayals of immigrants in Walden and the Water-Cure Journal were more openly biased character assaults. In its "Laughing Cure" column, for example, the Water-Cure Journal included jokes at the immigrants' expense:

> An Irishman riding to market with a sack of potatoes before him, discovered that his horse was getting tired, whereupon he dismounted, put the potatoes upon his own shoulder, and again mounted, saying "that it was better he should carry the praties, as he was fresher than the poor baste."[113]

And when discussing ship fever, disease was presented as the result of the filthy personal habits of immigrants. Unlike the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal which usually was more restrained, the Water-Cure Journal offered ad populum attacks in their discussions of immigrants and disease. In the Water-Cure Journal, immigrants are consistently linked to disease. In "Case of Ship Fever," an "Irishman, age 17, had ship fever when arriving in New York." The writer claims that bathing was "a ceremony that had not probably been performed since his [immigrant's] birth."[114] In the public's mind, the reason why immigrants were diseased was because they were, physically and spiritually, unclean.

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[112] "Ventilation of Passenger Vessels," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal 38 (22 March 1848): 163.
[113] "The Laughing Cure," Water-Cure Journal 7 (1849): 157.
[114] "Case of Ship Fever," Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 7 (1849): 104.

When health and sanitary reformers discussed cleanliness and ventilation as health precepts, they did so in religious and moral terms. In 1850, the health reformer John H. Griscom believed that "Cleanliness is next to godliness, and if, after admitting this, we reflect that cleanliness can not exist without ventilation, we most look upon the latter as not only a *moral* but *religious* duty" (qtd in Rosenbergs "Pietism" 387)[115]. Health reformers presented hygienic guidelines as if they were physical and spiritual laws followed by the righteous. Since reformers believed filth caused disease,[116] it was easy to make the connection between a lack of personal hygiene and a lack of moral character. Sanitary reformers assumed that physical disease was the result of moral failing. Griscom writes: "The coincidence, or parallelism, of moral degradation and physical disease, is plainly apparent to an experienced observer" (Griscom qtd in Rosenbergs 388).[117]

As Charles E. Rosenberg argues in The Cholera Years, when cholera devastated urban areas on the East Coast in 1832 and 1849, Americans believed that disease was God's way of

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[115] "Griscom was a founding member of the New York Medical and Surgical Society and the New York Academy of Medicine, founded in 1847" See Charles E. Rosenberg and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Pietism and the Origins of the American Public health Movement: A Note on John H. Griscom and Robert M. Hartley" Sickness and Health in America 2nd ed. Ed. Judith Walzer Leavitt and Ronald L. Numbers (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985) 387.

[116] Koch's discovery of the tubercle bacillus in 1882 led to the eventual acceptance of the germ theory of disease. The Progressive Movement's public heath crusade in the first two decades of the twentieth century was supported by this scientific discovery. Hygienic practices were cited in a recent New York Times "Model Shows How Medical Changes Let Population Surge" Science Times 7 January, 1997: C3, as the reason why mortality rates have plummeted. Not having a scientific basis for the linking of filth and disease did not prevent the antebellum medical community and reformers from linking illness to unsanitary conditions, the lack of personal hygiene and particular dietary habits (eating contaminated meat, for instance, would cause illness).

[117] See Charles E. Rosenberg and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Pietism and the Origins of the American Public Health Movement: A Note on John H. Griscom and Robert M. Hartley" Sickness and Health in America 2nd ed. Ed. Judith Walzer Leavitt and Ronald L.

punishing the intemperate. Cholera spread quickly through crowded areas via water supplies contaminated by fecal matter containing the cholera bacillus. The areas that were most severely stricken by cholera were usually those inhabited by the poor. Poverty, filth, and disease were typed as the fruits of immorality, and the immigrant was cast as the unclean.

As Charles E. Rosenberg notes, when cholera was spreading across Europe in 1832, Americans believed that the disease would not affect them because pestilences only infected those who were morally compromised. While hesitant to make material claims of social privilege, when it came to spiritual and moral concerns, Americans, Thoreau included, did not hesitate to lay claim to their spiritual and moral superiority. In "Baker Farm," for example, Thoreau tells his friend that he "used to wonder at the halo of light around [his] shadow, and would fancy [himself] one of the elect" (135). His friend replies that he never saw such halos about the heads of Irishmen.[118]

In his article 'Health Care for the 'Truly Needy': Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Concept," David Rosner points out that

> It was within [the] context of a relatively healthy, prosperous, homogenous, and rural country that attitudes toward the growing populations of the urban centers were gradually formed. The native and immigrant poor who came to work in factories and who suffered from a variety of infectious and chronic illnesses that seemed to arrive with them became symbols of decay and immorality to many Americans. With little understanding of the larger

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Numbers (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985) 388.

[118] The Irish in particular were labelled as the irreligious because of their Catholicism. See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, The Rise of the American City (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971) 133.

> economic and social forces that were creating commercial trading and industrial centers, many reformers began campaigns to control individuals who were felt to be undermining and destroying the qualities of an earlier era. By the 1830s, the poor who lived in East Coast Cities were objects of organized charitable efforts intended to save sinners as well as restore the nation to its previous salubrious and moral state. (359)

Again, Americans believed in a causal relationship between physical health and morality. Prior to the massive influx of immigrants during the late 1840's, Americans embraced the idea that all members of society could be reformed. However, at the time Thoreau was writing Walden, antebellum notions of social meliorism, reform, and individual self-improvement were eroding in the face of stereotypes that cast the immigrant as unclean and irredeemable.

The Intemperate Immigrant

Jacksonian America questioned how people could be poor in a nation so rich in natural resources and opportunities for social and financial advancement. These queries led to a widely-shared conclusion: poverty was the result of intemperance (Smith-Rosenberg 94). The immigrant posed an even deeper threat to society because immigrants were not only intemperate, but also carriers of Old World, "boggy" ways (Smith-Rosenberg 39). The temperance movement sought to combat poverty and sin and struggled to advance social stability.

In contemporary medical journals, alcohol consumption was attacked not only as a cause of poverty, but as a source of disease, infectious and otherwise. The following is a representative excerpt from an 1849 issue of the Water-Cure Journal.

> Rum and the cholera are twin brothers, and most amicably do they agree in the destruction of the human race. After the cholera had ceased in Albany, in 1832, an inquiry was instituted into the habits of every person swept away by the disease. The following which we find in the National Era, is the result. Rum drinkers, cider guzzlers, and tipplers of all classes, read and reflect. Intemperate 140; free drinkers, 55; moderate drinkers (mostly habitual) 131; strictly temperate, (but one committed some excess in eating, [and] that one was neglected by an intemperate husband) 5; members of temperance societies 2; idiot, 1; unknown, 2. Total 336.[119]

The connection between alcohol and infectious disease did not end with the discovery of microbes, as the following excerpt from The Journal of the American Medical Society suggests. This article was published in January 10, 1885, after Koch's discoveries of the tubercle bacillus in 1882 and the cholera vibrio in 1883 had been disseminated.

> We do not speak hastily when we express the opinion that indulgence in the use of fermented and distilled drinks with the personal irregularities of life occasioned thereby, have in past epidemics of cholera determined more attacks of the disease than uncleanly streets, bad sewage and imperfect house regulation combined. . . . the epidemic just ended [in Paris] has not contributed

[119] "Rum and Cholera," Water-Cure Journal 7 (1849): 57.

> anything material in support of the theories of Professor Koch as to the origin of cholera.[120]

Even though Koch had shown the cholera vibrio to be the cause of cholera, and impure water contaminated by fecal matter containing this bacillus was responsible for the spread of disease, alcohol was still discussed as the primary "predisposing" cause of illness.[121] Oddly enough, despite the fact that alcohol consumption was seen as a cause of illness, it was one of the most widely prescribed remedies of the mid-nineteenth century. Similarly, opium was the remedy of choice for the treatment of tuberculosis.[122]

During the first two thirds of the nineteenth century, most physicians believed that the environment was largely responsible for illness. Physicians took what they termed hereditary predisposition and an individual's constitution, which was in part genetically based, into consideration when diagnosing and treating illness. But throughout the nineteenth century,

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[120] "Cholera and Personal Habits," Journal of the American Medical Association 3 January 1885: 48.

[121] The idea that alcohol consumption caused disease instead of microbes or environmental conditions continued into the twentieth century. In The Hawk's Nest Incident, Martin Cherniack notes that in the 1930s some physicians diagnosed workers who died from acute silicosis as having died from alcohol consumption. See Martin Cherniack, The Hawk's Nest Incident, America's Worst Industrial Disaster (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

[122] Opium was prescribed for tuberculosis. See Rene and Jean Dubos, The White Plague (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987). By the mid-nineteenth century, medical practitioners were shifting their focus from cure at all costs to the relief of suffering. See Martin S. Pernick, A Calculus of Suffering (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). By the end of the mid-nineteenth century, medical practitioners were moving away from depletive therapies towards stimulative therapies, from mercury and bloodletting to opium and alcohol. See John H. Warner The Therapeutic Perspective (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

physicians believed that individual habits were the most important elements of health. Individuals predisposed themselves to illness because of immoral behaviors.[123]

Disease as the result of immorality and intemperance was frequently ascribed to the foreign in American medical journals. In 1849, when cholera was once again ravaging Europe, a contributor to the Water-Cure Journal explains that the mechanisms of this "dire disease" are not unknown.[124] First, he observes that "thirst in this disease is greater than any other known," which is true.[125] Cholera caused rapid dehydration which often resulted in death within a twenty-four hour period. The cure prescribed here, as always in the water-cure, is the consumption of large quantities of cold water. The writer continues to discuss the mechanisms of the disease; the Hindus were regarded as an Eastern source of the illness, and as the primary disease reservoir: "The great fact is that Hindoos are the most sinful of people . . . they are ignorant, sensual, drunken, licentious. Of course they are diseased. They are degraded and debased to an extent rarely equaled upon the face of the earth."[126]

But those Americans who were righteous and temperate would not be affected by cholera. The Water-Cure Journal contributor says that two groups in America were spared from cholera in 1832, the Bible Christians of Philadelphia and followers of Sylvester Graham. "Abstinence from flesh and liquor," cleanliness, fresh air, and following the water-cure regimens of "sleeping, bathing, clothing, exercise, and the indulgence of the natural passions

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[123] In "Temperance, Morality and Medicine in the Fiction of Harriet Beecher Stowe," Nicholas Warner discusses reformers and physicians shifting views of alcoholism as disease and alcoholism as moral failing. See Nicholas O. Warner "Temperance, Morality and Medicine in the Fiction of Harriet Beecher Stowe," The Serpent in the Cup eds. David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997) 138-140.

[124] "The Cholera," Water-Cure Journal 7 (1849): 9-11.

[125] "The Cholera," Water-Cure Journal 7 (1849): 9-11.

and appetites" were the means of preventing cholera infection.[127] Religion and water-cure, Christianity and health, were inseparable. The Water-Cure Journal's message to its readers in 1851 joyously announces that "the Great Hydropathic Reform . . . shall soon outnumber any other medical faith. . . . To you [readers of the Water-Cure Journal] we look for help in pushing forward and onward this 'SAVIOUR' of Health and Life."[128] The Water-Cure Journal would redeem and cure its readers. While anyone could read the journal, it was assumed that only the native-born would do so and prosper.

Immigrants as Disease Reservoirs in Walden

Thoreau's intended audience for Walden, his guidebook for individual self-improvement, are the "voluntary" poor, the students and philosophers of New England (2, 3). Thoreau compares them to the "degraded" poor, those who blindly follow the "laws of civilization rather than the natural laws of life. By distinguishing between the "degraded" poor and the "voluntary" poor, Thoreau is introducing larger American notions of worthiness into what on the surface appears to be a radical discourse (radical in the sense that Thoreau attacks capitalist enterprise). Such distinctions are, in part, representative of American nativist fears. Thoreau classifies the poor into two groups; one group he obviously esteems and deems worthy, another group he denigrates. Cultural notions of worth frequently served as distancing mechanisms between the American-born and the immigrant other.

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[126] "The Cholera," Water-Cure Journal 7 (1849): 9-11.
[127] "The Cholera," Ware-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 7 (1849): 9-11.

[128] "Address to Readers" Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 11 (1851): 12.

In practice, when Thoreau refers to the "degraded poor", he is referring to the Irish immigrants of Concord. In the "Shelter" section of the "Economy" chapter, he exposes the "squalidness" that "may consist with civilization" by describing the living conditions of the "degraded poor" (23). Thoreau is sympathetic to the poor's plight and is aware of their contributions to American industry.

> To know this I should not need to look farther than to the shanties which every where border our railroads, that last improvement in civilization; where I see in my daily walks human beings living in sties, and all winter with an open door for the sake of light, without any visible, often imaginable, wood pile, and the forms of both old and young are permanently contracted by the long habit of shrinking from cold and misery, and the development of all their limbs and faculties is checked. It certainly is fair to look at that class by whose labor the works which distinguish this generation are accomplished (23).

But although Thoreau is aware of the larger economic forces of the period, he still writes as if the immigrants' poverty were either a lifestyle choice like his own "voluntary" poverty, or the result of pernicious habits. He also discusses the plight of the degraded poor in moral terms, and, like the larger cultural discourse, he connects the "degraded" poor and disease to moral failing.

Thoreau and the Intemperate Immigrant

Just as Thoreau refers to the "degraded" poor as all of those who allow themselves to become the tools of industry, Thoreau figures intemperance as a disease that afflicts all those

who drink. In "Former Inhabitants and Winter Visitors," Thoreau writes about New England Rum:

> Nearer yet to town, you come to Breed's location, on the other side of the way, just on the edge of the wood; ground famous for the pranks of a demon not distinctly named in old mythology, who has acted a prominent and astounding part in our New England life, and deserves, as much as any mythological character, to have his biography written one day; who first comes in the guise of a friend or hired man, and then robs and murders the whole family, - New-England Rum. But history must not yet tell the tragedies enacted here; let time intervene in some measure to assuage and lend an azure tine to them. Here the most indistinct and dubious tradition says that once a tavern stood. (171)

But just as Thoreau's general discussion of the "degraded" poor includes, at first, the native-born and immigrant alike his general discussion of intemperance is immediately reduced to specific examples of intemperate Irishmen. The drunkard Hugh Quoil, for example, had Thoreau writes, a "face the color of carmine" and he suffered from "delirium tremens"; he died "in the road at the foot of Brister's Hill" (174).[129] Thoreau visits the Irishman's home to see how he lived his life. He describes what he saw:

> His pipe lay broken on the hearth, instead of a bowl broken at the fountain. The last could never have been the symbol of his death, for he confessed to me that,

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[129] For a discussion of the temperance movement and the literature of the American Renaissance, see David S. Reynolds, "Black Cats and Delirium Tremens: Temperance and the American Renaissance" The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature. Eds. David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal (Amherst: University of Massachusetts

> though he had heard of Brister's Spring, he had never seen it; and soiled cards, kings of diamonds spades and hearts, were scattered on the floor. (174)

The connection between delirium tremens, insanity and alcohol and tobacco are well documented in medical journals such as the American Journal of Insanity and the Water-Cure Journal. Published diagnoses such as "Four men are in the Pennsylvania Insane Asylum, whose insanity was caused by the use of tobacco"[130] were common. Thoreau suggests if Quoil had gone to Brister's spring to fill his bowl with water instead of filling his pipe with tobacco, he would have lived a long and healthy live.

In Walden, immigrants are not figured just as alcoholics and tobacco users. They break all of the water-cure's natural laws of life. They live in filthy hovels, never bathe, eat meat, and drink coffee and tea. Their lives are desperate and misguided; they follow Old Country ways in the new nation. Clearly, immigrant lives are at odds with the dictates of water-cure enthusiasts.

In the "Baker Farm" chapter, Thoreau tries to "help" his Irish immigrant neighbor, John Field.

> I tried to help him [John Field] with my experience, telling him that he was one of my nearest neighbors, and that I too, who came a-fishing here, and looked like a loafer, was getting my living like himself: that I lived in a tight, light and clean house which hardly cost more than the annual rent of such a ruin as his commonly amounts to; and how, if he chose, he might in a month or two build a palace of his own; that I did not use tea, nor coffee, nor butter, nor milk, nor fresh meat, and so did not have to work to get them; again, as I did not work

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Press, 1997) 22-59.

[130] Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms (April 1852): 67.

> hard, I did not have to eat hard, and it cost me but a trifle for my food; but as he began with tea, and coffee, and butter and milk, and beef, he had to work hard to pay for them, and when he worked hard he had to eat again to repair the waste of his system, - and so it was broad as it was long, for he was discontented and wasted his life into the bargain. (137)

Here Thoreau attributes the immigrants' hardships to meat eating and coffee drinking. On a secular level, Thoreau links the eating of meat and the drinking of coffee to a cycle of physical waste and despair, to capital gains and losses, to the superfluous expenditure of energy to acquire "luxurious" foodstuffs. The result of blindly tying oneself to the fiery wheel of consumerism is discontent and the "waste of life" (Thoreau 137). On the spiritual level, as I discuss in Chapter Six, Thoreau associates meat-eating with the bestial and as an impediment to spiritual development.

While discussing the immigrants' dietary habits, Thoreau distinguishes his own cleanliness; he lives in a "tight, light, and clean house" (137). Thoreau is physically and spiritually clean, immigrants are not. It is important to remember that pre-germ theory notions of disease associated illness with filth, and intemperance with disease. In fact, dirt was believed to be the cause of illness, and filth signaled not only disease, but impurity, immorality and a lack of spiritual well-being.

The irreligious and unclean were prone to disease. In "Baker Farm," Thoreau describes the living conditions of his Irish neighbors:

> An honest and hard-working, but shiftless man plainly was John Field; and his wife, she too was brave to cook so many successive dinners in the recesses of that lofty stove; with round greasy face and bare breast, still thinking to

> improve her condition one day; with the never absent mop in one hand, and yet no effects visible any where." (136)

Try as she might, Mrs. John Field, immigrant, cannot improve her condition, or make herself and her surroundings clean. Despite her assiduous use of a mop, her home remains filthy, just as no matter how hard her husband may work, he remains "shiftless."

Throughout Walden, Thoreau typecasts the immigrant as unclean. All of the Irishmen in Walden are filthy, intemperate, and diseased according to water-cure and Thoreauvian standards. James Collins' shanty is "dank, clammy, aguish"(29); Hugh Quoil's home is the unkempt, squalid den of a drunkard gambler; the Fields of Baker's Farm try to improve themselves and their surroundings, but cannot. Physically and spiritually, immigrants are diseased sources of contagion.

Compare Thoreau's representation of immigrants to his representations of himself. He writes of how he spends little time housekeeping (162), yet his home is clean (137). He bathes in Walden Pond every morning as part of his spiritual morning exercises (75), and he bathes again after his labors (112). He lives simply, purely, and enjoys his poverty. By simplifying his life and relishing poverty, Thoreau frees himself mentally, physically and spiritually, and, therefore, he enjoys good health. Thoreau's "voluntary poverty" frees his mind from the Blakean "mind-forged manacles" of society. The involuntary poverty of immigrants, on the other hand, entraps and enslaves. Ultimately, Thoreau finds immigrants lacking because they do not allow their poverty to elevate them spiritually and morally. Instead, poverty degrades them.

Thoreau addresses the poor. He does not want them to curse their lives because of their poverty. He wants to show how "poverty can be cultivated" to free the mind, body and soul (217).

> if you are restricted in your range by poverty, . . . you are confined to the most significant and vital experiences; you are compelled to deal with the material which yields the most sugar and the most starch. It is life near the bone where it is sweetest. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul. (218)

Seeking material gain shortens a person's life span and degrades both the physical and the spiritual. On the other hand, "voluntary" poverty heightens individual experiences, by "confining" them to only the "most vital," making life the "sweetest" possible.

Here, in spiritual terms, Thoreau is also outlining what is "necessary for the soul" (218). In Walden, physical health and well-being are linked to spiritual well-being. The discussions of "the natural laws of life" and the discovery of what is necessary to live in Walden and in the Water-Cure Journal are linked to larger spiritual concerns. In a culture where death was a part of the everyday life experience, the focus on the spiritual reduced the fear and pain of loss.

Thoreau the invalid is simultaneously seeking a cure at Walden Pond and instructing his audience on how to live life. This, in part, is why he is so concerned that his readers be active readers. They must be awake to understand Thoreau's message and hence justify his mission. Thoreau tells his readers to simply their lives so that they can enjoy life. "Life near the bone where it is sweetest" (218), not the life of capital gains and losses, or spiritual degradation.

Yet Thoreau realizes that one of the major reasons why immigrants come to America is to reap material benefits. He acknowledges that immigrants' expectations and his vision of America are diametrically opposed.

> and yet he [John Field, immigrant] had rated it a gain in coming to America, that here you could get tea, and coffee, and meat every day. But the only true America is that country where the state does not compel you to sustain the slavery and war and other superfluous expenses which directly of indirectly result from the use of such things. (137)

The preamble from the "Constitution of The New York Vegetarian Society" that appeared in the Water-Cure Journal is similar in language and tone to Thoreau's indictment of meat-eating.

> the practice of killing animals for the purpose of food is demoralizing in tendency, the cause of numerous diseases in the world, and the source of immense waste in time, talent, and labor, as well as the chief among circumstances that bring about plague and pestilences, wars, famines, and intemperance.[131]

Thoreau and followers of the water-cure believe that meat eating and coffee drinking, already figured as the source of poverty and poor health, cause disease on the community level as well. Here the desire for the fruits of capitalism, the very foodstuffs and "luxuries" immigrants crave are seen as the causes of slavery and war.

Water-cure advocates and Thoreau believed that if individuals were to change their eating and drinking habits, America would be a moral and healthful place. Slavery and war

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[131] "Constitution of the N.Y. Vegetarian Society" Water-Cure Journal 14.1 (July 1852): 118.

would be things of the past, and Thoreau's "true America" could flourish and prosper. But since, as Thoreau believed, immigrants came to America to "get tea, and coffee, and meat every day," they are a threat to the overall stability of the community and the nation as a whole.

Immediately after denouncing John Field in "Baker Farm," Thoreau writes about how he leads his life. Here, Thoreau sounds as if he is following commandments that he had heard firsthand from God, manifested in the form of his own "Good Genius." Nature sanctions his following of the word:

> as I ran down the hill toward the reddening west, with the rainbow over my shoulder, and some faint tinkling sounds borne to my ear through the cleansed air, from I know not what quarter, my Good Genius seemed to say, - Go fish and hunt far and wide by day, - farther and wider, - and rest thee by many brooks and hearth-sides without misgiving. Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Rise free from care before the dawn, and seek adventures. Let the noon find thee by other lakes, and the night overtake thee every where at home. There are no larger fields than these, no worthier games than may here be played. Grow wild according to thy nature, like these sedges and brakes, which will never become English hay. Let the thunder rumble; what if it threaten ruin to farmers crops? that is not its errand to thee. Take shelter under the cloud, while they flee to carts and sheds. Let not to get a living be thy trade, but thy sport. Enjoy the land, buy it not. Through want of enterprise and faith men are where they are buying and selling, and spending their lives like serfs. (138)

Through the want of "faith," faith in nature and in self, men enslave themselves. Traveling westward, and with a rainbow over his shoulder, Thoreau speaks in the imperative of the curative powers of nature and the natural life as opposed to the debilitating effects of marketplace concerns. These themes appear again in the "Higher Laws" chapter where John Farmer, a symbol of all native-born Americans, frees himself from societal demands by communing with nature and listening to his own inner voice.

In the Water-Cure Journal, individuals try to improve themselves in ways similar to Thoreau's prescriptions. In a "Letter from Mrs. Frances D. Gage to Dr. Jackson" of the Water-Cure Journal, Mrs. Gage writes: "if I understand you, you use no animal food, tea, or coffee" as part of the water-cure. Mrs. Gage tries to follow the water-cure regimen, but she fails. "But alas! I fear I should be among you like the inebriate among other men, for I must confess to you that I have not let go the flesh pots of Egypt, nor can I boost of the heroism of our mothers, 'who vowed on the book to drink no more tea.'" After exposing herself as a carnivorous tea drinker, she applauds the water-cure's mission:

> Whilst, however, I made this acknowledgment, I must bid you a hearty God-speed in your work of reform, fully convinced that we all need to simplify habits, and to look more closely into our own natures, and when we have found what to us seems to be the right way, to live up to it unflinchingly.[132]

Clearly the language here is quite similar to Thoreau's Walden. Thoreau exhorts his reader to "simplify habits," and encourages each individual to "look more closely into his own nature" (48). Mrs. Gage, a woman of the new republic, tries to improve herself and change her habits.

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[132] "Letter from Mrs. Frances D. Gage to Dr. Jackson," Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms (July 1852) 14.1: 60.

Despite her confession of moral failing here, with the help of Dr. Jackson and her annual subscription to the Water-Cure Journal, there is hope that at some time in the near future, Mrs. Gage will be able to leave "the fleshpots of Egypt" behind. There is no such hope for the immigrant other.

In "Baker's Farm," Thoreau took shelter from a rainstorm in the Fields' home. After the storm and Thoreau's communion with nature a rainbow appears (138). This rainbow symbolically sanctions Thoreau's exploits and way of life. The air is cleansed, and the "faint tinkling sounds" of music can be heard (138). In "Baker's Farm," the sound of music signals the freeing of Thoreau's spiritual inner nature or "Good Genius". In "Higher Laws," music signals the awakening of John Farmer's inner being. In Walden, the American-born are reformed and redeemed.

At the end of the "Baker Farm," we are told of John Field's prospects for reform.

> Before I reached the pond some fresh new impulse had brought out John Field, with altered mind, letting go "bogging" ere this sunset. But he, poor man, disturbed only a couple of fins while I was catching a fair string, and he said it was his luck; but when we changed seats in the boat luck changed seats too. Poor John Field! - I trust he does not read this, unless he will improve by it, - thinking to live by some derivative old country mode in this primitive new country, - to catch perch with shiners. It is good bait sometimes, I allow. With his horizon all his own, yet he a poor man, born to be poor, with his inherited Irish poverty or poor life, his Adam's grandmother and boggy ways, not to rise in this world, he nor his posterity, till their wading webbed bogtrotting feet get talaria to their heels. (139)

It does not seem as if John Field will ever find physical and spiritual redemption in this new country. He will always be impoverished, both morally and materially, because of his "boggy ways." He will never "rise" or elevate himself by letting "his mind descend into his body and redeem it" like the native-born John Farmer does at the end of "Higher Laws" (148). John Field is trapped in the degradation poverty can create because he does not live properly, healthily, and according to the modes of this "primitive new country." In other words, John Field will "not rise in this world" because he does not behave like a native-born American.

Immigrants should not live according to the traditions and customs of their homelands; if they insist on doing so, they will never improve their conditions. Worse yet, their boggy ways will contaminate the republic. According to William Howarth, one of Thoreau's journal entries "criticized an Irish laborer who would not drop his old customs 'in this primitive new country'" (38). Thoreau felt that "the writer's prerogative . . . was to transform old modes of expression into new ones, creating a 'fable which is truly and naturally composed'" (Howarth 38). Howarth says "With this narrative ideal in mind, on December 23 [1846] [Thoreau] began to compose the earliest version of Walden" (38). Here, the notion that Thoreau wrote Walden to write of the new can be read as his opposition to the old, and in this instance the following of Old World customs in the New World. Taking these journal entries into consideration, Thoreau's negative reaction to immigrants may be seen as one of the major impetuses for his writing of Walden.

Thoreau emulates the Eastern philosophies of "Hindoo lawgivers" (145, 147), and Thseng-tseu (145). He presents them as possible means of obtaining spiritual well-being in "Higher Laws". Yet when discussing a physical Eastern presence in America, Thoreau

associates the "oriental" with both effeminacy and disease. Throughout Walden, he equates the railroad with the foreign and disease, and the spreading of contagion.

> I think that in the railroad car we are inclined to spend more on luxury than on safety and convenience, and it threatens without attaining these to become no better than a modern drawing room, with its divans, and ottomans, and sunshades, and a hundred other oriental things, which we are taking west with us, invented for the ladies of the harem and the effeminate natives of the Celestial Empire, which Jonathan should be ashamed to know the names of. I would rather ride on earth in an ox cart with free circulation, than go to heaven in the fancy car of an excursion train and breathe a malaria all the way. (25)

Thoreau's imagery suggests that luxury, here the foreign imports of capital gain, leads to effeminacy and disease. The railroad car is equated with a drawing room. In Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life, Joan Hedrick argues that the parlor was the domain of women (82-83). Thus, the antebellum American drawing room itself was associated with the feminine. The "divans, ottomans, and sunshades" which decorate the railroad car/drawing room are symbols of the foreign and the effeminate. Indeed, the foreign is synonymous with the effeminate here, and the "oriental things" that were "invented . . . for the effeminate natives of the Celestial Empire" are a threat to manly, American Jonathans. Thoreau sees the railroad as spreading the contagion of foreign, effeminate imports westward, emasculating and infecting the last frontier - the American West. Thoreau would rather sit on a pumpkin in an ox cart than ride in a railroad car and "breathe a malaria all the way." Here, the effeminate, the foreign, and disease are all attached to the railroad, the product of the immigrant other's labors.

In the 1840s-1880s, "health seekers" frequently migrated toward the west coast in search of a healthy environment (S. Rothman 131-132). Rothman writes that Americans thought of the "West as Eden": "its air was . . . pure, its . . . atmosphere . . . wholesome, its climate . . . reinvigorating" (133). The image of the West was of a health seeker's paradise and many consumptives migrated westward to regain their health. Thoreau's vision of the railroad as the transcontinental means of spreading the foreign, effeminate, and disease westward to the healthful wilds of the frontier was an outgrowth of the larger national vision of the West as healthful (immigrant-free) environment consumptives[133].

In an article entitled "Human Physiology - The Basis of Reform," T. L. Nichols, editor of the Water-Cure Journal, writes

> We have here a declared analogy between God, man, and the universe, and the more we reflect upon the subject, the more we shall be satisfied that we have in human anatomy and physiology, the key of all mysteries, the basis of all social science, and the model of reforms. The individual man in the pattern of the true social man. The diseases of individuals are copies of social diseases; and thus we have a social physiology and a social pathology. You can no more make one man good and happy until the whole society to which he belongs is in good and happy conditions, that you can make one . . . organ of the body sound and well while the rest of the body is in a state of disease.[134]

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[133] Thoreau eventually migrates west to Minnesota for this type of cure, believing that the "dry air of Minnesota" would improve his health (Harding 445). His stayed in Minnesota from May-July of 1861 (Harding 448-451). This trip was a failure; Thoreau died from tuberculosis May 6, 1862 (Harding 466). See Walter Harding The Days of Henry Thoreau (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982).

[134] T.L. Nichols "Human Physiology, the True Basis of Reform," Water-Cure Journal and

Following the water-cure will not only cure individual ailments, but will also serve as a means of treating the ailing body politic. Those who do not adhere to the natural laws of life as outlined in Walden and the Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms are like the diseased organs in the larger societal body. Conversely, if the individual organ is healthy, and the larger organism is diseased, the end result for the individual in a "diseased" society will still be "disease".

On his part, Thoreau would willingly call for the dissolution of the current state of civilization or his own contemporary culture if it would redeem mankind both physically and spiritually.

> I should be glad if all the meadows on the earth were left in a wild state, if that were the consequence of men's beginning to redeem themselves. A man will not need to study history to find out what is best for his own culture. But alas! the culture of an Irishman is an enterprise to be undertaken with a sort of moral bog hoe. (137)

Immigrants are not what is best for American culture. Because he is a tool of industrialism, the Irishman is at odds with nature. Here Thoreau's privileging of nature allows for the alignment of the natural and redemptive with the cultural normative and the unnatural with deviance and the immigrant other. In Walden, immigrant culture is one of "boggy ways" (139). A reformer, "moral bog hoe" in hand, ultimately would sink and fail in his efforts to reform an immigrant. Immigrants cannot "[begin] to redeem themselves" because they are unnatural and morally "boggy" by nature.

Herald of Reforms 13.1 (1852): 1.

As the immigrant population increased during the Jacksonian era the belief in social meliorism was replaced by a desire for social structures with clearly defined boundaries and class/social structures that could serve as distancing mechanisms between the American-born and the immigrant. This was not solely the result of industrialization or the development of a clearly defined class system. European medical professionals, for example, as well as the less skilled were ostracized.[135] Fear of the immigrant other was in large part responsible for the change in the Jacksonian belief in social reform and the creation of less permeable social structures during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The target audience for Walden's and the Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms' models of individual self-improvement and subsequent social well-being is the American-born. In the next chapter, I will discuss the temperate ideal and individual health. Thoreau's and water-cure followers' mission of reform was to encourage the American-born to lead temperate lifestyles. If they did so, they would elevate themselves spiritually, and thus create national well-being.

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[135] The creation, for example, of hospitals during the late nineteenth century that served members of particular ethnic backgrounds also were the only institutions where nonnative-born medical practitioners could practice (examples in New York are St. Vincent's, Mt. Sinai, etc.). See David Rosner, A Once Charitable Enterprise (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Chapter Six: "Thoreau's Mission: Individual Self-Improvement and the Temperate Ideal as a Means of Reclaiming the Spiritual"

Many health reformers, including Sylvester Graham and Samuel Trall, editor of the Water-Cure Journal, began their careers by participating in the Temperance Movement (Nissenbaum 1; 150).[136] As already noted, water-cure advocates defined temperate behavior as more than just being a teetotaler. To be temperate, an individual had to avoid all activities that sapped "vital energy" (Blake 363). To safeguard "vital energy" and prevent "nervous exhaustion," individuals had to regulate their diet and sexual activities. Followers of the water-cure were prohibited from using stimulants such as alcohol, coffee, tea, and tobacco. Contributors to the Water-Cure Journal encouraged people to become vegetarians, dress properly and exercise. Proper dress and exercise were also advocated. Followers of the water-cure believed that water restored "vital energy" (Blake 363).

Those with unhealthy/immoral lifestyles were predisposed to disease. Therefore, Walden and the Water-Cure Journal pay particular attention to habits and health. In the article "The Home Practice of the Water-Cure," under the subtitle "The Habits," T. L. Nichols presents the hydropaths' definition of healthful practices: "There must be no labor, excitement, or gratification of body or mind, which can exhaust vitality. Temperance in things natural; abstinence from things hurtful. Avoid all *excess*."[137] Water-cure advocates - - and Thoreau - - believed that health was the result of a balanced, healthy equilibrium between the body and the

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[136]For a discussion of the temperance movement in nineteenth-century American culture, see David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal, The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).

[137] T.L. Nichols, "The Home Practice of the Water-Cure" Water-Cure Journal 11.3: 71.

mind. If the body were violated by intemperate behaviors such as overeating or drinking alcohol, or if the mind were violated by capitalist enterprise, disease would result.

In Walden, health is the balanced interaction of the body-mind-spirit. Thoreau's mission in "Higher Laws" is to awaken the spiritual in man and to suppress the bestial. He does this by examining man's habits and offering suggestions for alternative "spiritual" or "purifying" lifestyles. Ultimately, Thoreau believed that living according to the temperate ideal as defined in Walden created spiritual well-being, individual health, and community stability.

Reclaiming the Spiritual

In "Higher Laws," Thoreau presents one of his interpretations of the relationship between the physical and the spiritual.

> We are conscious of an animal in us, which awakens in proportion as our higher nature slumbers. It is reptile and sensual, and perhaps cannot be wholly expelled; like the worms which, even in life and health, occupy our bodies. Possibly we may withdraw from it, but never change its nature. I fear it may enjoy a certain health of its own; that we may be well, yet not pure. The other day I picked up the lower jaw of a hog, white and sound teeth and tusks, which suggested that there was an animal health and vigor distinct from the spiritual. This creature succeeded by other means than temperance and purity. (146)

This hog's lower jaw, with its healthy, strong teeth, is Thoreau's example of how an intemperate beast could still be healthy. The hog is dead. Not only is the hog dead, but it died while still young, for its teeth are still white and sound. Thoreau's example of a healthy

intemperate beast actually reinforces the idea that intemperance can lead to death. But men are not hogs, and in "Higher Laws" Thoreau argues that the bestial in man is a part of man's nature that must be overcome (147).

The "animal within us" is "reptile and sensual," but a part of our natures, nonetheless. While "Higher Laws" begins with Thoreau's experiencing the "savage delight" of his impulse to devour a woodchuck raw to celebrate his own wild, savage nature, the chapter concludes with Thoreau saying that all John Farmer "could think of was to practice some new austerity, to let his mind descend into his body and redeem it" (148). Part of this redemptive process requires the transcendence of one's occupation to allow for the "recreation of the intellectual man" (147). Moderation is presented as the means to well-being throughout the "Higher Laws" chapter.[138] "All sensuality is one" (147). We must regulate, as "Hindoo lawgivers" did, how we "eat, drink, cohabit" in order to "elevate" the physical (147). The result of this elevation will be a physical "nobleness" rather than the "imbruting" of the body that is the result of sensual indulgence.

Sensuality is here defined, as it is in the Water-Cure Journal and antebellum culture as a whole, as overindulgence. The antebellum temperance movement was more than a call for the end of alcohol consumption. Antebellum cultural discourse called for moderation in all aspects of life. If an individual were to lead a temperate lifestyle, his physical and moral well-being would be insured. During the antebellum period, moral and physical health were inseparable.

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[138] For a discussion of temperance, health and Sylvester Graham, a man who influenced water-cure advocates, see Stephen Nissenbaum, Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform (Westport, Conn.:Greenwood Press, 1980. For a discussion of moderation and Thoreau's stand against following middle class "common sense" see Joan Burbick, "The Body Politics of Walden" Healing the Republic: The Language of Health and the Culture of Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century America

Thoreau's fear that the animal within us may enjoy a health of its own speaks to his fear that he may be unable to control his own intemperate impulses. In "Higher Laws" Thoreau also writes that "we may be well, yet not pure," which would indicate that moral and physical well-being were autonomous. These fears, the one perhaps an individual fear that Thoreau himself would not be able to live up to the temperate ideal, the other a fear that the temperate ideal could not serve as a controlling mechanism within antebellum society[139] are representative of the larger cultural mindset of the period. If the citizens of the republic were temperate models of stability and moderation, then the society as a whole would be an orderly one. The temperate ideal was the modus operandi of physical, moral and social well-being on both the community and individual levels. Thoreau's temperate discourse, in "Higher Laws" and throughout Walden, as well as his economic discourse of frugality and necessity are integral parts of the larger cultural discourse concerning community health and stability.

As David Rothman discusses in The Discovery of the Asylum, the causes of illness, mental, physical, and moral, were attributed to antebellum social organization itself (111). Rothman argues that reformers believed that personal ambition, and the fear of financial ruin or the hopes of financial gain caused illness. Medical superintendents and practitioners as well as social reformers believed that "the startlingly fluid social order in the new republic encouraged and rewarded unlimited grandiose ambitions" (115). Reformers felt that the opportunities for advancement within the social structure created a "disorderly" environment. They argued that individuals whose ambitions were not realized would become physically and mentally ill.

(New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 57-74.

[139]See David Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum (Boston:Little, Brown and Company, 1971) and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg Religion and the Rise of the American City (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971).

Antebellum reformers and medical superintendents were eager to create a less stimulative environment while urging individual restraint. Like Thoreau's Walden, they urged individuals to simplify their lives in order to insure community and individual well-being.

The ideas that temperance and moderation insured health while excess and indulgence led to disease were reinforced by the period's disease etiology. During the first two-thirds of the nineteenth-century, disease was defined as systemic imbalance (Warner 85). As Charles E. Rosenberg discusses in "The Therapeutic Revolution" disease was primarily defined as an imbalance between the individual and the environment. The environmental causes of disease, be it the stimulating environment of capitalist enterprise or the noxious vapors of miasma, were believed to be the root causes of illness. The interaction between the individual and his environment was of primary importance and could create either individual well-being or a diseased state.

The language of Walden is the language of contemporary theories of disease and cure, of balance and measure, of the individual and his environment. Since the etiology of most diseases were as yet unknown, an individual's lifestyle was believed to be a primary cause and cure of disease. If an individual could improve his lifestyle, he could stem the course of his illness.

In "Higher Laws," Thoreau equates the "worms that possess us" with our sensual natures (145). These worms are like parasites that can "occupy our bodies" "even in life and health" (146). Antebellum Americans believed that sensuality, or self-indulgence created a diseased state. These "worms" which were waiting to destroy their hosts would do so more quickly if the host led an intemperate lifestyle.

The Canadian Woodchopper - An Exception to the Rules of Reform?

The one character who is spared Thoreau's missionary impulse in Walden is the Canadian woodchopper. The woodchopper devours woodchucks (97) in much the same way that Thoreau celebrates his desire for the savage in his wish "to devour [a woodchuck] raw" (140). Thoreau's explanation for his attraction to and ultimate ambivalence toward the Canadian woodchopper is best explained in the opening of "Higher Laws," a passage similar to Thoreau's discussion of the woodchopper in "Visitors." In both chapters, Thoreau criticizes the woodchopper and his diet. Thoreau argues that "there is something essentially unclean" about eating "flesh" (142). And while the woodchopper had "an exuberance of animal spirits . . . the intellectual and what is called the spiritual man in him were slumbering as in an infant" (98).

The woodchopper represents the seemingly contradictory beginning and end of "Higher Laws." Thoreau's discussion of the woodchopper also sheds light on why there are two seemingly contradictory threads in Thoreau's approach to the clean/unclean, the physical and the spiritual. "Higher Laws" contains the clearest statement of Thoreau's mission and purpose, one which is similar to the Water-Cure Journal's prospectus. Thoreau clearly believes that spiritual well-being is of the utmost importance. If Thoreau ultimately believes that the woodchopper is "spiritually lacking," then what do we make of Thoreau's lauding of the woodchopper as the most "simple and natural of men" (97), a man free from the "vice and disease, which cast a sombre moral hue over the world" (97), a person who "interested"

Thoreau "because he was so quiet and solitary and happy"(98)? These characteristics are, after all, the very ones that Thoreau believes promote health.

In "Higher Laws," Thoreau's discussion of spiritual and physical health also contains a strain of social Darwinism. Because of the fear that the fitness of the native-born was now at risk, the Canadian woodchopper is presented as a model of health. The woodchopper represents health because he is a rugged North American man who is at one with nature. He is not a sickly laborer whose natural dignity has been destroyed by civilization/capitalism or the unnatural immigrant other.

Thoreau's attraction to the woodchopper reveals a more invidious strain of his discourse, one which displays his fears that the emasculating powers of civilization are destroying the health and vigor of man. Thoreau presents what he believes to be the feminizing agents of society, namely the domestic and the foreign, as threats to his masculine "race".

The woodchopper represents the physical well-being that Thoreau feels that the American-born are losing because of civilization, capitalism and immigration. Throughout Walden, Thoreau's complaint is that civilized man is becoming physically weak, "feminine," and diseased. In "Economy," for example, Thoreau discusses Darwin's observations of the natives of Tierra del Fuego. Civilized "Europeans shiver[ed] in [their] cloth[ing]" while the "naked savages" were warm. Thoreau wonders: "Is it possible to combine the hardiness of . . . savages with the intellectualness of the civilized man?" (8) This is the question that Thoreau wants answered when he talks of reform to the woodchopper. Can the intellectual faculties be awaken in a robust man of nature? And if this is possible, this is the race of American men that Thoreau wants to populate America.

When Thoreau talks to the Canadian woodchopper in "Visitors," he asks the woodchopper typical water-cure questions: "Could he [the woodchopper] dispense with tea and coffee? Did this country afford any beverage beside water?" (100). Thoreau found that the woodchopper defended "many institutions better than any philosopher" (100), but he is puzzled whether this was a sign of the woodchopper's "fine poetic consciousness," which Thoreau links to spirituality, "or of stupidity" (99). Finally, Thoreau discovers that "If [he] suggested any improvement in his [the woodchopper's] mode of life, he merely answered, without expressing any regret, that it was too late"(100). Thoreau takes the woodchopper at his word; he does not provide him with the celestial/terrestrial music of his usual sermon about proper living, the purified intellect, and spiritual well-being. Why doesn't Thoreau try to reform the woodchopper?

Thoreau is worried that masculine hardiness is being lost because of civilization, and casts the woodchopper as a throwback to man in an uncivilized state.

> . . . in making the life of a civilized people an *institution*, in which the life of the individual is to a great extent absorbed, in order to preserve and perfect that of the race. But I wish to show at what a sacrifice this advantage is at present obtained, and to suggest that we may possibly so live as to secure all the advantage without suffering any of the disadvantage. (21)

The disadvantage is that American men are becoming detached from their natural environments, which in turn will degrade them physically and make the "race" unfit. The "degraded poor," for example, who live in shanties by the railroad tracks are "shrinking from cold and misery, and the development of all their limbs and faculties is checked" (23). The "degraded wealthy," on the other hand, are responsible for the creation of "luxurious" railroad

cars which threaten the integrity of the masculine American West by transporting "feminizing" foreign imports westward (25). The Canadian woodchopper is Thoreau's uncivilized, undomesticated, physically fit albeit "brute" being.

Thoreau abhors the domestic despite the fact the he is quite proud of his own housekeeping. Thoreau writes of his own undomesticated, domestic activities in "Sounds."

> Housework was a pleasant pastime. When my floor was dirty, I rose early, and, setting all my furniture out of doors on the grass, bed and bedstead making but one budget, dashed water on the floor, and sprinkled white sand from the pond on it, and then with a broom scrubbed it clean and white. (76)

Thoreau emphasizes that his home contains none of the foreign imports that "feminize." His housekeeping is in the wilds and involves using the materials of the wild, namely what Walden Pond offers. As always, Walden Pond purifies.

In general, Thoreau sees domestication as unnatural; domesticated animals would not be able to survive in the natural world. In "Sounds," Thoreau writes:

> I kept neither dog, cat, cow, pig, nor hens, so that you would have said there was a deficiency of domestic sounds; neither the churn, nor the spinning wheel, nor even the singing of the kettle, nor the hissing of the urn, nor children crying. . . .No yard! But unfenced Nature reaching up to your very sills. . . .Instead of a scuttle or blind blown off in a gale, - a pine tree snapped off or torn up by the roots behind your house for fuel. Instead of no path to the front-yard gate in the Great Snow,-no gate-no front-yard,-and no path to the civilized world! (86)

Domestic sounds and animals, pathways carved into the natural landscape are all threats to the integrity of the natural environment and the rugged masculinity that Thoreau lionizes in Walden.

Water-cure advocates were also concerned with maintaining the ruggedness of the race. In the prospectus of the January 1851 issue of the Water-Cure Journal, the editors address "Those in Health." They tell these readers that "To preserve health, no other mode of living can compare with" the water-cure "system. In fact, were its rules observed and carried out, many of our ills could be forever banished, and succeeding generations grow up in all the vigor of true manhood."[140] The austerity of the water-cure regimen will invigorate those who live by its rules.

Thoreau's writing is also a record of his means of cure. Antebellum cure was gender specific. Because he is a man, he must isolate himself within nature, work outdoors, swing an ax, and avoid the hearthfires of the domestic. This is why Thoreau loves the woodchopper; he represents health, vigor, and well-being within the natural world. As Thoreau says in the opening of "Higher Laws," he "loves the wild not less than the good" (140).

Thoreau associates this wildness with "ranging the woods" looking for "venison" or a "woodchuck" so that he "might devour" them: "no morsel could have been too savage" (140) for Thoreau. But this carnivorous wildness is ultimately not something that Thoreau emulates. Thoreau finds the woodchopper lacking because he could never get the woodchopper "To take the spiritual view of things" (100). Thoreau finds within himself "an instinct towards a higher, or, as it is so named, spiritual life, as do most men, and another toward a primitive, rank and savage one" and he says he "reverences them both" (140). But by the end of "Higher Laws,"

Thoreau moves away from the primitive towards spiritual enlightenment. Diet plays a key role in this transformative process.

Vegetarianism

Thoreau and followers of the water-cure regimen associated meat-eating with sensuality, disease, filth and immorality. Thoreau's "practical objection to animal food . . . was its uncleanness. . . .A little bread or a few potatoes would have done as well with less trouble and filth" (142, 143).[141] In "Higher Laws," Thoreau writes that "all sensuality is one" (147). We must regulate, as "Hindoo lawgivers" did, how we "eat, drink, cohabit" in order to "elevate" the physical (147). The result of this elevation will be a physical "nobleness" rather than the "imbruting" of the body. Thoreau notes that poets whose imaginative capabilities are the most advanced do not eat meat (143); "the imagination will not be reconciled to flesh and fat" (143). Contributors to the Water-Cure Journal state that the purpose of their journal is to elevate the physical, intellectual, and moral powers of mankind. J.H. Hanaford writes: "can we not offer no food for the mind, the germ of immortality? Can we not elevate, rather than brutalize the mind? Can we not indulge in communion of mind with mind?"[142]

In "Visitors," Thoreau notes that he does not offer his guests food. Instead, he entertains their minds and elevates their "spiritual" sensibilities. Water-Cure enthusiasts would

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[140] Title page of the Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (January 1851).
[141] Joan Burbick notes the relationship between Thoreau's diet and the clean/unclean as well. See Joan Burbick Healing the Republic (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 71.
[142] J.H. Hanaford "Food and Diet: The Appetite - Its Use and Abuse." Water-Cure Journal 11.5: 120.

agree that this is hospitality at its best. Hospitality that affords sumptuous repasts puts guests' health at risk. The following is an excerpt from the Water-Cure Journal:

> These excesses and ruinous practices follow very naturally from the customs of society, and especially from the influences which are thrown around. Often we are virtually taught that the great object of life is to satisfy our animal wants; or that the most feasible method of expressing our attachment to our fellow-mortals, is to gratify some physical, sensual impulse. The greater the joy on meeting a long-absent friend, and the stronger the bonds of friendship, the more sumptuous the repast, or rather the more destructive to health and happiness![143]

Individuals should follow the natural laws of life, not civilized society. Thoreau is once again properly hospitable when he tells thirsty visitors to "borrow his dipper" and go to the pond to get themselves a drink of water (101). Offering guests something other than water, perhaps coffee or tea, would jeopardize his guests' health. Thoreau is "glad to have drunk water for so long. . . .water is the only drink for a wise man" (144). Who would think "of dashing the hopes of a morning with a cup of warm coffee, or of an evening with a dish of tea!" (144). Coffee and tea not only cause ill-health; they are repeatedly cited as the cause of delirium tremens and insanity in the Water-Cure Journal.[144]

Water-cure enthusiasts frequently wrote poems about their lifestyles, and these poems served as lively advertisements for their causes. Some poems are lengthy dialogues between

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[143] J.H. Hanaford "Food and Diet: The Appetite - Its Use and Abuse." Water-Cure Journal 11.5: 120.

[144] For example, see "Insanity and Delirium Tremens." Water-Cure Journal 11.5: 120.

healthy and noble hydropaths and sickly meat-eaters while others are brief and pithy. The following is a poem written by Mary Chandler, subscriber to the Water-Cure Journal.

> Fatal effects of luxury and ease!
>
> We drink our poison, and we eat disease;
>
> Indulge our senses at our reason's cost,
>
> Till sense is pain, and reason hurt or lost.[145]

Antebellum Americans believed that overindulgence or intemperance caused illness and insanity.[146] For example, The American Journal of Insanity, edited by the medical superintendents of the New York State Lunatic Asylum in Utica, New York, reported that a man who was intemperate for many years had to be institutionalized as a direct result of attending temperance meetings (59). When this man died, an autopsy revealed that the "mucus membrane of the stomach was extensively diseased" (59). "Dr. Sewall," the attending physician, "says it resemble[d] the stomachs of those who die of delirium tremens" (59). The physicians concluded "The disease of the brain was probably the consequence of the stomach. It is, however, often difficult to determine in which organ the disease originates, when both appear to be diseased, for affections of the brain may produce disorder of the stomach" (59).[147] The reversible nature of disease here, and the culture's notion that dyspeptic disorders could be

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[145] Mary Chandler "untitled poem." In "To the Editor of the Water-Cure Journal "Vegetarianism" Water-Cure Journal 7: 117.

[146] It is interesting to note that "going into cold water" is listed as a reason for insanity in a physician's report on insane patients See David J. Rothman The Discovery of the Asylum (Boston; Little, Brown and Company, 1971) 111. Leading a "solitary life absorbed in meditation" is also written about as a cause of insanity. See "Letter from Sir James Mackintosh to Robert Hall, on the Recovery of the Latter from His First Attack of Insanity, " American Journal of Insanity 1.1 (1844): 50-52. If Thoreau and the water-cure enthusiasts were insane, these could be listed as possible causes for their illnesses.

[147] "Insanity Illustrated by Cases, and By Conversations and Letters of the Insane,"

linked to the brain and cause insanity reinforced the idea that intemperance could lead to illness and/or insanity.

Vegetarianism was a means of ensuring physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Thoreau sanctioned these dietary reform efforts:

> he will be regarded as a benefactor of his race who shall teach man to confine himself to a more innocent and wholesome diet. Whatever my own practice may be, I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of the human race in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals, as surely as the savage tribes have left off eating each other when in contact with the more civilized. (144)

Water-cure advocates believed that vegetarianism could lead to spiritual enlightenment as well as physical health.

Vegetarian societies were popular in both the United States and in England. The proceedings of vegetarian societies were published in the Water-Cure Journal. Its editors, for example, wrote that a vegetarian dinner held in London was attended by 106 vegetarians who were "in favor of the excellency of this primitive mode of sustaining human life." The writers for the Water-Cure Journal praised this vegetarian group's monthly periodical, The Vegetarian Advocate, for showing "indications of progression in vegetarianism." Contributors to the Water-Cure Journal did not want Americans to be outdone by the British: "America is distinguished throughout the civilized world for the noble stand she first made against intemperance in drinking. Shall she be less zealous in opposing a system of diet, as detrimental to the health and happiness of humanity as intoxicating liquors?"[148]

American Journal of Insanity 1.1 (1844): 59.

[148] "To the Editor of the Water-Cure Journal Vegetarianism" Water-Cure Journal 7: 117.

The following Preamble from the "Constitution of The New York Vegetarian Society" is similar in language and tone to Thoreau's indictment of meat-eating in "Baker Farm" and "Higher Laws."

> The undersigned, believing that Nature, Revelation, Science and Experience teach that man is in no sense a carnivorous or omnivorous animal; that his highest development of body and mind is only to be attained on food derived directly from the vegetarian kingdom; that the practice of killing animals for the purpose of food is demoralizing in tendency, the cause of numerous diseases in the world, and the source of immense waste in time, talent, and labor, as well as the chief among circumstances that bring about plague and pestilences, wars, famines, and intemperance; and that great ignorance exists in the public mind in relation to the right cultivation of the earth and the proper preparation of vegetable aliments, do form themselves into a society for the purpose of promulgating a knowledge of these principles, and of exemplifying in practice their truthfulness, and adopt the following Constitution.[149]

In "Baker Farm," Thoreau also links the eating of meat to slavery and war (137). In "Higher Laws," Thoreau, like the members of the New York Vegetarian Society, argues that "the killing of animals for food" is demoralizing, and that the "highest development of the body and mind" is only possible for those who are vegetarians.

> I have found, repeatedly, of late years, that I cannot fish without falling a little in self-respect. . . . I feel that it would have been better if I had not fish. . .

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[149] "Constitution of the N.Y. Vegetarian Society." Water-Cure Journal 14.1 (July 1852):118.

> .There is unquestionably this instinct in me which belongs to the lower orders of creation; yet with every year I am less a fisherman, though without more humanity or even wisdom; at present I am no fisherman at all. But I see that if I were to live in a wilderness I should again be tempted to become a fisher and hunter in earnest. (142)

Thoreau associates hunting and fishing with the lesser instincts of humanity. And because the killing of animals and the eating of flesh impedes spiritual development Thoreau no longer fishes or hunts.

What is complicated here is Thoreau's statement that if he were to continue to "live in a wilderness" he would eventually have to succumb to his predatory instincts. This position is at odds with his earlier discussion of nature as cure. In "Higher Laws" the "red in tooth and claw" instinctual nature of man is deemed a threat to spiritual well-being. Natural instinct is presented in "Higher Laws" as the baser nature of mankind, the bestial and sensual, which can be elicited by the natural environment itself. "Nature is hard to overcome, but she must be overcome" (Thoreau 147) for mankind to develop spiritually. This argument is perplexing for throughout Walden nature is clearly presented as a tonic to the ailments of civilization. Thoreau believes that man in nature is more likely to evolve spiritually than man living in the unnatural environs of civilization. Yet man in nature would be a carnivore and Thoreau finds this unacceptable. Much of "Higher Laws" is an outline of how to overcome the calls of both the wild and civilization in order to become self-aware.

In Walden and the Water-Cure Journal carnivores are associated with the bestial while vegetarians are associated with the spiritually enlightened. Hunting, fishing, eating meat, and

drinking beverages other than water are all soul destroying. Thoreau writes: "The wonder is how they, you and I, can live this slimy, beastly life, eating and drinking" (Thoreau 145).

Thoreau writes that moral, spiritual, and physical well-being are not easily obtained because of carnal appetites. In "Higher Laws" Thoreau argues that because life is a constant struggle between the spiritual and the sensual "life is startlingly moral"(145). How a person lives his life determines whether or not "goodness" or godliness will prevail. Thoreau believes "There is never an instant's truce between virtue and vice," yet "goodness is the only investment that never fails" (145). And here as elsewhere Thoreau immediately moves from the struggle to purify oneself and invest in goodness to the sounds of music. "In the music of the harp which trembles round the world it is the insisting on" the notion that goodness "never fails"(145). "The harp is the travelling patterer for the Universe's Insurance Company, and our little goodness is all the assessment that we pay" (145). In Walden, music signals the awakening of man's inner good genius in Walden. Investing in goodness and in the larger Godliness of the universe allows people to leave the "meanness of [their] lives behind" (Thoreau 146).

Thoreau's discussion of good and evil arises from his discourse on diet. Thoreau writes in "Higher Laws" as if he were preparing verses for his bible: "Not that food which entereth into the mouth defileth a man, but the appetite with which it is eaten" (145). "It is neither the quality nor the quantity, but the devotion to sensual savors; when that which is eaten is not a viand to sustain our animal, or inspire our spiritual life, but food for the worms that possess us" (145).

The Water-Cure Journal also incorporates overtly religious language into its text. Some contributors to the Water-Cure Journal based their health precepts on Biblical verses.

This was especially true with regard to diet. William Metcalfe, an English clergyman who was the "first public advocate" of vegetarianism in America,[150] "initially derived his vegetarianism from an interpretation of certain Biblical texts" (Nissenbaum 39). Metcalfe established the Bible Christian Church in Philadelphia, basing church doctrines on principles of vegetarianism (Nissenbaum 39).[151] Metcalfe became a contributor to the Water-Cure Journal.

Other contributors to the Water-Cure Journal associate diet with spiritual health, and at times sound like Pythagorean vegetarians. Nissenbaum writes that Pythagorean vegetarianism

> stemm[ed] from the belief that human life was poised precariously between two poles, the divine and the bestial, and that people's spiritual destiny depended on which of these two poles they most closely approached in their daily lives. By this philosophy, it was brutalizing to kill and eat living creatures, and those who did were thereby placing their spirituality in jeopardy. The eating of vegetable foods, on the other hand, reinforced the higher and more rational element in human nature. In neither case was the purely physiological effect of diet a matter of any consequence. (Nissenbaum 40)

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[150] "In 1850, William Metcalfe founded the American Vegetarian Society and edited its magazine The American Vegetarian, which utilized a wide variety of arguments against meat-eating" (Nissenbaum 49). Again, many of the contributors to the Water-Cure Journal were affiliated with both the Transcendentalists and the Grahamites. During the 1840s and 1850s when water-cure was at its height, followers of Graham from the 1830s were in part absorbed by water-cure establishments (Nissenbaum 150). See Stephen Nissenbaum, Sex, Diet and Debility in Jacksonian America (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1980) 49; 150.

[151] See the article "The Cholera," Water Cure Journal 7 (1849): 9-11. The article states that only the Grahamites and the Bible Christians of Philadelphia were spared in the cholera epidemic of 1832. "The Cholera," Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 7 (1849): 9-11.

William A. Alcott, a Grahamite, wrote in Vegetable Diet (Boston 1838) that Pythagorean vegetarians thought vegetarianism would make mankind " 'more truly noble and godlike'" (Alcott qtd in Nissenbaum 40).[152] T.L. Nichols, a Water-Cure Journal contributor, echoes Pythagorean vegetarianism when he writes: vegetarianism "unfolds the universal laws of man's being . . . and . . . is the inlet to a new and holier life" (qtd in Blake 366)[153]. This too is Thoreau's goal. Thoreau's dietary habits and chosen lifestyle are not solely a means of insuring physical well-being, but are also a way of gaining spiritual enlightenment.

Temperate Ideal as Link to Spirituality in "Higher Laws"

During the 1840s, the medical community regarded self-control and temperance as means toward health and stability. Temperance and continence were written about extensively in medical journals. Practitioners believed that if Americans practiced moderation America would thrive. Those whose personal habits deviated from these prescribed temperate behaviors were putting themselves and their nation at risk.[154] Individual ill health and social

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[152] See Stephen Nissenbaum, Sex, Diet and Debility in Jacksonian America (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1980) 40. Vegetarian theories were part of the writings of Pythagoras (sixth century B.C.) (Nissenbaum 39), and Thoreau is aware of this ancient source of vegetarian principles. In "The Bean-field" chapter of Walden, Thoreau writes "Nor that I wanted beans to eat, for I am by nature a Pythagorean, so far as beans are concerned" (108).

[153] John B. Blake, "Mary Gove Nichols, Prophetess of Health," Women and Health in America Ed. Judith Walzer Leavitt (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984) 366.

[154] Joan Burbick writes that "the temperance movement was as significant a social force as abolition" (57). "Health campaigns preoccupied the middle classes with discussions on vegetarianism, stimulants such as tea and coffee, diet advice, proper exercise, clothing and ventilation" (57). See Joan Burbick Healing the Republic (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 57.

unrest were the results of indulging the sensual. Water-cure advocates believed that good citizens must fight against their baser, bestial natures by becoming chaste, vegetarian water drinkers.[155]

In "Higher Laws" Thoreau writes that he is a vegetarian and water drinker not only because these practices will improve his physical health, but also because they will heighten his poetic sensibilities. Water-cure advocates' arguments for vegetarianism were frequently based on their beliefs that vegetarianism and water drinking promoted spiritual well-being. Thoreau too equates the poet and poetic sensibility with the highest level of spiritual existence.

> Like many of my contemporaries, I had rarely for many years used animal food, or tea, or coffee, etc., not so much because of any ill effects which I had traced to them, as because they were not agreeable to my imagination. . . . I believe that every man who has ever been earnest to preserve his higher or poetic faculties in the best conditions has been particularly inclined to abstain from animal food, from much food of any kind. (143)

Clearly Thoreau believes creativity and poetic sensibility are healthiest when the physical self is healthy and "pure". Thoreau's holistic approach to well-being, his linking of diet and lifestyle to mental, physical and emotional well-being are similar to some contemporary discussions of health.[156] Thoreau and contributors to the Water-Cure Journal believed that physical well-

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[155] See Harold Aspiz "Sexuality and the Pseudosciences," Pseudo-Science and Society in 19th-Century America. Ed. Arthur Wroebel. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1987) 144-165. Stephen Nissenbaum, Sex, Diet and Debility in America (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1980). Marriage manuals and manuals encouraging chastity were popular throughout the nineteenth century. See William Alcott Andrus. The Young Husband: Or, Duties of Man in the Marriage Relation. Boston: George W. Light, 1839. Dio Lewis. Chastity or, Our Secret Sins. 1874. New York: Arno Press, 1974.

[156] See also Michael P. Branch and Jessica Pierce "'Another Name for Health': Thoreau

being and spiritual well-being were interconnected.[157] They also feared that the replacement of the natural with the industrial and urban would promote ill health. Again, as Charles Rosenberg writes in "The Therapeutic Revolution," health was seen as the balanced interaction between the individual and his environment. If the environment were unnatural, the individual would be prone to systemic imbalance and illness.

At the time Thoreau was writing Walden, medical practitioners were moving away from depletive therapies such as blood letting and purging. Instead, practitioners were focusing on how to fortify the patient with food and rest.[158] In A Calculus of Suffering, Martin S. Pernick discusses a shift during the 1840's from the cure at all costs to the relief of suffering. Thoreau and water-cure advocates practiced neither depletive "heroic" therapies nor the stimulative therapies that were becoming popular during the 1840's. Instead, water was their cure.

> I am glad to have drunk water so long, for the same reason I prefer the natural sky to an opium eater's heaven. I would fain keep sober always; and there aware infinite degrees of drunkenness. I believe that water is the only drink for a wise man; wine is not so noble a liquor; and think of dashing the hopes of a morning with a cup of warm coffee, or of an evening with a dish or tea! (144)

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and Modern Medicine" Literature and Medicine 15.1 (Spring 1996) 129-145.

[157] In Branch's and Pierce's article, they too state that Thoreau "combined physical and spiritual well-being," a well-being that could only be maintained in a natural environment (131). They also state that Sylvester Graham dietary reform was only concerned with the physical (131). I have found that followers of the water-cure are interested in spiritual as well as physical well-being. See Michael P. Branch and Jessica Pierce "'Another Name for Health': Thoreau and Modern Medicine" Literature and Medicine 15.1 (Spring 1996) 131.

[158] See John H. Warner The Therapeutic Perspective (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

Thoreau believes that creative faculties are strongest when they gain strength from the natural world rather than from artificial stimulants.

Thoreau's representation in "Higher Laws" of the continent male ideal is consistent to that of contemporary medical culture. Medical practitioners and superintendents believed that chastity was essential for physical and moral well-being. Contributors to medical journals wrote of the importance of engaging in sexual activities for the sole purpose of procreation. The spilling of seed outside of procreation was labeled as the cause of physical ailments, nervous disorders, and insanity.

In Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform, Stephen Nissenbaum writes about Sylvester Graham's belief that "masturbation and marital excess"' caused disease (3). In Graham's Lecture to Young Men on Chastity, delivered in 1832 and published in 1834, Graham discussed how the mind, the stomach, and the "genital system" were interconnected (Nissenbaum 105). Graham associated excess with illness. He believed that "excessive sexual desire, . . . high-seasoned food, rich dishes, the free use of flesh, and even the excess of aliment" (qtd in Nissenbaum 106) overstimulated the genital system and caused disease or insanity (Nisssenbaum 106). As previously discussed, the Graham dietary regimen was stringent and also condemned meat-eating, tobacco use and alcohol consumption. Graham's definition of sexual excess was equally severe. Nissenbaum argues that Graham "came perilously close to condemning marriage itself, and suggesting the physical and moral desirability of total celibacy" (Nissenbaum 115). Nissenbaum writes that Graham expressed the "new fear of human sexuality that would become one of the trademarks of the later nineteenth century. Graham's views on these subjects came to find acceptance among middle-class Americans" (40).

Of course, Graham was not the only reformer who associated sexuality with disease. Reformers and medical writers such as Samuel Gridley Howe wrote of masturbation as a disease which caused nervous exhaustion, bodily ailments and disfigurements, and insanity.[159] Marriage manuals and medical texts encouraging chastity were popular throughout the nineteenth century. As James Reed discusses, birth control was available by mid-century, but abstinence was the only publicly accepted method.[160] Procreation was the only socially acceptable reason for engaging in sexual activity. In Brought to Bed, Judith Walzer Leavitt argues that married antebellum American women spent most of their childbearing years either pregnant or nursing. At the time, maternal mortality and debility rates were high.[161] As Leavitt and Hedrick note women who were about to marry expressed their fears of marriage in terms of their fears of death due to maternal illnesses.[162]

Harold Aspiz argues that sperm was equated with creativity in antebellum America. Reformers believed the loss of semen would in turn result in the loss of the germs of genius. The notion was that sexual energy could be channeled into creative energy and that "retained semen" would fertilize the mind and beget works of genius (Aspiz 160).

The equating of creativity with sperm obviously excludes women, and there aren't any homologous medical theories about women's gametes and genius. In fact, medical practitioners believed that the opposite held true: thought was debilitating for a woman's

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[159] Samuel Gridley Howe. On the Causes of Idiocy. 1848. (New York: Arno Press, 1972).
[160] Reed, James. From Private Vice to Public Virtue. (New York: Basic Books, 1978).
[161] These rates did not drop significantly until the 1940s when sulfa drugs and antibiotics were used to fight infection. See Judith Walzer Leavitt Brought to Bed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 182.
[162] See Judith Walzer Leavitt Brought to Bed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), and Joan D. Hedrick Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life (New York: Oxford University Press,

reproductive system.[163] It is not coincidental that these biological views of men's and women's abilities were espoused at this time. Women had been actively participating in the reform movements of the period. They were seeking freedom to work outside of the home. They also wanted the freedom to practice family planning and to seek an education (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 59). At the same time, the professions were beginning to establish themselves. Most men who were trying to establish their professional identities did not want to compete with women as well.[164]

Thoreau appears to have been intimate with nature rather than humanity although he does, in "Higher Laws," voice the culture's preoccupation with continence.

> Who knows what sort of life would result if we had attained to purity? If I knew so wise a man as could teach me purity I would go seek him forthwith . . . . . yet the spirit can for the time persuade and control every member and function of the body, and transmute what in form is the grossest sensuality into purity and devotion. The generative energy, which, when we are loose, dissipates and makes us unclean, when we are continent invigorates and inspires us. Chastity is the flowering of man; and what are called Genius, Heroism, Holiness, and the like, are but various fruits which succeed it. Man flows at once to God when the channel of purity is open. By turns our purity inspires and our impurity casts us down. He is blessed who is assured that the

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1994).

[163] See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles E. Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Women" No Other Gods (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) 54-70.

[164] A notable exception to this line of thinking were water-cure advocates. The Water-Cure Journal actively supported women's participation in the professions.

> animal is dying out in him day by day, and the divine being established. Perhaps there is none but has cause for shame on account of the inferior and brutish nature to which he is allied. I fear that we are such gods or demigods only as fauns and satyrs, the divine allied to beasts, the creatures of appetite, and that, to some extent, our very life is our disgrace. (146)

Here Thoreau is writing about sensual indulgence of any kind, but here more than elsewhere he is explicitly referring to sexuality. He links "generative energy' which is "loose" to the unclean. Thoreau writes that when the "generative energy" is controlled and the continent model is followed, purity, cleanliness, godliness, and creativity follow. Generative energy that is not controlled "makes us unclean" (Thoreau 146). The bestial nature of man must "die out" if a person is to commune with God. The fruits of chastity are genius and creativity and it is the "brutish nature" of man, the "divine allied to beasts" which prevents the human animal from elevating itself. Thoreau says that the bestial nature of human nature must be overcome (147).

Thoreau sees himself as impure, and he too must struggle to "elevate" himself and become a continent man.

> I hesitate to say these things, but it is not because of the subject, - I care not how obscene my words are, - but because I cannot speak of them without betraying my impurity. We discourse freely without shame of one form of sensuality, and are silent about another. We are so degraded that we cannot speak simply of the necessary functions of human nature. In earlier ages, in some countries, every function was reverently spoken of and regulated by law. Nothing was too trivial for the Hindoo lawgiver, however offensive it may be to modern taste. He teaches how to eat, drink, cohabit, void excrement and

> urine, and the like, elevating what is mean, and does not falsely excuse himself by calling these things trifles (147).

In "Higher Laws," Thoreau discusses how men can purify themselves.

> 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. (147)[165]

Thoreau celebrates the physical health of men who follow the natural laws of life. These natural laws are those prescribed by Hindu lawgivers, water-cure advocates and Thoreau himself. Nature and the natural environment foster creativity, poetic sensibility and physical well-being.[166]

In The Spirit of the Huckleberry: Sensuousness in Thoreau, Victor Friesen writes that in "Higher Laws" Thoreau sees the physical and spiritual as equal and reversible with one elevating the other (42). Thoreau celebrates the sensual and has a sensual relationship with nature. Isolated in a natural environment, Thoreau writes of the tactile sensations of the sun on his face, and of the earth in his hands. He also writes of his intimate relationship with the beans of his bean field. He clearly expresses his positive physical enjoyment of nature. As I discussed in Chapter Two, Thoreau figures himself as a natural object in a natural environment. He is a

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[165] Joan Burbick says that this quote and the imagery here is popular with social reformers such as William Alcott. See Joan Burbick, Healing the Republic New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.: 72.

[166] Michael Branch and Jessica Pierce note this connection in Thoreau's writing as well: "To Thoreau, the 'perfect body' was an expression of the combined physical and spiritual well-being that he identified with the natural world" (131). See "Thoreau and Modern

member of nature's community, and he celebrates the generative in nature. He does not, however, celebrate the procreative when it involves contact with human beings. He associates this type of physical contact with contagion and disease. Thoreau does not want to "spill his seed" and sap his creative energies.[167] When discussing civilization and human nature, Thoreau says he wants to control his "baser nature," his natural instincts, his appetites; he believes that these aspects of human nature must be controlled to attain the spiritual. Humanity is the source of physical, moral, and spiritual contagion. Yet when Thoreau writes of the natural world, and his place in the natural community, he celebrates the generative without restraint. This is apparent in "Spring."

In "Spring," Thoreau writes that "One attraction in coming to the woods to live was that [he] should have leisure and opportunity to see the spring come in" (199). Thoreau wants to witness the season of birth and renewal. He focuses in particular upon the excremental, amorphous, and primordial nature of thawing earth and how new life springs from the mud of death. He writes "Few phenomena gave me more delight than to observe the forms which thawing sand and clay assume" (201). The thawing earth gives birth to all organic matter.

> As it [sand and water and clay] flows it takes the forms of sappy leaves or vines, making heaps of pulpy sprays a foot or more in depth, and resembling, as you look down on them, the laciniated lobed and imbricated thalluses of some lichens; or you are reminded of coral, of leopards' paws or birds' feet, of brains or lungs or bowels, and excrements of all kinds. (201)

Medicine" Literature and Medicine 15.1 (Spring 1996) 129-145.

[167] For a discussion of semen and creativity, see Harold Aspiz, "Sexuality and the Pseudosciences." Pseudo-Science and Society in 19th-Century America. Ed. Arthur Wroebel. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1987) 144-165.

The earth is giving birth and Thoreau, like an expectant father in the birthing room, watches all.

> The whole bank, which is from twenty to forty feet high, is sometimes overlaid with a mass of this kind of foliage, or sand rupture, for a quarter of a mile on one or both sides. The produce of one spring day. What makes this sand foliage remarkable is its springing into existence thus suddenly. (202)

The rupturing sand produces all of the life that springs forth during this season. Thoreau feels as if he were standing "in the laboratory of the Artist who made the world and me"(202). The thawing earth is spewing forth life. This is the generative process that Thoreau witnesses and wants to be a part of. "I feel as if I were nearer to the vitals of the globe, for this sandy overflow is something such a foliacecous mass as the vitals of the animal body"(202). Humanity, Thoreau argues, springs from this primordial ooze.

> When the sun withdraws the sand ceases to flow, but in the morning the streams will start once more and branch and branch again into a myriad of others. You here see perchance how blood vessels are formed. . . .In the siliceous matter which the water deposits is perhaps the bony system, and in the still finer soil and organic matter the fleshy fiber or cellular tissue. What is man but a mass of thawing clay? [168]. . . .True, it I somewhat excrementitious in its character, and there is no end to the heaps of liver lights and bowels, as it the globe were turned wrong side outward; but this suggests that Nature has some bowels. And there again is mother of humanity. This is the frost coming out of the ground; this is Spring. (202-203)

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[168] This is like the Indian myths that talk about the gods shaping man from clay and then breathing life into him.

This topsy-turveyness of nature, the notion that the planet were "turned wrong side out" and nature's innards, liver and bowels, are exposed and inverted is akin to the spewing forth of bodies of new life from earth that has been fertilized by the dead. The graves of the dead thaw in the spring and give birth to new life.

Faced with death, Thoreau is comforted by the fact that mother earth will embrace him when dead only to give birth to him again as organic life.

> Fresh curls spring from the baldest brow. There is nothing inorganic. These foliaceous heaps lie along the bank like the slag of a furnace showing that Nature is "in full blast" within. Earth is "living poetry like the leaves of a tree . . . not a fossil earth, but a living earth;. . . .Its throes will heave our excuviae from the graves. (204)

Thoreau's descriptions of how new life springs from decaying matter suggests his preoccupation with the life and death cycle. Indeed, death fuels life here. In her essay "Against Nature," Joyce Carol Oates reads Thoreau's preoccupation with death in "Spring" as the result of his fear of death.[169] His brother John's death and Thoreau's own impending demise from consumption inspires the substance of "Spring." "Spring," she argues, is a "doctrinaire transcendental passage" that allows Thoreau to detach himself from his own perilous situation (Oates 413). Thoreau "filters" his fears through his intellect (Oates 413).

But Thoreau is comforted by "observing spring coming in" (199). By observing the rebirth of what once appeared dead, Thoreau is reassured and can face his own death. "There needs no further proof of immortality. All things must live in such a light. O Death, where was

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[169] Joyce Carol Oates "Against Nature," The Contemporary Essay. Ed. Donald Hall. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 408-414.

thy sting? O Grave, where was thy victory, then?" (209) Living in the wilds outside of Concord allows Thoreau to see that nothing in Nature ever truly dies; what is organic cannot be destroyed.

> We are cheered when we observe the vulture feeding on the carrion which disgusts and disheartens us and deriving health and strength from the repast . . . assurance it gave me of the strong appetite and inviolable health of Nature was my compensation for this. I love to see that Nature is so rife with life that myriads can be afforded to be sacrificed and suffered to prey on one another. (210)

Once dead, Nature will devour Thoreau while he lies fallow in the ground waiting to be reborn in spring.

"Spring" precedes the "Conclusion" of Walden. Thoreau ends his "Spring" chapter by saying "This was my first year's life in the woods completed; and the second year was similar to it. I finally left Walden September 6th, 1847" (211). He begins his "Conclusion" by saying "To the sick the doctors wisely recommend a change of air and scenery" (211). The consumptive Thoreau's stay at Walden is his self-prescribed change of air. He notes in "Spring" that "Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness" (209). Nature's wildness is Thoreau's curative tonic. What Thoreau does not celebrate in human nature, he does celebrate in Nature. He focuses upon the rebirth of spring to accept his own death. He is a part of an organic cycle in which one truly never dies. From "Spring" and rebirth he draws the conclusion to Walden.

Aurora/Spiritual Rebirth

The promise of rebirth is what attracts Thoreau to the morning hour. Just as the pond thawing in spring signals new life in the annual cycle so does the dawn in the diurnal cycle. Thoreau writes

> The phenomena of the year take place every day in a pond on a small scale. Every morning, generally speaking, the shallow water is being warmed more rapidly than the deep, though it may not be made so warm after all, and every evening it is being cooled more rapidly until the morning. The day is an epitome of the year. The night is the winter, the morning and evening are the spring and fall, and the noon is the summer. (198, 199)

Like spring, morning in Walden symbolizes spiritual rebirth.

Thoreau links water-cure practices to spiritual awakening. He writes of simplicity and bathing, two tenets of the water-cure, and links them to his morning ablutions.

> Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. I have been as sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the Greeks. I got up early and bathed in the pond; this was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did. They say that characters were engraved on the bathing tub of king Tching-thang [Confucius] to this effect: "Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again." I can understand that. (59, 60)

Bathing is a religious exercise for Thoreau; he bathes daily in the morning (75) and again in the forenoon (112). He does not talk about swimming at night, for the night symbolizes the winter of man's soul in Walden.

The tension to discover the true nature of mankind is apparent in Thoreau's discussion of the morning. Just as water-cure advocates believed that vegetarianism "reinforc[ed] the higher and more rational element in human nature," (Nissenbaum 40) Thoreau believes the morning is the time when the higher nature of man is most awake.

> The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour. Then there is least somnolence in us; and for an hour at least, some part of us awakes which slumbers all the rest of the day and night. Little is to be expected of that day, if it can be called a day, to which we are not awakened by our newly acquired force and aspirations from within, accompanied by the undulations of celestial music, instead of factory bells. (60)

Man wakes up each day reborn in a sense; every morning is a new spring. Man is most likely to here the voice of his inner "Good genius" in the morning.

Throughout Walden, Thoreau connects celestial music and flute music to mankind's awakening inner spirit. Thoreau's term for this inner spirit is "good genius". In "Baker Farm," for example, after having tried to awaken the inner life of his immigrant neighbors, Thoreau listens to his own inner "good genius." He traipses down a hill, and there is a rainbow over his shoulder and the "tinkling sounds" of music in the air (138). Music is associated with man's listening to and following his good genius. "No man followed his genius till it misled him" ("Higher Laws" 144). And when Thoreau writes of John Farmer at the end of "Higher Laws" recreating his inner spiritual self, the sound of flute music can be heard. Thoreau, of

course, played the flute; (117; Friesen 42) he is the bard who is trying to awaken the spiritual life of all humanity.

The morning, like spring, signals rebirth. But unlike Thoreau's generative discussion of the physical and organic life and death cycle in "Spring," Thoreau's discussions of the morning hour throughout Walden are always linked to the awakening of a man's spiritual being. Every dawn brings new opportunity to renew the inner life, perhaps most strongly during the springtime.

> In a pleasant spring morning all men's sins are forgiven. Such a day is a truce to vice. While such a sun holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return. Through our own recovered innocence we discern the innocence of our neighbors. You may have known your neighbor yesterday for a thief, a drunkard, or a sensualist, and merely pitied or despised him, and despaired of the world, but the sun shines bright and warm this first spring morning, recreating the world, and you meet him at some serene work, and see how his exhausted and debauched veins expand with still joy and bless the new day, feel the spring influence with the innocence of infancy, and all his faults are forgotten. (207)

A spring morning recreates the individual, and thus the world. Sinners are redeemed and reborn with the dawn of a new day.

Thoreau believed that the true nature of mankind is more spiritual than bestial, but because of his contact with civilization man's inner voice cannot be heard. Included in "Spring" is the following citation from the Chinese philosopher Mengtse (208).

> "A return to goodness produced each day in the tranquil and beneficent breath of the morning, causes that in respect to the love of virtue and the hatred of vice, one approaches a little the primitive nature of man, as the sprouts in the forest which has been felled. In like manner the evil which one does in the interval of a day prevents the germs of virtues which began to spring up again from developing themselves and destroys them." (208)

The primitive nature of man is virtuous. It is through the daily activities of the civilized world, working in a factory, eating meat, drinking coffee, buying lampshades, that virtue is destroyed. These civilized activities lead to the destruction of the seeds of goodness. Again, Thoreau quotes the Chinese philosopher Mengtse:

> "After the germs of virtue have thus been prevented many times from developing themselves, then the beneficent breath of evening does not suffice to preserve them. As soon as the breath of evening does not suffice longer to preserve them, then the nature of man does not differ much from that of the brute. Men seeing the nature of this man like that of the brute, think that he has never possessed the innate faculty of reason. Are those the true and natural sentiments of man?" (208)

Grahamites frequently saw man as teetering between two diametrically opposed existences, the divine and the bestial (Nissenbaum 40). How people lived their daily lives, their behaviors, habits, diet, determined their spiritual fates. A person with "the innate faculty of reason" would maintain the natural sentiments of man, which Thoreau believes arise from the "germs of virtue." If Thoreau thought otherwise, he would not have spent what could have been his last days writing a book encouraging people to rouse themselves.

In "Sounds," the voice of chanticleer signals morning and another opportunity for renewal. Thoreau writes: "The note of this once wild Indian pheasant is certainly the most remarkable of any bird's, and if they could be naturalized without being domesticated, it would soon become the most famous sound in our woods" (85, 86). The rooster's crowing awakens man and allows for the realignment of man's nature with the rational and spiritual parts of his nature.

In "Sounds," in contrast to chanticleer and aurora, Thoreau presents his readers with the evening and the sounds of the owl. Thoreau's discussion of owls begins with the screech owl:

> When other birds are still the screech owl takes up the strain, like mourning women their ancient u-lu-lu. Their dismal scream is truly Ben Jonsonian. Wise midnight hags! It is no honest and blunt tu-whit tu-who of the poets, but, without jesting, a most solemn graveyard ditty . . . .They are the spirits, the low spirits and melancholy forebodings, of fallen souls that once in human shape night-walked the earth and did the deeds of darkness, now expiating their sins with their wailing hymns or threnodies in the scenery of their transgressions. They give me a new sense of that nature which is our common dwelling. Oh-o-o-o-o that I never had been bor-r-r-r-n! (84)

While Chanticleer is the herald of the morning and new possibility, the screech owl sings of the graveyard and sin. Chanticleer, of course, is masculine and associated with Thoreau while in this passage the screech owl is associated with witches, mourning women, and the feminine.

Thoreau then speaks of the hooting owl:

> I was also serenaded by a hooting owl. Near at hand you could fancy it the most melancholy sound in Nature, as if she meant by this to stereotype and make permanent in her choir the dying moans of a human being, - some poor relic of mortality who has left hope behind, and howls like an animal, yet with human sobs, on entering the dark valley, made more awful by a certain gurgling melodiousness, - I find myself beginning with the letters gl when I try to imitate it, - expressive of a mind which has reached the gelantinous mildewy stage in the mortification of all healthy and courageous thought. It reminded me of ghouls and idiots and insane howlings. (84)

Owls are nature's "stereotype" of "some poor weak relic of mortality who has left hope behind" (84). Thoreau

> rejoice[s] that there are owls. Let them do the idiotic and maniacal hooting for men. It is a sound admirably suited to swamps and twilight woods which no day illustrates, suggesting a vast and undeveloped nature which men have not recognized. They represent the stark twilight and unsatisfied thoughts which all have. (85)

Thoreau first identifies screech owls with hags and then discusses how the hooting owls' "howls" "represent" the idiot, the maniac and "unsatisfied thoughts." Owls possess "a vast and undeveloped nature;" they are outside of nature/the nature of man.

At the time Thoreau was writing Walden, biological theories attempting to explain the differences between men and women sound strikingly like Thoreau's descriptions of Chanticleer and owls in "Sounds." Physicians believed men and women possessed different natures and character traits as a result of their biological differences. In mid-nineteenth-century

America, Americans accepted "a formally agreed upon set of characteristics" as being gender specific (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg "Female Animal" 54). Physicians argued that women's behaviors were controlled by their uteruses, which were connected to their central nervous systems (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg "Female Animal" 56). Physicians claimed that women's actions were controlled by their nerves and emotions (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg "Female Animal" 55). On the other hand, men's actions, medical practitioners argued, were controlled by the "intellectual propensities" of their brains (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg "Female Animal" 55). Physicians asserted that women were irrational and men rational because of their biological make-ups (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg "Female Animal" 55, 56). Most Americans accepted these biological views of men and women.

In "Sounds" Thoreau characterizes chanticleer and owls in ways that sound like the mid-nineteenth-century medical discussions of the gender characteristics of men and women. In Walden, owls are the hags of the night. They are associated with the irrational and the loss of hope, the antithesis of Thoreau's aurora. In antebellum America, physicians believed a woman was a "prisoner" of her own reproductive system (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg "Female Animal" 57) and a "creature of her internal organs, of tidal forces she could not consciously control" (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg "Female Animal" 56). At the time Thoreau was writing Walden, most Americans thought men and women possessed completely different natures. When the sun rises and the midnight hags are silent, "A different race of creatures awakes to express the meaning of Nature there" (85). This race is represented by John Farmer and chanticleer, the race of men.

The rooster is the symbol of Thoreau's mission to awaken man.

> To walk in a winter morning in a wood where these birds abounded, their native woods, and hear the wild cockerels crow on the trees, clear and shrill for miles over the resounding earth, drowning the feebler notes of other birds, - think of it! It would put all nations on the alert. Who would not be early to rise, and rise earlier every successive day of his life, till he became unspeakably healthy, wealthy, and wise? (86)

Not only is Chanticleer the ultimate herald, he is also a symbol of health in the natural world. "All climates agree with brave chanticleer. He is more indigenous even than the natives. His health is ever good, his lungs are sound, his spirits never flag" (86).[170] Although not physically healthy, Thoreau believes that he is the chanticleer of mankind. He will awaken his neighbors and teach them how to live. In "Where I Lived, What I Lived For" Thoreau writes: "As I have said, I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up." (57)

In "Where I Lived, What I Lived For," Thoreau writes that "Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep" (60). The true meaning of life becomes apparent when a person is awake and in tune with his moral being. Thoreau again equates this time with the dawn of spiritual renewal. "Meaning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me" (60). The mission of spiritual revivers is to awaken man's moral faculties and save them by making them aware of their true spiritual (as opposed to "worldly") natures.

While at Walden Thoreau reawakens and then sustains his own true good genius. Further, he prepares himself spiritually in case he does not survive his bout with tuberculosis.

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[170] Chanticleer, undomesticated and healthy, is Thoreau's Canadian woodchopper of the animal world.

As part of his larger invalid's mission, he also wants to wake up his neighbors. In "Where I Lived, What I Lived For" Thoreau writes that the men who build the railroads in the East are destroying themselves.

> We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And every few years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon. And when they run over a man that is walking in his sleep, a supernumerary sleeper in the wrong position, and wake him up, they suddenly stop the cars, and make a hue and a cry about it, as if this was the exception. (62)

Laborers are sleepers who let their work define them. Thoreau asks "Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life?" (62). Clearly, he thinks that life is to be enjoyed, not wasted laboring. He laments that "The millions are awake enough for physical labor; but only one in a million is awake enough for intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred millions to a poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive" (60). In "Higher Laws" and the "Where I Lived, What I Lived For" Thoreau sees the way people live their lives as not living at all. Few think. Fewer still attain the divine which Thoreau equates with the poetic and the inner self.

Thoreau ends "Higher Laws" with the most powerful message of moral reform in Walden, the awakening of the inner genius of John Farmer, the American born every man.

> John Farmer sat at his door one September evening, after a hard day's work, his mind still running on his labor more or less. Having bathed he sat down to

> recreate his intellectual man. It was a rather cool evening, and some of his neighbors were apprehending a frost. He had not attended to the train of his thoughts long when he heard some one playing on the flute, and that sound harmonized with his mood. Still he thought of his work; but the burden of his thought was, that though this kept running in his head, and he found himself planning and contriving it against his will, yet it concerned him very little. It was no more than the scurf of his skin, which was constantly shuffled off. But the notes of the flute came home to his ears out of a different sphere from that he worked in, and suggested work for certain faculties which slumbered in him. They gently did away with the street, and the village, and the state in which he lived. A voice said to him, - Why do you stay here and live this mean and moiling life, when a glorious existence is possible for you? Those same stars twinkle over other fields than these. - But how to come out of this condition and actually migrate thither? All that he could think of was to practice some new austerity, to let his mind descend into his body and redeem it, and treat himself with ever increasing respect. (148)

Here are the elements of Thoreau's reformation process. John Farmer symbolically carries out Thoreau's mission of reform. After having bathed, John Farmer hears and listens to the music of a flute. Thoreau is the flute player and herald of reform. John Farmer is thinking of his work, but the music is slowly awakening his being. His inner voice asks him why he is wasting his life toiling when he can elevate himself by communing with nature and cultivating the self.

The redemption of John Farmer, similar to Thoreau's purification at Walden Pond, involves both physical and mental rejuvenation. Thoreau and water-cure advocates believed in

the body-mind connection as controlling health. Just as Thoreau writes of his own purification process in Walden in the hopes of reforming his fellow citizens, Water-Cure Journal contributors such as T.L. Nichols believed "that health reform was 'the best means for the renovation of human society'" (qtd. in Blake 366).

Dr. Jackson, a regular Water-Cure Journal contributor, writes of how the water-cure regimen will reform society. Jackson discusses reform in terms similar to Thoreau's discussion of health in "Economy"; his aim is to "rectify habits" that "violate physical law."

> The Water-Cure Reformation, if it secures its legitimate end, must be a radical reformation. It must combat not only the unscientific modes of treating disease, but it must sweep within its circle all of those habits of the people which exist in violation of the laws of life. People kill themselves by eating, by drinking, by labor, by sleep, by want of sleep, by sexual excess, by taxation of brain, by money-making and spending, by extended violation of physical law, in almost every direction. Now the Water-Cure reformation contemplates a rectification of the general habits of the people, in all cases where correction is needful.[171]

Jackson offers, as does Thoreau in "Economy" and "Higher Laws," a listing of the intemperate habits which will cause illness. These habits violate the physical laws that water-cure advocates outline as healthful behaviors.

The full title of the journal, the Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms, testifies to the editors' dedication to reform. Like Thoreau, these physicians saw themselves as messengers of reform awakening their readers. The Prospectus of the Water-Cure Journal

states the journal's position on reform: "Reforms In all our modes of life will be pointed out, and made so plain that 'he that runs may read.' We believe full that man may prolong his life much beyond the number of years usually attained. We propose to show how."[172]

E.A. Kittredge, M.D. discusses the interrelationship between physical, moral and spiritual health in the article "The Water Cure, How Far Useful." Kittredge begins his article by sharing with his readers a conversation he had with a friend "the other day". His friend says he "can easily conceive how water may cure a fever, but it is too absurd to suppose it will cure dyspepsia, and such kind of disease!" Kittredge then says "Supposing your child was addicted to stealing, what would be your remedy?" His friend's answer is "by instilling into him the principles of Christianity." Kittredge then asks his friend how he "would cure a sinner", and his friend replies that the cure for a sinner is Christianity. Kittredge agrees and says you cure a sinner with Christianity, "Not [by] doing violence to his physical laws." Kittredge then makes the analogy that if someone is sick, "why whip and torture physical nature, and why not cure the dyspepsia or any other disease by the same reformatory means that you would use to cure a fever?" Water can cure all illnesses, not just fevers. It can also cleanse the soul. Water as cure is synonymous with Christianity as cure as presented in this article.

Kittredge's definition of disease is the standard hydropathic definition of illness and cure.

> What is the definition of disease? According to Webster, it is "to interrupt or impair any or all of the natural functions of the several organs of the living body. As sin, theologically speaking, affects our moral nature, so sin,

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[171] Dr. Jackson, "Reformation" Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (Jan. 1851): 1.
[172] "Reforms," Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (Jan. 1851): 1.

> physiologically speaking, affects our organic or physical nature. And if some remedy holds good in all cases of moral disease, why in the name of common sense should it not hold good in cases of organic or physical disease? .... the veriest simpleton knows that over-eating and drinking and other violations of hygienic law always precede dyspepsia - as in fact does every other disease.[173]

Kittredge defines disease as sin, the violation of the natural laws of life as outlined in the Water-Cure Journal. Sin causes physical, moral and spiritual disease; the water-cure regimen can cure disease on all of these levels simultaneously. The cure for sins against the self is water. The sins listed here, "over-eating and drinking" are labeled as "violations of hygienic law." These intemperate behaviors are unclean violations of the laws of health; water will cleanse and purify.

> Now what is hydropathy or water-cure?
>
> It is simply this. It proposes to take man from the false conditions in which he is wallowing, and make him live in obedience to the laws of his being and health, believing in the scripture to be as applicable in the physically sick man as in the morally sick one's.[174]

The laws the journal outlines are not just physical laws; they are the laws of each individual's own inner being. Violating the temperate ideal results in moral and physical degradation.

> Long continued violation of the laws, moral, physical, and intellectual, is the cause of all disease. And long continued perseverance in the way of well doing

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[173] E.A. Kittredge, "The Water Cure, How Far Useful," Water-Cure Journal 11.3 (March 1851): 66.
[174] E.A. Kittredge, "The Water Cure, How Far Useful," Water-Cure Journal 11.3 (March 1851): 66.

> is the only way in which we can recover our health. And if the re-cuperative power within is unable to cope with the diseased action, you may be sure she will be still more unable, if thwarted and obstructed with "medicines." Violated law can never be atoned for by using drugs, and artificial stimulants are poor substitutes indeed for wasted strength.[175]

The "re-cuperative power" within a person is the same inner nature that Thoreau talks about throughout Walden. The voice of this inner being or of the "purified intellect" can only be heard if a person leads a life of "well doing" as outlined in the water-cure regimen. Kittredge writes:

> No my friends; be not deceived by such shallow tricks, such insults to the God within you; do no more evil that good may come, but put your trust in the water of life and health, which, with air, exercise, diet and such like, will do all for you it is possible to do for good.[176]

Man must trust his inner nature; he must trust the waters of life and health. The imagery here is similar to Thoreau's imagery in "The Ponds," and "The Pond in Winter."

Contributors to the Water-Cure Journal not only wanted to cure the sick, they also wanted to practice "preventative medicine." In the "To Preserve Health" section of the opening title page of the Water-Cure Journal, the editors again emphasize how important temperate habits are to maintaining physical well-being.

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[175] E.A. Kittredge, "The Water Cure, How Far Useful," Water-Cure Journal 11.3 (March 1851): 66.
[176] E.A. Kittredge, "The Water Cure, How Far Useful" Water-Cure Journal 11.3 (March 1851): 66.

> To Preserve Health This is a matter quite as important as that of curing disease. Obedience to the natural laws will secure this greatest blessing of all earthly blessings. Few understand these laws, and hence ignorantly violate them in all manner of ways. Disease is frequently transmitted from parent to children, who suffer and pay the penalty of violated laws with their lives. It will be our duty to explain these physical laws which govern life, and thereby guard and preserve human health.[177]

Physical health is a blessing that is the reward of those who follow the commandments of the water-cure. The sins of the parents who violate natural laws will be visited upon their children.

The editors and hydropathic physicians who write for the Water-Cure Journal are trying to direct their readers toward the building of a healthy nation. They also preach to the converted, encouraging them to proselytize for their cause. The title page of the 1853 edition of the journal contains the journal's mission statement:

> Mission The Water-Cure as a general thing is safe, harmless, and capable of being made use of by Every Family at "Home," in all ordinary cases, whenever and wherever any remedy is necessary. In view of this fact, we ask "Is it not the duty of all who have been benefited by this great, yet simple system, to recommend it to their friends and neighbors?" With entire confidence, then, do we appeal for aid, to those who would rescue man from the jaws of a premature grave, by placing in their hands the means of preserving health and

[177] "To Preserve Health" Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (Jan 1851): 1.

> prolonging life to a green old age; and for this purpose, do we tender this new volume of the Water-Cure Journal for 1853.[178]

Thoreau and water-cure enthusiasts wanted to reform the physically degraded. The Water-Cure Journal considers itself to be the "herald of reforms". The journal will wake its readers up and put them in touch with their inner selves. The journal's editors believe the "effects" of the water-cure "are almost miraculous, and [the water-cure] has already been the means of saving thousands who were entirely beyond the reach of all other known remedies"[179] In the Water-Cure Journal and Walden, water is a spiritual, moral and physical cure-all. Water purifies, baptizes, allows for re-birth.

In Religion and the Rise of the American City, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg writes that those who participated in the missionary movements of the first third of the nineteenth century believed that "Man's salvation waited only upon the revival or awakening of his moral faculties" (Smith-Rosenberg 65). Like these missionaries, in Walden, Thoreau believes that "[m]oral reform is the effort to throw off sleep" (60). Thoreau the invalid tried to wake his readers up to instruct them in the natural laws of life.

As Sheila Rothman notes in Living in the Shadow of Death, beginning in the 1830s and throughout the 1840s, tuberculosis was epidemic in the New England area (14-15; 131). Those who lived in the New England area were afraid that the United States was quickly becoming a nation of invalids. In the face of a tuberculosis epidemic, Thoreau and water-cure enthusiasts became missionaries of health. While discussing physical health, they did so in

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[178] "Mission," Water-Cure Journal 13 (1852): 1.
[179] Prospectus, Water-Cure Journal 11.1 (Jan 1851): 1.

spiritual and moral terms. Thoreau believed that the American-born could perfect themselves by becoming temperate, and thus regain their health.

Conclusion

Thoreau's Walden may be read as a health narrative that describes how an individual can lead a healthful life. In the conclusion of Walden, Thoreau encourages his readers to "travel inwardly" and "explore the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean of one's being" (222). He ultimately argues that self-knowledge is the key to eternal well-being, and uses water as a metaphor for health, spiritual renewal and self-awareness. In "Conclusion," Thoreau writes that "The life within us is like water in the river" (220). The life force rises and falls with the seasons of time and change, but life is never-ending. Thoreau recalls the tale of a bug that was born sixty years after having been deposited in a tree as an egg (221). He exclaims, "Who does not feel his faith in resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this?" (221). The tale of the bug's life helps Thoreau face his own impending death from tuberculosis by contemplating his place in the eternity of the universe. Thoreau, hydropaths, Transcendentalists, indeed all antebellum Americans were living in a culture where death from infectious disease was commonplace. When faced with their own impending mortality, Americans focused upon nature's promise of immortality.

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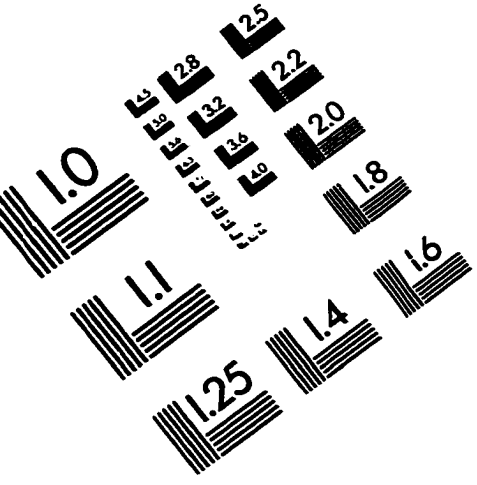

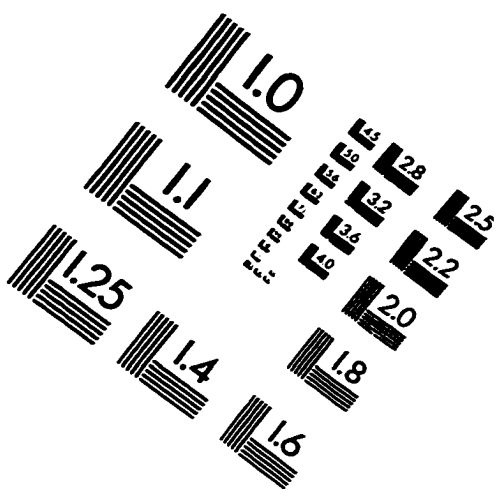

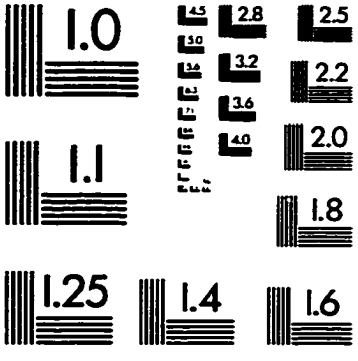

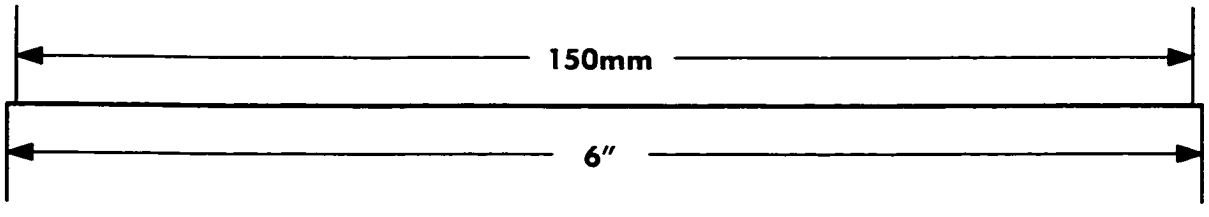

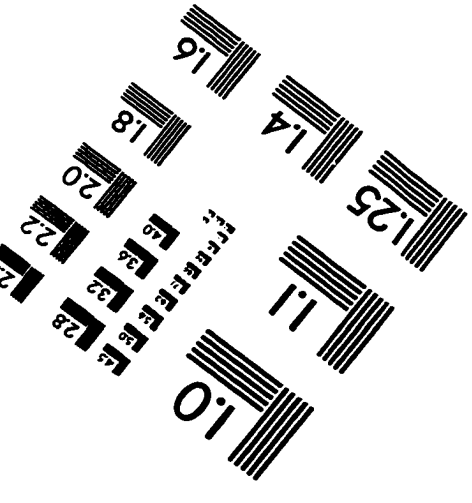

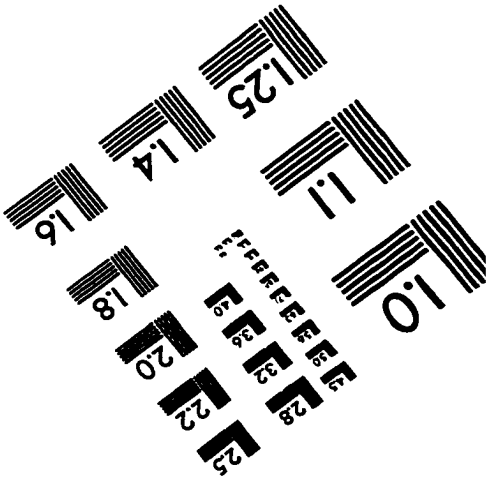

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