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"A Crash Is Apt to Grate Agreeably on our Ears": Thoreau and Dissonance

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For Thoreau, music refers not only to material acoustic vibrations but also carries a metaphysical and moral significance. Thoreau's conception of sound is inextricable from his metaphysical views, and in his writings sonorous harmony resonates with overtones of spiritual harmony. Simultaneously, he expands his definition of musical harmony to include sounds conventionally considered to be dissonant, and states that all sounds are musical. This essay investigates the philosophical implications of Thoreau's aesthetics of all-musicality and dissonant harmony, especially in the context of his spiritual and moral interpretation of sound. The discussion will necessarily take us by way of his views on violence.

In his earliest journal writings, under the rubrics of "harmony" and "sphere music," Thoreau sketches a theory of sound in which spiritual and acoustic harmony are intertwined. For example, in 1840 he writes: "[Music] is God's voice – the divine breath audible."[1] Such thoughts are not unique to Thoreau's youth but are found throughout his writings, although the word "God" becomes less common. In 1853 he writes that "The strains of the aeolian harp & of the wood thrush are the truest & loftiest preachers that I know now left on this earth."[2] And in "Higher Laws," Thoreau imagines John Farmer's experience of the sound of a flute which brought a moral message from a higher sphere.[3] For Thoreau, just as for Emerson, the spiritual is inseparable from the sensory; Thoreau was no materialist, and although his idealist metaphysical views often remain implicit, they inform his writings from the first to the last.[4]

Harmony, for Thoreau, seems to refer to the holistic interrelatedness of existence, which is acoustically embodied in the physiological experience of resonance; it is physically manifested in natural law and spiritually in the moral principles he terms "higher laws." In *A Week*, Thoreau writes, "Music is the sound of the universal laws promulgated."[5] Historically, the term also includes a political aspect, an idea of solidarity and justice, in the progressive uses of the term in 18th and 19th century America, such as in Robert Owen's New Harmony experiment and in Fourierist discourse. Encompassing these various dimensions – natural, spiritual, moral, aesthetic, political – the term was widely used in Thoreau's time, and Thoreau's own uses of it are very numerous.

Thoreau's association of the musical and the metaphysical participates in a longer philosophical history, to which it cannot be reduced, but nor can it be fully understood if seen outside of this context. He offers a radical rewriting and modernization of the Neoplatonic idea of the music of the spheres by bringing cosmic music down to earth, hearing metaphysical harmony in all sounds, from the lowing of a cow to the squeaking of a pump. The idea of sphere music, associated with Pythagoras, was passed through the immanentist, idealist tradition of Plotinus, Iamblichus (quoted in *A Week*, in the context of sphere music), Ralph Cudworth (whom Thoreau read in the spring of 1840), and Emerson, among many others.[6] However, while at times Thoreau maintains this metaphysics of quasi-monistic immanence, at others he expresses a strong dualism between a higher and a lower sphere. On one hand, the sonorous and spiritual harmony he perceives is immanent and ubiquitous; for example, in 1851 he writes: "My profession is to be always on the alert to find God in nature – to know his lurking places. To attend all the oratorios – the operas in nature."[7] On the other, sometimes Thoreau says that literal sounds are hints of a higher harmony, thus introducing a form of dualism between the earthly and the heavenly. In his early poem, "Rumors from an Æolian Harp," sounds are "rumors" of an ideal place, source of virtue. Similarly, in 1853, he writes that the ringing telegraph wire "is my redeemer – It always brings a special & a general message to me from the highest."[8] Sound is thus for Thoreau simultaneously the immediate and concrete embodiment of divine immanence, and the hint or reminder of a higher spiritual realm. As Christopher A. Dustin concisely explains, "Thoreau's vision of God as immanent in nature is incomplete without the moment of transcendence that relates the natural and the human to a source lying beyond both."[9] The coexistence of these two spiritual views, immanence and dualism, will be important in the following.

The metaphysical value of sound is a constant throughout Thoreau's life; however, his writings on harmony evolve from the abstract, more overtly religious vocabulary of his youth toward the more sensorial, phenomenal descriptions of real sounds with spiritual overtones of the 1850s. That these sounds retain a metaphysical charge for Thoreau is clear, for example, in the following description of the song of a bobolink:

> He is just touching the strings of his theorbo – his glassicord – his water organ – & one or two notes globe themselves & fall in liquid bubbles from his teeming throat. It is as if he touched his harp within a vase of liquid melody – & when he lifted it out the notes fell like bubbles from the trembling strings – Methinks they are the most *liquidly* sweet & melodious sounds I ever heard. … The very divinest part of his strain droppingfrom overflowing his breast – in globes of melody It is the foretaste of

> such strains as never fell on mortal ears – to hear which we should rush to our doors & contribute all that we possess & are – Or it seemed as if in that vase full of melody some notes sphered themselves & from time to time bubbled up to the surface & were with difficulty repressed.[10]

Musical birdsong analogically slides into the language of liquidity and spherical shapes like bubbles that drop and burst. Thoreau's language mimes the singularity of the song by inventing new reflexive verbs (the notes "globe themselves," "sphere themselves"). The sound is vividly actual and yet it evokes the divine and the afterlife. We can hear the echoes of sphere music: "one or two notes *globe themselves* & fall in liquid teeming *bubbles* from his throat…. The very divinest part of his strain dropping from overflowing his full breast – in *globes* of melody… it seemed as if in that vase full of melody some notes *sphered themselves* & from time to time *bubbled* up to the surface & were with difficulty repressed." Spheres, bubbles, globes: this is Thoreau's immanent and actual terrestrialization of the music of the spheres.

Thoreau heard metaphysical harmony not only in nature but in the everyday sounds of human life. He desires to "hear a music in the rattling of the tool we work with," writes that "the squeaking of the pump sounds as necessary as the music of the spheres," and evokes "the hum of the shaft or other machinery of a steamboat which at length might become music in a divine hand."[11] He states several times that *all* varieties of sounds are musical and harmonious. In 1839, he writes: "All sounds, and more than all silence, do fife and drum for us"; in 1851: "Every sound is music now"; and in 1857: "Music is perpetual, and only hearing is intermittent."[12] Based on Thoreau's view of thoroughgoing divine and harmonic immanence, we might name this idea of all-musicality his *panharmonium*.[13] This includes sounds often thought of as discordant, like the sound of a storm: under the rubric "Harmony," he writes in 1837: "Nature makes no noise. The howling storm – the rustling leaf – the pattering rain – are no disturbance, There is an essential and unexplored harmony in them."[14] The cosmic "sphere music" is called a "din": "The earth goes gyrating ahead amid such a din of sphere music."[15] Thoreau's panharmonium integrates cacophony into the category of harmony or aesthetically agreable sound.[16] Indeed, even "a crash is apt to grate agreeably on our ears."[17]

In 1840, in the first version of the different drummer trope, Thoreau writes: "A man's life should be a stately march to a sweet but unheard music, and when to his fellows it shall seem irregular and inharmonious, he will only be stepping to a livelier measure; or his nicer

ear hurry him into a thousand symphonies and concordant variations."[18] Discord is only perceived as such by those who are not attuned to the universe's higher harmonies. In *Walden*, Thoreau describes the "harsh and tremendous voice" of a cat-owl: "*Boo-hoo, boo-hoo, boo-hoo!* It was one of the most thrilling discords I ever heard. And yet, if you had a discriminating ear, there were in it the elements of a concord such as these plains never saw nor heard."[19] In nature there is no dissonance; all acoustic vibrations are ultimately harmonious as they are the sound of the promulgation of universal laws. Harmony, for Thoreau, does not exclude what is commonly considered discord.

However, hearing sphere music in the ruckus of our earth may entail certain complications when we consider dissonance from a spiritual and moral point of view. Are the sounds of *all* earthly actions truly harmonious? As much as we may be tempted to divorce the sonorous from the moral when he starts talking about crashes and dins, that would be abandoning half of the radicality of Thoreau's thought. What does it mean to say that "violent cacophony is the sound of the universal laws promulgated"? Does a crash preach, like the thrush? What would John Farmer think, if he were visited not by gentle flute music, but by a wild clatter?

These questions reflect a larger one, concerning violence. The sonorous expression of violence is crashing and cacophony. Can violence, like dissonance, be subsumed within the larger notions of metaphysical harmony and higher law? We may begin to seek an answer in Thoreau's recurrent, somewhat disturbing expressions in which violence is assimilated into what might be called an effective promulgation of higher laws. In a famous passage in "Spring," he writes:

> 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; that tender organizations can be so serenely squashed out of existence like pulp, – tadpoles which herons gobble up, and tortoises and toads run over in the road; and that sometimes it has rained flesh and blood! With the liability to accident, we must see how little account is to be made of it. The impression made on a wise man is that of universal innocence. Poison is not poisonous after all, nor are any wounds fatal.[20]

Thoreau knows that death, including violent death, is part of life: accident and predation are natural and ultimately innocent, just as crashes are harmonious and "there never was yet such a storm but it was Æolian music to the innocent ear."[21] The death of individuals does not adversely affect the life of the species and the health of nature in general. Commenting on this passage, David M. Robinson writes: "What, from a limited standpoint, may appear to be

cruelty or ruthlessness Thoreau tries to understand instead as the process or mechanism that serves as a guarantor of nature's power and richness. … Enormous loss, measured on a human scale, becomes less significant when seen from a higher and more comprehensive perspective."[22] Although discord exists among the parts, harmony reigns still on the level of the whole. The subsumption of natural violence into higher innocence is the metaphysical equivalent of the incorporation of dissonance into harmony; discord is not discordant after all, nor are any sounds unmusical.

Thoreau held this view from an early age. After his beloved brother John died tragically in 1842, Thoreau wrote to Emerson the following words:

> The wind still roars in the wood, as if nothing had happened out of the course of nature. … Nature is not ruffled by the rudest blast – the hurricane only snaps a few twigs in some nook of the forest. … old laws prevail in spite of pestilence and famine. … How plain that death is only the phenomenon of the individual or class. Nature does not recognize it, she finds her own again under new forms without loss. Yet death is beautiful when seen to be a law, and not an accident … One might as well go into mourning for every sere leaf – but the more innocent and wiser soul will snuff a fragrance in the gales of autumn, and congratulate Nature upon her health.[23]

The crashes and roaring of the storm do not interrupt nature's harmony. Death is one of the natural laws constantly promulgated, and is beautiful even when tragic. This idea returns in *Cape Cod*, in a Stoic description of the aftermath of a shipwreck: "I sympathized rather with the winds and waves, as if to toss and mangle these poor human bodies was the order of the day. If this was the law of Nature, why waste any time in awe or pity?"[24] This is the crash, whose sound "grates agreably" on his ears: the shipwreck. "I saw that the beauty of the shore itself was wrecked for many a lonely walker there, until he could perceive, at last, how its beauty was enhanced by wrecks like this, and it acquired thus a rarer and sublimer beauty still."[25] Paradoxically, the presence of death, or of dissonance, enhances aesthetic beauty, as it reveals the continuing vitality of nature despite the loss. According to higher laws, natural violence is an inescapable part of life, and no matter how grating the discord, it is still always subsumed into nature's harmony. The emphasis on natural law in these passages ("death is beautiful when seen to be a law," "If this was the law of Nature") shows that even as Thoreau embraces discord, such dissonance does not interrupt or displace his fundamental metaphysics of harmony, but expands it.

In his understanding of natural discord as harmonious, Thoreau is anticipating Darwin. At the same moment Thoreau was developing these ideas, Darwin was incubating

his *Origin of Species*, in which he would argue that the death or non-reproduction of the weak is for the greater good of the species. In an epigraph to his work, he quoted the natural theologian William Whewell. In the last paragraph he evokes the laws governing evolution including that of natural selection, and expresses a view somewhat similar to Thoreau's philosophy of panharmonium: "Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life…."[26] Underlying the strife, a certain harmony is preserved.

One may reasonably wonder at this point what Thoreau means by a metaphysical harmony that is not always peaceful and sometimes involves violent crashes. It certainly does not mean static symmetry or perfect order, unless that last term also be redefined. Beyond the importance of natural law underpinning his idea of harmony, Thoreau seems to mean the unity of the dynamic universe-system and the relatedness of all of its parts with each other, which he designated with terms like sympathy, resonance and relation, and today we might call holistic interconnectedness and interdependence.[27] This holistic relatedness is not broken when there is conflict between the parts.[28] It includes particularity and difference, and also means that there are no individuals who are absolutely other or foreign. It is characterized neither by pure homogeneity nor by radically heterogeneous particularity, but rather by interdependent particularity. Discord and disorder for Thoreau seem to be related to the dynamic conflict between entities and not to an ontology of objective chance.[29] Thoreau's conception of a dynamic and dissonant whole is based upon the idea that spirit and natural law are immanent throughout all of nature, including its violent parts, and is related to Emerson's Neoplatonic and immanentist view of "Unity in Variety."[30] Although Thoreau places extra emphasis on variety, he does not neglect unity. One might also cite Alexander von Humboldt, who wrote in his *Cosmos*, "Nature … is a unity in diversity of phenomena, a harmony."[31] Thoreau's extension of the definition of harmony to include dissonance, difference and discord occurs within the tradition of idealist metaphysics, rather than breaking with it. The incorporation of discord into a larger harmony might be seen as a Thoreauvian form of dialectics, comparable to Emerson's dialectics of "circles."

But we have not yet fully answered our question: are all acoustic phenomena really harmonious? What about the sound of a gun? Does it too sound "as necessary as the music of the spheres"? In "Higher Laws," Thoreau is somewhat ambiguous about human predation: he says clearly that eating other animals is a lower stage of spiritual development, but he also admits that he "reverences" both the spiritual and the "savage" life, and at times has been

tempted to devour a woodchuck raw.[32] He tends away from animal food because he finds it unclean and less spiritual, and "no human being, past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature."[33] And yet if humanity is just another animal, as the nonanthropocentric worldview maintains, it should have no more qualms than other predators when it kills and eats other animals – as long as it takes only what it needs, as they do, and kills for food and not for wanton murder.[34] Nature is so "rife with life" that this local violence will not upset the universal balance. Thoreau seems to waver between these two spiritual perspectives: on one hand the dualism of a lower, meat-eating stage vs. a higher spiritual stage in which humans forego eating other animals, and on the other the immanentism of the universal innocence of all of nature's predation, including that of humans. In 1859, he writes:

> I hear these guns going today – & I must confess that they are to me a spring-like & exhilarating sound – like the cock-crowing – though each one may report the death of a musquash. This, methinks, or the like of this, with whatever mixture of dross – is the real morning or evening hymn that goes up from these vales today – & which the stars echo. This is the best sort of gloryfying [*sic*] of God & enjoying him – that at all prevails here today – without any clarified butter or sacred ladles.
>
> As a mother loves to see her child imbibe nourishment & expand – so God loves to see his children thrive on the nutriment he has furnished them. In the musquash hunters I see the Almouchicois still pushing swiftly over the dark stream in their canoes – These aboriginal men cannot be repressed – but under some guise or other they survive & reappear continually – Just as simply as the crow picks up the worms which all over the fields have been washed out by the thaw – these men pick up the musquash that have been washed out the banks.[35]

Although there is clearly some irony in the statement that there is no better hymn to God happening on that day than gunshots, it is surely not only ironic, as he goes on to say that this "springlike and exhilarating sound" is indeed a way of glorifying God, since God loves the natural processes of life including predation. In this passage, which recalls those cited above concerning natural violence, humanity is an animal among others, governed by the same laws of nature which require eating to maintain health, and therefore hunting is innocent. Strictly speaking, meat-eating is compatible with the immanentist, nonanthropocentric view, whereas vegetarianism imposes a dualism between the ways of humans and those of other carnivores. Thoreau's approach is thus ambiguous: at times he maintains a dualistic view (higher/lower, clean/unclean, humans/other animals) where humans are held to a higher standard than other animals, and then at others he displays an immanentism where all predation, including that of

human animals, accords with natural harmony. This tension between two spiritual views, immanence and dualism, seems to remain unresolved.[36]

The sound of the hunter's gun is thus somewhat ambiguous. What of the soldier's? The tension we have just seen reappears in this context in a slightly different form. In many early journal entries, and in his 1840 essay "The Service," Thoreau associates music with a soldier's bravery and heroism. He essentially argues that a soldier fighting for a just cause is acting in harmony with the universe. The essay seems rather to be written to inspire a spirit of "service" and a soldier's courage in its readers' everyday lives, than to advocate any concrete use of guns, though it also criticizes the "insincerity and sloth of peace."[37] Rejected for publication in *The Dial* by Margaret Fuller, it may indeed seem rough terrain to readers because it juxtaposes two quite different registers, the highly abstract praise for spiritual courage and the evocation of the concrete practice of war, without offering the needed intermediary term – the particular moral justification for any historically situated use of violence, without which the violence is incomprehensible. Thoreau takes it for granted that the battle cry he praises is one in defense of justice and higher laws, such as John Brown's, and not, for example, that of the US Army against the Seminoles.[38] He states in "Slavery in Massachussetts," "Show me a free State, and a court truly of justice, and I will fight for them, if need be."[39]

In this context, Thoreau believes that the universe has an immanent rhythm and music, and acting in sync with it inspires bravery and overcomes isolation. This helps explain the following passage:

> Especially the soldier insists on agreement and harmony always. … War is but the compelling of peace. If the soldier marches to the sack of a town, he must be preceded by drum and trumpet, which shall identify his cause with the accordant universe. All things thus echo back his own spirit, and thus the hostile territory is preoccupied for him. He is no longer insulated, but infinitely related and familiar.[40]

It is difficult to see how the sack of a town, which is very different from two armed forces meeting on a battlefield, could ever be considered to accord with the higher law of justice and make the sacker infinitely related to the rest of creation. This passage may perhaps be best understood as the overexcited froth of a young man who had not yet outgrown his guns, the process he recounts in "Higher Laws." At any rate, Thoreau's view here and elsewhere seems to be that through bold actions theoretically in accordance with higher principles, the soldier is not only related to his companions but to the universe.[41] The sound of a just war is for Thoreau harmonious because it resonates with the rhythm of the universe's immanent laws;

but simultaneously, he states that the sound of all war is terribly dissonant: in 1840 he writes that "war is the sympathy of concussion."[42] It seems strange that sympathy, a romantic term related to harmony, could be found in the collision of battling bodies and the crash of concussion. But this idea reminds us again of the harmony he finds in storms and shipwrecks: the sympathy of concussion would be the accordance of discord, or the harmony of dissonance. He continues:

> Men do not peep into heaven but they see embattled hosts there. Miltons' [*sic*] heaven was a camp. … The soldier is the practical idealist – he has no sympathy with matter, he revels in the annihilation of it. So do we all at times. When a freshet destroys the works of man – or a fire consumes them – or a Lisbon earthquake shakes them down – our sympathy with persons is swallowed up in a wider sympathy with the universe. A crash is apt to grate agreeably on our ears.[43]

Even in heaven, where ultimate harmony should theoretically reign, the discord of war continues. This passage may be relatively incomprehensible if not seen in the context of the idea of a just war. The harmony of a just war's discord is thus related to the harmony of nature's violence, prefiguring the arguments cited above in the letter to Emerson and in "Spring": our sympathy with an individual is sacrificed to a sympathy with the whole. In the interest of higher ideals or the laws of nature, even "matter" may be destroyed: here we see a glimpse of Thoreau's dualism. Thoreau is not a simple sword-rattler; he prefers staying at home and braving the everyday experiences of life.[44] However, when necessary for a just cause, he supports the use of violence, for example in rising up against slavery: "I do not wish to kill nor to be killed, but I can foresee circumstances in which both these things would be by me unavoidable. … The question is not about the weapon, but the spirit in which you use it."[45]

The discordant sound of a gun used in the spirit of justice thus "grates agreeably" on Thoreau's ears, and is incorporated into the immanence of nature's harmony. But guns are not always used in this spirit, and this example shows that there are indeed some sounds that are not musical: if it is necessary to go to war for justice, then injustice exists, whose sound will always for Thoreau remain unbearable. Speaking of the execution of John Brown, he writes: "While these things are being done, beauty stands veiled and music is a screeching lie."[46] And in "Slavery in Massachussetts": "Justice is sweet and musical; but injustice is harsh and discordant. The judge still sits grinding at his organ, but it yields no music, and we hear only the sound of the handle. He believes that all the music resides in the handle."[47] The noise of this organ handle is evidently not as musical as the "rattling of the tool we work

with" or "the squeaking of the pump."[48] The image is quite evocative, as it vividly depicts the absence of harmony though not the absence of sound, just as true justice is not embodied in the "justice" of the court who sent Anthony Burns back to slavery. Dissonance exists not only in metaphorical sounds: the rousing drum-beat that inspires the soldier in "The Service" is quite different from "this rub-a-dub" that Thoreau hears at night as soldiers, like those who executed the judge's decision, train in the street.[49] The immanence of divine harmony clearly does not extend so far as to include all forms of violence, in particular human acts of injustice. Here we see Thoreau's idealist dualism between higher principles and human society, well analysed by Daniel S. Malachuk in his *Two Cities* in terms of the city of God and the city of man. Thoreau's first writings on music sometimes express this view as well: "Some sounds seem to reverberate along the plain, and then settle to earth again like dust; such are Noise, Discord, Jargon. But such only as spring heavenward … are the true sphere music."[50] Thoreau's dualism thus enters into tension with the immanentism of his panharmonium: not all sounds are musical after all. The dualist view does not undermine the radicality of Thoreau's panharmonium, but nuances it. From the perspective of immanence, discord does not exist; from that of dualism, some sounds are irretrievably dissonant. Thoreau holds both views.

It was not uncommon for romantics to believe simultaneously in a quasi-monistic immanence of spirit in nature and in a dualist split between higher and lower. The overlapping perspectives do not necessarily create an overtly problematic tension; we must not demand perfect consistency. However, moments of dissonance, if not direct clashes, remain. For example, beyond the question mentioned above of whether humans eating other animals is a form of harmony or of injustice (especially in light of nonanthropocentric views of equality between species), we can wonder whether Darwin's law can still be seen as harmonious when applied to human society. Would Thoreau say that he loves to see that "Nature is so rife with life" that the humans of London in 1854 can be afforded to be sacrificed and "serenely squashed out of existence" by malnutrition, disease and unemployment? Or would he hold humans to a higher standard than other animals? We can wonder if his quasi-monist, dissonant panharmonium extends to such social violence, which can thus be condoned, or if this violence should rather be understood in terms of the dualism of higher law vs. lower lawlessness, and thus be denounced. Thoreau lived long enough to have assimilated Darwin's theory of evolution, but not long enough to have witnessed or participated in the social darwinism debates that his work sparked. We may thus hear a certain dissonance in the latent clash between these two views.

[1] *Journal*, ed. Elizabeth Hall Witherell, 8 vols. to date (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981-) (PJ), 1:144. See also PJ 1:362.
[2] PJ 7:216.
[3] *Walden*, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 222.
[4] I understand the term "materialism" as the idea that the universe contains nothing but matter (which may be dynamic), and "idealism" as the ontological perspective that spirit objectively exists in or above matter. The fact that Thoreau focused on particularity and did not often use metaphysical terminology after his youth does not mean that his philosophy did not have a strong religious and metaphysical orientation. See Joseph Urbas's discussion of Thoreau's metaphysics in the context of Transcendentalist ontology in general: "'Being is the Great Explainer': Thoreau and the Ontological Turn in American Thought" in *Thoreauvian Modernities: Transatlantic Conversations on an American Icon*, eds. François Specq, Laura Dassow Walls, and Michel Granger (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013); and Daniel S. Malachuk's analysis of the importance of the "City of God" for the transcendentalists in *Two Cities: The Political Thought of American Transcendentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016); as well as Christopher A. Dustin, "Thoreau's Religion," in *A Political Companion to Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Jack Turner (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009); Alan D. Hodder, "Thoreau and the New American Spirituality" in *Thoreau at 200: Essays and Reassessments*, eds. Kristen Case and K. P. Van Anglen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); and Alan D. Hodder, "The Religious Horizon" in *Henry David Thoreau in Context*, ed. James S. Finley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[5] *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, ed. Carl F. Hovde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 175.
[6] *Week,* 176.
[7] PJ 4:55.
[8] PJ 5:437.
[9] Dustin, "Thoreau's Religion," 284.
[10] *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau*, eds. Bradford Torrey and Francis Allen, 14 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906) (J), 9:398.
[11] PJ 1:213; PJ 1:229; PJ 4:302.
[12] PJ 1:96; PJ 4:23; J 9:245.
[13] Many commentators have studied the ways in which Thoreau's panharmonium prefigures the aesthetics of John Cage; perhaps the most comprehensive study is Jannika Bock, *Concord in Massachusetts, Discord in the World: The Writings of Henry Thoreau and John Cage* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008).
[14] PJ 1:13.
[15] PJ 1:34.
[16] As a young man, Thoreau may have read William Gardiner's popular book *The Music of Nature; Or, An Attempt to Prove That What is Passionate and Pleasing in the Art of Singing, Speaking and Performing upon Musical Instruments, Is Derived from the Sounds of the Animated World* (London: Longman et al, 1832). Gardiner offers descriptions of awe-inspiring sounds such as storms, cataracts and war (14-15), and musical transcriptions of animals, birds, insects, coughing, wheelbarrows creaking, children crying or playing, and "London cries." Emerson read Gardiner in late 1837, taking copious notes (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, eds. William Gilman, Alfred Ferguson et al, 16 vol. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-1982], 5:432-33). Gardiner's book went through multiple editions in England and the United States. I have found no direct trace of Thoreau's reading it, but it is quite plausible given his friendship with Emerson and his strong interest in the music of nature during his youth.
[17] PJ 1:124. Branka Arsić states that Thoreau "proposes a listening that is attuned to cacophony and discord" ("What Music Shall We Have?" 177). She argues that dissonance is opposed to harmony (which she correctly associates with spirituality): "harmony cancels dissonance by generating concord understood as the perfect essence hiding behind all discord" (174). I am claiming rather that Thoreau offers a radically inclusive definition of musical harmony, including what is normally perceived as discordant, rather than seeing concord and discord as opposites.
[18] PJ 1:146.
[19] *Walden*, 272. Kenneth W. Rhoads focuses on the link between music and wildness as well as the spiritual dimension of sound for Thoreau: "Thoreau: The Ear and the Music" *American Literature* 46.3 (1974), 317-19, 323-27.
[20] *Walden*, 318.

[21] *Walden*, 131.
[22] David M. Robinson, "Thoreau, Modernity and Nature's Seasons," in *Thoreauvian Modernities: Transatlantic Conversations on an American Icon*, eds. François Specq, Laura Dassow Walls, and Michel Granger (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 74.
[23] Letter to Emerson, March 11, 1842, *The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau*, eds. Walter Harding and Carl Bode (New York: New York University Press, 1958), 64-5.
[24] *Cape Cod*, ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 9.
[25] *Cape Cod*, 10. See also Thoreau's reflections on the "strengthening sight" of a dead sucker (PJ 4:450)
[26] Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, *The Works of Charles Darwin*, eds. Paul H. Barrett and R. B. Freeman, 29 vols (London: Pickering, 1988), 15:347.
[27] Laura Dassow Walls introduces the useful concept of "empirical holism" to describe Thoreau's worldview, which coincides rather well with the vision I am suggesting: *Seeing New Worlds* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 4. Jane Bennett uses the term "heteroverse" in her analysis of Thoreau's perspective, a term which describes "how heterogeneous elements intersect or influence one another and how this ensemble of intersections does not form a unified or self-sufficient whole"; she understands heterogeneity and unity to be contradictory. *Thoreau's Nature: Ethics, Politics and the Wild* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 53.
[28] Branka Arsić argues that the objective state of the real is "dissonant, arhythmical, and indeed, asyntactical" which is "precisely what natural life is in the absence of a self to idealize it into prosodic coherence," that is, that the coherence of existence is only a human idealization projected onto it. *Bird Relics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 101. However, Thoreau believed that natural harmony and law exist objectively and immanently throughout reality which thus coheres in a holistic ensemble of interconnections; its coherence is not only a human projection.
[29] As David Robinson writes, "Thoreau consistently tries to see a particular fact or event not as a random or unique occurrence but as indicative of a more comprehensive idea or law." *Natural Life: Thoreau's Worldly Transcendentalism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004), 109. I have elsewhere argued that Thoreau's conceptions of chance and accident participate in his epistemology of surprise rather than constituting an ontology of indeterminacy, and that his ontology remains anchored in natural law: "'Blue Berries Always Surprise Us': Thoreau, Happiness and Accident" in *Revue Française d'Etudes Américaines*, forthcoming.
[30] Emerson, *Nature*, *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, eds. Robert E. Spiller and Alfred R. Ferguson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 1:27. It is theoretically possible to conceive of a form of unity or holism that is materialist and not idealist, but there is no indication that this was Thoreau's view.
[31] Quoted in Walls, *Seeing New Worlds*, 84.
[32] *Walden*, 210.
[33] *Walden*, 212.
[34] Philip J. Cafaro states (though in the context of farming) that this is the "responsible answer": "Take what you need, but *only* what you need." "In Wildness Is the Preservation of the World: Thoreau's Environmental Ethics" in *Thoreau's Importance for Philosophy*, eds. Rick Anthony Furtak, Jonathan Ellsworth and James D. Reid (New York: Fordham UP, 2012), 75.
[35] J 11:424-5.
[36] Kathryn Cornell Dolan notes a similar ambiguity in a journal entry which first condemns eating animals and then describes Eskimos hunting. "Diet and Vegetarianism" in *Henry David Thoreau in Context*, ed. James S. Finley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 222.
[37] "The Service," in *Reform Papers*, ed. Wendell Glick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 17.
[38] For Thoreau's views on war, see Larry J. Reynolds, "Warrior Culture," in *Henry David Thoreau in Context*, ed. James S. Finley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). A number of commentators have observed that Thoreau advocated not only non-violent resistance but also, when necessary, violent action against injustice; see for example Lance Newman, "Thoreau and Violence," *The Concord Saunterer* 23 (2015).
[39] "Slavery in Massachussetts," in *Reform Papers*, 106.
[40] "The Service," 9.
[41] Branka Arsić understands this passage as a criticism of both harmony and war; she writes, "The accordant world is thus the effect of an arrangement that subjugates differences into harmony. In Thoreau's interpretation, the soldier's insistence on harmony is a function of his practice of subjugation" ("What Music?" 206). She relates harmony to forced harmonization and colonialization (207). However, Thoreau's soldier does not want to subjugate discord or difference, but to conquer the foe of "Falsehood" or injustice, and in so doing he necessarily brings with him not only band music but the cacophony of war. The discord of a just war is for him harmonious.
[42] PJ 1:124.
[43] PJ 1:124.

[44] See for example PJ 1:91.
[45] "A Plea for Captain John Brown," in *Reform Papers*, 133.
[46] "A Plea," 136.
[47] "Slavery in Massachussetts," 105.
[48] PJ 1:213; PJ 1:229.
[49] "Slavery in Massachussetts," 95.
[50] PJ 1:50.