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Cooper's Green World: Adapting Ecosemiotics to the Mythic Eastern Woodlands

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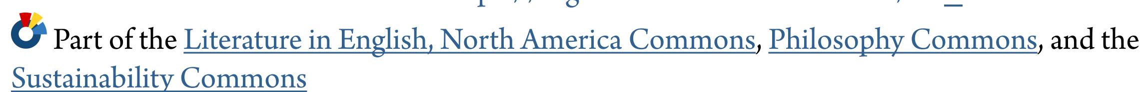
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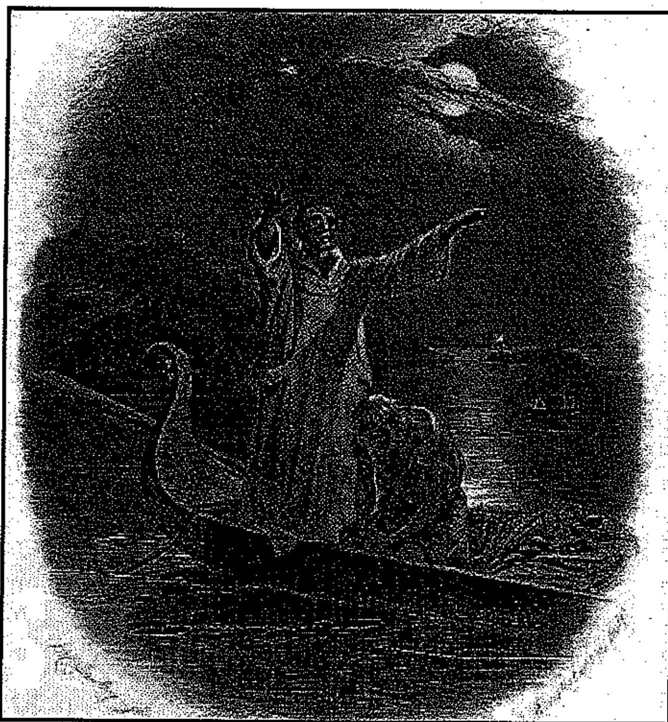
James Fenimore Cooper
His Country and His Art

Papers from the 2009 Cooper Seminar (No. 17)



The Absolution of Antonio the Fisherman
from *The Bravo*, Chapter XV
illustration by F.O.C. Darley (1859)

"Global Cooper"

Seminar on the works of James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851)
and of his daughter Susan Fenimore Cooper (1813-1894)

Hugh MacDougall, Editor

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Cooper's Green World: Adapting Ecosemiotics to the Mythic Eastern Woodlands

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Fascinated with finding a watery opening on the Eastern Woodlands at a mythic origin for a mighty river, Natty Bumppo asks: "Have the governor's, or the King's people given this lake a name? If they've not begun to blaze their trees, and set up their compasses, and line of their maps, it's likely they've not bethought them to disturb natur' with a name." The lake has no official name because it hasn't been set down on any official map yet, Hurry replies. "I'm glad it has no name," responds the young Deerslayer, "or, at least, no pale face name, for their christenings always fortell waste and destruction." Hurry explains that each Indian language has different vocabularies and names for such places, but adds that for his network of friends "we've got to calling the place the Glimmerglass, seeing that its whole basin is so often fringed with pines cast upward from its face, as if it would throw back the hills that hang over it." As Hurry and Deerslayer move across the lake their canoe "lay on the glassy water, appearing to float in air, partaking of the breathtaking stillness." "The echoes repeat pretty much all that is said or done on the Glimmerglass, in this calm summer weather" (*Deerslayer* 534-35).

So in the opening sections of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Deerslayer* we encounter the origins of the Susquehanna River, both in terms of an early American mythic history and of naming or language, but also geographically. Today at the Susquehanna's headwaters, along modern Lake Otsego and the Cooperstown marina, we also walk the shores of the fictional Lake Glimmerglass (now the name of a State Park at the north end of Lake Otsego) and encounter physically the Council Rock from Cooper's novel at the lake's outlet, all amid the fantasy opening in the vanished primordial Eastern woodlands described in the novel.

We are in a kind of distinctive overlay landscape of fantasy entwining geography. Story associations entwined with the Headwaters in the two anchor novels of Cooper's five-volume Leatherstocking Tales cycle, *The Deerslayer* and *The Pioneers*, melded with and shaped physical landscape and human communities in the region, and also influenced foundational notions of nature and wilderness in the early American republic that later helped to form landscapes on a continental scale. The result is an interweaving of ecopoetics and environment best understood as a "nature-text" (a narrative reciprocally connected with its physical contexts), in terminology from the emerging field of ecosemiotics as described by semiotician Timo Maran. It also is a nature-text that bears continued significance today in highlighting the role of cultural narrative in shaping environment (Maran 269).

The ecopoetic link in Cooper's fantasy history between the mythic yet place-based function of his text and its metonymic textual focus on naming is not coincidental. The tradition of "overlay landscape" that Cooper draws on for his fantasy landscape of the Susquehanna Headwaters is an old one in English-language literature and its roots. The Celticist Marie Sjoestedt wrote of such overlay literary landscape and place-name literature in influential early medieval Irish traditions, that "the Irish think of their history mythologically, and so too of their geography" (Sjoestedt 1). Stories such as the Ulster Cycle in Ireland and the *Mabinogi* in Wales shaped landscapes of what since has been called a Celtic Otherworld entwined with physical geography. In the interplay between those imaginary-spiritual landscapes (sometimes identified both with pre-Christian native and biblical traditions of Paradise) and actual geography, a dynamic sense of the natural world emerged paralleling the early Irish philosopher John Scottus Eriugena's observation that both being and non-being are present in nature (Eriugena 1). It anticipates Martin Heidegger's later notion, foundational to twentieth-century environmental philosophy, that Being—and by extension nature—is both appearing and hiding simultaneously, and hence not able to be conceptualized, objectified, possessed or abstracted (Heidegger; Foltz, 37-52). Analogous to Eriugena's cosmology of the revealed yet hidden "inside" of nature, early Irish literature tells of an Otherworld in the sea, linked to an archipelagic meld of sky and land and aerial waters, with boats floating in the air above the land or chariots traveling fields within the sea (Siewers 2009, 97-110). That early Glimmerglass echoes on (among other places) in the weblike allegory and multiple mirroring of fairyland, Ireland, and Elizabeth's court amid the Wandering Woods of Spenser's derivative Anglo-Irish fantasy history, *The Faerie Queene* (Siewers 2010).

Cooper's cycle brought its own emphases to reinventing for America this Insular overlay landscape trope, which earlier Spenser's work itself had adapted from Middle English models in turn referencing older Celtic Otherworld themes. By the time of Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* in the fifteenth century, that early Insular Otherworld trope had begun to meld with a fantasy geography of the primeval forest, paralleling tales of forest outlawry such as the Robin Hood cycle, subversive of Anglo-Norman feudal order. Northrop Frye called the trope the "green world" in the era of Spenser and Shakespeare, which he defined as involving two worlds overlapping with one other, typically a fairyland

connecting nature with fantasy, and conventional human society, and subverting the norms of both (Frye 88-89). This effect of Frye's green world foreshadowed the semiotician Juri Lotman's positing of mirrored meanings as a quality of a "semiosphere" or meaningful environment, a model that helped spur the development of ecosemiotics (Lotman 220). But in describing the American forest primeval in sea-like terms based on his own naval experience and maritime writings, Cooper also echoed early archipelagic traditions of the web-like elemental atmospheres of an Otherworld entwined with the interconnection of sea, land and sky in Ireland and neighboring islands.

For Cooper, the source of the Susquehanna became a place of watery reflection on the primeval forest, the forest a landscape including the reflection of the "green world" on the water, and the sky and the water reflecting one another into the mirroring green world of the forest. With its close reciprocal engagements with the physical, this Insular trope of overlay landscape in Cooper's hands also paralleled the late-eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish writer Edmund Burke's view of the poetic experience of nature as potentially a liminal physiological state of sublimity (itself undoubtedly influenced in part by James Macpherson's retro-Celtic Ossian poems), rather than Immanuel Kant's more metaphysical objectivity (Ryan).

In all this Cooper's overlay landscape approach to the Susquehanna Headwaters paralleled his metonymic emphasis on naming, a joint move that can be identified today with ecopoetics. Jonathan Bate defined *ecopoesis* as poetic expression "which may effect an imaginative reunification of mind and nature," a psychosomatic and experiential inhabiting of nature linked to language, going beyond merely pastoral settings (Bate 245). (The related term ecopoiesis, not coincidentally, refers to physical shaping of ecology in scientific and technical literature; both terms suggest the mutual reciprocity of nature and culture rather than their historical segregation in the West.) The *Deerslayer* helps express an ecopoetic "imaginative reunification" in the primordial Eastern forests. One example of its technique can be seen in the multiplicitous names for Lake Otsego, with no official *one name* that can "abstract" the lake conceptually. The story's commonly accepted name for the miniature finger lake, Glimmerglass, is both a physically based metonymy, and, as Hurry indirectly recognizes, an English-language veil for Indian names presumably throughout centuries more multiplicitous than even those for Natty Bumppo in the five-novel Leatherstocking Cycle. "Otsego" itself is mysterious in its etymology, thought to have derived from an Iroquois term for "place of the rock," relating in Cooper's fantasy cycle to the actual meeting rock or Council Rock at its outlet, which figures in *The Deerslayer*, but alternatively "clear water," "meeting place," "bodies of water," or "beautiful" (Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment; Otsego County). The name of the Susquehanna, also discussed in the novel in terms of its primeval Indian origins, remains a mystery of multiplicitous potential meanings: "muddy river," "long crooked river," "long reach river," and "the place of the straight river" are among the possibilities (Stranahan 3-4).

The novel's relation of story to place, and of naming to physicality (involving the subjectivity of both the lake and of Natty, in names like Glimmerglass and Hawkeye respectively), together reflect a kind of metaphor, in metonymy, that engages physicality to a greater degree than conventional abstract word imagery. For example, a maiden living on the lake (as a kind of holy fool reminiscent of mysterious maidens in Arthurian romance), Hetty Hutter, tells Natty that Deerslayer is the best of names because it indicates that he is not a warrior who kills Indians. Indeed, he is wary also of killing deer unnecessarily. When Hetty asks him for his actual name, he answers with his odd combination of modesty and bravado, "That's a question more easily asked than it is answered, young woman, seeing that I'm so young, and yet have borne more names than some of the greatest chiefs in all America" (*Deerslayer* 545-46). His names have come naturally, he explains. "Delawares seldom settle on a man's ra'al title, until such time as he has an opportunity of showing his true nature..." He says he still puts no great dependence on names because of their ability to deceive, but Hetty presses him "tell me *all* your names" His family name was Bumppo, perhaps echoing a Dutch name from New Holland (Alvis 352). His first name is the biblical Nathaniel, which is sometimes translated as meaning "gift of God," appropriate to Natty's fixation on "gifts" from God as the essence of identity. But he explains his family name with a mixture of tone-deafness and physicality: "Bumppo has lofty sound, yet men have bumped through the world with it." (Following such punning, "Natty" itself could also be taken comically as suggesting both the "natty" interwoven nature of the woods and his life in them, and also the buzzing of gnats that his soliloquies comically resemble.) His Indian names include Straight-tongue, the Pigeon, Lap-ear, and Deerslayer. But readers know that he will be called Hawkeye, and by the French and Iroquois allies La Longue Carabine for his rifle, the Leatherstocking for his cap, the Pathfinder, and at the end "the Trapper" as a kind of codgerly outdoorsman defined (or confined) by economic role in the new capitalist America.

In the multiple naming yet obscured "real names" for both Lake Otsego and Natty Bumppo, there lies an element of apophaticism (or finding of truth in relationships without objectification) at work in Cooper's fantasy cycle. This points to the environmental function of the overlay landscape trope as a storytelling structure. In the early medieval apophatic theology of writers such as the Christian Dionysius and Eriugena, and in the practice of desert ascetics whose traditions influenced the early Irish Christian literary world that produced the original Otherworld stories, the essence of ultimate reality could not be objectified. Rather, it was known or experienced through its activities or

energies in the physical world (Siewers 2009, 67-96). The Otherworld trope itself reflected this, involving a landscape of "non-being" metonymically fused with the physical geography of the islands around the Irish Sea. Human nature in apophatic theology reflects a similar apophasis in metonymy: The unknown image of God as subject is only known in relational experience of the divine energies of God that dynamically form both the human person and its redemption in a spiritual sea entwined with the physical, in a process of theosis grounded in bodily asceticism.

Cooper's fantasy in its metonymic overlay landscape stands in this tradition of apophatic phenomenology, but also parallels Heidegger's later secular sense of dynamic nature and of ecopoetic human self-realization in it, the bridge from deep ecology to environmental phenomenology (Foltz 170-80). Overlay landscapes of early Irish and Welsh monastic literary cultures shaped foundational English literature that influenced Cooper strongly. There is a parallel between the mirroring and echoing Glimmerglass, as both unnamed and multiply named source of the Susquehanna, and Frye's green world of English literature in Shakespearean comedies such as *Midsummer Night's Dream* and also in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Spenser probably had a direct link through early Reformation patristic studies to apophatic views of nature as well (Weatherby).

Cooper was a reader of both Shakespeare and Spenser, and quoted from both in epigraphs to his Leatherstocking chapters. The then-popular *Faerie Queene*'s central forest of adventure likely influenced Cooper's depictions of primeval American forest as well. Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, also an exemplar of the green world overlay landscape, was an important influence on Sir Walter Scott's romances, often mentioned as a progenitor to the cycle by Cooper, who was known as "the American Scott." The whole genre of historical romance itself is a reflection in part of the green-world trope, in writing as it were a kind of imaginative overlay landscape onto an historically real topography and putting the two into relationship.

But Cooper as a writer emerged in other contexts with indirect but strong personal affinities to an apophatic worldview as a performative cosmology or life-practice. Eriugena's writings and apophatic emphasis were a favorite nature philosophy of the Romantic poet Samuel Coleridge (Hedley 4, 36, 165), whom Cooper read, and with whom Cooper is sometimes paired as a kind of nineteenth-century Burkean Christian Romantic (Kirk 133-45, 197-203). Coleridge interestingly also had had connections with the Susquehanna Valley in the form of a utopian project he envisioned there early in his career with his poet-friend Robert Southey (McKusick). His mature theory of imagination echoed aspects of how Eriugena saw "the world as an indirect disclosure of God—as theophany," in which "self-disclosure of Being is for Eriugena a profoundly religious revelation," as Coleridge scholar Douglas Hedley described it (Hedley 196, note 6). Such a view parallels the Leatherstocking Tales' discussions of divinity and the primeval forest and other environments such as the lake and the prairie.

Cooper also drew on works by John Heckewelder, an eighteenth-century Moravian who wrote empathetically of American Indian cultures (Peprnik), reflecting the early Moravian attitudes explored in my colleague Prof. Faull's work on their utopian communities along the Susquehanna River prior to the American Revolution (Faull). The Moravians, whose worldview is referenced in *The Deerslayer* as formative for Natty's character, shared the same view of ultimate Nature as a triadic Trinity as Eriugena and the early apophatic theologians. They also with the Quakers (to whom Cooper was connected closely through his family, although he himself was Episcopalian), and other Anabaptists and Pietists (all active in the Susquehanna Valley) were influenced by the patristic Macarian homilies, key texts in ascetic practice of the apophatic theology of the East (Maloney 23-25; Ware). The Moravians eschewed the *filioque* formula of both later Protestants and Catholics (Freeman, Kinkel), and embraced instead a more central role for the Holy Spirit and its associations with grace flowing through the natural world and earthly beings, as in the Quaker doctrine of inner light. Rather than what became Western culture's dyadic emphasis on the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and Son as together the nexus of individuality, the Moravians followed the apophatic Trinitarianism of Eriugena and others in maintaining a triadic emphasis in which the Father and Son were both more distinct and more relational, together with the Holy Spirit.

The French psychoanalytic theorist Julia Kristeva has written on the importance of this alternate view of the Trinity to cultural formations of self and a kind of relational semiotic with the physical world (Kristeva 208-11). By contrast, in the mainstream culture of the West, following Kristeva's psychoanalytic terms, the Father as Real—or reality beyond language--had become fused with the Son as the Imaginary—or image of self. The resulting autonomous reality of Western selfhood semiotically emerged by distinguishing itself from and subordinating to it the Holy Spirit as the Symbolic, in older terms the networks of meaning associated with planetary webs of life and grace. The American image of "man versus nature" in cutting down the Eastern woodlands followed this reading of the ultimate nature of things closely. But Cooper's fantasy history of the Eastern woodlands at the Susquehanna Headwaters, including arguably the earliest "environmental fiction" of the new American republic, reimagined other and earlier traditions.

A generation after Cooper in the northeastern U.S., the influential American Pragmatist philosopher Charles S. Peirce would oppose the West's dyadic worldview with a triadic model for cosmic semiotics. Peirce's paradigm became the basis for biosemiotics and its offspring ecosemiotics today (Peirce 1992; Nöth). In Peirce's model, as opposed to Ferdinand de Saussure's more conventionally dyadic Western approach to semiotics in the same era, the making of meaning is a triadic process of *semiosis* involving Sign, Object, and Interpretant. The latter's "thirdness" involves meaning, habit, context, and tradition (or a landscape of meaning) potentially shaping the semiotic subject or selfhood in cosmic relationships.

Thus Cooper's fantasy overlay landscape of the Susquehanna Headwaters could be categorized as involving a semiosis of the Leatherstocking Cycle as Sign), the Lake Otsego area and its historic woodlands as Object, and the literary-philosophical tradition of the green world as an apophatic and metonymic landscape of Interpretant. Metonymy itself can involve a similar triadic melding of physicality (Object) with metaphor (Sign) in relation to landscape (Interpretant), as in for example the use of "desert" in Eastern Mediterranean and early Christian references to spiritual ascetic practice (Siewers 2009, 7). By contrast, conventional Western semiosis from the era of late-medieval Scholastic *analogia* and the revised Trinitarian *filioque*, to Saussurean sign theory, typically stressed the binary of archetype and analogue, and ultimately of self and other. Thus formed a Western emphasis on arbitrary internal human cognition, stressing the individual's autonomy in objectification of the external world, rather than the environmental empathy focused on by Peirce in his concept of "evolutionary love," spelled variously agapasm or agapism (Peirce 1992), and returned to in neurophenomenology more recently by Evan Thompson (Thompson 118–22 and 382–411). And the cycles of meaning as described by Peirce are dynamic. Cooper's overlay landscape as Interpretant can also stand for a whole process of Peircean triadic semiosis. His fantasy Forest then becomes itself further a Sign of the metonymic relation between the physical environment and a visionary American "green world" in which text and physical environment reciprocally shape one another in real life. That green-world tradition or Interpretant in turn came to form a type of semiotic subjectivity that helped shape readers such as the young Theodore Roosevelt reading Cooper enthusiastically while camping in the Adirondacks (Brinkley 40–41), and later helping to initiate American conservationism there late in the nineteenth century amid shared national notions of wilderness that arguably emerged in part from readings of Cooper's then-popular cycle.

Cooper's narratives in their larger cultural influence achieved such a shaping of semiotic subjectivity through two additional elements inherent in Bates' notion of ecopoetics, besides overlay landscape and metonymy: "time-plexity" and a well-grounded ethos of habitation. The multiple dimensions of temporal experience suggested by the Leatherstocking cycle's implicit deep engagement of American future with woodland past, or what the phenomenologist David Wood calls the "time-plexity," involved an awareness of the intersubjective life of our environment (Wood 221). Such temporal juxtaposition within narrative, associated with the non-human world, is also highlighted in early Celtic Otherworld stories, where the spiritual time of the "green world" moves differently than that of human society. It also evokes experience of what the phenomenologist Edward S. Casey termed "activist memory" (Casey 15). In the latter, the human as semiotic subject can interact with other senses of time and non-time beside the human. Apophatic theology categorized these intersecting layers experientially as human time, natural time, and spiritual world, in addition to the non-time of divinity (Mantzaridis; Romanides, 274–75; Basil).

Such cross-temporal interaction finds itself at odds with the modern Western adaptation of the Augustinian "eternal present," swallowing any variations of temporality in a transcendent subject (Agustine 233-34; Romanides 274), and becoming complicit in technological domination of the earth. By contrast the "seventh generation" environmental ethic popularized in mainstream American environmental thinking today from Native American cultures such as the Haudenosaunee/Iroquois, in terms of making decisions based on imagined effects on the seventh generation from us, illustrates how the element of time-plexity melds into the fourth aspect of ecopoetics, namely a grounded *ethos* that is place-based, related to the original sense of the Greek term as habitat. Such an ethos of habitation, along with time-plexity, shape the ecosemiotic subject.

To illustrate the interconnection of these ecopoetic elements of overlay landscape, naming, "time-plexity" and a grounded ethos of place, let us consider the scene in *The Deerslayer* in which Natty awaits his Indian friend Chingachgook, or the great serpent, at the Susquehanna Headwaters by the old meeting rock, presumably lapped by water in their imaginary eighteenth-century situation into its real small physical state today. "Has *that* no Colony name yet?" Natty asks of the river. "In that particular, they've got the advantage of us," says Hurry.

> "Having one end, and that the biggest, in their own keeping, they've given it a name, which has found its way up to its source; names nat'rally working up stream. No doubt, Deerslayer, you've seen the Susquehannah, down in the Delaware country?"
>
> "That have I, and hunted along its banks a hundred times."

"That and this are the same in fact, and I suppose the same in sound. I am glad they've been compelled to keep the red men's name, for it would be too hard to rob them of both land and names!"

Deerslayer made no answer, but he stood leaning on his rifle, gazing at the view which so much delighted him. The reader is not to suppose, however, that it was the picturesque alone, which so strongly attracted his attention. The spot was very lovely, of a truth, and it was then seen in one of its most favorable moments, the surface of the lake being as smooth as glass, and limpid as pure air, throwing back the mountains, clothed in dark pines, along the whole of its eastern boundary, the points thrusting forward their trees even to nearby horizontal lines, while the bays were seen glittering through an occasional arch beneath, left by a vault fretted with branches and leaves. It was the air of deep repose, the solitudes that spoke of scenes and forests untouched by the hands of man, the reign of nature, in a word, that gave so much pure delight to one of his habits and turn of mind. Still, he felt, though was unconsciously, like a poet also. He found a pleasure in studying this large, and, to him, unusual opening into the mysteries and forms of the woods, as one is gratified in getting broader views of any subject that has long occupied his thoughts. He was not insensible to the innate loveliness of such a landscape, either, but felt a portion of that soothing of the spirit which is a common attendant of a scene so thoroughly pervaded by the holy calm of nature. (*Deerslayer*, 523-25).

There is an element in Lake Glimmerglass, and in the origin of the Susquehanna in both place and time as an opening amid Cooper's primordial woodlands, of Edmund Burke's notion of the sublime: Delight in a safe terror through language that puts one on a perch between worlds (Burke 252-56). The edge of terror in Cooper's account of the headwaters relates both to the awesome expanse of wilderness to which the lake affords an insight, as well as to a retrospective awareness of the cultural, environmental and personal damage that would come as the new American republic's western course of empire rolled over the forest primeval. The multiple names or no names of the source of the Susquehanna reflect what Burke suggested in his essay on the sublime was a special influence over the passions that only words have in their non-mimetic attributes. Indeed, following from that, the apophasis of Peirce's theory suggests a kind of cosmic semiotics spanning the physical and the spiritual with a charge of metonymic energy, similar to the ancient notion of the *logoi* or harmonies of Creation. In the cosmic semiotics of thinkers such as the Christian Dionysius, Eriugena, and St. Gregory of Nyssa, such energies both shape and define Nature rather than being merely an attribute of it in Boethian views that later became predominate in the West (Siewers 2009, 67-96; Gregory 27-30; Boethius 22-46).

The naming of a landscape like a person can be deceptively imprisoning of meaning. Yet multiple names of the Deerslayer himself as well as of the source of the Susquehanna can evoke a dynamic experience of nature related to mythic origins of the Susquehanna, a kind of "lost Eden," in which historically for a short time Moravians and Indians lived in relative peaceful interactions that never however came to long-term fruition in the American republic. That "lost Eden" peering from Cooper's fantasy history and settling as an overlay landscape around Lake Otsego not only helped influence American conservationism on regional and national levels, but also helps today to illustrate the relationship of the four elements of ecopoetics suggested above: 1. Overlay landscape 2. Metonymy 3. Time-plexity 4. An ethos of habitation. Together these parallel and emerge from one of the most difficult aspects of Martin Heidegger's philosophizing about environment, namely his "fourfold" of earth, sky, mortals and immortals, which in their coming together signify an unobjectifiable natural world, more accurately considered a landscape of place-events than objects (Heidegger; Harman 131-35). Following from this, Heidegger's schema for understanding experiential place as fourfold can be lined up ecopoetically with the overlay landscape trope as grounded in earth; metonymy's merged physical and cultural meanings as related to the symbolic interaction of sky with earth; time-plexity related to an existential experience of mortality and time as mortals; and an ethos of habitation related to the "seventh generation" perspective of a kind of immortality framing human time.

Our experience of the Susquehanna Headwaters in *The Deerslayer* puts together the relation between all these elements of the literary ecopoetic, Heidegger's phenomenological fourfold as environmental experience, and landscape. Natty Bumppo's multiplicity of names suggest his physical and cultural qualities together, as a person of the vanished immense wilderness of the Eastern woodlands, glimpsed at the mythic origin of the Susquehanna. Glimmerglass reflects experience of the lake in an originary liminal time of naming like Eden. Otsego suggests a kind of memorialized reconstructing of a past Indian culture by colonialism, even as does the name Susquehanna. But together, Glimmerglass and Otsego and the (for Deerslayer) unnamed river suggest a multiplicity of other names, Indian or not, unknown or unmentioned, suggesting the green-world landscape of the source of the Susquehanna holistically. The source of the river cannot be reduced to object or possession, and if it is, is lost, as in the flip from *phusis* to metaphysical nature in Heidegger's terms. The green world of Cooper's primeval forest is meaning that relates the sign of the text, including implicitly both Glimmerglass and Otsego, to the lake as object. The relationship of both names to the physical environment stands outside human time, looking back at us engagingly in a non-human source of the river, while still evoking a kind of face for the headwaters implying ethical responsibility to the watershed, in

Emmanuel Lévinas' terms (Lévinas). In such triadic relationship of sign, object and meaning, not unlike the non-Western Moravian sense of the Trinity, we engage in an empathetic externalized development of self in relation to nature. As James Lundy wrote on ecosemiotics and metaphor, following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, we can talk about time flowing as a river, and about particular events on a river as metaphors structured by time, such as the source of the Susquehanna as Lake Glimmerglass or Lake Otsego, each involving an imaginary observer at a particular point in time categorizing a site based on time (Lundy). But if we overlay those metaphors in story in relation to each other and physical context, the resulting landscape realizes metonymy that evokes "river" rather than "human observer" as source. Like iconographic nature in Eriugena's theophanies or Celtic Otherworld, the Susquehanna's source and the Eastern woodlands look out at us. Or, as put by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (whom Peter Hallward has termed secular Eriugenists), "the landscape sees" (Deleuze and Guattari, 169; Hallward 5, 37, 56). Thus the ecopoetic qualities of time-plexity and ethos of habitation meld into the Peircean "third element" of Interpretant or tradition, relating text and environment in shaping ecological sensibilities of those engaging with the texts as well as the actual landscapes with which the narratives participate, into what can be called an ecosemiosphere.

In this sense of Cooper's cycle as a "nature-text" spanning a continuum of environmental contexts and narrative, the capstone of the five-volume Leatherstocking cycle finally can be seen as not *The Deerslayer* (the last book written in the series) but the book *Rural Hours* in 1850 by Cooper's daughter Susan Fenimore Cooper, the first recognized American woman nature writer. She follows the cycle of seasons around Lake Otsego, personified in relationships between humans and details of natural history from overlapping years of diaries. She relates in spring walking on the icy source of the Susquehanna, "particularly pleasant to wander about at will over so broad a field, confined to no track, and without an obstacle to arrest one's progress, all which gives a freedom to these walks upon the lake, beyond what we are accustomed to on terra firma, where roads, and fences, and bridges must be consulted at every turn" (*Rural Hours* 7). We have in this network of Cooper-family narratives, and in subsequent connections made between it and conservation and heritage efforts around the lake, an intergenerational family nature-text, suggestive of the localism in symbolic relations to nature that semiotic ecology also seeks (Maran 282). Its practical fruit comes forth in ecological projects around the lake, the Cooperstown historic district, and the current highlighting of cultural narratives of the Susquehanna in tandem with the Chesapeake, as the latter's identity as a watershed-based eco-region grows in the twenty-first century.

But these literary works also suggest the possibility that traditions such as the green-world trope afford not so much a literary genealogy as the participatory experience of a virtual patterning of nature through cultural symbolism, with implications potentially more real than what we often consider to be the matrix of actual landscape based in GPS grids, highway maps and property grids. Renewed study of the source of the Susquehanna through ecosemiotics may lead not to truths about Lake Otsego or eighteenth-century Indians or the green-world trope, but to better understanding of how we relate as persons with nature and each other through story and cultural environment—and how we can do so in more sustainable ways in eco-regional cultures in this century.

In such ways Cooper's green world puts its own American spin on the Burkean sublime in ways that relate to Peirce's subsequent synechism or continuity between the physical and the spiritual (Peirce 1996, 1-3), which itself echoes both native traditions and themes of mystical Christianity in the Susquehanna Valley, discussed above. Cooper provided a romanticized spin on Indian culture, nonetheless more realistic than that of his critics such as Mark Twain, one that enabled Russell Means of the American Indian Movement to star memorably as Chingachgook in the recent film adaptation of Cooper's Leatherstocking tale *The Last of the Mohicans*. And Cooper's fiction set off a long wave of "playing Indian" among non-Indian American children that, however exoticized, also entwined with movements such as the Hudson River School of landscape art, which Cooper helped engender directly, and the Boy Scouts, to help inspire American conservationism. The latter movement helped to embody the first American definition of wilderness in the early twentieth century. In part by reading both Cooper and landscape in dyadic terms related to the crude popular scientism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it conceived of wilderness as set apart from human community, finding expression in the classical American model of national park developed by Theodore Roosevelt and others.

But a century later, re-reading Cooper ecosemiotically in relation to complex public-private conservation and preservation efforts around Lake Otsego and on the Susquehanna that in turn relate back partly in formative inspirations to the narratives of the Coopers, we perhaps can move toward a new ecosemiotic definition of American wilderness for this century, drawing on the Leatherstocking Cycle and *Rural Hours* together. This renewed ecosemiotic definition of wilderness can take into account the triadic nature of Cooper's fantasy history, and its expression of the four elements of ecopoetics outlined above, paralleling Heidegger's fourfold, in its geography of relational rather than possessive desire. In the process, wilderness can be seen not oppositionally as an objectified nature set apart from human beings, but rather a Nature in which human beings are integrally implicated participants, active in experience of ecopoesis that involves both poetics and restoration.

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