



Association for
the Study of
**Literature &
Environment**



ASLE News

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Notes from Underground:



**The Depths of Environmental
Arts, Culture and Justice**

ASLE Eleventh Biennial Conference
June 23-27, 2015 ♦ University of Idaho

**For full information visit the [Conference Website](#)
Submission Deadline is December 7. [Submit Your Proposal](#)
Download the [Call for Papers](#)**

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President's Update

By Mark C. Long, Keene State College

Sixty years ago, in June of 1955, the Wenner-Gren Foundation convened an international symposium in Princeton, New Jersey, in honor of George Perkins Marsh's 1864 book *Man and Nature*. The Princeton symposium, co-chaired by the geographer Carl O. Sauer, the zoologist Marston Bates, and the literary and cultural historian Lewis Mumford, brought together seventy participants from a range of academic fields. As the symposium unfolded, Bates reports in the published proceedings, "less and less was said in defense or in support of a particular disciplinary perspective" as the participants addressed the challenge of envisioning a response to environmental change.

In the next few days we will be launching a new web site conceived to address this enduring challenge. Our new digital home enhances the visibility of ASLE by featuring the most recent intellectual developments in the environmental humanities. The web site is also designed as a resource for scholars, writers, and artists from a range of academic fields, as well as for graduate and undergraduate students, environmental educators and activists, journalists, and environmentally concerned citizens.

Many people in the ASLE community deserve our gratitude for their work on this initiative. Most especially, members of the ASLE digital strategies committee, Amy McIntyre, Allison Carruth, Anthony Lioi, and Catherine Meeks, and the web development team, Bixler Communications Group, have made a difficult project a

[ISLE Journal](#)
[Discussion Lists](#)
[Diversity Blog](#)
[Graduate Student Blog](#)
[Affiliated Organizations](#)



Special New Member Price for *Ecotone*

In 2015, [Ecotone](#) journal will celebrate ten years of reimagining place. In commemoration of this event, *Ecotone* is happy to offer a discount for ASLE members on the biannual journal: a one-year subscription will be \$10, or a two-year subscription is \$20--a discount of forty percent.

An email will be sent to all members in a few days with a special discount code to use.

Subscribe this fall to receive *Ecotone's* special "Sustenance" issue, with work from Alison Hawthorne Deming, Randall Kenan, and Camille T. Dungy.

ASLE Bookshelf

The following works were recently published by ASLE members. If we've missed your publication, please send bibliographic information to editor [Catherine Meeks](#).

Bartlett, Brian. [Ringing Here & There: A Nature Calendar](#). Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2014.

professional pleasure. Over the past year of designing and building the site we have also been blessed with the enthusiasm, time, and energy of many ASLE members who responded to our requests for materials.

We hope that the web site will inspire you to share your work with the members of ASLE. Contribute your voice to the field-defining positions on ecocriticism and the environmental humanities. Propose a member profile or a research spotlight. Or help us continue building out our resource pages and archives. We welcome your suggestions for new features as well. We are especially interested in profiles and features that effectively convey the story of our scholarship, writing, and teaching to external audiences--from journalists to other members of the public.

In addition to our new web site, the ASLE leadership team continues to bring people together in interesting and useful ways:

- We are planning and organizing the 2015 biennial conference "[Notes from Underground: The Depths of Environmental Writing, Culture and Justice](#)" that will take place at the University of Idaho in Moscow June 23-27;
- We have endorsed ASLE Interest Groups and welcome the formation of new groups. More information will be available on the Interest Groups page of the new web site;
- We are celebrating and supporting the creative arts in ASLE by establishing an institutional membership in the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP);
- We continue to reach out to our international members through our [International Membership Grants](#);
- We are finalizing a review and revision of the ASLE Strategic Plan to guide our projects and initiatives for the next five years;
- We are recognizing the contributions of ASLE members and friends with three new honorary members: Janisse Ray, independent writer, Robin Wall Kimmerer, writer and Professor of Environmental and Forest Biology at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry; and Kathleen Dean Moore, writer and Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Oregon State University Corvallis.



Praying Mantis. Photo by Paul Lindholdt.



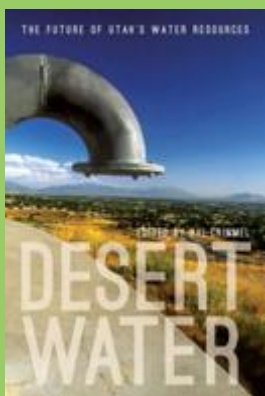
Wasp's nest. Photo by Paul Lindholdt.

Won't you join us by contributing your expertise and energies to ASLE? Consider standing for elected office, inquire about becoming a program officer or, if your resources permit, support the work of ASLE by becoming a sustaining, patron, or lifetime member, or by contributing a one-time gift to ASLE on the "Donate" page of our new web site.

Let me close by saying how grateful I am to have been given the opportunity to further the ongoing work of our association. I look forward to productive collaborations with many of you in the years to come.



Crimmel, Hal, ed. [*Desert Water: The Future of Utah's Water Resources*](#). Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2014.



Dreese, Donelle. [*Deep River Burning*](#). Salt Lake City: WiDo Publishing, 2014.



Schultz, Elizabeth. [*Mrs. Noah Takes the Helm*](#) (Poems). Cincinnati, OH: Turning Point Publications, 2014.

Notes on "Notes from Underground": ASLE Biennial Conference in Moscow, Idaho

by Cate Sandilands, York University, ASLE Vice President and 2015 Conference Chair

In a bit less than eight months' time, ASLE members will be assembling at the University of Idaho in Moscow for the start of our eleventh biennial conference, "Notes from Underground: The Depths of Environmental Arts, Culture and Justice" (June 23 - 27, 2015). The [call for papers](#) has circulated widely, and many interesting [calls for "underground" themed panels](#) have also been posted on the ASLE listserv, web site and elsewhere: from trenches and sewers to oil and diamonds to beat poets and indigenous art, we invite you to explore the depths of environmental arts, culture and justice with us. We are very excited that the conference theme has sparked such an imaginative range of ideas for exploration and discussion, and look forward to receiving your proposals for panels, performances, and presentations by the deadline of December 7, 2014. As you craft your proposals, please note that we are strongly encouraging non-traditional forms of presentation at ASLE 2015 in order to encourage the kinds of engaged discussion that can only occur at in-person gatherings; attending to the material conditions (underground and otherwise) of the conference itself means making the best possible use of the resources enabling our participation. Please see the [conference website](#) for the call for papers, for submission details, and also for a full description of the conference theme and location, including details about travel, accommodation, funding, and awards.

Please also note our new conference access guidelines. As part of our commitment to a tripartite mandate of ecological, economic, and social justice, ASLE is pleased to be able to support, with the University of Idaho, full mobility accessibility throughout the conference (including some field trips), ASL interpretation at all plenary events, accessible single-stall (including gender neutral) restrooms, aids to assist with visual impairments at plenary and concurrent sessions, as well as other accommodations. Our thanks especially to Sarah Wald, ASLE Diversity Officer, for her work to develop the ASLE guidelines, and to Gloria Jensen and the Disability Support Services Staff at U of I for their creativity in helping us implement them.

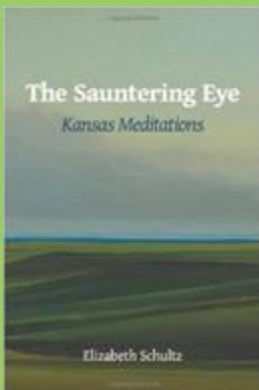
Although a fake events web site advertising the ASLE conference recently circulated around the internet locating our conference in Moscow, *Russia* (we take this imitation as a weird form of flattery), we are delighted that we will be converging on a different Moscow! ASLE's [Moscow](#) (pronounced MosCO) is situated in north central Idaho in the stunning Palouse region of fertile hills, grasslands, and rivers, a place made remarkable both by the land itself and by the complex histories and stories that wind through it. With outstanding birding, hiking, cycling and other recreational activities nearby, in addition to a rich independent cultural scene and the promise of some excellent local and regional food and wine in a compact and accessible small city, Moscow is a superlative conference destination. Our excellent local organizers at the University of Idaho—Anna Banks, Erin James, Jennifer Ladino and Scott Slovic—are busily organizing a roster of field trips that will help us learn about the region on a variety of scales, at a variety of paces, and through a variety of lenses; these trips will include a guided tour of the 100 year old, 63 acre University of Idaho arboretum; cycling, running, and hiking in the local hills; and a bus trip highlighting sites of Nez Perce cultural and political importance. In addition, we are very pleased to participate in the Moscow tradition of Progressive Evenings: on [Thursday evening](#), conference participants and local residents will mingle in and move through a series of downtown venues for short films, performances, installations and discussions that will include both ASLE and Palouse artists and writers.



Schultz, Elizabeth. [The Quickening](#) (Poems).
Simsbury, CT: Antrim House
Publishing, 2014.



Schultz, Elizabeth. [The Sauntering Eye: Kansas Meditations](#) (Poems).
FutureCycle Press, 2014.



ASLE Ph.D.

Augustine Nchoujie defended his PhD thesis, titled "An Ecocritical Reading of Zakes Mda's Selected Novels," on the 25th of June, 2014, at the



City of Moscow, Idaho. Photo by Scott Slovic.

We are also delighted to welcome to ASLE a stellar lineup of [keynote speakers](#) and panelists, addressing a range of underground topics, and from both the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere. Inaugurating our event will be Stephanie LeMenager, Barbara and Carlisle Moore Professor of English at the University of Oregon and author of the brilliant *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century*. On Wednesday, we will have the great pleasure to listen to internationally recognized and multiply awarded poet, novelist and essayist Linda Hogan, former Writer in Residence for the Chickasaw Nation and Professor Emerita at the University of Colorado. On Thursday we have a pair of very exciting discussions. In the morning, "Life Underground" will feature University of California, Santa Cruz feminist luminaries Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing discussing (among other things) fungi, lichens, and global underground networks of multispecies dissent and connection; in the afternoon, "Extractive and Underground Poetics" will include multi-talented poet-activist-scholars Ann Fisher-Wirth (University of Mississippi), Tanure Ojaide (University of North Carolina, Charlotte), and Rita Wong (Emily Carr University of Art and Design), who will both read from their work and discuss the role of poets and poetry in responding to extractivist cultures and politics. Friday night will see a Gathering of Palouse Writers from the University of Idaho and the region to celebrate and probe the ecologies and relations of the inland Northwest and also bring to light some of the deeply local manifestations of global undergrounds, insurgencies, and literatures. And Saturday afternoon, immediately before our closing banquet, Jorge Navarro from Huerto de La Familia will speak from his expertise in the politics of cultivation, thinking about the soil as a medium for growing food security, social equity, and community memory for Latino communities in the area of Eugene, Oregon and beyond.

Of course, we will have a full program of concurrent sessions--panels, roundtables, jam sessions--in addition to pre-conference seminars and workshops organized by Janet Fiskio (stay tuned for the full listing and pre-registration details). New to ASLE 2015 will be a limited number of mid-conference workshops and seminars; along with a half-day program of documentary films related to the conference theme, these sessions will occur during our Friday afternoon field session slot for those who prefer to stay closer to campus. And there will still be ample space for socializing at several sponsored receptions, including the popular [Authors' Reception](#), where ASLE authors will be able to showcase their new books.

We look forward to seeing you in Moscow in June!

University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon. The members of the jury included: Prof. Nol Alembong who served as president; Prof. Kashim Ibrahim Tala who served as rapporteur (supervisor); and Profs. Ngengasong Nkemngong and Djokoua Manyaka Toko, who served as members.



ASLE Officer Elections

Each autumn, ASLE members are invited to elect new leaders to important positions within the organization. As reported in the Spring 2014 issue of ASLE News, the Executive Council voted unanimously at last spring's retreat to approve a new election cycle for the President and Vice President, which will begin with this fall's elections. Where in previous years a new VP has been elected each cycle and automatically become President after serving as VP for one year, we will now elect a new VP and that person will serve as VP for two years (2015-2016), and Immediate Past VP for one year. We will then elect a President in the fall of 2015 to serve two years in that role and one as Immediate Past President. Two new Executive Council members will be elected, which is unchanged from prior years. We have a fantastic slate of candidates, whose statements are printed below.

The ASLE election will primarily take place online. This year, as we shift to a new website and membership platform, we will run our voting through a new platform as well. Current members will be sent an email via electionbuddy.com, which contains a link to the secure election online. Instructions and ballots will be available there. There is also a link next to each candidate's name entitled "profile" to review the same candidate statements published below. The secure system will ensure that each member can vote only once.

Online voting will begin immediately and will close at 11pm EST on December 6, 2014. If you would like a paper ballot sent to you, or have questions about online voting, please contact Amy McIntyre at info@asle.org or 603-357-7411.

Candidates for Vice President

Vote for one

Sarah Jaquette Ray, Humboldt State University

I am honored to be invited to run for Vice President this year. This is an exciting time to be active in ASLE, and to be part of the emerging environmental humanities movement more broadly. My vision as VP would be to:

- address our field's relevance to underrepresented communities and work on inclusivity within ASLE
- position ASLE as the primary organization of the environmental humanities
- make ASLE a resource for members' teaching and institutional service

If elected VP, I will focus on these aspects of ASLE's Strategic Plan.

These priorities should inform the 2015 conference in Idaho. I would encourage providing incentives for graduate students and international attendees, and creating opportunities for collaboration among teachers, scholars, and creative artists and writers in a range of fields. My approach in supporting President Sandilands would be to use my experience planning an ASLE off-year symposium, "Environment, Culture, and Place in a Rapidly Changing North," which focused on indigenous environmental issues, showcased Northern writers and scholars, crossed disciplines, and supported graduate students. A major reason for our success in Juneau was the attention we paid to issues of diversity-in terms of both discipline and cultural representation. You can read about the symposium on ASLE's Diversity Blog at <http://www.aslediversity.org/2012/04/16/asle-off-year-symposium-a-focus-on-diversity/>.

Thinking beyond the conference, and working closely with ASLE's Diversity Coordinator and the Diversity Caucus, I would work on expanding our affiliations, providing inclusive pedagogy and leadership resources and incentives, and outreaching to organizations like the Center for Diversity and Environment. In consultation with the existing Executive Council Digital Strategy subcommittee, I would explore ways to help ASLE members make their classes, programs, and institutions more inclusive, and to better connect ASLE to groups working on issues of environmental justice and the public humanities.

Since joining ASLE in 2005, I have sought to be involved in the organization in every way possible. I am in my second year as a member of ASLE's Executive Council, and was Graduate Student Liaison from 2009-2011. I have been involved in several initiatives to address inclusivity in ASLE. As a member of the Travel Awards committee for several years, I have helped to recognize inclusive research. This year, I helped formalize guidelines for Interest Groups and for accessibility.

These commitments are consistent with my own research, and my teaching and service at Humboldt State University, where I teach a course on "Power, Privilege, and the Environment" and recently led a Sustainability and Diversity student success workshop. I am committed to making environmental studies relevant to a range of students. As Program Leader of the new Environmental Studies major at HSU, I work toward inclusivity in the classroom and at multiple levels of administration.

I also see my leadership at HSU as advocating for environmental humanities, a marginalized field within environmental studies. This is a role that many of ASLE's

current and emerging scholars are likely to serve. ASLE is poised to be the authority for our efforts both in and beyond academia.

As VP, I see goals of inclusivity and making ASLE the cornerstone of the environmental humanities as mutually reinforcing, and I would be honored to work on projects to meet these aims.



Mabor beach, southern Goa, India. Photo by Mark Long.

Heather I. Sullivan, Trinity University

Working for ASLE as Vice President would be a great honor. I have been a member since 2003, and have attended all the meetings since Boston. Currently, I am chair of ASLE's ad-hoc Translation Committee providing grants to support the translation of international ecocriticism into English (2013-16). I am very interested in working towards expanding our diversity, international connections, and interdisciplinary projects both within the United States and beyond, particularly with our internationally affiliated groups. My own teaching, research, and service have all been focused on just such goals: as a German and Comparative Literature teacher and scholar, my emphasis is always on sharing ideas across cultures, disciplines, and continents. Additionally, I seek a broader time frame for studying the environmental humanities that includes works of literature throughout the entire "Anthropocene" (often considered to begin with the Industrial Revolution), and earlier, together with analyses of the most recent texts. I have published widely on ecocriticism, and have been co-guest editor of several special volumes on ecocriticism in various journals including *ISLE*, the German studies journal *Colloquia Germanica*, and a forthcoming volume in *New German Critique*. My research focus is on Goethe and the German romantics, literature in the Anthropocene, and eco-science fiction both American and international; my current project is on what I call the "dark pastoral."

Considering global climate change and the many wide-scale environmental crises across the planet, it is particularly urgent to work locally with our own campuses and cities, regionally and nationally across the United States, but also internationally. Again, this kind of bridge building has long been my priority. Locally, I am the Faculty Chair of Sustainability at Trinity University, and I teach multiple courses on literature and the environment for our environmental studies and comparative literature programs. Regionally and nationally, I attend all the North American ASLE meetings and participate as fully as possible in our activities and exchanges here and abroad. I have also been active in bringing ecocriticism into German studies. In terms of the international level, I attend the European ecocriticism conferences in which I participate as a board member of our sister group there, EASCLE, and I am a member of several Trans-Atlantic Environmental research networks. Efforts towards finding possible solutions to the many global environmental problems are more likely to be successful when we engage in scholarly, artistic, and activist collaboration here and abroad. If elected as Vice

President for ASLE, my goal would be to continue working towards additional joint projects, conversations, and meetings with diverse groups in North America and across national boundaries.

Candidates for Executive Council

Vote for two

Elizabeth Dodd, Kansas State University

My involvement with ASLE began with the first conference at Colorado State University when I was a (very) young assistant professor. Much has changed for both the organization and my own career since then, though ASLE has remained an important intellectual home for me. I've served on the very first executive council, in the mentoring program, as an editorial board member for *ISLE*, and as a judge for the graduate student creative writing awards. I would be grateful for the opportunity to give back to the organization further through a term on the Executive Council.

ASLE's increasing interdisciplinary and global emphases particularly interest me. I've been involved in much interdisciplinary teaching at Kansas State University, including team-taught courses, study abroad, and cross-disciplinary research projects. I serve on a large and energetic board for a new Prairie Studies Initiative with our Museum of Art and department of Landscape Architecture. A poet, an essayist, and a scholar, I try to enhance communication and shared purpose among colleagues and students with disparate experiences.

My published work includes two collections of poetry, three of creative nonfiction (one of which, *In the Mind's Eye*, was awarded ASLE's Creative Book Award), one of criticism, and essays, articles, and reviews in various venues.

Condensing a list like this shows the map of where one has been. What I'd like next is further exploration of ways ASLE can support and enrich scholars, creative writers, teachers, and students in collaborative efforts in a time when shrinking university budgets, increased corporate management styles, and politicization of the academic enterprise--and greater dependence on non-tenure track teaching faculty--place such efforts in increasing jeopardy.

Heather Houser, University of Texas, Austin

ASLE provided an amicable forum for sharing my scholarship as a graduate student, and it introduced me to generous mentors. Now, as an assistant professor at UT Austin, I'm honored to stand for election for the Executive Council. It's an historic time to be an ecocritic thanks to the scholar-teachers who have sustained ASLE and given us a voice. The organization has shown our colleagues that studying how culture represents environmental issues is an invaluable pursuit. I'm drawn to serve the membership so that the environmental humanities earn an even stronger presence on our campuses and beyond. I'd work to bring more community-oriented events to the biennial conferences. This may involve inviting local stakeholders to sessions or holding events off-campus in which conference goers and community organizers collaborate to address environmental challenges. I also wish to enhance ASLE's emphasis on mentorship and professional innovation. ASLE's current website redesign will help with these activities by improving networking and resource sharing. I believe this portal can also serve job seekers considering non-faculty positions.

As a postdoc and professor, I've taught environmental literature courses that cross genres and disciplines and have organized environmental humanities programming at the institutional level. My commitments to environmentalism are

not only scholarly. I'm involved in campaigns that put me in conversation with activists from the areas of labor, indigenous rights, and affordable housing. My research is centered on contemporary environmental literature and media, and science and technology studies. My book, *Ecosickness in Contemporary U.S. Fiction: Environment and Affect*, just appeared with Columbia University Press, and I've published ecocritical articles in *American Literature*, *Public Culture*, *American Literary History*, and *Los Angeles Review of Books*.

Stephen Rust, University of Oregon and Oregon State University

ASLE represents many things to me--people, ideas, a conference, a journal, a dream. As ASLE continues to expand, it is vital that we maintain our status as the flagship organization for the environmental humanities because at ASLE we value not only our shared sense of commitment to our work and the planet but to each other as well. This commitment is the reason ASLE events are so professionally and personally fulfilling. As a member of the EC, I will strive to help ASLE a) expand the field's scope into new areas of research, b) develop more efficient ways to share information among our international affiliates, c) build bridges with like-minded scholarly and nonprofit organizations, and d) insist that diversity and inclusiveness remain hallmarks of ASLE into the future.

Collaboration has been a vital part of my career as a scholar and educator. I chair the ASLE ecomedia interest group and served on the ASLE ad hoc committee on interest groups. I also moderate the online forum Ecomediastudies.org, where we call attention to new work in the field and maintain an active database of syllabi and other resources. My publications include two collections co-edited with Salma Monani and Sean Cubitt--*Ecocinema Theory and Practice* (AFI/Routledge, 2013) and *Ecomedia: Key Issues* (Earthscan/Routledge, forthcoming)--and a special cluster of essays on "Ecohorror" co-edited with Carter Soles for the Summer 2014 issue of *ISLE*. I am presently a full-time adjunct instructor at the University of Oregon and Oregon State University.



Post-monsoon sky, central Goa, India. Photo by Mark Long.

Nicole Seymour, California State University, Fullerton

I am thrilled about this invitation to run for the Executive Council of ASLE, an organization that has been invaluable to me as a scholar and teacher.

I am currently Assistant Professor of English in the area of Literature and the Environment at California State University, Fullerton. Previously, I was a Fellow at

the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Munich, Germany. My first book, *Strange Natures: Empathy, Futurity, and the Queer Ecological Imagination*, came out in 2013 from the University of Illinois Press. I have also published several articles on environmental justice and queer ecology in ecocritical and media studies journals.

My involvement with ASLE has been wide-ranging. To date, I have organized two panels and delivered two papers at ASLE conferences, reviewed two books for *ISLE*, and, most recently, served as a member of the Access Initiatives Working Group--a project of ASLE's Diversity Caucus. As part of this group, I drafted guidelines aimed at making ASLE conferences accessible to marginalized populations, including disabled persons.

As part of the Executive Council, I would continue in my commitment to making ASLE an accessible, inclusive, and diverse organization, especially when it comes to issues of disability, sexuality, and gender identity. I am also very invested in ecomedia studies and, specifically, ecocinema studies; another of my goals would be to ensure that this area of interest is well-represented within the organization and its associated projects. Many thanks for your consideration.

Laura-Gray Street, Randolph College

I am honored to be nominated for the ASLE Executive Council and would welcome the opportunity to give back to this rich inter-/multidisciplinary organization some portion of the support and inspiration it has provided me since 2001, when I attended my first conference in Flagstaff, AZ. My poetry collection, *Pigment and Fume*, came out with Salmon Poetry in 2014, and my work has appeared in *ISLE*, *Hawk and Handsaw*, *Terrain.org*, *Many Mountains Moving* (Ecopoetry Issue), *Isotope*, and numerous other journals. In 2013, Trinity University Press published *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, which Ann Fisher-Wirth and I co-edited, a comprehensive collection of over 200 poets and an introduction by former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Hass that is already in its 2nd printing. At Randolph College, I direct the English Department's Creative Writing Program, chair the Visiting Writers Series, and serve on our multidisciplinary BFA faculty. I also helped to shape and regularly teach classes for our Environmental Studies major, established in 2000. Both my teaching and writing are informed by engagement with regional and local organizations such as the James River Association, the Greater Lynchburg Environmental Network, and the Anne Spencer House and Garden Museum. If elected to the Executive Council, I would work to represent the creative arts and the efforts of the newly established Creative Caucus; and I would support the wide-ranging intersections of sciences, humanities, and arts that have, in my experience, characterized ASLE at its finest.

ASLE-Sponsored Conference in India a Success

By Mark C. Long, ASLE President

The international conference "Towards Ecocultural Ethics: Recent Trends and Future Directions" at the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), Goa, India, was held October 9-11, 2014, and organized by the BITS Department of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Department of Philosophy at Goa University. The event brought together research scholars and teachers from departments of English language and literature, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, business, communications, political science, philosophy, and religious studies.

Three days of conversations and debates about ecology, culture and ethics began with my keynote address, "The Ecological Arts: Humanities, Technology, Science." I was also a panelist at a featured conference session on ecological learning with a philosopher who teaches ethics at an Indian school of mining, a fisheries biologist employed by the Indo-German Biodiversity Program, a community activist from the capital city of Panjim, and an expert on the science and logistics of wastewater treatment. Another rewarding moment of the conference for me was a young research scholar telling me that my opening keynote inspired him to bring a group of tribal people to the BITS campus for his talk on the conflicts between tourism and fishing on Goa's Zuari River.



ASLE President Mark Long delivering keynote address. Photo by Department of Photography, BITS Goa.

The concurrent sessions highlighted the diverse landscape of the ecological humanities in India. Presentations on ecology and ethics, water studies, business and ecology, ecopolitics, Jainism, ecological justice and indigenous people, the Vedic tradition, Oikic studies, ecocinema, and representations of land and animals, to name a few, fueled lively conversations in the open halls and central green areas of the campus, as well as during afternoon tea breaks and evening meals. The conference concluded with a plenary address, "Melting Sneakers, Magic Rocks, and Miscarriages: Numbers and Narratives in US Environmental Law," by attorney Rebecca Todd (who happens to be my wife) on her work with Lois Gibbs on the Love Canal resettlement controversy during the late 1980s, and with eloquent remarks on the value of the humanities by a distinguished visiting professor of electrical engineering, Dr. Raghubir Sharan, who sat in on the proceedings.



Post-conference field trip. Photo by Rebecca Todd.

As a co-sponsor of this international conference, ASLE-US helped bring together over 160 people from across India--from Assam to Kerala, as well as from Egypt, Zambia, and Australia. BITS Goa has emerged as a center for the ecological and environmental humanities in India. In fact, the 2014 Tinai Eco-Film Festival will reconvene in 2015. For more information about upcoming events, contact Dr. Rayson Alex, the secretary of tiNai: An Organisation for promoting Ecocriticism (formerly OSLE, the Organisation for Studies in Literature and Environment-India) at raysonalex@goa.bits-pilani.ac.in. Or visit the film festival web page at <http://tinaiecofilmfestival.wordpress.com/>.

Report from SLSA 2014

By Helena Feder, East Carolina University

The 28th Annual Conference of the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts was held in Dallas, Texas on October 9-12, 2014. The theme of this year's conference was "Fluid," an idea that evokes multiple, overlapping definitions and disciplines. As the organizers have it, "Fluid can describe the property of flow, particles that move freely among themselves and that form and deform under pressure. It can refer to liquids both bodily and cultural, blood and capital. It evokes anything that is not solid, fixed, or stable." The conference featured two plenary speakers. Karen Barad gave a talk entitled "Liquid Time, Solid Memories, and Diffracted Histories"; Robert Markley's address, "What Was Climate Science? Knowledge without a Future," discussed disturbing climatic shifts within the academy as well as those larger shifts without. There were many interesting animal studies panels at this year's conference, and two excellent creative panels (and I'm not writing this just because I read on one of them, really!). There were also two excellent ASLE-sponsored panels. The first, "Biosphere Genealogy," focused on the work of Vernadsky and Bergson. The second, "Mediating Climate Knowledge," explored climate genres, data and documentary, and the early Anthropocene.



Sunset over Puget Sound, WA. Photo by Paul Lindholdt.

And there are a few others I must mention. Alan Rauch, of UNC Charlotte, chaired a panel entitled, "Humans and Other Urban Animals: Considering Constructions of Species in/and the City," which considered the urban squirrel, unstable horses, runaway wolves and rabid dogs and, importantly, interspecies trash. Another panel, "Waterworlds: Ecocritical Considerations of Fluid" contained papers on topics as diverse as the California drought, polar landscapes and Chernobyl, and systems ecology. All in all, it was another exciting meeting of minds like and unlike, exchanging ideas on topics ranging from posthuman identities and the biopolitics of elephant's teeth to war machines and the epistemological multiplicity of Oliver Wendell Holmes.

When can we do this again, you ask? Well, the news is good. Go to our website for information, coming soon, on next year's conference (<http://www.litsciarts.org/>) and be sure to stop by the SLSA panel at the upcoming [ASLE biennial conference](#).

ASLE Session at RMMLA 2014

By Jordan Carson, Baylor University

The [Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association](#) Conference in Boise, Idaho, October 9-11, included an ASLE-sponsored panel on the topic of nature and spirituality in literature.

The session was chaired by Jordan Carson of Baylor University. Elizabeth Fredericks from Baylor University presented "A Habitation and a Home: Place in John Clare's Early Poems," in which she discussed how Clare's insistence upon nature's intrinsic value, and the genuine meaning to be found in mortal life, was

also a reaction against contemporary religious tendencies--often complicit with the rise of industry--to devalue material life and experiences and urge a focus upon an impersonal, theocentric afterlife. Samantha Harvey of Boise State University presented "Thoreau's Experiment in Dynamic Matter," in which she argued that Thoreau understood life as a dynamic process through which the human self might flourish spiritually by means of a dedicated study of nature's particulars. Thoreau's understanding of life as an integrated, dynamic process thus also anticipates present-day New Materialist theories of the agency of matter. Dr. Harvey's presentation was part of a forthcoming book chapter, "Coleridge, Thoreau, and the Transatlantic 'Riddle of the World,'" coauthored with Rochelle Johnson, which will be part of the forthcoming book, *The Gospel According to this Moment: Thoreau at Two Hundred*, edited by Kristen Case and Kevin Van Anglen, from Cambridge University. Finally, Jay Beavers presented "Prophets of Nature in Cormac McCarthy's *The Orchard Keeper*," in which he discussed how the many ways in which character Arthur Ownby interacts and responds to the natural world around him can be explained by understanding the nature of Old Testament prophets and their attitude toward the natural world. The prophet's role includes preserving and stewarding the land for future generations in a way that benefits the land and serves the people who live on it, criticizing governmental powers that appropriated land for their own use. The three papers worked very well together, as they all addressed the intersection between nature and spirituality from very different perspectives. The panel was well attended and we had a fantastic discussion following the presentations.



Poison Ivy. Photo by Paul Lindholdt.

Course Spotlight

A Pig Tale: Teaching Sustainable Humanities in Siena, Italy

By Gioia Woods, Associate Professor of Humanities, Northern Arizona University

It was a time when the simplest foods contained traps, threats, and frauds...cheese was made of plastic, butter from tallow candles; in fruit and vegetables the arsenic of insecticides was concentrated in percentages higher than the vitamin content; to fatten chickens they stuffed them with synthetic pills that could transform the man who ate a drumstick into a chicken himself....From the tins of oil it was no longer the golden juice of the olive that flowed, but the fat of old mules, cleverly disguised.

So begins the thirteenth chapter of Italo Calvino's fable-like story of Marcovaldo, the Chaplinesque hero of the short collection *Marcovaldo: or The Seasons in the City* (1963). I had been reading Italian literature in preparation for a spring 2013 study abroad assignment teaching environmental humanities in Siena, Italy. I loved Marcovaldo and his nostalgia for the days when his wife's shopping bag brought him joy, for the days when he could find a forest instead of a collection of billboards from which to harvest firewood, when he could fish rivers untainted by blue paint from a nearby factory. Gentle Marcovaldo, who liberates a rabbit destined for science, harvests poisonous mushrooms from a city median, and wistfully pushes a cart down glittering aisles of a supermarket bursting with food he cannot afford. Calvino wrote the Marcovaldo stories during the consumer boom that was the Italian post-war "economic miracle"; the integrity of food and food systems is a dominant theme of the collection.

I taught several Marcovaldo stories during that spring in Italy as part of my "Literature and Landscape" class. In order to make full sense of Marcovaldo's experience, however, I knew I had to return to Italy to focus exclusively on food. My colleagues at Northern Arizona University taught food studies courses, but they were anthropologists, or political theorists, or environmental scientists. I was a literary critic. How could a humanist contribute to food studies? How could food be a marker for the sustainable humanities? I took as my starting point Roland Barthes' assertion that beyond a primary need, food is "a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior" (21). During the summer of 2014, I returned to Siena with a group of Northern Arizona Students to learn about what Tuscan food systems had to communicate.



Cinta senese, the "belted" Sienese pig, detail from Ambrosio Lorenzetti's 1328 fresco, The Allegory of Good and Bad Government.
Photo by Gioia Woods.

Our education began with a pig. The pig was in a fresco, probably the first secular fresco in all of Europe. Siena's secular center is the Palazzo Pubblico, where since the late 13th century the Council of Nine sat in judgment, made laws, and debated ways to defeat their mortal enemy, Florence. To remind the council to be just, they gathered in the presence of Ambrosio Lorenzetti's 1328 fresco, *The Allegory of Good and Bad Government*. Lorenzetti painted three full walls of the Sala del Pace, The Room of Peace. One wall personified what the council would need to make good government--Justice, Wisdom, Harmony, and Peace, among others. Another wall warned of the effects of bad government: murderous bands roam Siena, and the medieval Tuscan countryside is burned and bleak. On the third wall, Lorenzetti painted the ideal of good government. Here, inside the city walls students sit in lesson, artisans work in store fronts, and muses dance in the streets. The countryside is prosperous and productive. The rolling Tuscan hills are dotted with fruitful fields, busy laborers, and distant neighboring cities. Traders laden with sacks of grain, peasants driving donkeys, and richly-robed citizens on horseback enter and exit the walled city. What caught my eye among the detailed figures was a lone man driving a black-and-white pig into the city. This pig, I learned, was the cinta senese, the "belted" Sienese pig, prized by famers for its heartiness, adaptability, and sweet, firm flesh. The pig had a long, elegant snout, a compact, low-slung, but muscular body, and boarish bristles about its neck and back. I'd never seen a pig like this. It plodded steadily forward along the road into the city walls; its driver's eyes were keenly fixed on it, as if willing it to make eye contact.



Students touring medieval food garden in Siena. Photo by Gioia Woods.

Over the ensuing weeks, the students and I surveyed the social and symbolic meanings of food in Italian culture and its relationship to larger issues of environmental sustainability. We learned about Etruscan civilization and their food ways, analyzing frescoes of their symposia, where men and women sat together at table. We read about the Roman Republic's bread subsidies and later Roman Empire food extravaganzas. We walked parts of the pilgrimage route connecting Paris to Rome, along which peasants foraged for roots and greens during the decline of the "dark ages." We visited medieval convents in which nuns during the early Middle Ages kept

accounts of the reinvigorated spice trade and developed recipes for the region's famous panforte. We studied the history of the medieval wars between Siena and Florence and learned about the ways territory and conquest were tied to the production and distribution of Chianti wine. We examined the Medici's collection of unusual fruit and seed specimens, captured in lush paintings by some of the Renaissance's most prolific and well-funded artists. We toured Siena's Fisiocritici Museum, dedicated in 1691 to scientific learning and housing thousands of ecological specimens. We visited the Mezzadria Museum to see images of the long history of sharecropping in Tuscany. We sat with the proprietor at the Bottega di Stigliano, a market restaurant housed in a 200-year-old farmhouse that brought together small local producers, sold local products, and hosted EU-grant funded workshops to teach the neighbors how to make bread, grow greens, and forage for wild foods. Tuscans needed to relearn these skills, the proprietor explained, after being removed from their small garden plots and into suburbs by the post-war economic boom. We visited the mercatale to talk with vendors and artisanal producers about the philosophy of the filiera corta, the short chain that links the producer to the consumer. Students reported on the devastating effects of Mussolini's land reforms, the deep poverty and famine between the world wars, and the miracle of economic growth after World War II that contributed to environmental pollution, habitat and heritage loss, and the disruption of food systems. We read poems, nonfiction, and fiction-including some Marcovaldo stories-that helped us understand what food communicates. It became potently clear that stereotypical images of Italian abbondanza belied the slow violence that threatened the sustainability of the food system on the Italian peninsula.

Nearly every day I would walk past the Museo Civico where Lorenzetti's allegory silently admonished centuries of civic leaders. I would think about that pig, with its long snout, black belt, and low heavy body. I fancied I understood the man driving the pig to market and his (to me) obvious desire to make eye contact with that pig. Maybe it exasperated him, rooting around his garden. Maybe he loved it, talking affectionately to it when it came in from foraging. He had raised it, lived with it for years, and now he would trade it to butchers who would transform it into lardo, prosciutto, and capicola.



Students with artisanal producers at mercatale. Photo by Gioia Woods.

Our last field trip of the semester took us to Spannocchia, an organic agricultural estate just outside Siena. An Italian friend to whom I'd confessed my pig obsession urged me to schedule the "pig tour" there, and after a short hike through oak-studded hills, we arrived at the medieval farmhouse. There we were greeted by Jessica, an American intern with an advanced degree in culinary history. She led us through a muddy meadow behind the farm's stone buildings where a group of sleepy black-and-pink piglets dozed in the sun. A 200-pound sow lay on her side as piglets suckled her. The proprietors of Spannocchia had helped bring this breed of pig back from the brink of extinction, Jessica explained. They allowed the pigs to forage for wild chestnuts and live long, semi-feral lives free from confinement and antibiotics. They had worked to obtain DOP (denominazione di origine controllata, controlled destination of origin) classification for the pork products. This quality-assurance label guaranteed that food is produced within a specified region under certain conditions; for this breed of pig, it reestablished the centuries-old relationship between the pig and its native region, protecting both pig and habitat.

"How did the owners of this estate know about this pig if it was nearly extinct?" a student asked. "Have any of you seen Lorenzetti's Allegory of Good and Bad Government?" Jessica responded. We eagerly nodded yes. "Did you happen to notice the pig being driven into the city? This is that pig, the cinta senese. Lorenzetti's painting inspired us to find out more about that pig. For a long time, it was our primary point of research. Since the 1950s, Tuscans had become used to sub-standard salumi, and gotten complacent about pigs raised in intensive commercial environments."

After our tour, during which we learned about restoration efforts, visited the humane "transformation" facilities, and tasted the specialty salumi, I gathered the students for a final lecture. It struck me that Lorenzetti's fresco had provided the necessary environmental memory enabling a twenty-first century community to remember a thirteenth-century pig. Lorenzetti's image provided a counter balance to the "official" narrative of mass-produced pork, shrinking habitat, and inevitable fast food. That image helped Spannocchia and its partners establish the cinta senese's history in Tuscany, its relationship to geography, politics, and economics. In other words, Lorenzetti's image provided the environmental memory that helped these modern Tuscans imagine and understand a world they no longer inhabited. This was the sustainable humanities in action, I explained. That pig made us happy. That pig helped me understand how a humanist scholar could contribute to food studies. I imagine that if Marcovaldo could meet that pig, he'd be happy, too.

Work Cited: Barthes, Roland. "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. New York: Routledge, 1997. 20-27

Member News

Deborah Fleming has published *Without Leave*, a hippie/Vietnam Era novel, with Black Mountain Press. Winner of the 2013 Asheville Award, the novel chronicles the stories of a man who goes AWOL from the Navy and an artist and college dropout who meet in the Haight-Ashbury area of San Francisco in 1967.

JoeAnn Hart's novel *Float*, about plastics in the ocean, won the Fiction category for the 2014 Rubery Book Award. Based in the UK, the Rubery Award is for independent presses. *Float* was published by Ashland Creek Press in 2013, and was reviewed in the Autumn 2013 issue of ISLE.

Rochelle Johnson, Professor of English and Environmental Studies at The College of Idaho, recently received the Edith and Richard French Fellowship in support of one month in residence at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University, where she will research Susan Fenimore Cooper in the James Fenimore Cooper Collection. She was also awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Fellowship for 12-months (8/2014-7/2015) toward a biography of Susan Fenimore Cooper.

Joan Maloof, Professor Emeritus at Salisbury University and founder and director of the [Old-Growth Forest Network](#), was awarded the 2014 Mary Byrd Davis Nature Writing Residency at [Bordeneuve Retreat](#) for a month-long, all expenses paid residency in southern France.

ASLE News Notes

Environmental Humanities on the Ground: Materiality, Sustainability, and Applicability

Colleagues in China at Shanghai Normal University are organizing this conference from November 6-8, 2015, and invite submissions in English (max. 300 words) before March 8, 2015, to the conference at: environment2015@163.com. Registration will be free for those whose papers are accepted.

There has been much discussion recently of the overarching intersections between various humanistic disciplines concerned with the environment—environmental history, philosophy, art, and literature, among others. But it is now time for these fields, in the spirit of new trends in eco-materialism, to come down from the sky and touch the practical ground. How might we apply our work as scholars and teachers in the environmental humanities to the New Materialism? What are the points of intersection between human culture and ecological impacts? How does the perennial tension between economic development and the protection of nature and human well-being find expression in literature and art? Can our theories and analytical methods be applied to material culture as well as to artistic and popular texts?

The conference attempts to answer the call for us to bring the combined force of humanistic disciplines to bear on serious environmental and social issues facing countries around the world—for us to find our "seat at the table" along with such "practical disciplines" as law, business, politics, engineering, and the natural

sciences. We welcome proposals that address (but not limited to) the following topics, better with a cross-disciplinary purpose or scope: The language of responses to climate change; Soil, food, and sustainability; Manufactured landscape and ethical dilemma; Discursive representations of animals; Body, place, and justice; Nature, earth, and art.

Member News

Whether you got a new job, won an award, or did something interesting, enlightening, or exciting, we want to know what you're up to! If you have some news to share with other ASLE members, and it doesn't "fit" into the Bookshelf, PhD, or Emeritus categories, please contact Catherine Meeks (catherine.meeks@gmail.com) with the Subject heading "Member News."

ASLE Emeritus

ASLE News honors those ASLE members retired or retiring from teaching. If you would like to acknowledge someone in this new feature--or if you yourself will be retiring during the coming academic year--please contact Catherine Meeks (catherine.meeks@gmail.com). We will include a brief account of scholarly interests, the institutions of employment and years taught in the next newsletter.

ASLE PhDs

Have you or one of your students recently defended a dissertation? If so, ASLE News wants to know. Each issue, we include announcements commemorating those members who have recently completed their doctoral work. If you would like to be included in this feature, please contact Catherine Meeks (catherine.meeks@gmail.com) with the dissertation title, degree-granting institution, and committee members.

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