

Lawrence Buell

Introductory note

Lawrence Buell is Harvard College Professor and Powell M. Cabot Professor of American Literature at Harvard University. Although a careful close reader (his *Emerson* [2003] won the 2003 Warren-Brooks Award for outstanding literary criticism), his readings of individual writers are frequently allied to a strong ethical concern for 'Green' and other ecocritical issues. His *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, nature writing, and the formation of American culture* (1995), from which this chapter is taken, is the best starting-point for an appreciation of the 'Environmental' perspective. Given the ecological disasters that are likely to affect the planet, Buell argues that there should be a renewed urgency in re-defining our relationship to nature and our habitat; to an increasing extent, the destructive potential of multi-national commerce and the encroachment of urban development alongside its enabling ideologies have eroded basic instincts about all relationships (to community as well as ecology). This has similarly diluted our sense of the sublime and the wonderful, and supplied the cash-nexus for a more authentic set of values. Quite how literature, and a constructive reading thereof, might rectify this situation should be a contemporary imperative. Consequently, emphasis should be placed on a canon that contributes to such an awareness, and he suggests four criteria that might guide its compilation:

1. The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history . . .
2. The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest . . .
3. Human accountability to the environment is part of the [preferred] text's ethical orientation . . .
4. Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text . . . (pp. 7–8)

Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) and *The Maine Woods* (1864) are Buell's focal texts, but it is also their critical history, and the sustaining myths that have congregated around Walden Pond, that are in need of memorial and analysis.

Buell has explored these points in two further studies: *Writing for an Endangered Planet: literature, culture, and environment in the United States and beyond* (2001) and *The Future of Environmental Criticism: environmental crisis and literary*

imagination (2005). There is also at least one essay in which he has spelled out these criteria in broader terms: 'The Ecocritical Insurgency' (*New Literary History*, 30 [1999], 699–712). His present project is a focus on autobiographical writing as a means of ecological reassessment and a recognition of religious experience as a contributory factor to this (see 'Religion and the Environmental Imagination in American Literature', in *There Before Us: religion, literature, and culture from Emerson to Wendell Berry*, ed. Roger Lundin [2006], pp. 216–38).

'Green' or 'Ecocritical' criticism has many aims that border on simply literary ones. Buell's own reading is wide, but his specialist field is in American literature. It should be stressed that the full spread of associated critical emphases has several strands. In Great Britain, it has led to a re-definition of Romanticism, and Jonathan Bate's work on Wordsworth (*Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the environmental imagination* [1991]) and John Clare amongst others (*The Song of the Earth* [2000]) has been especially influential in promoting an essentially unpolitical 'ecopoetics', one that is 'pre-political' (*SOE*, p. 266). Buell's own 'Environmental' variety excites an interest in 'Place', both as concept (how we 'place' ourselves and how we are situated), and topography (geological and communal). It borders thus several associated political concerns about unplanned economic development. He returns to 'Place' in *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (pp. 62–96) and refines what might appear to be a consequence of his ethical preferences, that is, the long-term stewardship of a particular locale eschewing the increasing ease of travel and transplantation. The converse might be a necessity, in that it should be the search for international interdependence that saves any individual locality. What is far more valuable is 'place-attachment', an affection that can survive movement and an inevitable readaptation to alternative locations, and that incorporates imaginative myth across time (a tending of memory not just through nostalgia, but by a more strenuous act of commemoration).

Cross-references

- 18 Williams
- 33 Jameson
- 45 Stille

Commentary

- Neil Evernden, *The Social Creation of Nature* (1992)
- Jonathan Bate, Review of *The Environmental Imagination*, *American Notes and Queries*, 9 (1996), 53–56
- Glen A. Love, 'Revaluing Nature: toward an ecological criticism', in *The Ecocriticism Reader*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (1996), pp. 225–40
- PMLA Forum on the 'Literatures of the Environment', 114 (1999), 1089–104
- James C. McKusick, *Green Writing: romanticism and ideology* (2000)
- Greg Garrard, 'Wordsworth and Thoreau: two versions of pastoral' in *Thoreau's Sense of Place: essays in American environmental writing*, ed. Richard J. Schneider (2000), pp. 194–206
- Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (2004)
- Gabriel Egan, *Green Shakespeare: from ecopolitics to ecocriticism* (2006)

Place

In the moral (the ecological) sense you cannot know *what* until you have learned *where*.

– Wendell Berry, ‘Poetry and Place’

It is not down in any map; true places never are.

– Herman Melville’s Ishmael, in *Moby-Dick*

I describe my location as: on the western slope of the northern Sierra Nevada, in the Yuba River watershed, north of the south fork at the three-thousand-foot elevation, in a community of Black Oak, Incense Cedar, Madrone, Douglas Fir, and Ponderosa Pine.

– Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild*

This is the chapter most conspicuously missing so far: the one on place. How could a book on environmental writing not give pride of place to place?ⁱ Is it not more fundamental than seasonality, or even relinquishment? Judging from the multitudinous testimonials by and on behalf of writers, ancient and modern, as to the importance of the sense of place in their work, it might seem that place ought to be central to anyone’s theory of environmental imagination. If the visions of relinquishment and of nature’s personhood are to be realized concretely, if the face of nature’s seasonality is to be perceived, surely these events must happen *somewhere*. Some would even argue that environmental stewardship requires a personal commitment to a specific place. ‘Without a complex knowledge of one’s place, and without the faithfulness to one’s place on which such knowledge depends,’ warns Wendell Berry, ‘it is inevitable that the place will be used carelessly, and eventually destroyed.’ⁱⁱ

Yet grounding in place patently does not guarantee ecocentrism, place being by definition perceived or felt space, space humanized, rather than the material world taken on its own terms.ⁱⁱⁱ ‘The meanings of places may be rooted in the physical setting and object and activities,’ geographer Edward Relph observes, ‘but they are not a property of them – rather they are a property of human intentions and experiences.’^{iv} ‘Place thus comes to being,’ as Edward Soja concurs, ‘from the “short circuits” inherent in the horizontal experience’ of a thinking subject.^v If we idealize the sense of place as a panacea for the disaffections of modern uprootedness, we run almost as great a risk of cultural narcissism as when we accept the myth of place-free, objective inquiry. For place-sense may actually ‘connect’ us with actual environments in such a way as to insulate us from critical apprehension of them, so that they instill a form of ‘amnesia’ that allows us ‘to forget our separateness and the world’s indifference.’^{vi} Thus Berry distinguishes sharply between unself-conscious, insular regionalism and ‘*local life aware of itself*,’ which ‘would tend to substitute for the myths and stereotypes of a region a particular knowledge of the life of the *place* one lives in and intends to *continue* to live in.’^{vii} Even this might be thought restrictive. To be environmentally sensitive must one commit to living one’s entire life in a particular place, as Berry has? Must a writer write only about his or her home place? Does the vision of ‘*local life aware of itself*’ guarantee respect for natural environment as a value independent of the values assigned to it by the community of human inhabitants? In each case, the answer is, clearly not. One can be lococentric and homocentric, peripatetic yet environmentally responsive. At the same time, it seems indisputable that the self-conscious commitment to place that Berry celebrates would more likely produce or

accompany environmental responsiveness than would atopia or diaspora.¹ What we require, then, is neither disparagement nor celebration of place-sense but an account of those specific conditions under which it significantly furthers what Relph calls environmental humility, an awakened place-awareness that is also mindful of its limitations and respectful that place molds us as well as vice versa.^{viii}

PLACE AS A UTOPIAN PROJECT

Anyone looking for place-sense in literature had better start with modest expectations, bearing in mind Yi-fu Tuan's dictum that 'topophilia² is not the strongest of human emotions' and Neil Evernden's definition of *Homo sapiens* as 'the natural alien,' the creature without a proper habitat.^{ix} As an Emily Dickinson poem has it, to make a prairie requires only a clover, a bee, and reverie – and 'revery alone will do, / If bees are few.'^x Consider how sparse a representation of place we find tolerable even in so-called realistic fiction. William Dean Howells starts *A Modern Instance* with a charmingly illustrated four-paragraph map of a rural New England village, its mountains and fields and elms, its architecture, its main street. Then he turns to the affairs of his characters, rarely to look at this villagescape again, letting it stand once and for all as a sufficient 'composition of place' and implied statement about the bearing of environment on behavior. Here and elsewhere in fiction, writers typically regulate the evocation of setting according to a few simple rules: prefatoriness (each new location briefly described), dramatic intensification ('It was all wild and lonesome'), and symbolic doubling ('the silence in which the house was wrapped was another fold of the mystery which involved him').^{xi} Perhaps this formula explains the durability of the term 'setting': that is, mere backdrop. In any case, it is striking how easily readers accept what is absurdly untrue to actual experience. Do most people look attentively at landscapes only when looking at them for the first time? Does the rhythm of the occasional highlighted cameo correspond to the rhythm of our actual attention to our environment? Yet we do not complain about having to make these accommodations; they quickly seem self-evidently right. Even some of the most place-respectful people do not complain. Eudora Welty, for example, who holds that 'establishing a chink-proof world of appearance' is 'the first responsibility of the writer,' begins her great essay 'Place in Fiction' by conceding that 'place is one of the lesser angels that watch over the racing hand of fiction . . . while others, like character, plot, symbolic meaning, and so on, are doing a good deal of wing-beating about her chair, and feeling, who in my eyes carries the crown, soars highest of them all and rightly relegates place into the shade.'^{xii}

A more promising instance than *A Modern Instance* of setting's potential in fiction of the realistic sort is Thomas Hardy's *Return of the Native*. Hardy would likely have demurred at Welty's subordination of place to the role of handmaiden. It has been said, with little exaggeration, that every Hardy novel 'seems to focus upon some form of organic life in terms of which the characters themselves are described.'^{xiii} Nowhere is this more evident than in his portrayal of Egdon Heath, which Hardy realizes in fine visual detail, endows with an aboriginal personhood ('singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony'), intermittently evokes throughout the novel as a leitmotif, and uses

¹ A state of being without a settled habitation or of being dispersed.

² A liking, or an instinctual regard, for a particular place.

as a potent force that molds the character and behavior of those who come into association with it. Hardy's hero, Clym Yeobright, 'might be said to be its product': 'His eyes had first opened thereon; with its appearance all the first images of his memory were mingled; his estimate of life had been coloured by it; his toys had been the flint knives and arrowheads which he found there, wondering why stones should 'grow' to such odd shapes; his flowers, the purple bells and yellow furze; his animal kingdom, the snakes and croppers; his society, its human haunters.'^{xiv} It is hard to imagine more forthright testimony to environmental influence in shaping human affairs. But by the same token the passage makes it clear that the heath is in the long run ancillary to Clym's story, however vital to the direction it takes. *Return of the Native* is about people in place, not about place itself. Measured against the totality of what might have been said about the Wessex ecosystem, even on the basis of biology's still rudimentary state, Hardy barely scratched the surface. He and Welty agree that the function of place is to define character by confining it, to act as 'the ground conductor of all the currents of emotion and belief and moral conviction that charge out from the story in its course.'^{xv}

Such cases as Howells, Hardy, and Welty show how hard it is for writers to do justice to place, even when they respect it. Undoubtedly this holds more for fiction than for nonfiction, since a more or less pandemic ingredient of the novelistic contract is that novels feature human affairs. Still, it can be said of all genres that place is something authors find easier to name and praise than to present. Although Berry justifiably claims that he would not be the writer he is if not for his home base on an Appalachian Kentucky farm, he may need more than a lifetime to articulate what that sense of place feels like, what its ingredients are. Much will remain tacit, unapprehended, and – possibly – censored by the commitment to a certain kind of lyric or meditation or satire. William Least Heat Moon sets out to write a book about a single county in Kansas: *Prairy-Erth*, perhaps the most ambitious literary reconstruction of a small portion of America ever attempted in a single volume. It turns out to be three times as long as he expected: roughly two hundred thousand words. Yet 'ninety-nine-point-nine to the ninth decimal of what has ever happened here isn't in the book.'^{xvi}

Even if Least Heat Moon had devoted a lifetime of research to his project and arrived at something like an omniscient command of oral and archival history, it still might not have sufficed to articulate the sense of place. 'What must a man do to be at home in the world?' a Berry poem muses.

It must be with him
as though his bones fade beyond thought
into the shadows that grow out of the ground
so that the furrow he opens in the earth opens
in his bones, and he hears the silence
of the tongues of the dead tribesmen buried here
a thousand years ago.^{xvii}

But how likely is that to happen? And if it did, would it not pull a person over into a state of dreamtime unconsciousness far removed from the sphere of reading and writing? While reading E.O. Wilson's essay 'The Right Place,' I was struck by its account of the three ingredients of humanity's putative primal habitat and their persistence in shaping the taste for landscape. 'It seems that whenever people are given a free choice,' Wilson observes, 'they move to open tree-studded land on prominences overlooking water.'^{xviii}

Before my Thoreauvian eyes immediately flashed an image of the Walden cabin site. Did Thoreau himself sense this? Could such an idea have occurred to him? Was historical anthropology far enough along in his day to have permitted him to think it? Even if so, Wilson implies that the human sense of place – such as it is, whether or not it happens to be one of the strongest human emotions – is so deeply embedded, so instinctual, that no one will ever be able to bring it to full consciousness in all its nuanced complexity. John Haines, a contemporary poet and essayist exceptional for self-conscious attentiveness to the importance of place as a shaping influence in his writing, is one of the few writers I know to claim to have fulfilled the dream of his youth ‘to find a specific place and be born over again as my own person.’ Yet he confesses that he cannot fully explain why the place he found in Richardson, Alaska, so appealed to him except that it gave him a sense of freedom, of openness, of primality.^{xix}

Of course Haines made it hard on himself by relocating in a dream place – in the tradition of the new world aesthetics of the not-there (see Chapter 2). He would have started with a richer place-sense had he been an Alaskan aborigine or had he recommitted himself, like Berry, to his former home place. Immediately a landscape of much richer personal and social memory, both mythic and secular, might have suggested itself: landmarks with Wordsworthian traces of childhood encounters many times layered over and magnified in the memory. A Spoon River Anthology of houses with multigenerational histories attached to them, so that as one dream-walks through the neighborhoods, long, intertwined family histories rise up before the mind. The extraordinary events in the community’s history, its redundant social rituals, persistent moth-eaten scraps of local gossip, and the infinite series of intense and painful and joyous relationships of childhood. Indeed, for some home places, whether of aboriginal peoples or of more recent settlers banded in place long enough to have become as good as aboriginal, the sense of the sacred converts place into shrine and history into myth and binds all together in a single plenum. ‘Thus the sight of virtually every landmark, no matter how insignificant it may seem to the foreign visitor passing through the desert, brings deep emotional satisfaction.’^{xx} This observation was made about Australian aborigines, but a version of it would apply also, even if with reduced force, to long-established settler cultures where a sense of history as sacred memory is evoked by certain spots: trees, commons, churches, cemeteries.

But for all cultures, the art of bringing to full personal consciousness and articulating a sense of place is arduous, and for new world settler cultures especially so, given the relative shortness of their history in place. These cultures face the uphill battle of jump-starting the invention of place-sense by superimposing imported traditions and jerry-building new ones – Anglo-American wholesale borrowings and fabrications of Indian stories being a conspicuous example of this kind. The very year Thoreau graduated from Harvard, 1837, the town of Concord was zealously engaged in just such an endeavor, dedicating the completed Battle Monument commemorating ‘the shot heard round the world’ in 1775, when the local minutemen resisted the British in the first skirmish of the American Revolution. The ceremony came just two years after an equally significant social ritual, Concord’s bicentennial, at which Emerson, who wrote the poetic inscription on the monument from which I have just quoted, delivered a ‘Historical Discourse’ in which he assured his townspeople that ‘we hold by the hand the last of the invincible [Puritan] men of old’ in the persons of those selfsame, now aged veterans.^{xxi} This village-oriented sense of place was ultimately a much less richly interesting phenomenon to Emerson, however, than the mysterious ‘something’ in the ‘fields and woods’ that he found ‘more dear and

connate than' what he felt 'in streets and villages.'^{xxii} His disciple Thoreau, albeit himself an avid regional history buff, felt so even more keenly; and it fell to him to try to articulate on behalf of nineteenth-century New England settler culture what this sense of the place of exurban space might be.

Indeed, nowhere is the struggle to articulate the proper place of nature to a person's overall sense of place more visible and absorbing than in Thoreau's literary career. He wanted, we have seen, to write a Book of Concord, and had he lived long enough he might have produced one. Certainly he gathered a huge amount of material. But in the literary result Concord remained, on the one hand, a territorial and conceptual gestalt and, on the other hand, a welter of different niches, semicoordinated botanical and meteorological details, a few densely realized tracts like Walden Pond, sundry historical anecdotes, and thousands of personal encounters with fellow inhabitants, human and nonhuman. The richer Thoreau's store of knowledge, the more 'Concord' fissured into constituent items, like the different kinds of berries and seeds that are the topics of his late unfinished natural history manuscripts. This specialization of focus, I have come to believe, bespoke not a shrinkage of creative energy but, as Emerson perceived, the fact that 'the scale on which his studies proceeded was so large as to require [a] longevity' that could not be granted him.^{xxiii} His one completed Concord book, *Walden*, at times conveys a marvelously intricate sense of place. But how selective and idiosyncratic and fitful it seems if we ask it to tell us what the town of Concord looks like, what kind of people and plants grow there, what their history has been, specializing as it does in the play of phenomena through a particular chapter of a particular person's life.

Indeed the net result of Thoreau's environmental observations during the dozen years when he plied them most systematically, was so fragmentary as to make one wonder about his powers of synthesis. Certainly, some modern environmental writing, especially when assisted by modern microscopy, expresses itself with a far greater comprehensiveness and assurance. I have in mind especially documentary work that concentrates intensively on the play of natural phenomena occurring in a delimited place, including: Rachel Carson's *Under the Sea-Wind*, Sally Carragher's *One Day at Beetle Rock*, Edwin Teale and Mildred Teale's *The Life and Death of a Salt Marsh*, and David Rains Wallace's *Idle Weeds: The Life of an Ohio Sandstone Ridge*. Here is an exemplary passage from the last:

In the spring pool there were two levels of food-producing green plants. At the first level silver maple and white ash leaves fell into the pool, decomposed, and formed a nourishing broth for diverse populations of bacteria, aquatic fungi, protozoans, mites, copepods, amphipods, and other tiny organisms. The nutrients released by their decay also fertilized the second level – growths of filamentous green algae and freshwater diatoms. Algae and animalcules served in their turn as food for larger animals.^{xxiv}

When Robert Frost looks into such vernal pools, he sees only their beautiful surfaces as they briefly 'reflect / The total sky almost without defect' before the thirsty tree roots dry them up in early summer,^{xxv} but Wallace renders a succinct exposition of the entire food chain without blinking. In one sense, Wallace's narrative of the interplay of flora and fauna at Chestnut Ridge throughout the seasons handsomely supplies within a mere 180 pages what Thoreau never felt ready to supply even after logging thousands and thousands of *Journal* entries about Concord ecology. In another sense, however, the Wallace passage and the Frost poem illustrate mirror-opposite limitations of environmental perception: in Frost's case, the illusion of transparency, whereby space is reduced to a mental

construct; in Wallace's case, the illusion of opacity, whereby (as Soja puts it) 'spatiality is comprehended only as objectively measurable appearances.'^{xxvi} If the tendency to relegate landscape items to the status of symbols or reflectors is the occupational hazard, environmentally speaking, of fictive writing, then the tendency to fall into stolid documentary that deletes the traces of human interest and presence from its landscapes is the occupational hazard of nature writing.^{xxvii} All things considered, Thoreau's incompleteness is more complete than Wallace's incompleteness, especially if, like Sharon Cameron, we take the incompleteness of Thoreau's *Journal* as a sign of the seriousness with which he took nature's refusal to conform to the system of correspondences between environmental and moral realms that he sought to find there.^{xxviii} Altogether, it seems that place-consciousness in literature, and most especially the consciousness of the nonhuman environment as a network enfolding human inhabitants, ought to be considered a utopian project that realizes itself, in its more instructive forms, not as a *fait accompli* but as an incompleteness undertaken in awareness that place is something we are always in the process of finding, and always perforce creating in some degree as we find it, so as to make it a perpetual challenge to compensate for the different kinds of reduction I have described. Most especially is this true of modern westerners, who are much more nomadic than aborigines and more buffered from the exigencies of their physical environments by technological aids like central heating and freeway systems.

To concentrate on this line of thinking in the discussion below, I shall intentionally avoid certain standard ways of discussing the sense of place. I shall not review 'archetypal' images like houses, nests, and other enclosures as Gaston Bachelard does in *The Poetics of Space*, nor try to define various paradigmatic frames of reference in terms of which place can be formulated, as D.W. Meinig does in 'The Beholding Eye';^{xxix} nor attempt to classify different kinds of space (home, region, sacred space, and the like), as Tuan and Relph do.³ Nor shall I dwell on how mythography and folklore help establish a sense of place by defining a regional or tribal ethos. Nor shall I survey canonical literature's famous imagined countries, like Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, the Nebraskas of Willa Cather and Wright Morris, the deserts of Austin and Abbey.⁴ Instead I shall proceed by focusing on certain

³ See Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place: the perspective of experience* (1977) and *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values* (1974; 2nd ed., 1990); Edward Relph's *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography* (1981).

⁴ These 'imagined countries' are similar only in that they form an active context for human action; could the main narrative events occur in this way elsewhere? William Faulkner (1897–1962) found a way in his Yoknapatawpha novels (apparently modelled on Lafayette county, in Mississippi) of depicting Southern rootedness as well as an occasionally tragic inability to change with the times; see his *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932) and *Absalom! Absalom!* (1936). Willa Cather (1873–1947) moved to Red Cloud, Nebraska, when she was nine and captured its stark landscapes as well as its Native American myths in poetry and essays; see her *April Twilights* (1903), *O Pioneers!* (1913), and *My Antonia* (1918). Wright Morris (1910–98) was similarly associated with Western landscapes, as novelist, photographer and essayist, especially the flora and fauna of the Great Plains. His novels were as much narratives of people as place. His 'photo-texts' were the most widely appreciated: *The Home Place* (1948), *God's Country*. (1968), and *Plains Song: for female voices* (1980). Mary Hunter Austin (1868–1934) cultivated a sense of the inner voice, her 'I-Mary', that remained in tune with landscape, in her case usually around California's San Joaquin valley. No matter how complex or developed our lives might become, she held fast to the idea that a reconnection with instinctual forces was always possible. Her essays on

memorable ways in which literature provokes environmental reflection by expanding preconceived understandings of the nonhuman environment as a dimension of personal and communal sense of place.

REPERCEIVING THE FAMILIAR

Perhaps the commonest attraction of environmental writing is that it increases our feel for both places previously unknown and places known but never so deeply felt. The activation of place-sense that comes with this vicarious insidership is apt to subside quickly, however, unless it is repeatedly jogged. Whether from laziness or a desire for security, we tend to lapse into comfortable inattentiveness toward the details of our surroundings as we go about our daily business. Place is related to complacency psychologically as well as etymologically; we reassure ourselves by converting abstract space into familiar place and subsisting in the unconsciousness of its familiarity.^{xxx} We thus face the constant challenge of keeping the familiar fresh, so that we do not reach a level of complacency where place-sense dwindles into a caricature of itself. This is true for both writer and reader.^{xxxi} Therefore, rather than concentrate on place's role in holding psyche and society together by supplying a deeply satisfying sense of home base or home range, I want instead to take this for granted as an important dimension of many human lives and artistic works and concentrate instead on the more delicate issue of how the sense of place can be kept alert and sensitive rather than left to lapse into dogmatic slumber in some cozy ethnocentric alcove.

Environmental literature launches itself from the presumption that we do not think about our surroundings, and our relation to them, as much as we ought to. 'We' often includes the writer as well. 'There is smugness in knowledge like that,' writes John Janovy, Jr., as he muses about the prospects for research on grasshopper parasites. 'There is smugness in knowing that a valuable jewel lies in the grass of the Ackley Valley Ranch, and all someone has to do is go pluck it up with an insect net. There is a smugness in knowing that thousands of others could walk those fields day after day and never see that jewel; its security is in its simplicity and obviousness.'^{xxxii} In this case, one suspects that the speaker feels confident of his power to make the familiar come newly alive for us but that he trusts to the writing process itself to keep himself invigorated. In revving up 'smugness' to a pitch of exuberance, he can excite both parties by celebrating the banal grasshopper as a hidden jewel, so that complacency will give way to wonder. The best environmental writers continually recalibrate familiar landscapes (sometimes familiar to reader as well

Native American culture, *Land With Little Rain* (1903) brought her to popular notice and her *Isidro* (1905) and *Lost Borders* (1909) confronted rationalist resistance by dramatizing this internal colloquy. Her play, *The Arrow Maker* (1911), never quite made it to the East Coast in performance. Edward Abbey (1927–1989) depicted Western landscapes, especially those of New Mexico in his early novels set in the Western Cowboy genre: *Jonathan Troy* (1956) and *The Brave Cowboy* (1958). He latterly became a Park Ranger in Utah and set his narratives there in *Fire on the Mountain* (1962) and *Desert Solitude* (1968). Towards the end of his writing career, he was drawn to more obviously ecological themes, and in *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975) he had the reader side with a plot to blow a hole in the Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado river; essays on his affection for landscape have been collected in *The Journey Home: some words in defence of the American West* (1977).

as writer) in such ways, so as to keep alive the sense of the ‘undiscovered country of the nearby,’ as John Hanson Mitchell calls it.^{xxxiii} The writing process itself, as for Janovy if I read him rightly, does not equate with the moment of discovery as the writers experienced it; but the rhetorical energy points backward to the prior experiences of discovery that provoked them to their present plateaus of environmental consciousness and commitment to place.

Thoreau’s *Journal*, being a (nearly) private register of thought composed (nearly) at the times of occurrence, provides an almost perfect record of this process. Consider Thoreau on the subject of muskrat houses, ‘singularly conspicuous for the dwellings of animals’ (*J* 5: 440). Their regular appearance in autumn he always looked forward to and seldom failed to note, often at length. Thoreau had an engineer’s interest in the details of muskrat construction, but more noteworthy is his stylization of the inert data so as to enliven it with place-sense. Muskrat nests are not *things* but habitats, dwellings remotely like one’s own that provide a basis for erasing the line between village and outback and seeing both as variant forms of settlement in place.^{xxxiv} (‘There is a settler whom our low lands and our fogs do not hurt’ [*PJ* 4: 129]. ‘A more constant phenomenon here than the new haystacks in the yard, . . . they were erected here probably before man dwelt here and may still be erected here when man has departed’ [*J* 12: 389].) Muskrat houses resemble Thoreau’s cabin (‘They have reduced life to a lower scale than Diogenes⁵’ [*PJ* 4: 129]), as well as Eskimo igloos, boat houses, and Indian lodges.

Thoreau keeps environmental perceptiveness activated by shuttling back and forth between standard reportage that objectifies the dens and whimsical twists that transform them into places, between transforming muskrats into members of the human community and transforming people into muskrats. ‘For thirty years,’ he declares, ‘I have annually observed, about this time or earlier, the freshly erected winter lodges of the musquash along the riverside, reminding us that, if we have no gypsies, we have a more indigenous race of furry, quadrupedal men maintaining their ground in our midst still. This may not be an annual phenomenon to you. It may not be in the Greenwich almanac or ephemeris, but it has an important place in my Kalendar’ (*J* 12: 389). The sequence is typical of him: the author’s familiar calendrical routine (‘I have annually observed’) transfused by defamiliarizing exotica (muskratgypsies) produces readjustment of the familiar as socially defined (‘my Kalendar’ displaces the conventional one). Thoreau’s sense of Concord as a distinct place over time depends equally on loving, on habituated familiarity with its phenomena – we might call this the Wendell Berry part of Thoreau – and on keeping alive a sense of strangeness about them. Without novelty, place would lapse into banality; but without the element of repetition, Thoreau would not have thought so consciously about the muskrats as part of the spirit of place. Here as always in Thoreau the key rhetorical devices are analogy (switching reference frames from Concord to the [European?] gypsies and classical antiquity) and synecdoche (local phenomenon set in macrocosmic context).

Here Thoreau also shows the environmentally restorative side of the exotica with which he habitually overlays his landscape descriptions. Ultimately it was not alienating but

⁵ The Greek philosopher (c. 412–c. 325 BC) who founded the Cynic sect in Athens. According to Seneca, he lived in a tub so as to make a public comment on luxurious excess.

immensely enriching to the place-sense to see the humble ground-nut not merely as a botanical item but ‘the potato of the aborigines,’ introduced perchance by ‘some Indian Ceres or Minerva,’ destined or so he hopes to outlast ‘the tender and luxurious English grains’ and (self-fulfilling prophecy) to ‘be represented on our works of art’ when ‘the reign of poetry commences here’ (*Wa* 239). The ability to exfoliate whole cultural histories out of local minutiae was the rhetorical correlate of the heightened perceptual sensitivity with which Emerson credited him.

Thoreau found it invigorating to see things newly; but to see new things he found positively thrilling. A fascinating passage from the late *Journal* sheds light on Thoreau’s gift for keeping place-sense alive and on his perceptual limits. He rejoices at having discovered what he takes to be a new species of bream in Walden Pond. Apparently he was wrong (see *J* 11: 349n), but that is not the point so much as the thoughts to which his pseudodiscovery gave rise after he described the creature’s appearance meticulously and carried around for several days ‘in my mind’s eye those little striped breams poised in Walden’s glaucous water.’

They balance all the rest of the world in my estimation at present, for this is the bream that I have just found, and for the time I neglect all its brethren and am ready to kill the fatted calf on its account. For more than two centuries have men fished here and have not distinguished this permanent settler of the township . . . When my eyes first rested on Walden the striped bream was poised in it, though I did not see it . . . – the miracle of its existence, my contemporary and neighbor, yet so different from me! . . . The bream, appreciated, floats in the pond as the centre of the system, another image of God. (*J* 11: 358–359)

This is the ultimate extension of the romantic dictum of discovering greater truths within particulars: the universe from the grain of sand, thoughts too deep for tears prompted by the meanest flower that blows. His sense of the immense significance of the minute life-form is remarkable. It propels him to set the obscure minnow on the same ethical and spiritual footing as his townspeople, as contemporary and neighbor and image of God. ‘Every fact,’ as Emerson justly said, ‘lay in glory in his mind, a type of the order and beauty of the whole.’^{xxxv} What especially quickens Thoreau’s excitement here is of course the sense of a common habitat as the bond joining fish to human and of the whole place as enriched by the previously unknown species.

A typically homocentric bias for the contemplation of the discrete item channels Thoreau’s excitement as well.^{xxxvi} Although he has been credited with being the first person to study a body of water systematically, in this passage the question of how the bream fits into the pond’s ‘economy’ (the closest prescientific synonym for ‘ecology,’ a term not coined until 1866) scarcely interests him compared to the bream’s uniqueness. A very few years after Thoreau wrote this passage, young John Muir was converted to the study of botany as a University of Wisconsin undergraduate when an older student showed to his amazement that the pea and the locust tree belonged to the same genus.^{xxxvii} Although Thoreau would have been intrigued by this discovery, his background first as a transcendentalist and then as a botanist yoked him to synecdoche: to the contemplation of the individual fact in relation to whatever truth seemed to flower from it. His two major late integrative projects, the study of seasonal phenomena and the dispersion of seeds, confirm by their belatedness and inchoate state how hard it was for Thoreau, lacking a modern understanding of ecological theory, to shift from reasoning ‘vertically’ (from individual

fact to ulterior truth) to thinking ‘horizontally.’⁶ Thus the drift of Thoreau’s meditation on the bream runs counter to the precept of the first important American scientific treatment of pond ecology, published a quarter of a century after his death: ‘If one wishes to become acquainted with the black bass . . . he will learn but little if he limits himself to that species.’^{xxxviii} Not that Thoreau was guilty of the kind of specialized myopia this article was really indicting. As *Walden’s* ‘Ponds’ chapter attests, Thoreau certainly had an ecological *sense* even if he generally preferred, until late in life, to formulate it in terms of a series of luminous defamiliarizing perceptions of this and that phenomenon.

The more conventional but no less environmentally informed descriptions of Thoreau’s contemporary Susan Fenimore Cooper show more systematic unfolding of place consciousness than Thoreau attempted in print. A longish July entry from her literary day-book *Rural Hours*, which complements the passages we have just scanned, surveys village topography and history from the standpoint of a unique nearby ‘remnant’ of old pine woods on a hillside. After sketching where this ‘monument of the past’ is situated, Cooper imagines the pines, with a bit of quiet irony, as ‘silent spectators of the wonderful changes that have come over the valley,’ from pre-Columbian wilderness to the present. She ends with a plea that the grove be spared; for ‘this little town itself must fall to decay and ruin . . . ere trees like those, with the spirit of the forest in every line, can stand on the same ground in wild dignity of form like those old pines now looking down upon our houses.’^{xxxix} In effect, Cooper reinvents the whole cultural ecology of Cooperstown within the space of a half-dozen pages as falling under the aegis and tutelage of the ancient pine grove. She repeats the epochal events of public memory: the Europeans’ arrival, the naming of the local lake by George Washington, the Revolution, the gradual retreat of the Mohawks, the march of settlement. Her historical recitation articulates the sense of a community emerging over time, but it puts human history under the gaze of the pines in order to redefine it as accountable to natural history as a higher authority than its own parochial institutions. Cooper would not have approved of *Walden’s* more aggressive remapping of Concord history from the social margins, according to which ex-slaves like Brister Freeman and down-at-the-heel dipsomaniacs like Hugh Quoil are recalled to public memory as notable former inhabitants while the glorious Concord Fight of 1775 is relegated to a comic aside during the Battle of the Ants (*Wa* 257–258, 261–262, 230). But as a reinterpretation of place, Cooper’s essay is a *tour de force* of the same sort: the ecological transformation of a somewhat stolid Yankee community by seeing it from the woods, seeing it indeed as if it were properly part of the woods, rather than seeing the woods as ancillary to itself. What chiefly differentiates Cooper’s vision from Thoreau’s is her insistence on the ‘we’; even in her deviance she represents the scenes in front of her as ‘our’ village. The comparative transparency of her style reflects this sense of her eye as public, not merely idiosyncratic. But this sociable posture belies the significance of the mental readjustment that she requires of her readers when they take her seriously.

What Cooper does to town history, Wendell Berry does on a more personal scale in writing about the ‘marginal farm’ he and his wife bought and moved to 4 July, 1965. The longest of the sequence of poems Berry apparently composed as a public statement of

⁶ i.e. not to focus just on one natural detail and provide knowledge derived from one species or *genus*, but rather to consider lateral relationships between *genera* or places as constitutive of habitats.

dedication to this place is a poem about the history of the property. To a great extent, it tells a painful story of mismanagement, yet such is the price of vision, which Berry holds up (in the next poem) ‘against the false vision / of the farm dismembered, sold in pieces on the condition / of the buyer’s ignorance.’^{xli} The long view of the place as tended and mis-tended by generations of precursors allows him to inhabit it with awareness and care. For Berry this is both good practical sense and good inspiration. Berry would presumably agree with Leopold’s valuation of husbandry as the highest form of ecological aesthetics (SCA 175).

Seeing things new, seeing new things, expanding the notion of community so that it becomes situated within the ecological community – these are some ways in which environmental writing can re-perceive the familiar in the interest of deepening the sense of place. These examples make clear not only that such devices *displace* in order to *replace*, but also that they depend heavily on metaphor, myth, and even fantasy to put readers in touch with place. Thus ‘in Thoreau’s writing,’ as one discussion of his ‘anti-geography’ puts it, ‘static “areas” start to metamorphose into shifting cognitive profiles and perspectives, and topographical features that seem arrested and fixed remain in subliminal flux.’^{xlii} Muskrats montage into gypsies, grasshoppers transform into jewels. But far from alienating the reader from the physical environment, these defamiliarizations seem meant to return us there with a new understanding and enthusiasm in accordance with Paul Ricoeur’s rule of metaphor: its representations both warp us away and return us to the world.^{xliii} This doubleness is a fact not just of linguistic representation but also of actual place-experience, insofar as place always implies active reciprocal relation between inhabitant and context. All creatures process their environment subjectively and seek to modify it in the process of adapting to it. It is not a question of whether we can evade this ground condition but of how to make it subserve mutuality rather than proprietary self-centeredness.

To transpose from literary terms to those of practical environmental reform, Thoreau’s, Cooper’s, Berry’s, and Janovy’s work as literary place-creators can be compared to contemporary environmental restorationism. Unlike the conservationist resource-management tradition, unlike the preservationist approach of protecting environments in their present state, the restorationist project seeks ‘to repair the biosphere, to recreate habitat.’ According to its premise, ‘humans must intervene in nature, must garden it, participate in it.’^{xliiii} It extends beyond Leopold’s transposition of the stewardship ethic in *Sand County Almanac*: ‘whoever owns land has thus assumed, whether he knows it or not, the divine functions of creating and destroying plants’ (SCA 67). For all practical purposes when you are living in a place, you are constructing it, whether you like it or not. So when a person wields an axe, he or she should do so ‘humbly aware that with each stroke he is writing his signature on the face of his land’ (SCA 68).^{xliiv} Environmental restorationism, likewise, assumes that we have no alternative but to alter the landscape; there is no return to primordialness, if indeed such a state existed; and it further holds up as its goal, like Leopold himself in renewing his Sauk County place, modifications that replenish biodiversity. Now, environmental writing does not literally repair the biosphere, does not literally do anything directly to the environment. But in the ways I have described it tries to practice a conceptual restorationism in reorienting the partially denaturalized reader not to a primordial nature, which we cannot recover either in fact or in fantasy, but to an artifactual version of environment designed to evoke place-sense. ‘Reverdure / is my calling,’ Berry writes. He refers directly to his farmer’s vocation: ‘to make these scars grow grass.’^{xliiv} But this is his mission as poet also.

Environmental texts, then, practice restorationism by calling places into being, that is, not just by naming objects but by dramatizing in the process how they matter. Inevitably certain reductions occur: no one can realize (in the full sense) anywhere near the totality of what can be realized about the environment; to set anything down in an essay or a book, one must be rigorously selective (compare Thoreau's copious lists of *Journal* observations on a good afternoon walk with any passage in his published works); and one's selections will express personal and culturally mediated preferences that others may not share. But these are niggling objections to an effective result, like the section of *Walden* that initially establishes place sense: 'Sounds' through 'Solitude.' The first of these chapters begins with the most leisurely evocation of the cabin setting yet (*Wa* 111–114), then proceeds through a haphazard-seeming inventory of sounds heard on the spot: a sumach branch breaking (114), the railroad whistle and whiz (114–122), church bells filtered through the wood, the lowing of cows (123), whipporwills (123–124), owls (124–126), the rumbling of wagons and the croaking of frogs (126). Thoreau savors each sound, often for a long time. Frequently the passages become highly subjective, even rarefied; Thoreau seems to have been a positive epicure of auditory experiences ('All sound heard at the greatest possible distance produces one and the same effect, a vibration of the universal lyre, just as the intervening atmosphere makes a distant ridge of earth interesting to our eyes by the azure tint it imparts to it' [123]). Selective though it is, however, Thoreau's catalog of sound effects is so unhurried and protracted as to create a certain plenitude. From this time forth *Walden* is solidly established as place, and we are prepared for the next chapter's insistence that solitude does not mean isolation, that nature itself is neighborhood (132).^{xlvi} 'The externality of the world,' observes Stanley Cavell, 'is articulated by Thoreau as its nextness to me.'^{xlvii} Nature remains other but connected, meaningful albeit not fully known: not terrain, but place. In the process of perceiving this place-sense for himself, the speaker creates it for the reader also.

MAP KNOWLEDGE AND PLACE-SENSE

Places are by definition bounded, but human-drawn boundaries usually violate both subjectively felt reality and the biotic givens. The truism that one learns much about a subject by focusing on its border disputes was never truer than here. Where does a place start or end? Janovy thinks of Keith County as his place. Fine. But to the reader it is a confusing patchwork of scattered niches: a farm here, a bridge there with a swallow's nest underneath, a dam here, a marsh there, as the chapters swerve whimsically around. Annic Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* is less peripatetic: the speaker hangs out mostly around a rustic cabin of some sort, with the creek nearby. But the locale is not specified or even much described, not even as sketchily as *Walden* describes where things are around Concord. Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* provides more conventional geography, but as the book unfolds the sense of sacred ground extends outward across southern Utah for thousands of square miles. Can we still think of this huge region as 'a place'? Perhaps Mary Austin had the right idea when she called her territory the Country of Lost Borders and admitted to not feeling at home within it notwithstanding the bond she felt to it.

Clearly there is no point trying to stipulate the precise territory comprised by the there to which the what of an author's (or community's) place-sense is meant to refer, since 'territoriality is always socially or humanly constructed in a way that physical distance is not.'^{xlviii} But since there is always a more or less localized physical there, and since

jurisdictional units never correspond faithfully to reality, we should expect that place-sense will define itself partly in acquiescence to and partly in resistance to or evasion of official boundaries. Environmental writing approaches this antinomy by pitting map knowledge against empirical knowledge. In ancient times, there was not perhaps much difference between chorography⁷ and diagrammatic representations in point of subjectiveness. The perfection of orthogonally sectioned mapping, however, opened the way for a 'desubjectified' cartography wildly at variance from the perceived reality of the more impressionistic and ethnocentric mapping practices of prescientific cultures.^{xix} Nowhere has this been more obvious for a longer period of time than in the United States, for 'no previous paradigm of government ever took the notion of boundary so seriously as did the young American republic.'ⁱ As is well known, much of the credit goes to Thomas Jefferson. A modified version of his system of dividing territories into rectilinear townships and sections ('a model example of Enlightenment abstraction,' John Stilgoe rightly calls it) was approved by Congress in 1785 as the template for defining the American hinterland and thereby, in time, also what Philip Fisher has termed 'democratic social space.'ⁱⁱ The spatial physiognomy of American egalitarianism, entrepreneurialism, and privatism was rolled into one diagram. The most obvious significance of such a legally mandated mapping system in America and elsewhere, as colonial discourse studies and American ethnic studies have pointed out, is that it was part of a strategy for consolidating control over 'unsettled' regions. From this standpoint, the challenge of present-day interpretation is to deconstruct the official map.ⁱⁱⁱ Set the white man's maps against each other. Oppose the official version with the map of Indian claims.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Or set ethnogeographical narrative against legally sanctioned agrarian geography, as Leslie Marmon Silko does in *Ceremony* when she has her protagonist recover his manhood by rustling back his own cattle as part of a ceremonial journey to the sacred mountain that has been cordoned off with wire fences by the occupying forces of the Floyd Lee ranch. My own chief concern here, however, is not with mapping or official geography as the site of clashing political or cultural systems. I am more concerned with its role as a provoker of environmental consciousness on account of the oscillation in the mind between 'mental maps' and scientific maps (both procrustean, yet both having their own explanatory power), a tension that could only have arisen from the rigorous pursuit of standards of objectification that marks modern western culture.^{iv} From this perspective, official maps look more complexly productive than when seen merely as agents of cartographical imperialism.

Among the fruits of the contemporary renaissance in American environmental nonfiction that dates back to the 1940s and the work of Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Loren Eiseley, and Joseph Wood Krutch, two of the most intricate achievements so far have been Barry Lopez's *Arctic Dreams* (1986) and William Least Heat Moon's *PrairieErth* (1991). No apology whatsoever needs to be made for these works on the score of belonging to a 'minor' genre like 'nature writing.' In point of thematic and formal sophistication, they fully equal the classics of American autobiography and narrative fiction. If their stature is not recognized for awhile, and it probably won't be, that is because we have not learned how to read them. Cartography is one way in.

⁷ The art of representing the features of a district or area on a map as distinct from geography (the features of the whole globe) or topography (named sites, such as towns, lakes or hills.)

Both authors rely heavily on maps of their respective places: the North American Arctic and a single county in Kansas. Lopez ends with a scholarly section of panoramic maps, a gazetteer of places (with a latitude and longitude key), and a bibliography. Least Heat Moon sets identical facing maps of the county watersheds and road and rail system (which are remarkably symmetrical) at front and end. Subsectional maps occur throughout both books, and Lopez intersperses a series of special maps as well (of the distribution of the region's Eskimo population, for instance). The two authors both distrust maps and rely on them. 'I traveled everywhere with maps,' as Lopez recalls, but they were never entirely accurate; 'they were the projection of a wish that the space could be this well organized.' He recognizes the superiority of aboriginal place-sense to western cartography in this respect: 'the evidence of continued intimacy with a local landscape – a practical knowledge of it, a sensitivity toward it, a supplication of it.'^{lv} Throughout he is careful to honor the sophistication of Eskimo feats of land-memory, eyesight, technological inventiveness and thrift, attention to individual members of a species, and ecological understanding of the relations between weather and season and animal behavior. He also takes care to affirm the validity of indigenous mythic narrative as a way of reinforcing community stewardship of the environment.^{lvi} Moreover, he tries to imagine nonhuman perception – how an island looks to a loon or land terrain to a fox. Lopez devotes separate chapters to muskoxen, polar bears, and narwhals, and in them tries to get inside the creature's heads and reconstruct how its range looks from its own standpoint. No work of settler literature ever dramatized more conscientiously the aboriginal principle that 'the animals one encounters are part of one's community, and one has obligations to them.' This indeed has been a major theme running throughout all of Lopez's work.^{lvii} In *Arctic Dreams*, it makes for a multiperspectival representation of region in the course of which the western lay narrator and the finds of western science on which he also extensively draws are repeatedly calibrated against or corrected by the knowledge of native culture and animal behavior that Lopez painstakingly gleans from personal encounters and scientific studies.

Notwithstanding, neither the status of maps as keys to place nor their status as imaginative artifacts is undermined for Lopez. Whatever doubts his commentary may raise about maps, Lopez presents them as bibliographical apparatus without suggesting that they might not be reliable guides. What is more, he takes pleasure in Eskimos' adeptness at this genre, noting that Eskimos with no western education 'were making and using maps long before they met Europeans' and have shown the ability to read European maps of their home range with ease, to produce maps of almost equal sophistication.^{lviii} Lopez's thinking is inconsistent here; his temptation to vindicate Eskimo science by showing that it almost meets western standards of objectivity is at cross-purposes with his tendency elsewhere to contrast the two different forms of knowing. If Lopez had more fully entered into the spirit of aboriginal thinking about cartography, he might have written an account like Hugh Brody's description of the hearing at which representatives of the Indian tribes of northeastern British Columbia, who had produced reams of orthodox maps of their hunting territories (quite accurate, it seems) in connection with a late 1970s land-use survey, rolled out for the astonished whites a ceremonial 'dream map' of their region representing its spiritual reality.^{lix} But it would be fairer to say that Lopez looks upon *both* western and Eskimo ways of knowing as indispensable approximations, each needing to be supplemented by the other. The text's voice defines its place as that of a mediator between local and scientific forms of knowledge, expert in neither, respectful but not uncritical of each.

Perhaps what especially makes Lopez relish convergences of native and outsider forms of landscape apprehension is that he writes from the standpoint of an outsider who wants to become more of an insider. To this end, it is important both to contrast the two modes of knowing and to imagine bridges from the one to the other. Maps afford one such bridge. Eskimo alacrity with western maps points to a key trait of indigenous culture: its successful adaptation to territorial imperatives and the need, in the harsh Arctic climate, 'to pay attention to the smallest [visual] clues.'^{lx} Conversely (as Lopez's grateful reader comes to realize), westerners' charts, limited though they are, are essential if one is to get past the tenderfoot stage and begin making contact with the subtler navigational clues that Eskimos and other Arctic aboriginals in practice steer by. Western maps register a shallow sense of place, but despite their superficiality they can guide one toward deeper understanding. At times they can even lend to place-sense a perspective that local knowledge cannot, as when Lopez muses that the Arctic region 'turns on itself like any nation. It is organized like Australia around an inland desert sea, with most of its people living on the coastal periphery. It is not vast like the Pacific. It is vast like the steppes of Asia. It has the heft, say, of China, but with the population of Seattle.'^{li} This is a wonderfully inventive *and* objectively compelling passage. It could only have been written with the aid of a globe or an atlas, however. Local knowledge by itself would never have thought it up. In a way the passage is blatantly presumptuous: What arrogance to conflate Arctic with Australia with Asia with Pacific – not to mention the conflation of all Arctic peoples with each other into an imitation-western 'nation.' Why then is Lopez, usually so sensitive to cultural difference, completely unfazed? Clearly because he is using cartography to unmoor his readers from their own provincial embeddedness by taking them on the verbal equivalent of a plane ride over the territory he will soon immerse them in. The panorama, the area map, cannot substitute for a sense of place, but it can provide a stage of basic reconfiguration that may induce the wonder, openness, and perplexity needed to make a more comprehensive Arctic training program work.

Lopez sidesteps some hard questions. He does not, for example, take note of the relation between cartography and the culturally insensitive division of Arctic terrain into Russia, the United States, Canada, and Greenland (Denmark), although he devotes a chapter to European Arctic expeditions that chronicles their blundering rapacity and histrionic pathos at some length. I suppose that Lopez never makes geography the villain as such, except for easy shots at the foolishness of Northwest Passage fantasies, because he is broadly interested in bioregional knowing and because cartographical knowledge has, in the long run, assisted rather than impeded that knowledge, at least for those westerners aware of the limitations of graphs. William Least Heat Moon, by contrast, writes about a place whose sense of itself has been much more violently shaped by cartographic practices than the Arctic, where with the partial exception of the Bering Straits area the political borders of settler culture marked on maps seem to have determined the cultural forms to a lesser degree. Chase County, Kansas, was carved out during the nineteenth century according to Jefferson's grid. *PrairyErth* follows the same grid in seeking to invent a way of thinking about county landscape, culture, and history that will express both the durability and the arbitrariness of this legacy. So Least Heat Moon maps his book as twelve equal-size chunks (each with a set of six more or less symmetrically arranged chapters), in recognition of the county's twelve Jeffersonian 'quadrangles.'

He offers the quadrangles both as a profound reality of the county's topographical and cultural life and as a sign of what has to be transcended to grasp the 'deep map' (the book's

subtitle) underlying the surface one. The speaker observes the impress of rectilinearity in land parcel patterning, in the orientation of the region's settlements, in the design of farm-scapes, even in the way individual houses were situated on lots. These are givens of settler culture that, in turn, have become part of the communal spirit of place to which he must be faithful. At the same time, there is something raucous and campy about his 'fidelity.' As it protracts, it becomes an ostentatiously gymnastic exercise calculated to undermine the neoclassical rationalism it purports to observe – and which, indeed, it overstates by so underscoring (for surely it would never have occurred to a resident to formulate his or her place-sense in the mathematicized form that Least Heat Moon renders it). Sure enough, when the traveler gets to the ninth quadrangle and finds it *too* gridlike, 'lying as it does with all the mystery of a checked tablecloth,' he is repelled, 'baffled with the imaginary become real, inked lines turned to cut-in roads.' He dislikes 'that perfect scotching of the prairie which imprisoned the place and fenced me out; it was a net to ensnare the land and haul dark mysteries like a load of pilchards into the light.'^{lxiii} It comes as no surprise, then, and not just because Least Heat Moon is part-Osage on one side, that the book ends with a coda imagining the county's shape and pathways very differently, from the standpoint of the remnant Kaw population. The author does not expect or particularly want settler culture to evaporate. It is, he admits, the presenting sociogeographical reality and likely to remain so; something like 95 percent of the book follows its construction of place. Furthermore, he clearly relishes pointing out cases where symbiosis of land and settlement has occurred, as in the planting of osage orange trees as natural hedgerows or the adaptation of the hardy cottonwood, now the totem tree of the state of Kansas. When settlers modify regional ecology in such a way that nature flourishes and the people intertwine with it, that is not imperial imposition; for the grid itself is modified, biologized. The author is not at all disposed to deny bona fide deeply rooted place-sense to the 'countians' because of their culture's gridlike inception, least of all when the grid begins to soften and dissolve.

Two levels of self-consciousness affect *PrairyErth's* account of the imposition of design on terrain: self-consciousness not only about the imposed design of settler culture but also about the artifice of the book's own design.^{lxiii} The reason for *PrairyErth's* various omissions, the author confesses near the end, is not just that 'a book can't include everything . . . but rather because my explorations quite early began forming into a gestalt that seems to control what I am capable of writing about.'^{lxiv} This awareness may help account for his decision to start each new section with a series of several dozen 'Commonplace Book' quotations, like the 'Extracts' preamble to *Moby-Dick*. (He quotes Thoreau, Berry, and Lopez, among others, in the very first batch.) Many of these are prescriptive assertions like 'You must not be in the prairie; but the prairie must be in you,' and 'Except by the measure of wildness we shall never really know the nature of a place.'^{lxv} Each batch is a heterogeneous cacophony of other peoples' landscape designs: of all sorts of places but particularly of Kansas, with Kansan voices liberally represented. Each batch says in effect: (1) Don't trust me; (2) I am the only way in. This ambiguous message advertises the bibliographical minefield that the author has had to pick his way through more openly than Lopez's more conventional list of sources at the end of his volume; and it warns us in advance that the book itself may be nothing more than a potpourri of self-contradictory crotchets. In this way *PrairyErth* generates more ironic self-reflexivity about anybody's perception of place than does *Arctic Dreams*, which reposes a deep trust in the validity and holism of aboriginal place-sense, by and large respects the explanatory power

of western science, and treats the perceptual flaws of well-meaning westerners as educable rather than intractable. Although both books treat the two levels of cartography – as literal mapping and as authorial design – with ambivalence, sometimes as neglecting place-sense and sometimes as producing it, they clearly sit at different points on this continuum, *PrairyErth* standing relatively for the principle that grids impose a false or foreshortened consciousness and *Arctic Dreams* for grids and local place-sense as complementary ways of seeing. Again, I am not suggesting that Least Heat Moon denies his countians place-sense. Theirs may be more intersocial and less comprehensively biotic than that of Lopez's Eskimos; theirs may also be more personal and neighborly than tribal (in the sense of ethnic and sacral). But although Least Heat Moon interposes more of confessional and of abstruse meditation between the land and the reader, the reader of *PrairyErth* likely comes away with the distinct impression of how much more complex and profound a shared sense of interaction with region persists in this county than one would have expected from prairie stereotypes, the sterile-looking atlas map of Kansas, and the flyover at 35,000 feet. This fruition, such as it is, the grid has impeded but also produced.

The ambivalent relation of map knowledge to place-sense that Lopez and Least Heat Moon elegantly unfold operates on one frequency or another to help define the sense of place in much environmental writing. The better we understand its operation, the better we can understand environmental mimesis. To prepare the way for some final reflections, let us turn once more to *Walden*.

Thoreau is the only major American writer to have earned a living from defining and measuring tracts of land. This experience, on top of a strong positivist streak that uneasily coexisted with his transcendentalist bent, gave him an unusually firm – although ambivalent – command of official geography and made him very likely the most skillful cartographer who ever penned a literary classic.^{lxvi} These endeavors inspired the map of Walden Pond that he inserted into *Walden* (*Wa* 286). Visually, it comes as an unexpected and slightly bizarre interruption – the sole illustration in the main body of the text – as an accompaniment to Thoreau's narrative of sounding the pond. Like the map itself, this narrative shows the author at his most pickily meticulous. ('I can assure my readers that Walden has a reasonably tight bottom at a not unreasonable, though at an unusual, depth. I fathomed it easily with a cod-line and a stone weighing about a pound and a half' [285–286].) Thoreau completely suspends the 'poetic' dimension of *Walden* for the nonce and lets geometry take over. Indeed, he seems flatly to disown fancy's vagaries ('the imagination, give it the least license, dives deeper and soars higher than Nature goes' [288]). Has Prospero,⁸ then, forsaken his rod for the cod-line and stone? By no means: for as the statistics accumulate, Thoreau weaves them into his most extravagant conceit yet, the ethical law he deduces from the pond's dimensions: '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' (291). Thus Thoreau applies Emerson's dictum in *Nature*: 'The axioms of physics translate the laws of ethics.'^{lxvii} Thoreau commentators have rightly hesitated to take seriously this *jeu d'esprit*, as one calls it.^{lxviii} Fair enough. Yet the mock-serious pedantry of the

⁸ The main character in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* who colonizes the bare, rugged, island on which he is shipwrecked.

long passage in which this declaration occurs seems explicable only as Thoreau's way of coping with the impossible dream of a synthesis of poetry and science that will put qualities on as firm an objective ground as quantities.^{lxix} The transcendental deduction does this. Significantly, the passage winds down by bemoaning the divorce between the modes of thinking: that either we 'are conversant only with the bights of the bays of poesy, or steer for the public ports of entry, and go into the dry docks of science, where they merely refit for this world, and no natural currents concur to individualize them' (292). Despite this conclusion, however, the speaker proceeds, as it were, to reiterate his commitment to putting moral truth on an objective footing with two more paragraphs of factual reportage.

Thoreau's attempt in this section first to banish fancy and then to drive it over to the side of objectification by reintroducing it as ethical science is encapsulated by the map, which is both the Q.E.D. of the moral geometry exercise and a nice piece of professional work that establishes the section as one half of a diptych of 'enterprise' scenes – the other half being the seriocomic narrative of the ice cutters that immediately follows. The map genre presumes the validity of a proper kind of appropriation of the pondscape for civic uses; it then becomes the implicit standard used to measure the capitalist enterprise in ice harvesting (which imposes its own sort of mathematics).

The pond-sounding episode both squares and competes with the accumulating place-sense in *Walden* generally. Up to this point, Thoreau has constructed the pondscape seemingly without much system. The early glimpses are sketchy and metaphor-laden (for example, pp. 86–87). 'The Ponds' chapter stands out chiefly for its narratives, its legendizing, and its dreamy imagery ('It is a soothing employment . . . to sit on a stump on such a height as this, overlooking the pond, and study the dimpling circles which are incessantly inscribed on its otherwise invisible surface amid the reflected skies and trees' [187–188]). The sketch of White Pond, Walden's lesser twin, consists of little more than a garrulous story about a waterlogged tree (198–199). From this accumulation of imagery and anecdotalism a strong, compelling, but nebulous sense of place builds: delicious, inviting, mystical, leafy, limpid, refreshing, and secluded despite the railroad. The reader may have to exert a self-conscious effort to notice the amount of data crammed into many of these passages because Thoreau's fussy precision, for example on changing pond levels ('now, in the summer of '52' [180]), tends to dissolve in fancy ('It licks its chaps from time to time' [181–182]). One mark of Thoreau's success at lyricizing, although also of the obstinacy of disciplinary paradigms, is the insistence with which literary critics have wanted to interpret the pond as a symbol of something rather than as a meditation about and arising from a particular body of water. But while Thoreau abets this reading, he refuses to let the pond remain at the subjectified level of an intensely felt green world, a pastoral gem. He must give an exact, proportional account of it (the map). He must disenchant the legend of its bottomlessness. However many false bottoms *Walden* has, Thoreau must find and chart the bottom of Walden Pond.^{lxx} The facts are not to be ignored.

His triumph is slightly rueful. After reciting the definitive sounding results, the speaker adds: 'I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless' (287). Disenchantment whets the desire to remystify and no doubt partly drives the correspondential fantasy a few pages later, not to mention the lyrical effervescence of the next chapter, 'Spring.'

Thoreau represents the pond, then, by building on a counterpoint between a surveyor's deference to verifiable truth and a denizen's sense of place as subjectively felt. I mean

'subjective' in the sense of affect-laden yet not entirely idiosyncratic, inasmuch as it is mediated and thereby rendered intersocial by the various interlocking topoi that Thoreau has internalized: romantic pastoralism, the aesthetics of relinquishment, the vision of nature's personhood, seasonality, maybe even (if E.O. Wilson is right) an atavistic sense of humanity's primal habitat. The kind of text that emerges from the interaction between map knowledge and experiential place-sense in *Walden* – and in *Arctic Dreams* and *PrairieEarth* as well – can help us refine the theory of environmental nonfiction's 'dual accountability' to imagination and to the object-world, developed in Chapter 3.⁹ All the nonfictions I have discussed operate, in different degrees, with due respect for the way experiential place-sense can connect up with actual environments but also with respect for its perceptual limits; all recognize in map knowledge both a potential standard against which to measure the vagaries of place-sense and an alternative form of perceiving valid only insofar as it has the power to connect one with lived reality or to impress itself on the environment so as to create the environment in its own image. In the interplay of map knowledge and place-sense, then, environmental writing affirms the alterity of the ground that is felt or mapped and thereby also the relativity of all visions of place, be they cartographic or intuitive; but at the same time it activates and validates (within limits) both 'subjective' and 'objective' modes of knowing that otherness. In the interplay of these alternatives the possibility both of a heightened consciousness of place-sense and of a self-critical resistance to sleepily centripetal place-embeddedness is quickened. In the betweenness of mapmaking and place-bonding environmental writing locates itself. Both official and intuitive knowledge are ultimately directed toward expressing its topophilia, its commitment to rendering a textual equivalent of an actual or virtual place.

Wendell Berry sums up the most fundamental principle that underlies this commitment when he insists that 'it is vain to think either that the mind can *be* a place, or that the mind alone can *find* a proper place for itself or for us. It must look out of itself into the world.'^{lxxi} Self-evident though Berry's assertion might seem, in practice it is not so easy to hold in the mind. The discourse of epistemology is conventionally atopic; even Heidegger has trouble getting from the theory of being's situatedness to the realization of that situatedness as a particularity. When *qua* epistemologist one tries to imagine what the 'objective self' might be – a way of seeing that transcends personal idiosyncracies – one may conceivably talk about stepping outside ego and 'considering the world as a place in which these phenomena [the personal experiences of other people] are produced by interaction between these beings and other things,' but one may all the while have in mind rather the transmission of abstractions between minds. We can step out of ourselves if we are lucky; but if we do, we will find no world there. The 'objective self,' at least in the exposition of it I follow here, does not have anything to do with a world of objects.^{lxxii} Of course everyone knows that there is no such actual being, that an unplaced intersubjective self is no more possible than an isolated *cogito*. But when we are constructing arguments, or texts (such as this book) it is all too easy to think as if being *were* decontextualized. Ethnic and feminist revisionism provide one check to this misconception to the extent

⁹ Entitled 'Representing the Environment', the chapter illustrates an evaluative criterion based on a 'theoretical distinction between human constructedness and nonhuman reality' as opposed to an undifferentiated 'presupposition of the inevitable dominance of constructedness alone' (pp. 113–14).

that they insist on keeping us from forgetting that every human being inhabits a particular kind of body. Place-consciousness provides another sort of check by insisting that every body occupies a bounded physical space. That limitation can be irksome; but although it circumscribes our horizons, it also helps to make possible what we can know.

At best, the placedness of experience provides humankind with a way of offsetting, if not altogether overcoming, its inheritance of 'natural alienness' described by Evernden.^{lxxiii} If the perception of seasonality is the commonest avenue toward fuller understanding of nature's motions, so the experience of place may be the commonest avenue toward experiencing relinquishment as ecocentrism.

Notes

ⁱ Some theorists of environmental perception seem to use 'environment' and 'place' synonymously: e.g., David Canter, *The Psychology of Place* (London: Architectural Press, 1977), pp. 9–10. I follow the more common practice of using 'environment' to apply, in principle, to the world outside the observer regardless of how it is perceived, and to reserve 'place' for environment as subjectively located and defined.

ⁱⁱ Wendell Berry, 'The Regional Motive,' in *A Continuous Harmony: Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (New York: Harcourt, 1972), pp. 68–69.

ⁱⁱⁱ This fundamental point is made clear in Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Plon, 1976), and Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), two of the best short expositions of the concept of place by humanistic geographers. See also E.V. Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), which sums the point up usefully: 'People do not experience abstract space; they experience places. A place is seen, heard, smelled, imagined, loved, hated, feared, revered, enjoyed, or avoided' (p. 142). Although it is certainly possible to desire to relocate to an 'empty' space and to experience it as healing, the sense of location bonding that ensues from this seems to convert what these geographers call space into place; see for example the title essay of Gretel Ehrlich, *The Solace of Open Spaces* (New York: Penguin, 1986), pp. 1–15.

^{iv} Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, p. 47.

^v Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 134.

^{vi} Yi-fu Tuan, 'Place and Culture,' in *Mapping American Culture*, ed. Wayne Franklin and Michael Steiner (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), p. 44. This collection is a good starting point for the multidisciplinary study of place in American literary culture. In *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (1974; rpt. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), Tuan shows both that environment shapes culture and that culture can shape perception of the environment even to the extent of prompting people to 'see' things that don't exist (pp. 59–91).

^{vii} Berry, 'The Regional Motive,' p. 67.

^{viii} Edward Relph, *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography* (London: Croom Helm; Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1981), pp. 161–164.

^{ix} Tuan, *Topophilia*, p. 93; Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 103–124. As Evernden puts it: 'paradoxically, we are an exotic organism even in our place of origin, wherever that might be. We are exotic in any environment, for in a sense we did not evolve in any existing habitat. I say "in a sense," for of course we were part of local ecosystems during most of our history. But in our minds we may have fallen out of context a very long time ago' (p. 109).

^x Emily Dickinson, poem 1755, in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas Johnson, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), p. 710.

- ^{xi} William Dean Howells, *A Modern Instance*, ed. William Gibson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), pp. 43, 230.
- ^{xii} Eudora Welty, 'Place in Fiction,' in *The Eye of the Story* (1942; rpt. New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 125, 116.
- ^{xiii} John Alcorn, *The Nature Novel from Hardy to Lawrence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 10.
- ^{xiv} Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, ed. James Gindin (New York: Norton, 1969), pp. 4, 137.
- ^{xv} Welty, 'Place in Fiction,' pp. 122, 128.
- ^{xvi} William Least Heat Moon, *PrairieErth: (a deep map)* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), p. 615.
- ^{xvii} Wendell Berry, 'The Silence,' in *Collected Poems* (San Francisco: North Point, 1985), pp. 111–112.
- ^{xviii} E.O. Wilson, *Biophilia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 110. This same line of speculation, deriving modern taste in landscapes from an atavistic proclivity for the primal savanna, has also been used to explain aesthetic preference for open spaces and for large grass lawns: see for example Tony Hiss, *The Experience of Place* (New York: Knopf, 1990), p. 37; and Winifred Gallagher, *The Power of Place* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1993), p. 219.
- ^{xix} John Haines, 'The Writer as Alaskan: Beginnings and Reflections,' in *Living off the Country: Essays on Poetry and Place* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), pp. 5ff. By contrast, another sensitive outlander who found a special place in Alaska, anthropologist Richard Nelson, in *The Island Within* (San Francisco: North Point, 1989), makes much more specific and stronger claims for his ability to enter into deep understanding of and communion with that place; see especially the title chapter, which outdoes Thoreau and Muir and Gary Snyder for pantheistic exuberance: 'There is nothing in me that is not of earth, no split instant of separateness, no particle that disunites me from its surroundings' (p. 249).
- ^{xx} Richard Gould, *Yiwara*, quoted in Walter, *Placeways*, p. 138.
- ^{xxi} *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1903–1904), 11: 76.
- ^{xxii} Emerson, *Nature*, in *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*, ed. Robert E. Spiller and Alfred R. Ferguson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 10.
- ^{xxiii} Emerson, 'Thoreau,' in *Complete Works*, 10: 484.
- ^{xxiv} David Rains Wallace, *Idle Weeds: The Life of an Ohio Sandstone Ridge* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), p. 94.
- ^{xxv} Robert Frost, 'Spring Pools,' in *Complete Poems of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, 1961), p. 303.
- ^{xxvi} Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 122. Soja goes on to discuss the illusion of transparency also. This notion of mirror-opposite fallacies derives from Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974), trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 27–30.
- ^{xxvii} Peter Fritzell, *Nature Writing and America: Essays upon a Cultural Type* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), is particularly severe on the epistemological limitations of 'impersonal description' in nature writing (p. 27 and passim).
- ^{xxviii} Sharon Cameron, *Writing Nature: Henry Thoreau's Journal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 44–48.
- ^{xxix} D.W. Meinig, 'The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene,' in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 33–48.
- ^{xxx} See Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 199 and passim, on the comforting nature of the sense of place.
- ^{xxxi} For example, in his essay 'Landscape and Character,' Lawrence Durrell assures us that 'ten minutes' of quiet introspective rumination while sitting on the omphalos at Delphi 'will give you

the notion of the Greek landscape which you could not get in twenty years of studying ancient Greek texts' (*Spirit of Place* [New York: Dutton, 1969], p. 158). Maybe so, especially if one feels excited and alert. What is unsatisfactory about Durrell's advice is its promise of a once-for-all shortcut to insidership with the essential Greece.

^{xxxii} John Janovy, Jr., *Keith County Journal* (New York: St. Martin's, 1978), p. 79.

^{xxxiii} John Hanson Mitchell, *Ceremonial Time: Fifteen Thousand Years on One Square Mile* (New York: Warner Books, 1984), p. 9.

^{xxxiv} Thoreau's interest in habitation in the broadest sense was so keen and persistent that Frederick Garber has made it central to his second book on Thoreau, *Thoreau's Fable of Inscribing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), a sensitive and sophisticated study contending that Thoreau's work and life ought to be seen in the light of a quest to explore and realize the meaning of being in the world. Garber's analysis owes much to Martin Heidegger, particularly Heidegger's late essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (see Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter [New York: Harper and Row, 1971], pp. 145–161). Some contemporary humanistic geographers have also been strongly influenced by Heidegger, to the point of making habitation the center of their projects; see for example the essays collected as *Dwelling, Place, and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World*, ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), particularly the four essays in Part III, 'Place and Dwelling.'

^{xxxv} Emerson, 'Thoreau,' in *Complete Works*, 10: 471.

^{xxxvi} Tuan, *Topophilia*, pp. 15–16. The tenacity of segmentation bias in literature is especially apparent in such poetic forms as the seventeenth-century meditative image poem and the postromantic nature lyric. The work of the major philosopher most often cited as a harbinger of contemporary ecologism shows it: Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's achievement in 'The Thing' (in *Poetry, Language, Thought*), for example, in some ways resembles that of Thoreau's *Journal* passage. As an antidote to the normal state of banal inattentiveness of modern life, he tries to reimagine an inconspicuous object so as to make it offer a true 'nearing of the world' (p. 181). This synecdochic approach is meant to open up a vision of a world of magically luminous things: 'Things, each thinging and each staying in its own way, are mirror and clasp, book and picture, crown and cross.' But the dramatization of a protoecological sense of a 'ring'/'ringing' of existence (p. 182) is constrained by the hyperfocus on *the thing*.

^{xxxvii} John Muir, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), pp. 280–283.

^{xxxviii} Stephen A. Forbes, 'The Lake as a Microcosm' (1887), reprinted in *Foundations of Ecology: Classic Papers with Commentaries*, ed. Leslie A. Real and James H. Brown (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 14. On Thoreau as pioneer of limnology, see Donald G. Quick, 'Thoreau as Limnologist,' *Thoreau Journal Quarterly*, 4, no. 2 (1972): 13–20.

^{xxxix} Susan Fenimore Cooper, *Rural Hours* (New York: Putnam, 1850), pp. 188, 194.

^{xl} Wendell Berry, *Clearing* (New York: Harcourt, 1977), 'The Clearing,' p. 21. See also Berry's essay 'The Making of a Marginal Farm,' in *Recollected Essays, 1965–1980* (San Francisco: North Point, 1981), reprinted in *This Incomparable Land: A Book of American Nature Writing*, ed. Thomas J. Lyon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989; rpt. New York: Penguin, 1991).

^{xli} Robert E. Abrams, 'Image, Object, and Perception in Thoreau's Landscapes: The Development of Anti-Geography,' *Nineteenth Century Literature*, 46 (1991): 261. This discussion should, however, be set next to, for example, Don Scheese, 'Thoreau's *Journal*: The Creation of a Sacred Place' (in *Mapping American Culture*, ed. Wayne Franklin and Michael Steiner [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992], pp. 139–151), which (like the present essay) stresses Thoreau's use of metaphors as a way of returning the reader to the landscape they recreate.

^{xlii} Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. Robert Czerny et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), especially pp. 216–277, 'Metaphor and Reference.' To be specific, Ricoeur argues that

while metaphor 'seeks the abolition of the reference by means of self-destruction of the meaning of metaphorical statements,' ultimately it draws 'a new semantic pertinence out of the ruins of literal meaning' and thereby 'sustains a new referential design' (p. 230). Ricoeur's notion of reference has been attacked as stolid and monolithic, but the idea of metaphor's bidirectionality cannot thereby be disposed of.

^{xliii} Alexander Wilson, *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 115. This book offers a sympathetic but critically circumspect view of restorationism, without minimizing for example the difficulty of how one determines what the target of a particular restorationist project should be. The journal *Restoration and Management Notes* is an excellent introduction to the discourse. Of special pertinence in the present context are two essays by William R. Jordan III, 'Restoration at Walden Pond,' *Restoration and Management Notes*, 7 (1989): 65–69; and 'Renewal and Imagination: Thoreau's Thought and the Restoration of Walden Pond,' in *Thoreau's World and Ours: A Natural Legacy*, ed. Edmund A. Schofield and Robert C. Baron (Golden, Colo.: North American Press, 1993), pp. 260–271. In the latter, Jordan calls Thoreau himself a restorationist.

^{xliv} Leopold offers the latter dictum as an ad hoc definition of a 'conservationist.' For the case on behalf of the biblical stewardship tradition yielding a positive ecological ethics rather than its opposite, as is often alleged, see Robin Attfield, *The Ethics of Environmental Concern*, rev. ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991). Attfield tends to see Leopold as an adversary on account of his doctrine of biotic egalitarianism, but in general, and certainly in the passage at hand, Leopold's conservationism seems to me strongly grounded in the stewardship tradition. This is even truer of Berry; see his chapters 'The Body and the Earth,' in *The Unsettling of America* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1977), and 'Two Economies,' in *Home Economics* (San Francisco: North Point, 1987).

^{xlv} Berry, 'Reverdure,' in *Clearing*, p. 50.

^{xlvi} It is customary to read 'Solitude' as expressing the will to detachment, not the desire for embeddedness; and certainly the speaker does proclaim alienation from other people here ('What do we want most to dwell near to? Not to many men surely . . .' [p. 133]). But it would be truer to think of 'Solitude' as part of a two-chapter sequence that unfolds a sense of emplacement such as will allow a person to replace factitious camaraderie with the sense of a 'more normal and natural society' (p. 136). Thoreau's argument is not that we should seek isolation for its own sake, though clearly he takes pleasure in solitude. Solitude is also important as a vantage point from which to recalibrate and renew one's relation with other people, as the following chapter, 'Visitors,' begins to show.

^{xlvii} Stanley Cavell, *The Senses of Walden* (1972; rpt. San Francisco: North Point, 1981), p. 107n.

^{xlviii} Robert David Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 30. Sack's 'territoriality' and my 'place-sense' differ in that for him the sense of rightful domain is primary, but the general point holds for both.

^{xlix} Tuan, *Topophilia*, pp. 30–44, among many other sources, very pertinently notes that ethnocentrism carries forward into such conventions of contemporary cartography as setting 0° longitude at Greenwich, England, and putting Europe at the center of the world map.

^l William Boelhower, 'Saving Saukenuk: How Black Hawk Won the War and Opened the Way to Ethnic Semiotics,' *Journal of American Studies*, 25 (1991): 345. See also Boelhower's 'Nation-Building and Ethnogenesis: The Map as Witness and Maker,' in *The Early Republic*, ed. Steve Ickringill (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1988), pp. 108–131.

^{li} John Stilgoe, in *Common Landscape of America, 1580–1845* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 103, gives a lucid, succinct historical account. 'By the 1860s,' he observes, 'the grid objectified national, not regional order, and no one wondered at rural space marked by urban rectilinearity' (pp. 106–107). Philip Fisher, 'Democratic Social Space: Whitman, Melville, and the Promise of American Transparency,' *Representations*, 24 (1988): 60–101.

^{lii} See for example Terry Cook, 'A Reconstruction of the World: George R. Parkin's British Empire Map of 1893,' *Cartographia*, 21, no. 4 (1984): 53–65; Graham Huggan, *Territorial Disputes: Maps and Mapping Strategies in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), especially the conclusion, 'Decolonizing the Map'; and William Boelhower, 'Saving Saukenuk,' and 'Inventing America: A Model of Cartographic Semiosis,' *Word and Image*, 4 (1988): 475–497. In the latter Boelhower observes that 'the map both as a minimal and maximal cultural sign is the ideal text for studying the way Indian land was transformed into Euro-American territory and settlers from various nations into a homogeneous ethnos, as the ideological boast goes' (p. 478).

^{liii} See for example the analysis, with accompanying cartographical illustrations, in Ward Churchill, 'Struggle to Regain a Stolen Homeland: The Iroquois Land Claims in Upstate New York,' in *Struggle for the Land: Indigenous Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide, and Expropriation in Contemporary North America* (Monroe, Me.: Common Courage Press, 1993), pp. 87–111.

^{liv} For the basic concept of mental mapping, see Peter Gould and Rodney White, *Mental Maps*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1985), which, however, valorizes map over human perception in a one-sidedly positivistic way. ('Our images – the maps and models of the world we carry around with us – need larger and much more relevant information inputs. Only then can our visions of a larger world . . . grow to match the human-created problems we shall *all* face shortly' [p. 156].) For Gould and White, geographical science is an instrument for correcting the subjective bias that goes with place sense, not the instrument for deepening and enriching that subjectivity that I credit it with being in the cases discussed below.

^{lv} Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (New York: Bantam, 1987), pp. 251, 238.

^{lvi} See Scott Slovic, *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), pp. 141–150, for a discussion of Lopez's attentiveness, over and beyond the customary procedures of the tradition of western travel writing to which *Arctic Dreams* broadly speaking belongs.

^{lvii} Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, p. 180. In this regard, see also Lopez's essay 'Renegotiating the Contracts,' *Parabola* (Spring 1983), reprinted in *This Incomparable Land: A Book of American Nature Writing*, ed. Thomas J. Lyon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989; rpt. New York: Penguin, 1991), pp. 381–388, as well as his book *Of Wolves and Men* (New York: Scribner's, 1978).

^{lviii} Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, p. 258. Tuan, interestingly, uses the same example of near-correspondence between Eskimo and western maps to argue for the ethnocentricity of the former on the basis of the slight distortions of the home range (*Topophilia*, pp. 34–35).

^{lix} Hugh Brody, *Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1981), pp. 256–270. See pp. 146–177 for Brody's analysis of the accuracy of the Indians' conventional maps.

^{lx} Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, p. 261.

^{lxi} *Ibid.*, p. 255.

^{lxii} Least Heat Moon, *PrairyErth*, pp. 363, 364.

^{lxiii} Neither Lopez nor Least Heat Moon deals much with Native American modification of landscape in the manner of, say, William Cronon's environmental history of the Indian dispensation in New England, *Changes in the Land* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

^{lxiv} Least Heat Moon, *PrairyErth*, p. 598.

^{lxv} *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 96.

^{lxvi} Robert F. Stowell, in *A Thoreau Gazetteer*, ed. William L. Howarth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), prints several of Thoreau's maps, ventures a number of reflections on the

relation of cartography to Thoreau's writing, and takes note of Thoreau's mixed feelings on the subject. Late in life Thoreau expressed the fear, for example, that having surveyed Walden Woods 'so extensively and minutely that I now see it mapped in my mind's eye . . . as so many men's wood lots,' 'it will not be easy to see so much wildness and native vigor there as formerly' (*J* 10: 233, noted by Stowell, p. ix).

^{lcvii} Emerson, *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*, p. 21.

^{lcviii} Charles Anderson, *The Magic Circle of Walden* (New York: Holt, 1968), p. 274.

^{lcvix} For sensitive discussion of this aspect of Thoreau's thought, see H. Daniel Peck, *Thoreau's Morning Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), especially Chapter 4, 'The Categorical Imagination' (pp. 79–114).

^{lcvx} See in this regard Walter Benn Michaels, 'Walden's False Bottoms,' *Glyph* 1 (1977): 132–149, which emphasizes the book's indeterminacy; and the reply by Joseph Allen Boone, 'Delving and Diving for Truth: Breaking through to Bottom in Thoreau's *Walden*,' *ESQ*, 27 (1981): 135–146, which redescribes the book's project as a confident, affirmative penetration of surface, both literal and figurative. Both essays are reprinted in *Critical Essays on Henry David Thoreau's Walden*, ed. Joel Myerson (Boston: Hall, 1988).

^{lcvxi} Wendell Berry, 'Poetry and Place,' in *Standing by Words* (San Francisco: North Point, 1983), p. 179.

^{lcvxii} Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 63.

^{lcvxiii} See note 9 above.

Slavoj Žižek

Introductory note

Slavoj Žižek (1949–) is a Slovenian sociologist and philosopher. He is a senior researcher at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia and also the International Director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities at Birkbeck College at the University of London. His many explorations of popular culture attempt to have us regard it as symptoms of ideological schism, composed of strife and unrest, but also of energy and power. His refusal to accept the norms of modern 'seeing' and acceptance reveal many hidden aspects of power; to accomplish this, he reads Lacan (see Introductory note in this ed., pp. 184–85) in an individual way that emphasizes the Lacanian Real, the primacy of the Cartesian subject (see Introduction, pp. 6–8) and the pervasiveness and polymorphous qualities of ideological formations both in the mind and also in physical imprints in advertising, film and other modern representations. It is this capacity to swerve from High to Low culture and back again that makes it difficult to typify his working methods.

His first full-length study of ideology was *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), a deliberately *recherché* attempt to revisit Marx's sense of Ideology as a false consciousness. For any ideology to be false, there would have to be a faith that analysis would reveal a true state of affairs, yet, as with Lacan's Real, this is ever deferred, mediated for us to the point of disappearance by the market as well as private and public bureaucracies. For Marx, ideology posited certain plausible fictions or beliefs so as to stabilize existing political power; for Žižek, such possibilities for belief in the political system have evaporated. What remains is a more fractured array of attempts to have us persuaded that there are some fictions that are nonideological, and that there is much that might go without saying, especially nowadays in the interests of National Security or continued prosperity.

No longer is it feasible in the developed world to gain wholehearted consent to any corporate action, unless it is dressed up as an exercise of voluntary subjectivity. There is an inevitable gap between our sceptical view, eventually (we think) proof against all impositions of special interest, and our willing co-option by some usually abstract symbol (for example, the People, Human Rights, or God). Political action has to be motivated by something, yet here we have catalysts that are really signifiers posing as signifieds, and the mechanism for such surrenders of our sceptical selves lies in the split psyche, first noted by Lacan, where there is a constant oscillation between our conscious involvement in highly-informed

First published 1988 by Pearson Education Limited
Second edition published 2000
Third edition published 2008

Published 2013 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Third edition selection and editorial material © David Lodge and Nigel Wood 2008

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ISBN: 978-0-582-78454-3 (pbk)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP catalogue record for this book can be obtained from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Modern criticism and theory : a reader / edited by David Lodge; revised and expanded by Nigel Wood. — 3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-582-78454-3 (pbk.)

1. Criticism—History—20th century. 2. Criticism—History—21st century.
3. Literature—History and criticism—Theory, etc. I. Lodge, David, 1935–
II. Wood, Nigel, 1953

PN94.M57 2008

801'.950904—dc22

2007044009

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