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# The Theory and Practice of Walking

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## Walking as a Form of Social Criticism

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As the market economy and consumerism have grown, more social critics have commented on the increasing alienation and political malaise. In France in 1967, Guy Debord published *The Society of the Spectacle*, which that the capitalist society “is a permanent opium war waged to make it impossible to distinguish goods from commodities, or true satisfaction from a survival that increases according to its own logic” (30) creating a “ceaseless manufacture of pseudo-needs” (33). In other words, the growth of capitalism and industry created a society that constantly has to continually re-create needs in order for capitalism and industry to continue. Industries such as fashion and auto (and the ever-increasing technology industry that creates home computers and tablets) play on consumers’ desires to be happy by creating “pseudo-needs” (Debord 33), also called “artificial wants” in Thoreau’s “Life Without Principle” (88). These artificial wants claim that they will fulfill such desires as being happy, even though giving into buying the product doesn’t actually fulfill the desire (and in fact leaves the door open to wanting more—such as a better upgrade, the “limited” edition car with all the bells and whistles, next season’s style).

Other critics include Theodor W. Adorno, who in *Minima Moralia* (1974), studies how modern society alienates and affects people. More recently, Zygmunt Bauman considers the implications of the interchangeability of people with commodities in his book, *Consuming Life* (2007). Yet there has been relatively little study about the practices that may help subvert this consumer-based society. Michel de Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) defines how governments and corporations control their citizens and consumers, prescribing them in specific niches—but also considers how people subvert such controls. For example, when the Spanish colonizers attempted to assimilate Native Americans into Catholicism,

The Indians nevertheless often made of the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept. They were *other* within the very colonization that outwardly assimilated them; their use of the dominant social order deflected its power, which they lacked the means to challenge; they escaped it without leaving it. The strength of their difference lay in procedures of ‘consumption.’ (de Certeau xiii)

Henry David Thoreau shares with these critics a distaste for the way in which social-cultural practices control people. Recently there has been research that has brought Thoreau to prominence as a writer who attempts to shape the American political landscape. Bob Pepperman Taylor argues in *America's Bachelor Uncle: Thoreau and the American Polity* that Thoreau's writings, when considered as a whole (and not just the designated political writings such as “Resistance to Civil Government,” “Slavery in Massachusetts,” and “A Plea for Captain John Brown”) create a picture of how Thoreau wishes to create—and in some ways recreate—the American polity. According to Taylor, so-called “nature writings” such as *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* and *The Maine Woods* are actually nuanced political texts that aim “to understand the history of the human experience within the context of the natural world” (35). The journey of *A Week* is also a journey through history and the displacement of the Native Americans and includes Thoreau's consideration of “America's shaping environments, precedents, and values, with the aim of encouraging and directing the growth of a more legitimate and admirable polity” (Taylor 34). *The Maine Woods* acts as a “microcosm of the development of his thinking about the proper moral relationships between nature and human

communities” (Taylor 37). These ideas spread throughout Thoreau’s writings, as “Thoreau’s [*Walden*] is a Socratic message about the importance and nature of moral independence, a lesson of the greatest importance for participants in a democracy” (Taylor 80).

Yet if Thoreau is a social-political critic, he also defines practices that might help the American polity—and society—grow on an ethical and economically firmer ground. Brian Walker’s “Thoreau’s Alternative Economics: Work, Liberty, and Democratic Cultivation” takes *Walden* as an advisory tract that “asks us to think critically about our relation to the work we do” and that suggests “strategies and practices we might adopt” (845-846) in order to escape the angst that can form in a world where people’s value might be defined by the items they consume and the employment they have. Walker cites Thoreau’s practices such as cultivation, voluntary poverty, and walking are ways in which Americans may regain a conscience that is not limited by the moral views held at the time. “Much of Thoreau’s ingenuity in *Walden* and his miscellaneous essays is devoted to showing how entirely banal practices of everyday life—walking, talking with friends, botanizing, reading and writing, doing day labor—can be rethought and reconstructed to enhance autonomy” (Walker 852). For Walker, Thoreau becomes a figure who exemplifies ways in which people can become more autonomous from capitalistic society.

Considering Thoreau as a social-cultural critic and someone who is practicing ways to study the society, Shannon L. Mariotti stresses how Thoreau’s solitary political criticism is similar to Theodor W. Adorno’s, and how the two (despite being separated by differing backgrounds and a century) highlight each other’s work, providing an understanding that goes unnoticed if they are read apart (Mariotti xii). Adorno describes the practice of “negative dialectics” as “to focus our attention on the object, not on its category” (Mariotti 33), or the

practice of looking on an object and seeing what makes it different, rather than just putting it in a category, and from that observation recognizing the sort of energy or meaning from the object. For example, Adorno's meditations of the American landscape and roads in *Minima Moralia* describe the roads and surrounding landscape as "uncomforted and comfortless" due to the relations of the road, the swiftness of cars passing by on it, and the unattended scrub that grows alongside (48). Thoreau also focuses this sort of gaze on nature in order to critique the social-cultural norms in his time (Mariotti 40). "Thoreau employs a microscopic gaze similar to Adorno's, drawing out the wild qualities of little things like huckleberries or wild apples to make broader critiques of the domesticating and taming tendencies of modern society" (Mariotti 40). However, there is a limitation to studying Thoreau through the lens of Adorno: Mariotti writes, "while Adorno's ways of working against modern alienation are largely cognitive, taking place through mental activities, through thinking, Thoreau's critical practices of recuperation take place through corporeal activities" (40-41).

While Mariotti provides a compelling argument to read Thoreau through Adorno's writings, Thoreau's stress on physical practice (he is commonly known as Emerson's disciple who actually lived out Emerson's brand of Transcendentalism) actually allows him to be an interesting subject for cultural theorist, Michel de Certeau, who describes how people practice consumerism. In fact, de Certeau's most widely read essay, "Walking in the City" (a chapter in *The Practice of Everyday Life*) sheds light on—and in some ways even parallels—Thoreau's essay, "Walking." Together, Thoreau and de Certeau can show how walking can be a practice used for escaping and subverting dominant societal norms and how walkers can be reformers in society.

However much Thoreau anticipates and parallels de Certeau, one must recognize the differences. Michel de Certeau writes during late twentieth-century France, after “The Society of the Spectacle” has taken a firm hold, along with the practice of capitalism and its tagline of consumerism. Much of de Certeau’s understanding of society comes from Michel Foucault’s work, which stresses how the fields of discipline (including surveillance), medicine, and psychology have grown and overlapped, creating a society that is constantly under surveillance. Capitalism and the industry system (described earlier by Debord) weave into this society, feeding off of people’s worries and building empires that are in some ways more powerful than the state. There are two main parts to de Certeau’s study. The first is what people produce with the goods they consume, “For example, the analysis of the images broadcast on television (representation) and the time spent watching television (behavior) should be complemented by a study of what the cultural consumer ‘makes’ or ‘does’ during this time and with these images” (de Certeau xii). The second is the “tactics of practice” (xvii), which is an attempt to understand the “trajectories” created through unauthorized consumption. Such trajectories are important because “In the technocratically constructed, written, and functionalized space in which the consumers move about, their trajectories form unforeseeable sentences, partially unreadable paths across space” (xviii). For de Certeau, there is a power in these “trajectories” because, “Statistical inquiry, in breaking down these ‘efficacious meanderings’ into units that it defines itself, in reorganizing the results of its analyses according to its own codes, ‘finds’ only the homogenous” (xviii). In other words, statistical analysis of the state or corporations cannot fully compute these trajectories. In attempting to understand whole practices, statistical analysis is forced to break the practices into recognizable parts—even though these recognizable parts are not congruent with how the physical practice actually works. Michel de Certeau labels these trajectories and practices

“tactics,” and considers them as “a calculus [or calculation] which cannot count on a ‘proper’ (a spatial or institutional localization)” (xix). Such social-cultural structures performing statistical analysis and controlling surveillance have places—such as collections of offices for an ad agency (which has to send out surveys to understand what products people are buying and what demographics buyers fit into) or a university (as a place where medical and statistical research is performed either through the university hospital or, again, through surveys). Tactics, on the other hand, are performed in a non-localized area. In the most obvious form, practitioners do not have offices from which they openly subvert surveillance systems. Instead people “poach” on “company time,” such as writing a letter when one should be working in a cubicle, or use a place in a way that is unexpected or not allowed.<sup>1</sup> “If it is true that the grid of ‘discipline’ is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures [...] manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only to evade them” (xiv). Michel de Certeau claims, “These ‘ways of operating’ constitute innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of socialcultural production” (xiv). Like the natives’ *bricolage* of the imposed culture, people shift their consumption in a way that is creative and unexpected.

These tactics become important to the study of Thoreau because he is working to evade (and change) the materialism that is continuing to grow during his lifetime. However, consumerism, and the social-cultural system wherein people define themselves by how and what they consume, is not an issue that has evolved to its present proportions. The social-cultural problem that is taking place as Thoreau is writing is materialism. He is writing after the

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<sup>1</sup> Such as how skateboarders will use benches and curbs to play off of, even though this is not the intended purpose of those who put those benches and curbs there.

Industrial Revolution and when the “society of producers” is taking control (Bauman 29). Here is “a kind of society committed to the cause of stable security and secure stability” where “bulky possessions implied or insinuated a well-anchored, durably protected and safe existence, immune to the future caprices of fate” (Bauman 29). Thoreau attempts to fight this materialism. “Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind” (*Walden*13). He claims, “The necessities of life for man in this climate may, accurately enough, be distributed under the several heads of Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel” (*Walden*11) and that when one has obtained these necessities, what people want is “Surely not more warmth of the same kind, as more and richer food, larger and more splendid houses, finer and more abundant clothing, more numerous incessant and hotter fires, and the like” (*Walden* 14). Instead, Thoreau’s vision involves a society where values such as honesty and courage are sought instead of social recognition and property. In “Economy,” Thoreau says, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation” (*Walden*8-9) Thoreau refers to the oppression that comes with performing within a cultural norm where people (particularly white men) need to produce monetary wealth in order to be “successful” (either through labor—such as digging ditches or laying railroad—or by controlling others’ labor).

Part of Thoreau’s railing against materialism (and its clearest synecdoche, “business”) is based off of Transcendentalism. How can people “transcend” to heavenly states of understanding, love, and peace if they can’t stop focusing on material goods? Yet Thoreau’s thesis is hardly out-dated or expressive only to nineteenth-century Transcendentalism. In 2002, Tim Kasser published *The High Price of Materialism*, a summary of studies performed through the 1990s by Kasser, his colleagues, and other researchers in the field of psychology. Using

surveys, Kasser and his colleagues studied how people's aspirations to obtain wealth and material luxury (not only including being able to "buy things just because you want them" (6), but social recognition and "appealing appearance," *The High Price of Materialism* 10) coincide with their mental well-being and feelings of depression and anxiety. In general, they found that "People who are highly focused on materialistic values have lower personal well-being and psychological health than those who believe that materialistic pursuits are relatively unimportant" (22). Despite living in the 1800s, Thoreau similarly insisted that materialism does not improve people's condition (across time and cultures, there are pockets where asceticism pops up) and because he developed ways to regain a sense of self that are still important to such groups, as the Situationist International, which Debord founded as a response to the "Society of the Spectacle," whose goal it was to upset society.

Thoreau uses walking as the primary practice that allows him to regain a sense of self and counter the materialism found in his culture.<sup>2</sup> While walking has been treated by a number of critics that describe a different type of walk and what kind of function that walk can perform, the form of sauntering that Thoreau describes is appealing in its simplicity, although it still acts as "a revolutionary activity that seems capable of changing our lives forever" (Mariotti 121). There are three interconnecting parts to the form of Thoreau's walk and that are important to its ability for social-cultural change. First, it is important to recognize that these walks are not quick, fifteen-minute exercises that people can use to break up their days and remind themselves not to be cogs in the machine of materialism or consumerism. In "Walking," Thoreau states, "I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend *four hours a day at least*—and it is commonly more than that—sauntering though the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely

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<sup>2</sup> There are, of course, other practices—voluntary poverty being probably the most prominent and discussed by Brian Walker in "Thoreau's Alternative Economics."

free from all worldly engagements” (262, emphasis added). Here is a dedication to, an insistence upon setting aside work and typical ideas of leisure activities (no mall-walking or window shopping here) in order to take some time to fully develop and gain an understanding of society.

By setting up the length of the walk in this way, Thoreau also sets walking in a certain time frame: “when sometimes I have stolen forth for a walk at the eleventh hour of four o’clock in the afternoon, [...], when the shades of night were already beginning to be mingled with the daylight, have felt as if I had committed some sin to be atoned for” (262). Walking is primarily a daytime activity, typically during hours that most people would spend at their jobs. Although the “sin” Thoreau has committed by putting aside and limiting his walk is not defined, it is possible to conjecture what Thoreau finds wrong by considering how he reacts to people around him. He is “astonished at the powers of endurance, to say nothing of the moral insensibility, of my neighbors who confine themselves to shops and offices and the whole day for weeks and months, ay, and years almost together” (“Walking” 262). Thoreau is not interested in sitting inside and working. Nor is he interested in most other kinds of work that would require him to move (as evidenced in “Life Without Principle”): “a fellow” “wishes [Thoreau] to spend three weeks digging [a bank wall] with him” If Thoreau does this work, “most will commend [him] as an industrious and hard working man” (65). However, Thoreau isn’t interested in this work, or in the commendation, preferring “certain labors which yield more real profit, though but little money” (“Life Without Principle” 65)—such as walking. The general purpose of walking for Thoreau becomes a chance for an “education at a different school” (“Life Without Principle” 65) instead of succumbing to the stagnancy and drudgery of work. “When sometimes I am reminded that the mechanics and shopkeepers stay in their shops not only all forenoon, but all afternoon too, sitting with crossed legs, so many of them [...] I think that they deserve some credit for not

having all committed suicide long ago” (“Walking”262). This restlessness becomes a refusal to conform to social-cultural norms that require him to have a job and be “productive” during the day. Thoreau has to keep moving and developing in order to live.

Once the length of the walk is established (along with an understanding of why walks take so long), the question becomes what one does on a walk. Thoreau hints at this in “Life Without Principle” by writing, “ I prefer to finish my education at a different school” (65). The length of a walk, the necessity of setting a steady, comfortable pace is important because in order to gain the benefits of walking it is necessary to think. Thoreau requires his walkers to “walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates when walking” (“Walking” 263). Although he doesn’t say what people should think about, the thought process for Thoreau is his observation of nature. Mariotti notes how walking gives Thoreau a space for employing a “microscopic gaze” or what Adorno calls negative dialectics (“to focus our attention on the object, not on its category” Mariotti 33). “While walking slowly and thinking, Thoreau perceives in a careful, particularizing way. He walks and looks at flora and fauna in minute detail: each wild apple, each plant, each huckleberry is studied for itself” (Mariotti 125). These observations “oppose the gaze of the market, which abstracts [away] from particular qualities and sees objects in terms of their value as means of exchange” (Mariotti 125). The use of these observations is important when considering how social-cultural economies alienate people, providing the sense of “quiet desperation” (*Walden*8) that Thoreau tries to avoid by living in voluntary poverty and walking (Mariotti 44). Mariotti also considers how Thoreau’s saunter and its leisurely pace compares with Adorno’s observations of running—not so much for exercise, but after buses (Mariotti 39). For Adorno, “Human dignity insisted on the right to walk, a rhythm not extorted by command or terror” and “Running in the street conveys an impression of terror. [...] Once

people ran from dangers that were too desperate to turn and face, and someone running after a bus unwittingly bears witness to past terror” (*Minima Moralia* 162). The very insistence of a leisurely pace, or the purpose of walking for and not to a place (i.e., walking in order to explore, observe, relax, etcetera; as opposed to walking as a way to commute) becomes also an insistence on thought, for digging in one’s heels and saying, “Give me a moment. I want to consider my options.”

Because Thoreau’s practice of walking primarily takes part outside, Thoreau worries, “Perhaps we should be more susceptible to some influences important to our intellectual growth, if the sun had shone and the wind blown on us a little less” (“Walking”263). However, he is countering this supposed problem by walking thoughtfully. Going outside and taking a breath becomes a chance to calm one’s self and regain perspective. Strangely enough, the worries Thoreau has of the coarseness that might develop through being outside parallel his worries of being a social and cultural critic. Taylor considers how in Thoreau’s journals there is a tension between being aloof from society (as if on a hill above the city) in order to have a useful perspective of it and being so aloof from society that one cannot see it at all, much less have a useful perspective. In Taylor’s words, “The critic may find him- or herself on hills from which no human road may be clearly seen, thereby losing sight of human affairs altogether” (Taylor 8). How is it possible for someone who spends all of his or her time in the woods to also have time to understand social-political climates and describe the problems with culture? Part of the remedy is that Thoreau is not spending all of his time isolated (a whole chapter in *Walden* is dedicated to visitors and “The Village” describes his walks to Concord in order “to hear some of the gossip” 115). Yet another part of being able to form autonomy and perspective on society is by walking thoughtfully. If any kind of intellectual roughness is to be gained by staying outside

too long, Thoreau is willing to claim that the roughness is “a scurf that will fall off fast enough—that the natural remedy is to be found in the proportion which the night bears to the day, the winter to the summer, thought to the experience” (“Walking” 263). For Thoreau, walking is a “crusade” (“Walking” 260) that allows him to regain a center (and sense of self). As Mariotti claims, “by turning to the swamp, Thoreau is not turning away from politics as such, but actually using the withdrawn space to become the kind of critical thinker whose thoughts are not manufactured for him to fit the needs of his society and the state” (124).

Engaging with the environment becomes the third advantage of Thoreau’s form of walking. Strongly interlinked with thought, engaging with the environment involves participating in the multiple textures that are explored with walking. For example, the texture of the landscape changes as one passes through varying environments. The space of the prairie is open as one pushes through the rustling branches or on paths worn as deer, but the space shifts as one moves into a wooded area, where the light is filtered through the trees. For Thoreau, the primary place to escape social-cultural practices and engage with environment is in the wild places. “When we walk, we naturally go to the fields and woods” (“Walking” 263) because, for Thoreau, they provide “the preservation of the world” (“Walking” 273). Brian Walker links this to how “exercises that return us to the everyday” “refresh the faculties and give the self a ballast outside public opinion and standard custom” (853). However, “it is of no use to direct our steps to the woods if they do not carry us thither” (“Walking” 264). There needs to be some kind of engagement with the environment and a sense of space for walking to have any purpose for Thoreau. “I am alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile in the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit. In my afternoon walk I would fain forget all my morning occupations and my obligations to society” (“Walking” 264). Thoreau recognizes the synergy that needs to occur

between intellect and body for walking to help people develop autonomous selves. Maybe part of the reason why engaging (and recognizing) one's environment during a walk is important is expressed by John Wylie, in "A single day's walking: narrating self and landscape on the south West Coast Path" (2005). Wylie claims, "An involved walking affect<sup>3</sup>, a particular density of materials and movements, precipitates a certain sense of self" (240). In other words, the emotional state created by working through and engaging with the environment creates a frame in which to see one's self. "Self and world overlap and separate in a ductile and incessant enfolding and unfolding" (Wylie 240). It might be possible to say that this sense of "being in the world" could inspire some to social action, or allow others to realize just how empty and unattached they are to the lives they lead at home, but it would not be far to assume that this continual movement within the environment, with the "enfolding and unfolding" would be particularly refreshing—particularly when the world is alienating.

If the form of Thoreau's walk is useful as a practice for social-cultural critique, then it is important to consider why. What is it about walking (in particular, taking long walks in which one thinks and engages with the environment) that makes it particularly useful for escaping the "grid of discipline" that comes with society? First of all, walking is important because the very practice of walking is as separated from the market economy as the walker is. For example, walking is first brought up in "Economy" as the fastest way to travel:

I say to my friend, Suppose we try who will get [to Fitchburg] first. The distance is thirty miles; the fare [for the train] ninety cents. That is almost a day's wages [...] Well, now I start on foot, and get there before night; I have travelled at that rate by the week together. You in the mean while have earned your fare, and

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<sup>3</sup> Affect being defined here as a psychological term: "a mental state, mood, or emotion" or "an inner disposition or feeling" (OED Online)

arrive there sometime tomorrow, or possibly this evening, if you are lucky enough to get a job in season. Instead of going to Fitchburg, you will be working here the greater part of the day. (*Walden* 39-40)

Of course, there is a level at which Thoreau is being facetious: walking is a paradox in its speedy slowness (particularly compared with cars and the current rate of trains and airplanes)—but this is a paradox that overcomes its initial illogicality. Cars, trains, planes, and buses have their own required fare in order to use them. No matter how small the up-front cost is, there is still a cost that requires a traveler to work or to have worked before boarding. Walking doesn't have that cost. It is a universal mode of transportation. Thoreau establishes the *necessity* of economic freedom in "Walking": "if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk" (261)<sup>4</sup>. To walk is to be independent of a consumer-based culture that says, "Take the train—it will be faster" or "Buy this car—you will be independent from train schedules." Thoreau answers these advertisements with "no." All that is required for walking are the minimums for what are required for living (food, namely, and possibly clothing by way of shoes). The sooner one may start off because he or she has food, a good pair of shoes (or sturdy enough soles without the shoes), and clothes for the weather, the faster he or she travels.

The hundred dollar backpacks, tents, and sleeping bags (along with other gadgets that range from useful, such as a water purification and filtration systems—to redundant, such as a GPS) are signs of the increasing commercialization of taking a walk (particularly one in designated "wilderness areas" such as a national park or the Appalachian Trail). Yet this

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<sup>4</sup> One reason why economic freedom is important for Thoreau is because he claims, "We should go forth on the shortest walk, perchance, in the spirit of undying adventure, never to return" ("Walking" 261)

commercialization does not touch the qualities (such as the basic economic freedom) that make a walk important to Thoreau, no matter how many gadgets may prove useful on the trail. There are still walks—and types of walkers—that ignore the commercialization and the consumerism and move in the spirit of Thoreau. The hope for walking is that it is a simple practice, well defined, easy, and difficult to commercialize except by selling shoes.

Walking's resistance to the market economy and materialism becomes important by how Thoreau considers it as a form for separating oneself from the market economy. By having a walk take four hours of the day, Thoreau puts a limit on how much work one can do. He wonders why "about four or five o'clock in the afternoon, [...], there is not a general explosion heard up and down the street, scattering a legion of antiquated and house-bred notions and whims to the four winds for an airing" ("Walking" 262). This is related to Thoreau's lack of interest to conform to ideals of hardworking individuals who do sell their "forenoons and afternoons to society" ("Life Without Principle" 69), but it also shows how for Thoreau, there are no exchange rates for material wealth and people's time. Mariotti takes into account the idea of abstract exchanges, and how "the exchange principle also turns subjects into objects, transforming the subject's labor into a calculation of hourly wages. [...] This way of thinking would have us believe that the subject's labor and the wage he is paid are truly fungible and equivalent things" (36). Time and labor cannot be reduced to money. Thoreau resists this abstract exchange, most notably in "Life Without Principle" and "Economy." He admits, "perhaps I am more than usually jealous with respect to my freedom," preferring to simplify his wants and in a way that he does not need to work in a fashion that it becomes "drudgery" ("Life Without Principle" 69). Thoreau insists that, "No wealth can buy the requisite leisure, freedom, and independence, which are capital in this profession [of walking]" ("Walking" 261). "Capital" here has two potential

meanings that Thoreau implies: that leisure, freedom, and independence are *important* to the profession of walking, and that leisure, freedom, and independence are the *currency* of the profession of walking.

In order to facilitate walking as a type of economy, Thoreau defines walkers in a “class” that “is a sort of fourth estate, outside of Church and State and People” (“Walking” 261). Mariotti notes how in Thoreau’s reading<sup>5</sup>, the “fourth estate” would be considered the press, which keeps “a critical eye trained on the government” (Mariotti 122), and by claiming walkers as members of the fourth estate, “Thoreau defines the walker as someone who occupies a new space for an unconventional critical politics” (Mariotti 123). As Mariotti claims, “practices of withdrawal are political for Thoreau because they recuperate the critical capacities that define what he means as a truly democratic citizen” (Mariotti 22). The walk becomes an opportunity for shaking off the drudgery of society and barrage of conformity. The woods and swamps become places for Thoreau to regain his “senses” (“Walking” 264) and a sort of critical integrity that is lost when he is fully engaged in the American society. To walk (and lose oneself in walking) is to regain a critical distance to recognize how parts of the sociological, political, and economic system work as a whole.

If Thoreau finds walking preferable because it challenges the way people treat economy and class, de Certeau’s work shows how walking subverts socially and culturally designed places. As mentioned before, de Certeau is interested in how people consume and how they tactically subvert social-cultural norms. Michel de Certeau uses walking as an example of a tactical use of consumption. Places, areas that are designed and formed by structures (architectural, economic, social, and cultural), are affirmed or redefined as spaces, a *feeling*

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<sup>5</sup> Thoreau read and reviewed Carlyle’s work, *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841), which considered the idea of four estates of Church, State, People, and Press.

(instead of an area) that is not defined by what surrounds it, but by the impressions gleaned from walking or stopping briefly. Michel de Certeau writes, “The walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else. And if on one hand he actualizes only a few of the possibilities fixed by a constructed order [...] on the other he increases the number of possibilities” (98). To parse this out: Each step taken is a chance to create a new space or psychogeography (in Situationist terms) of a space. The threatening atmosphere of an alley can shift as a person moves through it and gains a new perspective. The ever-changing distances and perspectives (approaching a sign, moving under it, looking up at the bottom of it, and then focusing on a different object) and impressions form spaces, which might be different than how city planners (or strip mall designers) create places where people are encouraged to mull around or speed through.

While de Certeau’s theory concentrates on walking, a practice that also continually challenges how places and spaces work is parkour or free-running. Parkour is the practice of finding “new ways of movement in dialogue with urban configurations” (Brunner 143), by considering as “stepping stones to moving forward, regardless of the obstacles original purpose, function or material” (Ameel and Tani 17). “Obstacles” are defined as widely as railings, the gaps between rooftops, and walls. Although parkour does not have a single distinct organization, it has gained popularity in urban landscapes in Europe and the United States since the 1990s and is, in some ways, the follow-up to the Situationist practice of *dérive* (which involves moving through a variety of urban landscapes and milieus efficiently). As Lieven Ameel and Sirpa Tani show in “Parkour: Creating Loose Spaces?” practitioners of parkour, called *traceurs*, challenge how planned places are supposed to feel, while confronting the definition of “normal” behavior

in public places. By challenging these norms, traceurs “loosen” spaces that are “tightly” defined<sup>6</sup>. Christoph Brunner, in “Nice-looking obstacles,” considers how parkour not only loosens spaces, but deterritorializes places. In reimagining how to move through places, parkour creates a space that is redefined by the “creation of new relations through movement” (Brunner 145). Through parkour, “Capitalist implements of architectural planning, and the corporate money that widely enables architectural projects to take form, falls short in light of Parkour’s potential for different ways of encountering and moving with and through supposedly rigid structures” (Brunner 146).

Walking works in a similar way, although its movements are subtler. Consider how Thoreau does not travel on roads because “Roads are made for horses and men of business. I do not travel in them much, comparatively, because I am not in a hurry to get to a tavern or grocery or livery-stable or depot to which they lead (“Walking” 265). Thoreau’s choice of ignoring ways of business becomes a way to open up places that are generally considered unacceptable, such as the wild. If Thoreau does move on the road, he actualizes a different sort of space. Because his consciousness of (and even his bitterness) at what roads represent, the representation of what a road is and what it represents changes. It is condemned as a lane of commerce, of drudgery, and the way to drown the drudgery in a tavern—and the footpaths that lead off of it are transitional spaces where brick and cobbles (and the worn tracks of wagons) give way to footpaths become places created by people who are fed up with the road and take a path that promises a break from the cycle of work, eat, and sleep. By walking in nature, Thoreau is creating a new space that he records in his writing.

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<sup>6</sup> Ameal and Tani’s research is based heavily on the interviews they conducted and Franck and Steven’s book, *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life* (2007), where loose spaces are defined as those where people understand the “possibilities inherent in it [a place] and make use of those possibilities for their own ends” (Franck 2)

The use of creating redefining places through spaces is useful as a practice of resistance to social-cultural norms because of how it is a tactical way to move through strategized (localized) places. Michel de Certeau considers it this way: “Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible” (93). Walking, as part of the everyday, can only be traced as a trajectory. The space that is created as a walker passes through a place is transient and transparent to the eye of panoptic power and social-cultural norms. “Surveys of routes miss what was: the act itself of passing by” (de Certeau 97). By moving through a place, either with traffic, against it, taking short cuts or ignoring “No Trespassing” signs, “Walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it ‘speaks.’ (de Certeau 99). Walking is, in short, a guerilla tactic—in the way that guerilla warfare and such “tricks” are performed as “victories of the ‘weak’ over the ‘strong’ (whether the strength be that of powerful people or the violence of things or of an imposed order, etc.)” (de Certeau xix). Walking recreates the street in a way that it belongs to the walkers, and not to those who designed and built it in order to attempt people to act and behave in a certain manner. A street designed as a place to shop can become a place where people riot. Yet walking is not something merely reactionary to the street itself. The act of walking gives a distinct character to a city:

[The walkers’] story begins at ground level, with footsteps. They are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their

intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. *They weave places together.* (de Certeau 97, emphasis added).

In 1958, Guy Debord of the group, Situationist International, would publish a document called *The Naked City: Illustration of the hypothesis of geographic turntables* (Ford, 35)<sup>7</sup>. The illustration was created by taking sections of a map of Paris and cutting (or whiting) out the rest. Arrows based off of impressions gleaned from walking the streets of Paris gestured from one section to another—weaving the physical places together (at least as a representation). Even if the new map was inaccurate in its definition of *place*, it was successful in its sense of the *space* of the city and how the spaces played off of each other.

How walking transcends places becomes important in other ways. There is one moment in the texts of Thoreau and de Certeau where they seem to briefly glance at one another before turning away and going their separate ways, and it is when they are both considering place. Thoreau writes, “Some, however, would derive the word [saunter] from *sans terre*, without land or a home, which, therefore, in a good sense, will mean, having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere” (“Walking” 260); de Certeau writes, “To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper” (de Certeau 103). There are clearly some differences between the two, and contextually Thoreau’s false etymology and de Certeau’s theory do not match up. However, these two thoughts blend very well together when taken with an understanding of disorientation and dislocation. Mariotti relates Thoreau’s concept of home with Adorno’s and considers how neither of them in particular liked the sense of being “at home”: “Adorno describes the feeling of being at home [...] as something to be avoided at all

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<sup>7</sup> Simon Ford provides a history of the SI in, *The Situationist International: A User’s Guide*, profiling many of the characters that created the SI (Debord being one of the most prominent) and describing and defining the techniques and terms used by the Situationists.

costs” because “in such a space, we try to insulate ourselves from the painful world, and our thoughts become complacent or complementary to the instrumental and violent tendencies of modern society,” while “Thoreau associates the traditional idea of ‘home’ with a movement away from jarring and disruptive confrontations with the wild particular objects of the world” (Mariotti 51). Both of Thoreau and Adorno prefer being jarred out of a “home” space because “we recuperate critical capacities by engaging particular objects in the outside world” (Mariotti 51). In other words, Thoreau prefers being in places (like swamps and other wild areas) that are going to force him to give up his prejudices and change his mind. Such places force him out of a mindset that the rest of society has (or may have). As Taylor notes, “without the experience of privacy and solitude that nature provides, society threatens to overwhelm us” (89).

However, de Certeau shows how walking and these jarring spaces create the city. It isn't the act of walking in nature that's giving Thoreau a space for social critique (although nature is certainly providing its own sort of buffer), but the act of walking in general that allows for social-cultural critique. Cities, particularly where it is easier to walk than rely on public transportation or traffic, require these multiplying movements where pedestrians are constantly recreating space and place, “The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place” (de Certeau 103). There is no place in the moving city—a strict social morass is almost impossible. Yet if this constant movement is supposed to be positive for Thoreau and Adorno, it is also alienating.

The identity furnished by this place is all the more symbolic (named) because, in spite of the inequality of its citizens' positions and profits, there is only the pullulation of passer-by, a network of residencies temporarily appropriated by

pedestrian traffic, a shuffling among pretenses of the proper, a universe of rented spaces haunted by a nowhere or by dreamed-of places. (de Certeau 103)

Through the movement of walking, places that may have been designed for a certain feeling are lost in the ambient noise of footsteps. This constant alienation and disorientation may be disconcerting and depressing, but in some ways it is also exactly what Thoreau and Adorno are looking for: for them, modern society is alienating and a space that affirms that alienation (as opposed to a home) is a space that isn't lying (Mariotti 51). Living in such spaces suggests recognition of the discomfort that society can bring, which is probably why Thoreau wants to set his house in a swamp ("Walking" 275).

The culmination of Thoreau's form of walking and how it can be seen through de Certeau's theory can be found in the Situationist International practice of *dérive*. The Situationist International was a group that was founded by Guy Debord in 1957 and existed until 1972. Its purpose was to disrupt ideas of the cultural milieu of Europe (Ford 23). The group developed practices that allowed people to reconsider the environment (Ford 33). A *dérive* ("drift" is the direct translation from French) is a practice of moving through a space (typically urban) and mapping out the "psychogeography" of that space and is one of the clearer examples of how an organized group used the practice of walking in order to produce a critique of social-cultural spaces. Thoreau's walks through the fields and woods outside Concord have a similar drift, although Thoreau does not focus so much on man-made places and the psychology of those, but that of the wild. Throughout the text of "Walking," Thoreau is constantly desiring to explore his surroundings "My desire for knowledge is intermittent; but my desire to bathe my head in atmospheres unknown to my feet is perennial and constant" ("Walking" 282-3). Although Debord, in "Theory of the *Dérive*," considers *dérive* a purely urban practice in order to feel the

emotional contours of the city. However, Thoreau is attempting to do something similar in the wild, describing nature as “a personality so vast and universal that we have never seen one of her features” (“Walking” 284). Here for Thoreau is an endless exploration of the milieu of nature.

Of the form that Thoreau describes for a walk, the length of the walk is present: as Debord describes in “Theory of the Dérive,” “the average duration of a dérive is one day, considered the time between two periods of sleep” (64). The length actually seems rather long (even longer than Thoreau’s four hours or more) except that “the starting and ending times have no necessary relation to the solar day” and that “a dérive often takes place within a deliberately limited period of a few hours, or even fortuitously during fairly brief moments; or it may last several days without interruption” (64). Here is the clearest example of a group of people who prefer the leisure of a walk and exploring the landscape, with little or no thought to how a walk is to conform to schedules of work and sleep. How Debord defines a dérive requires practitioners to think through and engage in the environment. Specifically, a dérive is “a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. Dérives involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects” (“Theory of the Dérive” 62). *Psychogeography* is a Situationist term for “the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment (whether consciously organized or not) on the emotions or behavior of individuals” (“Definitions” 52). The process of mapping psychogeography is essentially a very refined way to engage in the environment. Mapping out a psychogeography requires practitioners to engage in the environment and gauge the psychological effects of moving through certain areas.

This isn’t to say there are not differences between Thoreau’s use of walking and the Situationists’. Thoreau would have never approved of the Situationists’ use of urban space (as stated earlier, Thoreau preferred walking in swamps). In Debord’s “Theory of the Dérive,” he

declares “Wandering in open country is naturally depressing, and the interventions of chance are poorer there than anywhere else” (63). However, such differences are dependent on the writers’ time and place. Thoreau was writing before the great metropolitan cities took over as centers of the population and the woods were nearby: “My vicinity affords many good walks [...] Two or three hours’ walking will carry me to as strange a country as I expect to see” (“Walking” 264). In contrast, Debord was born in Paris, lived in Paris, and died in Paris, a metropolitan center that is a world of its own and an environment that was continually shifting. In their times, both preferred environments that offer complexity and interest to the walker. Surely, if Thoreau walked through the rural areas of northwest Ohio, with straight country roads that only vary where there’s been a contested property line and mere pockets of woodland that exist in rows of corn and soybeans, then he would probably agree with Debord that “wandering in open country is depressing” (“Theory of the Dérive” 63). Maybe if Debord had more experience in natural areas, such as the woods of Thoreau’s time (or at least a descent metropark) he might have an idea of what kind of anti-Spectacle properties the country or more rural areas might provide. Taylor notes how in *The Maine Woods*, Thoreau proposes a park to “provide at least a minimal counterbalance to the values of commercial society” (Taylor 52) so that “the bear and panther, and some of the hunter race, may still exist, and not be ‘civilized off the face of the earth’” (*The Maine Woods* 712<sup>8</sup>).

In *Walden* Thoreau writes,

To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor cites this section from: Thoreau, Henry David. *The Maine Woods. A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers; Walden, Or, Life in the Woods; The Maine Woods; Cape Cod*. New York: Library of America, 1985. 589-845.

simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically. (13)

This understanding of what Thoreau thinks of philosophy provides a frame for Thoreau's practices. The problems of society during Thoreau's lifetime were people's increasing materialistic concerns, which dampened interest in moral concerns (such as the moral problem of slavery being overlooked because not paying workers allowed cotton producers to have an edge in the market). Brian Walker, in his essay, "Thoreau on Democratic Cultivation," claims "*Walden* is one of the most interesting books we have about the way we might put our ideals into practice in a market society" and "it is worthwhile unpacking Thoreau's ideas with some care" (156). However, there has been remarkably little study towards other practices of resistance to the market economy that Thoreau anticipates. The only practice that is continually written about is civil disobedience—exemplified in "Resistance to Civil Government"—and yet this is probably the weakest of Thoreau's practices. The prison or jailhouse provides too much of a controlled place for it to be useful for social-cultural resistance.

Thoreau thoroughly counters materialism with the practice of "voluntary poverty" (*Walden* 13), yet it is a practice that is usually looked at through the lens of charity. In one exception, Brian Walker's "Thoreau's Alternative Economics" considers the usefulness of voluntary poverty. Brian Walker argues that by defining the material necessities actually needed and providing readers with an example of how he does not strive for "superfluidities," Thoreau gives "advice as to strategies and practices we might adopt if we want to elaborate more flexible responses to the shifting economy of work in which we find ourselves" (846) by "revising" "their basic wants and needs downward" (852 "Thoreau's Alternative Economics").

The practice of cultivation, exemplified by Thoreau tending to his bean field, has huge potential to provide practitioners an amount of self-sufficiency and a space for re-creating community. Yet Thoreau's consideration of cultivation is studied almost always as a metaphor. This limitation is particularly disheartening, especially considering how in the past ten years the practice of homesteading (and growing one's own food) has had a revival—even in urban areas. Urban homesteading allows the cultivator to place him or herself slightly out of a consumer-based society that tends to focus on quick turnovers and highly mechanized distractions. An understanding of natural process takes the forefront when planting seeds, watering, pulling weeds, and harvesting. There is potential to study how modern types of homesteading fit in with Thoreau's ideas on cultivation, yet there seems to be no scholarly study on this new form of cultivation. There are newspaper articles, blogs, how-to books, and book reviews, but only a few attempt to bridge the gap between thought and practice.

The very nature of Thoreau's work and what he tried to do by writing was “to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically” (*Walden* 13). Activities such as walking, cultivation, and voluntary poverty are important because they ask people to reconsider their prejudices. They form new, open spaces where people can sit back from mechanized society and watch how the gears turn—and maybe throw a brick if they wish.

## Annotated Bibliography

**Adorno, Theodor. *Minima Moralia*. Trans. E.F.N. Jephcott. London: Verso, 1974.**

Adorno explores how society has become increasingly alienating in this collection of aphorisms. By using his technique of negative dialectics, Adorno considers objects, practices, relations, and phrases and how they have shown the effects of alienation. This text has been primarily useful to me as a cross-reference to Shannon Mariotti's analysis of Thoreau through Adorno in order to see the context from which Mariotti builds her argument.

**Ameel, Lieven and Sirpa Tani. "Parkour: Creating Loose Spaces?" *Geografiska annaler*.**

***Series B, Human geography* 94B.1 (2012): 17-30.**

Ameel and Tani's work is built on the interviews they conducted with various traceurs operating in Finland in order to study how traceurs view spaces and private property. Ameel and Tani argue that traceurs loosen spaces that may be considered "tight" or socially restricted in the movements allowed. The practice of parkour is of importance to this essay because it shows how spaces may be bent and redefined in new ways that de Certeau did not consider in his work, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. It also provides an example of how spaces can be obviously bent, which is useful because walking tends to be a bit more subtle in its relationship with places.

**Bauman, Zygmunt. *Consuming Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.**

Bauman explores how the current state of consumerism is wrecking the social-cultural morals of the world (particularly the United States). He claims that "The consumerist culture is marked by the constant pressure to be *someone else*" and that "consumer markets" "breed dissatisfaction with the products used by consumers to satisfy their needs" (100). Despite the pessimism of the book (with no real hope in sight), it is useful for understanding how culture shifted in the twentieth century from a society of producers to a society of consumers and how that shift would affect social criticism.

**Brunner, Christoph. "Nice-looking obstacles: parkour as urban practice of**

**deterritorialization." *AI & Society* 26.2 (2011): 143-152.**

Parkour makes a particularly useful example of how movement and the relationship between bodies (human and concrete) can shift and change spaces. Like Ameel and Tani's study, Brunner's essay explores how traceurs break down territorial boundaries of private and public spaces, although Brunner emphasizes how this deterritorialization acts as a space in which there can be a critique of having such places in the first place. His study is based in part off of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts in *A Thousand Plateaus*, *Bergsonism*, and *Difference and Repetition*.

**Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York:**

**Zone Books, 1994.**

Like Bauman's *Consuming Life*, *The Society of the Spectacle* is a pessimistic work considering how problematic society is. Debord categorically goes through each change and problem that the "Society of the Spectacle" has enacted, such as how people are distracted from moral issues by commodities (30), how the perception of each moment in time becomes interchangeable (with the "suppression of any qualitative dimension" 110), and how it trivializes the environment of the city (120). The form of *The Society of the Spectacle* is very similar to Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, which was published in 1951 in German, and the thought clearly had an impact on Bauman's *Consuming Life*.

**Debord, Guy. "Theory of the Dérive." *Situationist International Anthology*. Ed. Ken Knabb.**

**Berkley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981.**

The idea of *dérive* and "drift" through a city is an important evolution of Thoreau's saunter that will play a part in the Situationist International's reimagining of a city and attempt to find the psychogeography of the city, or psychology of the city. Both Debord and Thoreau consider walking to be "adventure of the day" ("Walking" 263) that can take the whole day. *Dérive* relates to sauntering in that the both of them are attempting to subvert and escape a consumer culture and give the practitioners some breathing room and critical integrity by asking them to explore their surroundings in ways that they have not done before, such as the *dériveur's* exploration of exits and how places are designed to push or pull people through them, or Thoreau's exploration of nature and how it provides a refreshing distance from the city.

**de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley:**

**University of California Press, 1988.**

*The Practice of Everyday Life* This book forms the theoretical basis for why Thoreau's practices, such as walking, are important to subverting a consumerist and commodity-driven culture. Michel de Certeau is concerned about language, consumption and the use of commodities, strategies (plans made by governments, corporations, and the military that use their knowledge to control or manipulate environments and people) and tactics (movements that are based off of limited knowledge in order to evade or survive), and how a place becomes a space. The chapter, "Walking in the City" is probably de Certeau's most popular essay and the one that can best describes how Thoreau is forming a space in nature.

**Ford, Simon. *The Situationist International: A User's Guide*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2005.**

This book provides a history, documentation, and analysis of how the Situationist International came to be, the various people and movements behind the Situationist International, and a number of the documents produced by the Situationist International. This book was particularly useful in providing information for how techniques such as *dérive* were developed and for defining the mission of the Situationists.

**Kasser, Tim. *The High Price of Materialism*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.**

*The High Price of Materialism*, a summary of studies performed through the 1990s by Kasser, his colleagues, and other researchers in the field of psychology. Using surveys, Kasser and his colleagues studied how people's aspirations to obtain wealth and material luxury (not only including being able to "buy things just because you want them" (6), but social recognition and "appealing appearance," *The High Price of Materialism* 10) coincide with their mental well-being and feelings of depression and anxiety. In general, they found that "People who are highly focused on materialistic values have lower personal well-being and psychological health than those who believe that materialistic pursuits are relatively unimportant" (22).

**Mariotti, Shannon L. *Thoreau's Democratic Withdrawal: Alienation, Participation, and Modernity*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010.**

Mariotti provides an in-depth analysis of how solitary practices that are typically denied positive political value are of value because they provide distance for critical inquiry, and how Thoreau relates to the social-political theorist, Theodor W. Adorno. She reads Thoreau's natural essays through the lens of Adorno's social theory and defines how Thoreau fits into the various thoughts that make a societal withdrawal politically useful, particularly Adorno's "negative dialectics," the alienation and mechanization of people by society, and the usefulness of withdrawing from society to gain a critical understanding of politics. Mariotti's work is pertinent to this thesis in that she considers the practice of withdrawal and ways of withdrawing from society that make Thoreau a prophet for practices in the nineteen-sixties and today.

**Taylor, Bob Pepperman. *America's Bachelor Uncle: Thoreau and the American Polity*. University Press of Kansas, 1996.**

*America's Bachelor Uncle* provides an argument that the best of Thoreau's political work is in his nature essays and not in his three overtly political essays ("Resistance to Civil Government," "A Plea for Captain John Brown," and "Slavery in Massachusetts"). Like Mariotti, Taylor notes how Thoreau distances himself from society in order to be a social critic and evaluates how Thoreau maintains a critical distance while trying to form America's democratic landscape. Taylor does a close reading of Thoreau's work, analyzing how Thoreau's rhetoric affects a political understanding of his essays.

**Thoreau, Henry David. "Life Without Principle." *Civil Disobedience, Solitude and Life Without Principle*. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1998.**

"Life Without Principle" is probably one of the better examples of Thoreau's shorter works that critiques the social-cultural climate he lived in. His chief concerns in this essay are to "consider the way in which we spend our lives" (64) and provide an understanding for he does not care for the way most people spend their lives. Here is his critique on work, on business, on creating "artificial wants" when "the chief want" should be "a high and earnest purpose in its inhabitants" (88).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Walden, Civil Disobedience and Other Writings*. Ed. William Rossi. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008.

This anthology provides both *Walden* and Thoreau's essay "Walking" alongside reviews and critical essays written recently. The "Economy" chapter of *Walden* closely parallels "Life Without Principles" (although they have their differences) and describes what Thoreau considers the necessities—thus creating a clear distinction between the artificial wants that society may require and the actual things one needs to survive.

"Walking" is a good example of a "nature" essay by Thoreau that is not a particularly descriptive nature essay. It provides an understanding of how Thoreau sees the wild and explains what Thoreau is interested in doing with his time if he is not interested in working. With this essay, it was possible to parse out the form of Thoreau's saunter and why it is so important to him.

**Walker, Brian. "Thoreau's Alternative Economics: Work Liberty, and Democratic Cultivation" *The American Political Science Review* 92.4 (1998): 845-56. JSTOR. American Political Science Association. 20 Oct. 2012.**

Walker presents *Walden* as a text that provides its reader with advice for dealing with the alienating structures of modernity and the problems of having a changing employment system. Part of this essay is also focused on how Thoreau's advice provides a space for democratic self-cultivation and how "the successful practice of self-cultivation can easily mean the difference between a life spent in freedom and a life caught in a spiral of desperation" (848). Walker's main examples of Thoreau's practices of creating a space of self-cultivation are his "alternative household economics" (such as how Thoreau parses down the necessities to something most people can afford) and walking. Walker's idea of walking as a practice for self-cultivation is the basic idea I am working on for this thesis.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Thoreau on Democratic Cultivation." *Political Theory* 29.2 (2001): 155-189. JSTOR. Sage Publications. 9 Nov. 2012.

In "Thoreau on Democratic Cultivation," Walker considers how the metaphor of cultivation works in Thoreau's *Walden* and how *Walden* speaks back to ancient Greek and Chinese philosophers who also considered the metaphor of cultivation and how self-cultivation (such as cultivating virtues) should help a society. Walker also considers the problems with political theory and how it is not able to translate its concerns into practices.

Wylie, John. "A single day's walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South West Coast Path." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 30.2 (2005): 234-247. JSTOR. Wiley-Blackwell and The Royal Geography Society. 26 Nov. 2012.

Wylie's essay attempts to understand the theoretical implications of the physical act of walking. This essay came from one day of a hike along England's South West Coast Path. It describes the terrain, the effect on the walker, and questions self-world relations. This essay was useful in providing an understanding of how layered (and paradoxical) the experience of walking can be, and also in describing the particular "enfolding and unfolding" (240) sense of self and environment in a way that captures the experience.