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Playing Underground: Thoreau and the Queer Antipastoral

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This article situates Thoreau's *Walden* within the tradition of "mole philosophy" in which philosophers figure new forms of thought as a kind of burrowing, and often as a burrowing mole. Like the others, Thoreau's mole philosopher partakes in what is fast becoming a geological fantasy about depth and interpretation, but his mole differs from his predecessors' in that its burrowing has to do primarily with getting out of the sun. The sun, it seems, lacks a certain mystery. Indeed, the idea that nature provides familiarity and reliability through its rhythms or cycles is at odds with, among other things, *Walden's* requirement that we ask, unceasingly, "Who knows when?" and "Who knows what?" Burrowing, then, alerts us to a queer antipastoral mode at play in *Walden* when so-called natural cycles (solar, seasonal, reproductive, etc.), as well as other commonplaces of a maturing American literary pastoral mode, threaten to stall the text's erotic curiosity.

SOCRATES: Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling…" —Plato[1]

"The sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new. Murphy sat out of it, as though he were free…"—Beckett[2]

The Stakes of Sunshine

The pastoralist's sun is never not being the sun. How could it be anything else, since our very being depends on it. The sun will come up tomorrow; we implicitly make this bet all the time and when we do, we imply a confidence that the sun exists somewhere even without us being present for it. As we posit this place from where the sun comes up we are positing a viewpoint that exceeds and outlasts us; we posit objectivity as such. Such a relationship to the sun enables further reliance on "harmonious periodic cycling embodied in the cycle of the seasons," a cycling that provides "regular anxiety-free prediction of the future."[3] And so we'll be ok after all, it seems, despite everything that travels under the name "destruction of the planet." And we'll feel ok, too, because our confidence in the sun and its seasons transports us "from grief to consolation… catharsis, and closure."[4] We hardly need to do a thing, we're told, but wait for the cycles to cycle around. Even in the post-apocalypse the sun "circles the earth like a grieving mother with a lamp."[5] Such an image reassures us that when we're not there (dead, let's say) someone or something is there, a mother even, and she is thinking of us. It's easy to forget that the sun does not circle the earth at all; that's the earth's dream. Rather, the sun rises because the earth moves, meaning that if the sun "stops rising" it's probably because we screwed up, not the sun. Indeed, the sun might run out of hydrogen and stop working well for us in five billion years, but the Holocene extinction is happening right now. Such forgetting is precisely the sleight of hand that pastoral forms and modes have perfected, often under the name of a mother, like Mother Nature.

That solar imagery is pervasive in literary pastoralism's world building is not surprising given the overall orientation toward life lived outdoors.[6] In *The Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx argues that the sun has particular significance for the nineteenth-century pastoral mode. He argues that the same conventional framework that operates in "Allegory of the Cave"—in which a fire's light provides false knowledge and the sun's true— evolves in nineteenth-century literature such that fire takes on further, historically specific associations with industrialization, such as steam power, furnaces, machines, and so on. Such powers and objects appear as threats to the garden where the sun is the garden's "only true lamp."[7] The sun retains associations with both natural cycles and divine truth, but for the "complex pastoral" text, a well-wrought sunrise is no longer a free pass.[8] Although he declines to name it as such, Marx's close readings accumulate into an argument about how some American authors experiment with a

new idiom wherein the sun, and especially its cycle of rising and setting, is used to maintain and explore contradictions between pastoral ideals and capitalist demands rather than resolve them.[9]

While it is a major text for *The Machine in the Garden*, Marx does not explicitly link *Walden* to these developments. I assume this is because he doesn't think *Walden* is ultimately a very interesting book with which to think about pastoral modes. In the discussion of it that follows here I hope to prove him wrong in that regard, but I do take for granted his argument that how a text treats the sun and/or artificial light is part of the desire to "have it both ways" that is a signature feature of pastoralism as he theorizes it.[10] I am also on board with his sense that one of the things the pastoral mode tries to do is teach us how to live with a desire for something we can't really have.[11] We are taught to seek satisfaction through putting pressure on versions of the nature/culture binary without really threatening their coherence or challenging their hierarchies.[12] All in all, I proceed by keeping in mind that a text's love of the sun indicates its metaphysical and pastoral buy-in, and that the opposite is also true; antipastoral texts often show how the sun can be harmful and are often also critical of logocentrism.[13] Socrates reminds me, though, that there is more than one way to get out of the sun. Even though he assumes that philosophers will not care to explore the dark of the cave and that they will ultimately benefit from following the light out, a lot has been learned in the dark of the underground. So many legacies are associated with "the underground"—political, literary, extractive, some of necessity, some vicarious. Too many to generalize about motives, but sometimes the wish is to get out of the sun and all it could represent, if even for a moment. I'm specifically interested in how we might think about anti- and de-pastoral modes and practices through accounts of being and thinking underground that (roughly paraphrased) ask us not to follow Socrates and imagine human beings living underground. Instead, they say, imagine animals. Imagine *moles*.

Mole Philosophers

Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche all mention the mole by name. Regardless of these men's possible expertise in fossorial mammalian life, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, moles were generally understood to live exclusively underground. One 1855 periodical quips, "[Moles] live and die within the precincts of the earth… 'He is of the earth, earthy.'"[14] Despite this allusion's insinuation that "earthy" beings can't access spiritual truths, the mole turns out to be a rich little metaphor for philosophers. Moles are a deliberate choice, as David Farrell Krell argues in his preliminary survey of moles in literature and philosophy, as "the image suggests something about the way these philosophers understand themselves, how they estimate their own search for truth.[15] Even

in the eighteenth century it was known that moles are "good" for agriculture because they help aerate the soil and manage other "pest" species but at the same time, moles are not beloved creatures. They disturb us and our yards, sometimes our fields. We treat them as rodents (they are not) and their burrows can cause root damage, particularly if other small mammals use their tunnels and disturb the earth further. From an agrilogistic point of view, then, they both perpetuate the status quo and resist it.

From a metaphysician's point of view (such as Kant's) the mole's work is similarly dialectical; their tunneling has ruined the "grounds" of reason making certainty impossible and their tunneling is also required to investigate and repair that damage.[16] Hegel's Spirit-mole struggles to push its way through the constraining crust of the earth to get to the sunlight where there is freedom and knowledge.[17] As we might suspect, Marx's mole responds to Hegel's (and Shakespeare's): his mole is "not working towards the light; it is working in the earth" waiting to pop up unexpectedly, revolutionarily.[18] Nietzsche, per usual, has several kinds of moles, and they do all the things. They try to get up and out like Hegel's, they plot and disrupt like Marx's, and like Kant's mole critique, they promise to report back about what's going on down there when they are ready.[19] These are some of our precedents.[20]

Thoreau is also interested in things that go underground, and even imagines himself as a burrowing mole-like creature.[21] Putting his several burrowers into conversation with the continental moles helps me think about his relationship to pastoralist thinking. Thoreau has been canonized as a writer of various pastoral modes and looms large in the largest-looming arguments about American pastoralism.[22] Sometimes he defaults to a simple pastoralism as a way out of true ethical encounter.[23] Sometimes he wrestles with himself and his situation in a more complex way.[24] And sometimes, he doesn't even wait until nightfall to unweave the day's work.[25] Such is the case, I think, with the marked ambivalence toward solar phenomena and symbolism in Thoreau's texts. For even the most seemingly sun-centric passages—such as the epigraph about crowing to wake his neighbors up, or the final lines that proclaim, "Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star"—are also passages about what happens when we are awake in the *dark.* And then there's the following moment in his journals: "The intense light of the sun unfits me for meditation, makes me wander in my thought; my life is too diffuse and dissipated; routine succeeds and prevails over us; the trivial has greater power then, and most at noonday, the most trivial hour of the twenty-four" (August 5, 1851). I see nothing definitive about this passage and consulting its immediate context in the journal only makes matters worse if we're looking for a theory of light, or a clear position on the sun. But a refusal to be summarized is exactly what I hear in this passage. I hear that noon is the most trivial

hour of the twenty-four because it purports to show us everything. High noon thinking is that bird's eye view, the sun's view, a God's view. It's a fantasy that with such a view, everything could be revealed all at once, with no shadows. It's a *technological* fantasy figured as a "natural" and inevitable daily occurrence, and Thoreau doesn't like it.[26]

He doesn't like it and so he queers it. The sun is "but a morning star" and this queer sun waits for us in the dark. Just so, his writing calls on animals and other clichéd phenomena to evoke a reliance on "natural" patterns and cycles only to then parade them as specters of contingency and unknowability rather than stability and certainty. In this way, they do the work of the queer antipastoral, as Cameron Clark has conceptualized it. The queer antipastoral frustrates both our expectations of what nature will do for us (the sun will come up tomorrow, for example, or, it will rain eventually) and our expectations around how narratives will handle sexual reproduction and erotic intensity.[27] As though nodding in agreement, Leo Marx describes *Walden* as a book about a young man pretending to be a shepherd so he can pretend to undertake a "pastoral withdrawal" irl and then, like Virgil, confuse us on purpose when he writes about it.[28] Following Sarah Ensor's work on Thoreau, I think this shepherd cosplay is erotically charged and queerly so. Ensor writes, "What emerges [in Thoreau's writing] is a queer understanding of reproduction that dispenses with normative futurity in favor of modes of suspension and delay…and replaces a preoccupation with reproductive products or ends with an emphasis on the ecological conditions of reproduction's (im)possibility."[29] These shenanigans are not isolated to the matter of Thoreau's pastoralism, of course. Indeed, whether not they choose to use the words "queer" and "queering" to describe what Thoreau's writing is and what it does, his readers love to point out that Thoreau's writing leans into ambivalence both stylistic and ethical. Stated generously, there is a "richness to the point of confusion of its aims."[30] And this richness and confusion has both captivated us and made us uncomfortable, as some kinds of play is wont to do.[31]

Burrowing in *Walden*

I want to slow down and move through a set of examples that I hope will illustrate a queer, depastoralizing desire in *Walden*. The examples are all from the last chapter of *Walden* and are about insects. Specifically, he's interested in insects burrowing and then unexpectedly coming out of something. First, a locust coming out of the ground. He writes, "If we have had the seven-years' itch, we have not seen the seventeen-year locust yet in Concord…Who knows what sort of seventeen-year locust will next come out of the ground?"[32] The underground bug—the seventeen-year locust—is in fact a periodical cicada, worth noting I think because the cicada is "a staple of poetic descriptions of the natural world…They provide the baseline for the 'music of nature'

and the soundtrack of pastoral poetry."[33] But this isn't the soundtrack we hear at the end of *Walden*. What strikes me about his treatment of the seventeen-year locust first and foremost is that it is not on a seventeen-year cycle, or any cycle at all, for it has "not been seen before." In contrast to the predictable itching that we *have* had ("If we have had the seven-years' itch...")[34] the locust is unpredictable: "Who knows what sort of seventeen-year locust will next come out of the ground?" The locust's so-called natural cycle of reproduction is interrupted, but that interruption does not announce a crisis; it heralds potential rather than disavows it.[35]

Next, Thoreau introduces another burrowed and emerging insect as a figure of unknown possibility:

> Everyone has heard the story...of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of a dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood which had stood in a farmer's kitchen for sixty years...from an egg deposited in the living tree many years earlier still...which was heard gnawing out for several weeks, hatched perchance by the heat of an urn. Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life...heard perchance gnawing out now for years by the astonished family of man...may unexpectedly come forth from amidst society's most trivial and handselled furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer life at last![36]

The "strong and beautiful bug" anecdote ups the ante again. The bug in the table is supposed to restore our faith in "resurrection and immortality" but it is not clear why since it is a story of happenstance and novelty, not inevitability. The bug, who has magic-journeyed from living tree to dry table leaf, is "hatched perchance," Thoreau tells us, by the heat of a hot water pot that sits on the table in which the bug has been buried. It was *not* activated by the heat or light of the sun.[37] Unlike a cycle's implied promise, these material conditions for transformation and potential are openly contingent, and especially silly if we remember that *Walden* blames tea for ruining afternoons (God forbid we think of coffee), so we know he isn't referencing a mid-afternoon habit of boiling water. The hot water pot appears at random. Similarly, this bug has been "heard perchance" before it has been seen but it was not anticipated with any degree of accuracy.[38] It has been "heard gnawing out now for years" by the "family of man" sitting around the table. Yet somehow it still manages to emerge "unexpectedly" (an image of acousmatic terror and domestic disruption that Melville's later short story on the same local rumor, "The Apple Tree Table," exploits in all its potential horror and hilarity). This staccato buildup of anticipation delivers nothing—everyone is sitting around, looking at the table, listening to they know not what but it's been "heard now for years," suddenly it appears when they don't expect it—and ultimately the audience

feels "astonished" rather than satisfied by this mystery's end. It is the bug that is here to "enjoy" itself, not them, an unsettling queer that erupts unexpectedly within the domestic sphere.

What I've meant to convey so far is that *Walden* plays with rather than unconsciously repeats pastoralist high notes. That is, Thoreau sets up expectations for prescriptive normativity, cyclical certainty, natural necessity—the seventeen-year locust will be on time, and the bug in the apple-wood table will astonish us *á la* life-finds-a-way—but these small scenes of transformation and potential are contingent and social rather than inevitable and "naturally" cyclical. We can look forward to them if we really want to, but "who knows" what will happen next. Our curiosity, our libido, our impulse to make meaning – to be born in beauty, as Diotima put it —are not reduced to reproductive futurity: "who knows" what kind of insects they will be, who knows when they will be here, who knows what accidents of daily life will bring them? In the discussion of insects above we've seen how burrowing both invokes pastoral patterns and creates anticipation and tension without offering resolution. Very queer indeed.

These are far from the only instances of burrowing-like behavior in the text. *Walden* talks about going down into things (the earth and water) rather frequently, a tendency that Walter Benn Michaels terms a search for "solid bottoms." As elaborated by Michaels and others, this is a search that requires penetrating surface realities in pursuit of a deeper truth, and just like the pastoralists' sun that guarantees a future, this "buried truth" fantasy offers a guarantee, too: meaning exists, and it can be found, it's just been temporarily obscured, or overlooked by us, and so accruing knowledge and mastery over matter is definitely still possible and desirable.[39] The violence against every kind of matter that this fantasy authorizes knows no bounds, and it would be naive of me to say that Thoreau does not participate in it. But I want to offer another way to think about going underground with him. I propose that in addition to the "solid bottom" moments in his writing, there are burrowing mole-philosopher moments. These burrowers, like the insects that troubled natural cycles, help make a sense of the queer antipastoral concrete for me in a larger literary studies context by returning us to the stakes of sunlight more directly.

The instances of going underground I want to talk about come from "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," the second chapter of *Walden*. The short answer to the where and what for is: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately."[40] To get at what it could mean to "live deliberately," the chapter offers a proliferation of metaphors clustering around waking up, morning, and light. I offer this context to emphasize the move he makes at the end of the chapter: after carrying on about the "auroral hour," the cosmos, the Pleiades, "perpetual morning," and "celestial music," to name just

some such references, he suddenly goes underground. In this first of two underground passages he writes:

> Let us settle ourselves and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call *reality*, and say, This is, and no mistake; and then begin, having a *point d'appui*, below freshet and frost and fire, a place where you might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or perhaps a gauge, not a Nilometer, but a Realometer, that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams and appearances had gathered from time to time. If you stand right fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if it were a cimeter, and feel its sweet edge dividing you through the heart and marrow, and so you will happily conclude your mortal career.[41]

Overall, in this passage I hear him describing a fantasy very much like the one Kant sent a mole to accomplish: we can dig a hole to bring the sunlight into the earth, to reveal what has been hidden underground, under all that damage (facts) and start again there. Sunlight (pure knowledge, either divine or objective) reveals what is hidden, and lamplight (fire, human knowledge) keeps what has been revealed visible for future generations. He doesn't specify what the lamp would be burning—my guess is natural gas from distilled peat that was locally harvested near Concord—but whatever it is, it is the sun's energy as standing reserve, and so this knowledge found at the bottom seems implicated in extractive logic and mining practices.[42] Once we get to where no man has gone before, as it were, we have some options. In his words, "you might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or perhaps a gauge, not a Nilometer, but a Realometer…" How to understand these options and their relationship to each other is not obvious to me. The list begins with two things that sound quite concrete: *found a wall or a state* indicates to me a new political reality and *set a lamp-post safely* returns me to Kant and the idea that we seek secure foundations for light/knowledge. The third item, the Realometer, is rather curious. Thoreau seems to think that what it measures—the "shams of appearance" listed above—is both enough like natural cycles to riff on the Nilometer name (which measures the rise and fall of the Nile) and different enough to require the distinction—not a record of natural cycles but a history of ideology critique, which are, apparently, still in some sense natural and inevitable. This fantasy taps into all sorts of metaphysical desires for certainty, for authenticity, for new beginnings, and appears thoroughly pastoral in the sense that in it the underground is a place in nature away from human contamination where our future lies.

Indeed, this is precisely what the emerging discipline of geology enabled and in which Thoreau was very interested. As Bruce Braun argues, "geology brought a 'territory' with its 'qualities' into being, and thus opened a space—simultaneously epistemological and geographical—that could be incorporated into forms of political rationality." Thus, "Nature" is shown to be fully historical (which Kant's mole also revealed, despite itself), as we assign new forms of cultural intelligibility to what was previously "inert and untheorized."[43] Braun demonstrates that geological discourses expose the sub-surface to extractive capital such that by the late nineteenth century, geologic knowledge was fully instrumentalized.[44] Thoreau writes before that moment of course, but we can already see his geologic imagination veering in the same direction, i.e., asking what knowledge of the underground would do for his thought and his world.[45] I don't think this passage ultimately takes us to full political, economic, and human exploitation of the underground. Indeed, the passage warns us away from such behaviors.

Notice how he says that when we get to the solid bottom and think we are encountering a fact at last we "will see the sun glimmer on both surfaces, as if it were a cimeter." This is not, I insist, suggesting that facts are so powerful they can "cut through" to real reality.[46] No, this is "high noon" thinking we saw before being brought underground; it is the fantasy that we can see the front and the back at the same time. But, of course, that is forbidden, not to mention impossible, and the fact-cimeter kills us.[47] So far, his underground exploration has not moved us beyond mole precedents. But *Walden* is a book about method, about how to do things, even unimagined things. Here is the second passage about going underground:

> ...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...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.[48]

Reading this second passage as a commentary on or even refutation of the first passage amplifies the queer antipastoral resonances here. To explain, in the first passage the feet went first, settling, wedging, and clearing away everything we know by way of frameworks and traditions looking for "hard rocks in place." In the second scene the intellect is the knife, a cleaver this time, which "discerns" and "rifts" the earth. Here Thoreau's head is "hands and feet" and so it can go first and navigate by touch. In this

fantasy he needs no lamppost, no compensation for the lack of sunlight. He is a creature, and the creature can tell what is underground using divining senses that work in the dark; senses other than vision are what gets us to the "secret of things," the "richest vein." This isn't divine knowledge or human reason. And this isn't, I don't think, an image advocating for thought-as-mining if mining means in search of the sun's energy as standing reserve. Granted we see his geological imagination at work again in the sense that he describes interpreting the subsurface. But the crucial difference is this: unlike the "we" of the first passage who identifies ideological obfuscation on its way down and intends to mark, measure, and recover what is learned, whatever the intellect-cleaver of this second passage finds cannot be put into language or expressed as a quantity, for it will be encountered, if ever encountered, by the mouth and paws of a burrowing creature that "knows not the first letter of the alphabet and cannot count a single pebble," as he says. It's much more difficult, I think, to imagine how this creature participates in territorializing the underground and introducing extractive practices.

Is this the end of the story? Perhaps like Nietzsche, Marx, and Kant's moles Thoreau hopes to bring something up from the surface "into the light." Perhaps, and yet the passage doesn't seem to me to end with the idea that thinking "in the dark" or thinking underground calls for returning to the light to see and comprehend what's been found. The tools in the passages just don't work that way. For instance, there is a divining rod, which would ordinarily be perfect for locating a resource underground, but *Walden's* divining rod produces value rather than discovers valuable things. To explain, Thoreau associates it with another obscure figure whom he calls an old and ancient "settler." He describes the settler as the "original proprietor, who is reported to have dug Walden Pond, and stoned it, and fringed it with pine woods."[49] What stands out to me is the admission that the pond-as-pond, woods-as-woods originate in a specific act of constituted power—"settling."[50] The ancient settler, "first came here with his divining rod, saw a thin vapor rising from the sward, and the hazel pointed steadily downward, and he concluded to dig a well here."[51] The divining rod in *Walden*, then, produces what it purports to find. Another tool in this passage—the cleaver—is likewise provocative. Per the passage, the cleaver "discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things," and on the one hand he sounds very hetero here, very Dr. Frankenstein. This is a queer secret, however, because to cleave means both to divide and to adhere. To rift means both to open up (reveal) and to veil (conceal). To discern means both to "recognize" a difference and to produce a difference as in to separate a thing from another. These metaphors for method matter—although nature has been commonly thought of as something to discover, Braun reminds us that just as there is no prediscursive body, there is no prediscursive "nature."[52] I see Thoreau's writing working within and enjoying that

constraint in these passages when he tries to talk about what it would mean to think underground. And while I would love to see a more motivated analysis of power and discourse in these passages, ultimately it is moments like these, and the way *Walden* handles "what we call" binary oppositions (like those that nourish pastoral modes and attitudes) that push me to think about it as antipastoral and to link its overall strategies of queering knowledge to antipastoral modes.

Like many readers before me who have been drawn to Thoreau's writing because we find tensions there that go unresolved—stylistic, philosophical, libidinal, and so forth—reading this tension as an expression of the queer antipastoral helps me isolate a kind of textual edging that complicates and enlivens my sense of how Thoreau's writing produces its relationship to its world, and to a future. In thinking about queerness and ecological concerns I appreciate Thoreau because, while there's a very simple way we could say he writes "about nature," his writing constantly defamiliarizes what might seem obvious. He worries over how he does what he does. If we push past the idea that he's searching for a "solid bottom" when he writes about burrowing and tunneling down—in other words, that he is not simply fantasizing about ways of expanding the reach of power and control—I wonder the extent to which his writing was politically, philosophically, emotionally *committed* to pastoral modes and methods, and what circumstances or problems allow him to deploy it when we wish he wouldn't, while at other times, as I hope to have shown here, his writing plays with more complicated images of queer antipastoral resistance to the philosophical and narrative temptations of the pastoral to "assume the world can be tamed" alongside our own erotic energies.[53]

"I knock on the earth for my friend," he once wrote, "but no friend appears; and perhaps none is dreaming of me."[54] Perhaps not even a grieving mother with a lamp. Perhaps there is no mother. What game will we play now.

Notes

[1] Plato, *Republic*, 186 (514a).
[2] Beckett, *Murphy*, 1.
[3] Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 58.
[4] Gilbert, "'Rats' Alley'," 182.
[5] McCarthy, *The Road*, 28.
[6] Marx, "Does Pastoral Have a Future?" 212.
[7] Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 209.
[8] Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, 270–272.
[9] Marx, *Machine in the Garden*. 333–335, 344–348.
[10] Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, 226.
[11] Marx, "Does Pastoral Have a Future?" 223.
[12] See "Does Pastoral Have a Future?" 212–214 for Marx's argument about how this plays out in *Walden*.
[13] I think of how the sun burns, blinds us, dries up rivers, beats down on a 'heap of broken images,' without illuminating anything, and so on. Both pastoralist and antipastoralist traditions often solve this problem of too much sun by offering *shade*. There are "shades and cool retreats," as Virgil allows, where even the "vilest reptiles" find shelter (*Ecologue* II). At Arnold's "Dover Beach," we are "on a darkling plain" in the moonlight. For Eliot, the "dead tree gives no relief" yet we find that "there is shadow under this red rock."
[14] Naturalist, "The Mole," *The Field*, December 8, 1855, 360.
[15] Krell, "The Mole," 171.
[16] See John Sallis for detailed argument and close reading of Kant's mole. Sallis, *The Gathering of Reason* 6.
[17] Krell, "The Mole," 173. See also de Grazia, "Teleology, Delay, and the 'Old Mole'"251–253.
[18] Stallybrass, "Well Grubbed, Old Mole," 14. Stallybrass and de Grazia both read Marx's twist on *Hamlet's* "well grubbed, Old Mole" moment as rematerializing the ghost's desire to resist illegitimate power in the name of transformation.
[19] For a thorough discussion of Nietzsche's moles see Bergoffen, "Mole: On Nietzsche's Moles," 235.
[20] I notice that these precedents are still playing "Allegory of the Cave," but they are also playing the spinoff called "Orpheus and Eurydike." That is, even if the moles try to resist the surface sunlight for whatever reason, they do also want to come to the surface and show off what they've been up to down there, as this tradition insists that we ought to at least *try* to bring what lies below up to the light so we can see it better. We should try, we're told, even if we know we will fail.
[21] Thoreau also imagines himself as Orpheus, reminding me how desire and gender inform all these games' rules.
[22] See also Gifford, "Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral and Post-Pastoral," 42–61 and Buell, "American Pastoral Ideology Reappraised," 1–29.
[23] For example, he defaults to pastoral modes at key moments to offer emotional and moral escape routes from the dilemmas arising out of his own and other White people's freedom in the context of US Slavery. "Nature has been partner to no Missouri Compromise" as he says in "Slavery in Massachusetts," and by this pastoralist platitude he claims to enjoy his walk once again. See also Outka, "Slavery and the Anthropocene," 29–43 and Utzinger, "A Season of Purity," 30–48.
[24] For example, Dimock discusses his writing in terms of the "nontragic pastoral" in "Pastoral Reborn in the Anthropocene," 67–78, and suggestions that Thoreau's writing approaches an anti-pastoral mode appear in Azzarello, *Queer Environmentality*, 62 and Schneider, *Dark Nature*, ix-x. Schneider also documents ecocriticism's lack of attention to the "darker Thoreau."
[25] Branka Arsić proposes we reframe the discussion, saying, essentially, if you think he's writing in the pastoral mode, that's on you not him. Arsić, "Our Things," 161.
[26] Problematic as such a thought may be in other ways, for him "nature" is the name of that which resists such domination.
[27] Clark, "Grief, Ecocritical Negativity, and the Queer Anti-Pastoral," 218.
[28] Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, 244–245.
[29] Please see her rigorous and beautiful reading of Thoreau's interest in "nurse species" including ants. Ensor, "(In)Conceivable Futures," 47.
[30] Buell, 24.
[31] Michaels, "*Walden's* False Bottoms," 134.
[32] Thoreau, *Walden*, 332.

[33] LeVen, *Music and Metamorphosis in Graeco-Roman Thought*, 83.

[34] The seven-years' itch reference is not just a convenient numerical parallelism. At minimum, we can interpret this as a reference to chronic itching that scratching does not satisfy, but if, as Gionfriddo suggests, Thoreau is referring here to scabies, then we're talking about another instance of burrowing, this time, in the skin. See Gionfriddo, "Thoreau, the Work of Breathing," 59.

[35] The insect lives 17 years of its life underground and then emerges to live only a few weeks and reproduce as soon as possible. In this discussion of the burrowing insects, I'm echoing Sarah Ensor's reading of Thoreau's interest in certain ant behaviors: "…what seems important to a reading of Thoreau is not the ultimate arrival of that end but the capaciousness and experience of the 'until' itself. Suspension, non-fruition, and incompletion become *part* of the reproductive process rather than being understood as barriers to or signs of failure within it." Ensor, 50.

[36] Thoreau, 333.

[37] This is the same bug as in Melville's story, probably a rose bug. Sackman, "The Original of Melville's Apple-Tree Table," 448–451. See also Kuiken, "Chance Encounters," 199.

[38] For a discussion of Thoreau and "chances," see Zebuhr, "Sound Enchantment," 590–600.

[39] For an example of this kind of argument see Boone, "Delving and Diving for Truth," 135–46. As Michaels has argued, there is a strong critical impulse to deny this tension and grasp for unity in the text, to neutralize this eroticism. Michaels, "Walden's False Bottoms," 134–149. And of course there is, that makes sense for the way literary criticism has developed historically, and, resolving tension is a hallmark of the pastoral mode, as Dimock gloses in "Pastoral Reborn," 68.

[40] Thoreau, 90.

[41] Thoreau, 97–98.

[42] The complexity of mining and mines in *Walden* deserves its own study.

[43] Braun, "Producing Verticle Territory," 28.

[44] Braun, 24.

[45] In thinking about Thoreau as writing "before" a moment we can only see now, I am inspired by Peter Coviello's work on Thoreau, sexuality, and temporality. See for example Coviello, "What Came Before," 301–305 and "Wild Not Less Than Good," 510–511.

[46] Boone, 136.

[47] Michaels, 136.

[48] Thoreau, 98.

[49] Thoreau, 137

[50] See Cavell, *Senses of Walden*, the "Portions" where he argues for the centrality of "settling" to the text.

[51] Thoreau, 182.

[52] And of course, they matter for literary studies, too. I'm thinking for instance of Rita Felski's discussions of "digging down and standing back." *Limits of Critique*, 52–84.

[53] Clark, 230.

[54] Thoreau, Journal, June 11, 1855.

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