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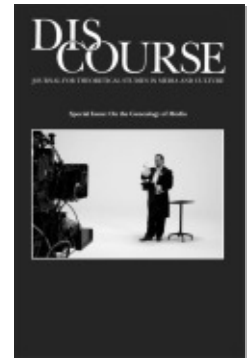
## Walden Choragraphy: Frog Maintenance

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# Walden Choragraphy: Frog Maintenance

Gregory L. Ulmer

*In this life, there is a pool that is below, and one draws from it.*

I start with *Walden*,<sup>1</sup> by Henry David Thoreau. It could be any work, for if choragraphy is any good it must function with any work in any medium. I start here because it is this classic that gives me access to my book fetish. The starting point should be motivated, not random. The motivation need be nothing more than the fact that I cannot forget Thoreau; that among all the books I have read, *Walden* persists with a vividness in my memory. It is a mnemonic strange attractor. I want to inquire into the organizing operations of this attractor, of its ability to live on, to stimulate the imagination into our own time. What might be learned from the force of this one work about the force of writing itself? The future that interests me is not just that of *Walden*, but of literature and even of literacy as such.

I am mourning literacy. *Mourning*: the psychodynamics of separating from a nurturing surround, relinquishing this provider at the material level but internalizing, introjecting it, while gaining in exchange for the material loss the symbolic power of a new language. My method is the remake: to remake *Walden* in an electronic version. The version I am talking about now is not in one medium or the other, but is a cognition, a mode of reasoning into which this mourning introduces me. The form is the remake, and the method

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is the fetish. To justify and rationalize this combination is beyond the scope of this prospectus. An inadequate substitute for the book that it would be necessary to write is the inference that might be drawn from my desire to locate materially (choragraphically), to localize, the emotion, or more deeply, the mood, that the pond in Walden Woods reveals to me: not Thoreau's mood, but my own. I want to learn how to use this mood as a mode of research:

*When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only.*

Jonas Mekas supplies a relay for my remake in his diary films, *Diaries Notes and Sketches Also Known as Walden*:

*Street and subway noise*

Close up of the Author

IN NEW YORK WAS STILL WINTER

Central Park, scattered snow

BUT THE WIND WAS FULL OF SPRING

naked branches in wind

the author playing accordion

BARBARA'S FLOWER GARDEN

Chopin

Barbara planting flower seeds on the window sill

Film Makers' Cinematheque, 4th St.

*Street and subway noise*

SITNEY IS FINGERPRINTED BY THE POLICE, AS DIRECTOR OF  
THE CINEMATHEQUE

Sitney, CU of his hand

I CUT MY HAIR, TO RAISE MONEY, HAVING TEAS WITH RICH  
LADIES

the Author, showing his haircut, turning around

daily expense notes

SUNDAY AT STONES

the Author, eating: also, David & Barbara Stone

I WALKED ACROSS THE PARK. THERE WAS A PHANTASTIC  
FEELING OF SPRING IN THE AIR

apple blossoms<sup>2</sup>

Some of my earliest memories are of my father reading books to me. I know that these memories are overdetermined, that they include the dimension of *screen memory*, a possibility that makes them all the more useful for my experiment. One point of perplexity in these memories is that my fetish appears to be related to my father, a possibility that calls attention to the inadequacy of conventional psychoanalytic definitions of fetishism (an inadequacy already addressed in the “impossible” practices of female fetishism). My favorite books as a preschooler were in the Mother West Wind series by Thornton W. Burgess.<sup>3</sup> I still have several of the books. The inside of the binding is covered with an illustration of the meadow in which Mother West Wind released the Merry Little Breezes every morning. In the foreground is a pond surrounded by many of the creatures who populate the stories. In the center of the pond sitting on a lily pad is a large bullfrog. The second chapter of the volume I am holding tells why Grandfather Frog has no tail.

“Grandfather Frog was old, very old, indeed, and very, very wise. He wore a green coat and his voice was very deep. When Grandfather Frog spoke, everybody listened very respectfully.” In the old days when frogs ruled the world, they kept their tails all through life. The king of the frogs had an especially grand tail, and all he did all day was sit and admire it. All the other frogs followed the example of their king, and did nothing but eat, sleep, and admire their tails. This behavior so angered Mother Nature that she punished the frogs by causing them to lose their handsome tails as they grew up. “Now you all know that people who do nothing worthwhile in this world are of no use and there is little room for them.’ Old Grandfather Frog stopped and looked sadly at a foolish green fly coming his way. ‘Chug-arum.’”

I especially liked it when my father read these lines in his bullfrog voice. I realize now that my father believed the lesson imparted by the tale and was speaking for himself through the voice of the frog. What I remember experiencing then, however, was the *magic* of writing. I asked how it worked; how he just looked at the book and told the story. He explained the principles of writing, and promised that one day I would be able to read the stories for myself. I recognized the feeling that this act of reading gave me when I read accounts of first encounters between literate and oral peoples, how the natives described as magic the power to retrieve meanings stored in writing.

One of Heidegger’s translators commented on the distinction between the beast fable and the Upanishads as reflecting a

difference between two kinds of thought or even two world views. The beast fables describe a science of survival, a calculative view of life and its possibilities. The clear formulations of problems or lessons of the fables contrast with the opaque, obscure, mystical messages of the sort found in the Upanishads that attempt to reveal the ultimate nature of things. It is the difference between Aesop and Hesiod: "Heidegger finds the outlook of the beast fables represented in modern society by the calculative thinking of contemporary science and its applied disciplines. Here is the clear realism of animal life, the sharp and realistic view, the unsentimental outlook quick to take advantage of circumstances to attain an end. With this Heidegger contrasts another kind of thinking which he calls meditative, and which he says is implicit in man's nature. To think in this way requires two attributes not at all common, two stands which man can take, and which he calls *releasement toward things and openness to the mystery*."<sup>4</sup>

How might Thoreau be classified in terms of this opposition? The winter that the pond froze over, for example, a hundred men came to remove the ice and ship it abroad to sell in hot climates. "As I looked out I was reminded of the fable of the lark and the reapers, or the parable of the sower," Thoreau observes. Later, drawing water from his well, he thinks about the ice from Walden Pond melting in a drink drawn from the Ganges: "In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta. . . . I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo there I meet the servant of the Bramin, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas." Thoreau indicates the possibility that the fable and the cosmology may exchange features or effects.

the old pond—/ a frog jumps in, / water's sound

(Basho, *Two Western Journeys*, 1648–88)<sup>5</sup>

"Basho was seated in his hut, facing Kikaku. Suddenly, breaking the stillness, a frog jumped into the pond. A sudden shift from stillness (no sound) to movement (sound), and then a return from movement (sound) to stillness—this, combined with the old pond and a frog, created an atmosphere of infinite *yugen* and tranquility. And that perfectly matched the sentiment that was ripening within Basho at the time. It symbolized his innermost feelings.—*Shida*."<sup>6</sup>

I am immediately attracted to this term naming an experience whose nature I cannot quite understand: *yugen*. The commentators note that the originality of Basho's haiku was in the combination of

the frog and the pond. The many *waka* and *renga* devoted to frogs always feature their croak. In a standard anthology organized by topics, none of the poems in the section devoted to *ponds* refers to a frog. Moran suggests that to understand a poem this delicate and mysterious requires many years of experience. Gozan on the other hand does not hesitate to name the unexpressed sentiment of this haiku: “I am all alone.”

With this selection of the leap of the frog, Basho created his own style, adds another commentator. The effect is achieved by a perfect balance of the humor, typical of *haikai*—the emphasis on plainness and familiarity (the “plop” of the frog in the water)—juxtaposed with the sense of loneliness and desolation. The poetic mood is evoked in this delicate equilibrium:

*In the mean while all the shore rang with the trump of bullfrogs, the sturdy spirits of ancient winebibbers and wassailers, still unrepentant, trying to sing a catch in their Stygian lake,—if the Walden nymphs will pardon the comparison, for though there are almost no weeds, there are frogs there,—who would fain keep up the hilarious rules of their old festal tables. . . . The most aldermanic, with his chin upon a heart-leaf, which serves for a napkin to his drooling chaps, under this northern shore quaffs a deep draught of the once scorned water, and passes round the cup with the ejaculation tr-r-r-oonk, tr-r-r-oonk!*

Someone might think of the proverb “I fished and caught a frog,” glossed as meaning “to bring little to pass with much ado.” Perhaps Thoreau had that piece of wisdom in mind when he mentioned that “at long intervals, some came from the village to fish for pouts,—they plainly fished much more in the Walden Pond of their own nature, and baited their hooks with darkness,—but they soon retreated, usually with light baskets.” It is a different story when a philosophical friend comes calling: “We waded so gently and reverently, or we pulled together so smoothly, that the fishes of thought were not scared from the stream, nor feared any angler on the bank, but came and went grandly.” The fishes of thought.

Gene Youngblood described *The Reflecting Pool* (1977–99), a video by Bill Viola, whose work he characterizes as “metaphysical structuralism.” “The sound of a passing airplane announces the solitary image of this work. The setting is mythical—a swimming pool in the forest. The pool, which fills the bottom half of the frame, mirrors the trees above it. We hear the sound of a stream that feeds the pond. Viola emerges from the woods by a winding path that

leads to the far end of the pool. After forty-five seconds he suddenly leaps into the air with a shout—but his image freezes at the zenith of its arc. He is suspended over the pool in a fetal position. Nothing else changes; ambient sounds are heard, the water undulates, but in it there is no reflection of the figure suspended above. On the water, sixteen different images appear over the duration of the piece.”<sup>7</sup> Viola wrote that *Pool* concerned “themes of emergence”; the images of transition, motion to stillness, suggested “the spiritual birth of the individual.”

In the backyard of my Florida home is a swimming pool. It is a relatively old pool, dating from 1962, when the house I now own was built, of a type no longer in fashion. It is an Esther Williams design—walk-in steps at the shallow end, with a shallow walkway all around the pool (excellent for younger children). The shallow half of the pool has a flat bottom at a depth of only a few feet. At the deep end the walls of the pool slant from the walking ledge in toward the drain, eight feet deep. The design was discontinued because the only safe place to dive into the pool is from the diving board. Swimmers diving in from the side risk hitting their heads on the slanted wall.

Esther Williams did not start out in the swimming-pool business. Billed as Hollywood’s Mermaid because of the roles that translated her abilities as a champion swimmer into underwater spectacles, Williams got her start in an Andy Hardy film in 1942.<sup>8</sup> After my friend, Robert Ray, wrote his book on Andy Hardy meeting the avant-garde (*The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy*, 1995), I started to think about my Esther Williams pool. I wished I had a copy of the Edward Ruscha “artist’s book” called *Nine Swimming Pools* (1968).

“Whoever inhabits that bull’s hide stretched between the Jucar, the Guadalete, the Sil, or the Pisuerga has heard it said with a certain frequency: ‘Now that has real *duende*!’” Federico García Lorca “took his Spanish term for daemonic inspiration from the Andalusian idiom. While to the rest of Spain the *duende* is nothing but a hobgoblin, to Andalucía it is an obscure power which can speak through every form of human art, including the art of personality.”<sup>9</sup> The ancient topos of the spirit of place; how relevant is it to choragraphy? In Basho the fit between his inner feeling and the sound of the frog leaping into the pool formed a mood that had a name: *yugen*. Lorca had a name from the traditions of his place for the mood upon which he drew for his creativity: *duende*. “Black sounds: behind which there abide, in tenderest intimacy, the volcanoes, the

ants, the zephyrs, and the enormous night straining its waist against the Milky Way.”<sup>10</sup>

*We worship not the Graces, nor the Parcae, but Fashion. She spins and weaves and cuts with full authority. The head monkey at Paris puts on a traveller's cap, and all the monkeys in America do the same.*

“If one may judge who rarely looks into the newspapers, nothing new does ever happen in foreign parts, a French Revolution not excepted.” Despite, or perhaps because of, the Frenchness of his name, Thoreau shows no sympathy for the French. He never explicitly refers to them as “frogs,” but he shares none of my own Francophilia: “Shall the world be confined to one Paris or one Oxford forever? Cannot students be boarded here and get a liberal education under the skies of Concord?” Here we are in agreement: Paris, Florida.

I am collecting as many of the frogs in *Walden* as I can find, using this fetish to organize my reading. *Fetish*: a heterogeneous assemblage of materials held together by a trivial contingent detail. “When I ask for a garment of a particular form, my tailoress tells me gravely, ‘They do not make them so now.’” It is unlikely that Thoreau ever requested a coat that buttoned with the ornamental fastening known as a “frog.” These frog fastenings are typically to be found on military dress uniforms. I am sure that I have seen a photograph of George Armstrong Custer wearing a dress coat with frog fastenings.

“M is also the first letter of *Mureau*, one of the more unconventional texts in this book. *Mureau* departs from conventional syntax. It is a mix of letters, syllables, words, phrases, and sentences. I wrote it by subjecting all the remarks of Henry David Thoreau about music, silence, and sounds he heard that are indexed in the Dover publication of the *Journal* to a series of I Ching chance operations. . . . Mureau is the first syllable of the word music followed by the second of the name Thoreau.

Reading the *Journal* I had been struck by the twentieth-century way Thoreau listened. He listened, it seemed to me, just as composers using technology nowadays listen. He paid attention to each sound, whether it was “musical” or not, just as they do; and he explored the neighborhood of Concord with the same appetite with which they explore the possibilities provided by electronics.”<sup>11</sup>

“Precipitous declines in the populations of some species of frogs, toads, and salamanders around the world have begun to alarm

experts on amphibians, many of whom are undertaking new field experiments in an effort to pin down the reasons for the mysterious trend. Because amphibians breathe through their skin, lay their eggs in water, and have two stages in their life cycle—one in water and another on land—they come into contact with a wide variety of substances. As a result, many biologists believe amphibians are more sensitive than other kinds of animals to environmental changes and pollutants. Like the canaries once used by coal miners to detect deadly fumes, they say, the amphibians may be providing early warning signs of trouble for other fauna, including humans."<sup>12</sup>

Walden Woods itself is in danger of disappearing, threatened by real estate developers. Don Henley, star of the rock group the Eagles, has taken on the preservation of Walden Woods as his personal cause. By organizing charity concerts and contributing percentages of the sale of certain albums, Henley has raised millions of dollars to purchase the acreage around Walden Pond. Don Felder, lead guitarist of the Eagles, grew up in Gainesville, Florida. He started his first band at age fourteen. Second guitar in that band was Stephen Stills. Come to think of it, Marilyn Monroe's sister lives in Gainesville.

*I would fain say something, not so much concerning the Chinese and Sandwich Islanders as you who read these pages, who are said to live in New England; something about your condition, what it is, whether it is necessary that it be as bad as it is, whether it cannot be improved as well as not. . . . I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. How many a poor immortal soul have I met well nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty.*

How to maintain my swimming pool? Do I have that look as if I were pushing before me everywhere I go a twenty-by forty-foot hole in the ground? After the rains the bottom breaks out in black spot, requiring immediate applications of poisons and considerable scrubbing with a steel brush on the end of a long pole. The skimmer, still with the original iron pipes, has started to leak, causing the water level to drop. I can only open it now when I have to change the filter, so that all the circulation of water through the filter and back into the pool must flow through the drain at the bottom. Storms fill the surface with leaves and pine needles that must be cleared quickly before they become waterlogged and drift

to the bottom where they could block the drain, stopping the flow of water to the pump, which would in turn soon burn out.

Most important of all, acidity, alkalinity, and the amount of mineral salts in the water must be kept in balance to prevent corrosion of metal parts, scale deposits, and etching of plaster surfaces. All water has an acid-alkaline balance that is measured on a pH scale. The scale runs from 0 to 14, with the center, 7, indicating a neutral state. Controlling the chemical balance of pool water is vital. The ideal range is slightly on the alkaline side. Testing pH is not difficult. The water sample in the test kit will change color according to the pH. For example, a phenol-red indicator will turn the sample yellow for acid, orange for little or no alkali, and red for high alkalinity. Every time I do the test for pH, I think of developing a similar test for PhD.

My Esther Williams swimming pool is trying to become a frog pond, to return to nature, and I am doing everything in my power to prevent that from happening. Measuring the chemicals and adding the right mixtures to bring the opposites into balance—acidity and alkalinity—is a kind of alchemy, related to the ancient tradition of the music of the spheres. What Heidegger called “mood” or attunement—*Stimmung*—is an allusion to this tradition, to the theory of temperament as a result of the balance or imbalance of the four humors in alchemical psychology. Yet, as I carry out this chore of mundane chemistry, I experience a sense of chagrin:

“Each time he encounters one of these double words, R.B. insists on keeping both meanings, as if one were winking at the other and as if the word’s meaning were in that wink, so that *one and the same word, in one and the same sentence*, means *at one and the same time* two different things. This is why such words are often said to be “preciously ambiguous”: not in their lexical essence (for any word in the lexicon has several meanings), but because, by a kind of *luck*, a kind of favor not of language but of discourse, I can *actualize* their amphibology. In French these amphibologies are extremely (abnormally) numerous: *Absence* (lack of person and distraction of the mind), *Alibi* (a different place and a police justification). The fantasy is not to hear everything (anything), it is to hear *something else*.”<sup>13</sup>

*Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito’s wing that falls on the rails.*

The grooved piece of iron placed at a junction of the rails where one track crosses another is known as a “frog,” as in this

example from the dictionary illustrating proper usage: “[T]he accident was caused by the train suddenly leaving the rails at a frog.”<sup>14</sup> There are many such frogs in *Walden*, a work exemplifying, after all, the problem of the machine in the garden. Thoreau mentions the train and its tracks frequently. In one sentence, he alludes to the semantic sets of two different frogs: “*A mink steals out of the marsh before my door and seizes a frog by the shore; the sedge is bending under the weight of the reed-birds flitting hither and thither; and for the last half hour I have heard the rattle of railroad cars, now dying away and then reviving.*” The Fitchburg Railroad passed the pond near Thoreau’s cabin: “*I usually go to the village along its causeway, and am related to society by this link.*” The workmen along the rails saw Thoreau so often they mistook him for a laborer like themselves: “*And so I am. I too would fain be a track-repairer somewhere in the orbit of the earth.*”

In their discussions of dream work, the psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan noted that every dream has a railroad switch, a switch word, or what I have called a *choral word*. Every dream, that is, to use railroad slang, has a frog. Here is the lesson of *Walden* I want to generalize as a rule of choragraphy—to use the frog as the organizing logic of electronic rhetoric, to design hypermedia by means of *frog*. It is a common enough device, but Thoreau’s example makes the case for it especially convincing: “*What I have observed of the pond is no less true in ethics. It is the law of average. Such a rule of the two diameters not only guides us toward the sun in the system and the heart in man, but draw lines through the length and breadth of the aggregate of a man’s particular daily behaviors and waves of life into his coves and inlets, and where they intersect will be the height or depth of his character. Perhaps we need only to know how his shores trend and his adjacent country or circumstances, to infer his depth and concealed bottom.*”

Thoreau shows me a way to perform choragraphy across the levels of schooling. It is a lesson simple in form and profound in effect. Tim O’Brien applies the device to perfection in his autobiographical account of his service in Vietnam: “The things they carried were largely determined by necessity. Among the necessities or near-necessities were P-38 can openers, pocket knives, heat tabs, wristwatches, dog tags, mosquito repellent, chewing gum, candy, cigarettes, salt tablets, packets of Kool-Aid, lighters, matches, sewing kits, Military Payment Certificates, C rations, and two or three canteens of water. Together, these items weighed between 15 and 20 pounds, depending upon a man’s habits or rate of metabolism. . . . To carry something was to hump it, as when Lieutenant

Jimmy Cross humped his love for Martha up the hills and through the swamps. In its intransitive form to hump meant to walk, or to march, but it implied burdens far beyond the intransitive.”<sup>15</sup>

The movement from physical burdens to metaphysical ones is treated with telling effect in *The Things They Carried*. Similarly, anything and everything in and around Walden Pond may be turned into a device for exploring a value, a belief, a question. The principle is as ancient as the theory of correspondences, of an intuited relationship between the macrocosm and the microcosm. The assignment is to position ourselves at the crossing, at this switch or frog between the material environment of Gainesville, Alachua County, Florida, and the mood, the emotional frame that tells me how I am situated, where things are “at” for me, my attunement to the world. I do not—cannot—know this mood in advance; or I can only “know” it. I know in principle or by definition that as a modern person I am *alienated*, for example. I know what the term means, but I do not understand it. I know further or the theory suggests that as the modern condition gives way to the postmodern, so too must the ground mood of dread, of anxiety, give way to another tuning.

The school project is to explore this tuning collectively in our place specifically (*chora*), to extrapolate from our models and relays to find the equivalent of *yugen* or *duende* for our own location; or if we can find no equivalent in our local culture, then to invent a word for the mood whose traces we discover running through the collective entries, or to borrow a term from another culture to help find a dimension of our experience we had not noticed before. The instructions are to form an image—a dialectical image, we might say—by juxtaposing a detail in my own setting with a detail or feature of a cultural text—any work of my choosing in arts and letters. Any work in the standard curriculum of the public schools should serve this purpose well enough. The next step is to explore the resonances thus created as an allegory from which I may infer the nature of a personal emotion, that may in turn allow me to recognize an underlying collective atmosphere. This inference is a discovery, an expression, not a representation of something that I already knew. It is an invention whose proof is in one’s recognition of the match, the correspondence, the fit between the outside and the inside, the visible and invisible dimensions of experience.

The effect might be instead a sense of the lack of fit, in which for example the juxtaposition of Walden Pond and my Esther Williams swimming pool forms an abyss, a gap of meaning into which I

have poured just enough bits and bytes to stabilize the terrain, the ground. The frogs have shown me an outline of an ideal, perhaps, an impossibility or a utopia that I may use as a point of reference, as a reminder that there is more tuning to be done. The juxtaposition of my pool and Thoreau's pond, mediated by the choral frog, produces an effect of triangulation, marking out a site in the unknown to which I may now direct my attention.

The project requires that I undertake myself the construction of an allegorical metaphor. *Walden* repeats the device endlessly, as when Thoreau comments on "the forms which thawing sand and clay assume in flowing down the sides of a deep cut on the railroad." His interpretation manifests an explicit use of the traditional schema of correspondences. "What is man but a mass of thawing clay. The fingers and toes flow to their extent from the thawing mass of the body," he states, and then shifts the vehicle of the figure to that of a leaf. He goes on to declare, "The Maker of this earth but patented a leaf. What Champollion will decipher this hieroglyphic for us, that we may turn over a new leaf at last?" Such is his poetics—to begin with an observation of something in the material world and then to turn it in the direction of a maxim relating to human conduct.

This turn of figuration is familiar enough to instructors at all levels: "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in." Or, "We have constructed a fate, an *Atropos*, that never turns aside. (Let that be the name of your engine). . . . Every path but your own is the path of fate. Keep on your own track, then." We know this figure well, but there is little evidence to suggest that the literal-mindedness of our one-dimensional culture has changed very much despite the continuous training in figuration provided by advertising. The challenge of choragraphy is to add heuristics to hermeneutics, fabrication to interpretation. The goal of reading the figures composed in the arts-and-letters relays is to learn how to make a figure oneself, to use the works in the humanities curriculum as a *chora* or place of mediation in which, in the prosthesis of the Internet, we may think together our personal and collective dimensions, grounded and manifested in our own local setting.

My swimming pool may teach me something about my attunement to life, then; not just something about myself, but about my community, if I am prepared to be a Champollion to the hieroglyphics in my own place. This extrapolation from the models and application to myself are the real challenges of choragraphy and of

the collective online experiment. What is the ethical dimension of maintaining the proper balance of chemicals in pool water? What is the politics of my struggle to purify the water in which my family swims? What is the metaphysics of a luxury whose leisure function belies the deteriorated fragility of its mechanical functioning?

I understand now that the feeling I associated with the ponds of childhood memory was one of security, certainty, order. Hence the fetish power of the frog. How much of my disciplinary devotion to putting order into a body of heterogeneous information draws upon that unforgettable page in the coloring book with the cat-tails, red-winged blackbird, frog-on-the-lily-pad scene? What about the passage from innocence to experience that includes lessons in ecology, of a Darwinian food chain underlying this bucolic image? "I love to see that Nature is so rife with life that myriads can be afforded to be sacrificed and suffered to prey on one another," says Thoreau, undeterred by accident and death; "tadpoles which herons gobble up, and tortoises and toads run over in the road."

Pool maintenance teaches responsibility: to be not the child who plays in the water, but the one who balances the chemicals and enforces rules for safety. In the large frame of society, the pool is a mortification. Children, mortgage, the entire farm—where did they come from? The pool in its materiality shows me something, makes me confront something—for one thing, my own class position, the patriarchal mood of my values—that otherwise readily slips out of sight and therefore out of mind. The critical power of the project depends upon this anchor or grounding of theories and emotions in the maker's own material existence, which then may be included in the act of reading and writing.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Henry David Thoreau, "Walden" and "Civil Disobedience," ed. Owen Thomas (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966).

<sup>2</sup> David E. James, ed., *To Free the Cinema: Jonas Mekas & the New York Underground* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Thornton W. Burgess, *Old Mother West Wind* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1910).

<sup>4</sup> John M. Anderson, introduction to *Discourse on Thinking*, by Martin Heidegger (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 11–39.

<sup>5</sup> Makoto Ueda, ed. and trans., *Basho and His Interpreters* (Stanford, CA: Stanford, 1991), 140.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>7</sup> Marilyn Zeitlin, ed., *Bill Viola: Survey of a Decade* (Houston: Contemporary Art Museum, 1998), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Ephraim Katz, *The Film Encyclopedia* (New York: Putnam, 1979), 1237.

<sup>9</sup> Federico Garcia Lorca, "The Duende," in *Symposium of the Whole*, ed. Jerome Rothenberg and Diane Rothenberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 43–51.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 43, 51.

<sup>11</sup> John Cage, *M: Writings '67–'72* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1974), i.

<sup>12</sup> *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 26 March 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 72.

<sup>14</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "frog."

<sup>15</sup> Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 4–5.