

THE AMERICAN NATURE WRITING NEWSLETTER

A BIENNIAL PUBLICATION DEVOTED TO THE STUDY OF WRITING ON NATURE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF LITERATURE AND ENVIRONMENT

FALL 1993

VOL. 5, No. 2

LETTER TO ANWN SUBSCRIBERS AND ASLE MEMBERS

Greetings. This jumbo issue of the newsletter commences with this pedestrian letter, processes through the sublime, and concludes with the miscellaneous.

The American Nature Writing Newsletter was founded in 1989 by Alicia Nitecki of Bentley College, which supplied the majority of the funds for its production. Over the years and under Alicia's guidance, several people volunteered to edit the various sections, and, thanks to the layout skills of Sarah Freas of The Maia Press, the newsletter began to look ever more professional.

In October 1992, the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) formed to promote the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature that considers the relationship between human beings and the natural world. In its brief life span, ASLE's membership has grown from the original fifty to the present four hundred. ASLE is undertaking many projects, including production of an annual membership directory, an annual annotated bibliography of scholarship, a Handbook for Graduate Study, an e-mail news network, an archives/syllabus exchange, and formal affiliation with several national and international conferences.

Soon after ASLE's formation, it became clear that the group would need a newsletter. Alicia Nitecki kindly agreed to let ASLE adopt *The American Nature Writing Newsletter*, even allowing ASLE to assume editorship. Accordingly, ASLE's first president, Scott Slovic, has edited the past two newsletters, and I am filling in for him this year while he is in Japan. Both Alicia and Sarah deserve a hearty thanks for initiating the conversation that has by now inspired so many of us.

As a result of the formal alliance between ANWN and ASLE, ASLE members will now automatically receive the newsletter (currently published twice a year). **Former ANWN subscribers will need to join ASLE in order to continue to receive the newsletter.** A membership form is provided at the back of this issue.

Our present practice is to engage a series of guest editors to edit thematic issues, while a managing editor coordinates production and relays ASLE news and business. The guest editor for this issue is Christopher Cokinos, and the topic is Contemporary American Nature Poetry. The Spring 1994 issue will be guest edited by Louise Westling on the Gaia Hypothesis, and the Fall 1994 issue by Matthias Schubnell on Native Americans and Nature Writing. Sincere thanks to our guest editors. Beginning with this issue, we plan to have a regular "Letter to the Members" column, informing ASLE members of current activities. In future issues, we would like to add a "Letters from the Membership" section. To be included in the next issue, send your brief letters and announcements to me (my address is printed below) by May 1, 1994.

Most of the ASLE business news appears at the end of this newsletter in the "General Notes and News," "Minutes of the 1993

ASLE Annual Meeting," and "Calls for Papers" sections. In the rest of this letter, I would like to extend thanks, to plead for money, and to propose a conference of our own.

ASLE has been blessed by the hard work of many people. It is very exciting to meet so many bright and committed folks. Thanks, of course, are due to Scott Slovic, ASLE's founder and first president, and to Mike Branch, ASLE's dedicated first secretary-treasurer. Without them, we would not exist at all. One of the skills we officers needed to learn this year was how to delegate duties. Thankfully, many people volunteered to share the load. Graduate liaisons Mark Schlenz and James David Taylor helped with promotion. Current graduate liaisons Dan Philippon and George Hart are at work on a Handbook for Graduate Study. Mike Munley is working as our archivist and syllabus exchange manager. Zita Ingham is coordinating ASLE's annual bibliography, and more than twenty people are serving as contributing editors to the bibliography. Paul Bryant ably edited the ASLE bylaws, making excellent suggestions for their improvement. Allison Wallace has stepped forward to serve as our treasurer and is in the process of filing papers to obtain non-profit status for our group. Dave Teague has volunteered to be conference tracker and is assembling a list of annual conferences so that ASLE members will be better equipped to propose panels for them. Tom Dean has agreed to be interim vice president this year, handling public relations and sharing in decision making. Heart-felt thanks to all and to many whom space does not permit me to mention. I would like to offer a special thanks to artist Karen Allaben-Confer, who donated the illustrations for this issue at a mere moment's notice, and to Nancy Peppin who ably handled the layout.

If present trends are indicative, it appears that ASLE's projects and mailings are going to exceed our funds. Rather than curtail our projects or raise our membership dues, I think that we need to become serious about seeking stable funding in the form of grants, donations, and institutional affiliations. I will make it my goal this year as president to ensure that ASLE finds secure financial footing, but I honestly have no experience in such matters. I need help. If you are able to make a donation, our lawyer consultants assure us that we are far enough along in the non-profit application process that your donations will be tax deductible. Membership renewals are right around the corner for many of our original members; prompt response to your renewal notice will help greatly. If you have funding suggestions or grant writing experience, I would appreciate your advice. Perhaps your institution would be willing to pledge a certain amount to ASLE in exchange for being listed as one of our sponsoring institutions. I believe that we need about five people, each working on different funding efforts; therefore, volunteers are hereby hailed. Please write or call me.

One of the most pleasing discoveries about ASLE has

been this one: not only do we care about important issues, but we are pretty darn good at having fun. Many ASLE members are accomplished musicians, and many more have a quirky sense of humor. Almost all of our members enjoy doing things outdoors. In short, this association has the potential to have some wonderful times together. It was evident at the Western American Literature conference in Wichita, Kansas (see "Minutes" in this issue) that we will soon need our own conference. Given our love of nature, perhaps our first conference should be in a beautiful place. Given our creativity, maybe we can think of innovative session structures to supplement (supplant?) the standard paper sessions. How about a few outdoor activities on the agenda? I suggest that we hold a conference during a time of year when it is warm enough to be outside comfortably, perhaps just after Spring term ends. It is unlikely that we'll be ready for our own conference this coming summer. I propose that we shoot for next summer (1995). If you

would like to send suggestions to me, I'd be happy to print them in the next newsletter. If you think you might like to host ASLE's first conference, please let an ASLE officer know. You won't have to work alone. We need to begin planning now.

Enough of the pedestrian. Let us, then, to the sublime. Bring on the poetry!

Sincerely,

Cheryll Glotfelty

President, ASLE
English Department
University of Nevada
Reno, NV 89557
(702) 784-6223



Earth recycling, 1993, pen and ink on scratchboard
Petticoat fungus; oak leaf and gall; other debris on an autumn substrate

The American Nature Writing Newsletter is published twice a year and contains brief essays, book reviews, classroom notes, and information about activities relating to the study of writing on nature and the environment. *ANWN* also serves as the newsletter for the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, reporting ASLE's business and publishing letters from its membership. Items of interest, including news about conferences, forthcoming publications, and work in progress, are welcome.

FOUNDING EDITOR	Alicia Nitecki Bentley College
MANAGING EDITOR	Cheryll Glotfelty University of Nevada, Reno
GUEST EDITOR	Christopher Cokinos Kansas State University
BOOK REVIEW EDITOR	Michael Branch Florida International University
CLASSROOM NOTES EDITOR/L.	Thomas Stuckert Findlay University
ILLUSTRATIONS	Karen Allaben-Confer Brooktondale, NY
LAYOUT	Nancy Peppin Reno, NV

**Thanks to Kansas State University, Manhattan, for partially funding this issue of the newsletter.*

ASLE Officers

PRESIDENT (in absentia)	Scott Slovic Southwest Texas State University on a Fulbright in Japan, 1993-94
PRESIDENT	Cheryll Glotfelty University of Nevada, Reno
VICE PRESIDENT	Thomas Dean Cardinal Stritch College
SECRETARY	Michael Branch Florida International University
TREASURER	Allison Wallace Unity College of Maine
ARCHIVIST	Mike Munley Ball State University
AUDIO ARCHIVIST	Thomas Meyers University of Texas, Austin
BIBLIOGRAPHY EDITOR	Zita Ingham Arkansas State University
CONFERENCE TRACKER	David Teague University of Houston
GRADUATE LIAISONS	Dan Philippon University of Virginia George Hart Kalamazoo, MI

IN THIS ISSUE . . .

Letter to Members
Cheryll Glotfelty

ARTICLES

After the Obit: the Greening of Contemporary American Poetry Christopher Cokinos	4
W.S. Merwin and the Nature of Nature Ralph Black	5
Nature, Pleasure, and the Sublime: Gary Snyder's Gesture with Language David Copland Morris	6
Joy Harjo and Louise Erdrich: Speaking for the Ground Louise Westling	8
Mary Oliver's Question John Elder	10
"... Always Listening to Words Listening to the World": William Stafford, 1914-1993 Wayne Dodd	11

POETRY

What's Here Naomi Shihab Nye	6
School Scott Minar	7
Catbird Virginia Terris	9
Gray Gray Sky Roger Mitchell	11
The Standing Dead Wayne Dodd	12

CLASSROOM NOTES

Nature as a Specific Image Marianna Hofer	12
Poetry in Composition Marianna Hofer	12

BOOK REVIEWS

<i>Poems for a Small Planet: Contemporary American Nature Poetry</i> , eds. Robert Pack and Jay Parini. Leslie Ryan	13
<i>The Forgotten Language: Contemporary Poets and Nature</i> , ed. Christopher Merrill. Daniel G. Payne	14

General Notes and News	15
Minutes of the 1993 ASLE Annual Meeting	16
Calls for Papers	18
Exchange Subscriptions and Memberships	
ASLE Membership Form	19

**All drawings are by Karen Allaben-Confer.*

AFTER THE OBIT: THE GREENING OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETRY

Christopher Cokinos
Guest Editor

It is...entirely possible that nature writing will eventually cross-fertilize both poetry and fiction, revivifying genres that have grown dangerously estranged from popular audiences.

—John A. Murray

Who killed poetry?

—Joseph Epstein

Who killed poetry? No one. Everyone. Is this even the right question? Did you see that flock of ibis? Did you notice how the green weeds are reclaiming that lot by the school?

I just got a flier across my desk for a new book—one I have ordered and will eagerly read. Here, I mention it simply for the diagnostic title...*After the Death of Poetry*. This is the conventional wisdom: contemporary American poetry is a corpse, the blood drained from it by modernist difficulty, the vital organs ripped from it by the universities which house so many of our poets. A corpse so neglected that most serious readers haven't noticed its passing, let alone bothered to bury it.

A poetry critic-detective, Joe Friday, stands astride the pale and drawn body and wants to know "the facts." These are, o that postmodernist rag, hard to pin down. Yes, modernism ushered in a new age of difficulty. On the other hand, T.S. Eliot did pack an arena at the University of Minnesota. Yes, creative writing programs have proliferated like Queen Anne's lace along roadsides, and, yes, many of our publishing poets and fiction writers work in them. But to speak of a singular kind of (dead and deadened) poetry (and fiction) arising from the academies like literary methane is absurd. Even the most casual literary reader can see the incredible diversity of writing styles and talents that abound in this vast nation.

Still, the audience for poetry in America is small. Average press runs for new books of poems are almost always in the low hundreds or thousands. On the other hand, some poets do sell a lot of books—Gary Snyder's *Turtle Island*, which won the 1975 Pulitzer Prize, is now in its seventeenth printing and has sold 115,000 copies. That's not bad in a nation where—a recent study shows us—almost half the population has some degree of literacy difficulty and where those who can read tend to gravitate toward Howard Stern and Ross Perot. Can we agree the audience for any serious writing isn't particularly large here?

Nonetheless, while much sweaty hand-wringing continues over what's wrong with American poetry, some of us have noticed a few interesting signs: Maya Angelou's "On the Pulse of Morning," her inaugural poem, was on the best-seller list; cowboy poetry festivals and urban poetry slams proliferate (and even if aesthetes want to look down at the "quality" of such work, it is *at least* a kind of public, oral poetry and a potential avenue for its adherents to printed work that is likely more resonant and perceptive); and the mainstream press has taken some recent interest in poetry—*The Washington Post*, for example, ran on its front page (top of the fold, with a photo) a long article on Rita Dove being named Poet Laureate.

There is a pulse in what so many have pronounced a corpse. And this issue of *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* shows, I think, that contemporary American poetry's best hope for maintaining and expanding its audience (and therefore *enlightening* its audience)



*First sign of life renewed, 1993, pen and ink on scratchboard
Amelanchier (shadbush, serviceberry, juneberry) blooms first in spring while all other trees and shrubs are just budding. The berries feed birds in June — early fruits.*

rests with those poets whose gaze falls outward, toward nature, toward environment, and (in a sense) inward toward what psychological and ethical futures we may choose in this seemingly diminished world.

I think of Robinson Jeffers, how his poetry is quoted again and again in environmental titles, how his poetry is known by biologists and activists and environmental philosophers. Not just by a circle of critics, a circle of writers. The poets featured in this issue—in articles and reviews and poems—look outward and inward too, like Jeffers, though, of course, the answers and observations are as diverse as the writers. The key is this: though I think American poetry healthier than many critics and writers, I am convinced it matters most when engaging what Mary Oliver says is the "only question://how to love this world."

Hence, this issue, which is, by the nature of the publication, only the briefest of introductions to contemporary American nature poetry. But it is a start, especially for those readers who think of "nature writing" almost solely as non-fiction prose. It is much more than that, and the connections among nature writers of different genres is a rich area of exploration, critically and pedagogically.

I hope that this special issue goes some way in bringing American poets of nature into our lives and our classrooms and our activist communities, to learn from them and be amazed by them. I hope it may convince those skeptics of American poetry that things are perhaps not quite so bad after all. On that last point, I won't hold my breath.

The poetry of nature, and our relationship to it, is a living, breathing, vital, sensuous, joyous, sobering, wonderful, sad, and indispensable body. A body of work. A body of works. A body that works. Poetry lives, because those poets who are doing the work Ezra Pound set out for us—to "make it new"—are doing just that with the most important matters possible: making new the old connections to the earth, making new the loveliness of the earth, making new our degradations of the earth.

Pattiann Rogers titles one poem: "The Family Is All There Is." It is a family, she delineates, that is all life, nonhuman, human. A family of "moonfish" and "willow herb" and "children playing at shoulder tag" and "wave gliders" and more. Connected. All. "Name something else," she concludes. What else is there?

The greening of contemporary American poetry is the life force in poetry today. It is a family history and a future. The poetry obit has been written, of course, before the death. There is more to say, but I will stop, with you, to listen. These green poems can make astonishing music. Listen, carefully. Begin to sing.

Kansas State University

W.S. MERWIN AND THE NATURE OF NATURE

Ralph Black

W.S. Merwin is a poet for whom the natural world often occurs as a riddle or a parable, a sign to be read and interpreted. It resonates in his poems like heat from a nearby, or light from a distant, fire, startling for what it does to the air, and to the rest of the world that the poem reflects and inhabits. But to categorize him too easily as a poet of nature is as reductive as it would be for such diverse poets as Wordsworth and Pablo Neruda: we rob him, as we would rob them, of some of his most acute sensibilities: the political, the personal, the cultural.

And yet Merwin is nothing if not an acute observer of landscape, of the minutiae of the natural world. The story of nature is told over and over, celebrated, eulogized. His earlier poems—in books like *The Moving Target* (1963), *The Lice* (1967), and the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Carrier of Ladders* (1970)—often presented aspects of the natural world as something isolated, devoid of human presence. When the landscape was populated at all, the human figure was often enigmatic and emblematic, as in “The Last One,” from *The Lice*. The poem, which echoes some of Edwin Muir’s later work, is a parable of environmental destruction:

Well in the morning they cut the last one.
Like the others the last one fell into its shadow.
It fell into its shadow on the water.

They took it away its shadow stayed on the water. (10)
The faceless and nameless “cutters” attempt to erase the shadow of the last tree, an act that for Merwin is an imaginative as well as an ecological death. The shadow, however, as the poem’s imaginative pulse, is a source of untold power, of caution, and of hope:

Well the next day started about the same it went on
growing.
They pushed lights into the shadow.
Where the shadow got onto them they went out.
They began to stomp on the edge it got their feet.
And when it got their feet they fell down.
It got into eyes the eyes went blind.
The ones that fell down it grew over and they vanished.
The ones that went blind and walked into it vanished.
The ones that could see and stood still
It swallowed their shadows.
Then it swallowed them too and they vanished.
Well the others ran. (11)

Often Merwin’s poems are pared down to the essentials of portraiture, the narrator absent, only the life of the landscape visible. This is the whole of “Memory of Summer Facing West,” from *The Compass Flower* (1977):

Sheep and rocks drifting together before sunset
late birds rowing home across bright spaces
shadows stroking the long day above the earth
wild voices high and far-carrying
at sun’s descent toward ripening grain (46)

He ticks off the details of the day, presenting a kind of strangeness in the first juxtaposition of sheep and rocks and then grounding the poem in that final, crisp image. The end-words of the poem—sunset, spaces, earth, far-carrying, grain—read like a kind of haiku, honing the moment even further. *The Carrier of Ladders* has a number of short poems that show Merwin’s debt to Japanese traditions of nature poetry. The poem “Tale” runs: “After many winters the moss/ finds the sawdust crushed bark chips/and says old friend/old friend” (72). And “Full Moonlight in Spring”: “Night sends this white eye/

to her brother the king of the snow” (73). Some of Merwin’s short poems owe more to the surrealist painters than to Basho, but in all of these poems the world reverberates out from that very place that the poem pays its unwavering attention to.

Merwin’s newer poems seek to comprehend more fully the connection between ecological and imaginative crises (and deaths) that a poem like “The Last One” explored. In *The Rain in the Trees* (1988), environmental destruction is linked time and again not with an abstract death of the poetic imagination, but with the far more concrete and chilling death of language itself. As the world perishes so do the names by which the world is known. The poem “Witness” is a kind of epigraph to the book: “I want to tell what the forests/were like/I will have to speak/in a forgotten language” (65). “Losing a Language” tells us “many of the things the words were about/no longer exist//the noun for standing in mist by a haunted tree/the verb for I...” (67). The poem that follows it, “The Lost Originals,” begins: “If only you had written our language/we would have remembered how you died...” (68). The poem “Chord” uses the creative and perhaps redemptive spirit of John Keats as a touchstone by which to measure our part in the world’s vanishing.

While Keats wrote they were cutting down the sandlewood
forests

while he listened to the nightingale they heard their own
axes echoing through the forests...

while the song broke over him they were in a secret place
and they were cutting it forever

while he coughed they carried the trunks to the hole in the
forest the size of a foreign ship...

when he lay with the odes behind him the woods were sold
for cannons

when he lay watching the window they came home and lay
down

and an age arrived when everything was explained in
another language (66)

Merwin’s most recent collection of poems, *Travels* (1992), is something of a departure for the poet, mostly for the narrative turn the poems take. Merwin embraces the stories and guises of Georg Eberhard Rumpf, the 17th century Dutch herbalist; David Douglas, 18th century Scottish naturalist for whom the Douglas Fir is named; Manuel Cordova and William Bartram. These “travels” (the landscapes here are physical and metaphysical alike) allow Merwin to delve more deeply into the myths and truths of nature, to worry in time as well as space over the crumbling relationships humans have fostered (or failed to foster) with the natural world.

These poems return to the discoverers and namers of nature as to origin and source. And it is perhaps this insistence on finding, knowing, and telling that source that makes the voice of these poems among Merwin’s most personal. “The Hill of Evening” is a meditation on aging and the importance of home, recalling some of Frost’s most elegant poems: “I have come to think/of each age I should tell you as a season/always complete in itself as the days/here seem sometimes to be all...” (11). But it is far from a personal mortality that Merwin is concerned with. In “Fulfillment,” a note is struck that sounds in many of his poems—memory, lineage, lasting. The animals warn the speaker that no one will remain to listen or to tell: “nobody will/remember you they said nobody/will believe you ever stood/in the daylight...” It is the stark possibility that ends the poem:

...when
summer is done and the last flocks have
vanished and from the sleepless
cold of the unremembered river that

one voice keeps rising
to be heard once only once but there
is nobody listening (37)

This, perhaps more than anything else, is the imperative toward which Merwin has been writing with such compassion and conviction for the last thirty years: that we do not forget who or where we are, that always there is a listener for the stories we tell about ourselves, about our world.

Works Cited

- Merwin, W.S. *The Carrier of Ladders*. New York: Atheneum, 1970.
—. *The Compass Flower*. New York: Atheneum, 1977.
—. *The Lice*. New York: Atheneum, 1967.
—. *The Moving Target*. New York: Atheneum, 1963.
—. *The Rain in the Trees*. New York: Knopf, 1988.
—. *Travels*. New York: Knopf, 1992.

New York University

WHAT'S HERE

Idaho potatoes have made it to Honolulu.
Scores of automobiles, legions of shirts,
rice steamers, pillows, chopsticks,
as well as unlikely accessories—
bowling pin salt-and-pepper shakers,
rickrack, glittering eyeshadow,
chocolate-covered cherries,
washed up on these wind-rich shores.
Outlandish as it seems, all these
preceded us.

The leaves of Eucalyptus robusta
try not to notice it.
Wild purple orchid,
sleek bark of koa,
stand clear. What's here
may or may not belong here.
I press my extra eyes
into the mist over the valley,
forgetting my small book of stamps,
and the ten thousand travelers
eating breakfast,
guarding the word *invisible*,
echo of pink-fringed cloud,
sweet breath of every tree.
I ride the waves of vowels, saying
in my own flat language,
I'll go soon. And, don't remember me.

Naomi Shihab Nye
San Antonio, Texas

NATURE, PLEASURE, AND THE SUBLIME: GARY SNYDER'S GESTURE WITH LANGUAGE

David Copland Morris

Now is a fine time for those unacquainted with the poetry of Gary Snyder to get to know it. For many years his work was only available in a series of relatively slim and costly volumes, but now we have an inexpensive yet very full one-volume paperback collection entitled *No Nature: New and Selected Poems*.

Why would a writer widely described as a nature poet call a representative sampling of his work *No Nature*? Snyder explains in the Preface: "Whatever it [nature] actually is, it will not fulfil our conceptions or assumptions. It will dodge our expectations and theoretical models. There is no single or set 'nature' either as 'the natural world' or 'the nature of things.' The greatest respect we can pay to nature is not to trap it, but to acknowledge that it eludes us and that our own nature is also fluid, open, and conditional." He concludes that nature is "[a]n open space to move in, with the whole body, the whole mind. My gesture has been with language."

Here is one such gesture, entitled "Piute Creek":

One granite ridge
A tree, would be enough
Or even a rock, a small creek,
A bark shred in a pool.
Hill beyond hill, folded and twisted
Tough trees crammed
In thin stone fractures
A huge moon on it all, is too much.
The mind wanders. A million
Summers, night air still and the rocks
Warm. Sky over endless mountains.
All the junk that goes with being human
Drops away, hard rock wavers
Even the heavy present seems to fail
This bubble of a heart.
Words and books
Like a small creek off a high ledge
Gone in the dry air.

A clear, attentive mind
Has no meaning but that
Which sees is truly seen.
No one loves rock, yet we are here.
Night chills. A flick
In the moonlight
Slips into Juniper shadow:
Back there unseen
Cold proud eyes
Of Cougar or Coyote
Watch me rise and go. (6)

In this poem, written very early in Snyder's career, we can see the major characteristics and virtues of all his work. Primary among them is a sense of gracious humility and awe in the face of the wild, non-human world. Permeating Snyder's vision is an undiluted sense that the sheer existence of matter is miraculous. That this mysterious material realm should so exceed the ability of the human mind to absorb it creates in Snyder a sense of wonder; he is a man for whom the sublime is real.

But he is not sentimental. Running against any easy sense of rapture or harmony is the hard, sharply faceted surface of Snyder's diction—"Tough trees crammed/In thin stone fractures"—and the pre-

cision of his tropes: "Words and books/Like a small creek off a high ledge/Gone in the dry air." In this last poetic figure we can see elegantly evoked the ultimate elusiveness of nature. In the face of nature's overwhelming reality the symbolic representations used to capture it dissolve just as a creek is blown to mist as it leaps from a high cliff.

Snyder tells us that nature is beyond words, yet he embodies its mystery in language. The lines tell us that the actuality of nature dooms to failure all attempts to capture it in the abstractions of words and books, yet here is Snyder giving us new words in yet another book. Snyder's sense of modesty is very attractive; he is no Milton claiming to justify the ways of God to man. He is content with seeing clearly that which is here to be seen.

But "Piute Creek" displays only one side of Snyder's sensibility; it doesn't show us the contagious sense of gaiety, the deep feeling of pleasure he experiences in moving with the whole mind and body through the space of nature. Snyder is by temperament a sunny poet, and one of his great gifts is his ability to celebrate without false sentiment. It is his craft--his sense of timing, pace, diction and imagery--which makes his vocation of pleasure so piquant. Here is "Water":

Pressure of sun on the rockslide
Whirled me in dizzy hop-and-step descent,
Pool of pebbles buzzed in a Juniper shadow,
Tiny tongue of a this-year rattlesnake flicked,
I leaped, laughing for little boulder-color coil--
Pounded by heat raced down the slabs to the creek
Deep tumbling under arching walls and stuck
Whole head and shoulders in the water:
Stretched full on cobble--ears roaring
Eyes open aching from the cold and faced a trout.
(10)

There is a kinesthetic pop to this writing--a relish of bodily sensation, physical energy, the dialectic of need and satisfaction. And at the end, a sense of humorous wonderment at the world's ability to surprise. The trout is somewhat analogous to the cougar or coyote in "Piute Creek," but in "Water" the tone is different--all is startled exhilaration rather than muted awe. Snyder makes his gesture toward nature with a meticulous poetic language, words under a special kind of pressure, which, when read, release the unique energy we identify with poetry. He generates an abundance of this energy, but what distinguishes him from most nature poets in my mind is the fact that he has--almost equally--both a sense of the sublime and a sense of humor. That an excellent craftsman should also be endowed with such a richly complex sensibility is a lucky accident for us all.

If you do not know Snyder's work, I believe a great pleasure awaits you. If you wish to become reacquainted with his poetry, the newly released volume presents it in the full scope of its achievement.

Works Cited

Snyder, Gary. *No Nature: New and Selected Poems*. New York: Random House, 1992.

University of Washington-Tacoma

They were a morning surprise, fins
on the water, a gray misting
of clouds so tall and deep
they looked like the giant, frayed bottoms
of trousers.

For us, this was joy,
to be seaside in the morning
looking out to discover
life, grace. It is not always

like this, a perch before something
so grand the only words
that hold it are *ocean, sky*.

*

I was such a long time learning
things. There are pieces of my life adrift
on the curling white lines
of breakers. Sometimes I imagine

them picked up by strong snouts
and carried out to sea
where they gather and dance in a calm
under the ethereal
light of stars and moon. Or that

songs are sung to me
over the water, strange musics
that strum the small, tender bones
of the inner ear--

and in the music, words
like *hope* and *enigma*.

And for those silvery, combed gods
who came before
this modern chasm,
I am grateful.

Scott Minar
Elmira, New York

JOY HARJO AND LOUISE ERDRICH: SPEAKING FOR THE GROUND

Louise Westling

Joy Harjo and Louise Erdrich do not write poetry about "Nature" as an object of contemplation. Instead, like most Indian writers, they speak from traditions that assume profound kinship, mingling, and shape-shifting among humans and other creatures, forces, and features of the landscape. The earth diver stories of Eastern tribes such as those of Harjo's Creek ancestry and the Ojibwa or Chippewa peoples of Erdrich's background ally humans with loon, beaver, and muskrat in the creation of land after a great flood. The emergence stories of Hopi and Pueblo people of the Southwest involve wise agents of creation such as Locust, Hummingbird, and Spider who help the puny first humans to grow up like plants from the deep earth into the light. Kinship with bear and deer, and delight in tricksters such as rabbit, coyote, and raven are central to the lore of tribal peoples all over North America.

Joy Harjo writes of the continued power of these traditions for Indian people struggling to survive in the war zones of American cities. She sees her poetic voice as "an arrow, painted/with lightning/to seek the way to the name of the enemy," in "a language of lizards and storms."

The spirits of old and new ancestors perch on my shoulders.
I make prayers of clear stone

of feathers from birds
who circle the ashes of a smoldering volcano.

The feathers sweep the prayers up
and away.

I, too, try to fly but get caught in the cross
fire of signals
and my spirit drops back down to earth.
(*In Mad Love* 9)

And so she calls for help to "the curled serpent in the pottery of nightmares," "the dreaming animal who paces back and forth" in her head.

The powers of the tribal past can still be found, as we see in "Deer Dancer," even in "the bar of broken survivors, the club of shotgun, knife wound, of/poison by culture," where a beautiful stranger danced naked on a table.

She was the myth slipped down through dreamtime. The
promise of feast we
all knew was coming. The deer who crossed through knots
of curse to find

us.

.....not a stained red dress with tape on her heels
but the deer who
entered our dream in the white dawn, breathed mist into
pine
trees, her fawn a
blessing of meat, the ancestors who never left.

(*Love* 5-6)

In "The Book of Myths," Harjo speaks of having been "on the stolen island of Manhattan," when she saw "Rabbit sobbing and laughing as he shook his dangerous bag of tricks." He represents a whole world of "sweet and bitter gods who walk beside us." The cultures and languages of Indian people shape an alternate landscape that subverts white emblems of desire.

There is a Helen in every language; in American her name is Marilyn

but in my subversive country,
she is dark earth and round and full of names
dressed in bodies of women
who enter and leave the knife wounds of this
terrifyingly beautiful land;
we call ourselves ripe, and pine tree, and woman.
(*Love* 55)

In "Explosion" Harjo anticipates a new order based on this subversive continuum of earth, language, and women. A cyclical repetition of the ancient emergence story will restore full human connection with the land. "Maybe there is a new people, coming forth/being born from the center of the earth,/like us, but another tribe" (*Horses* 68).

Louise Erdrich's poems synthesize Indian and European traditions to present a fierce new vision centered in the non-human world. Some poems, such as the title poem of *Jacklight*, give voices to animals hunted by humans, voices shaped according to Ojibwa and Crow traditions but wrenched out of tribal contexts, into a contemporary male world of metal weapons and pickup trucks. The hunt is a violent courtship drama in which feminine animal spirits are ultimately more powerful than the men who try to possess them with lights and bullets. "Jacklight" begins with an epigraph taken from a scholarly study of the Northern Ojibwa: "The same Chippewa word is used both for flirting and hunting game, while another Chippewa word connotes both using force in intercourse and also killing a bear with one's bare hands." As the poem begins, the animal speakers "have come to the edge of the woods,/out of brown grass where we slept, unseen,/out of knotted twigs, out of leaves creaked shut,/out of hiding," and each animal has taken "the beams [of light] like direct blows the heart answers" and "moved forward alone." But the tables are turned by the end of the poem, for the speaker says

We have come here too long.
It is their turn now,
their turn to follow us. Listen,
they put down their equipment.
It is useless in the tall brush.
And now they take the first steps, not knowing
how deep the woods are and lightless.
How deep the woods are. (3-4)

In "Family Reunion" Erdrich associates animals killed by hunters with Indian victims of white society. Raymond Twobears's head is as mangled by alcohol as the snapping turtle he decapitates on a fishing trip, and his heart is like a caged animal knocking and rattling "at the bars of his ribs to break out." On the way home from the family reunion, his face "has the odd, calm patience of a child who has always/let bad wounds alone, or a creature that has lived/for a long time underwater. And the angels come/lowering their slings and litters" (*Jacklight* 9-10).

Erdrich's most recent book of poetry, *Baptism of Desire*, reshapes Catholic rituals and dogmas in terms of Indian religious practice, American popular culture, and classical mythology. In "The Sacraments"—the poem that seems the symbolic center of the book—Erdrich defines her own life in terms of five sacramental events named for the major Catholic rituals but shaped by Native American traditions and experience of the natural world. The first ritual is baptism, in a sense by fire, in the Plains Indian ceremony of the sun dance at the summer solstice. The dancers circle, held in

place by thongs through their flesh, and ceremonial feathers link them with a sacred bird.

We began, the wands and the bracelets of sage,
the feathers cocked over our ears.
When the bird joined the circle and called,
we cried back, shrill breath,
through the bones in our teeth.
Her wings closed over us, her dark red
claws drew us upward by the scars,
so that we hung by the flesh,

as in the moment before birth
when the spirit is quenched
in whole pain, suspended
until there is no choice, the body
slams to earth,
the new life starts. (18)

This baptism is an act of self-wounding in homage to the sun. The bird—perhaps paralleling the Christian Holy Spirit—interacts with the human worshippers through the traditional Indian ritual of tearing of the worshipper's flesh to allow a violent reunion with the earth. The poem closes with a section devoted to Extreme Unction, which takes the form of snake hatchlings—this image perhaps paralleling human souls—that hibernate in pond sludge through the winter.

they continue, as we do,
drawing closer to the source,
their hearts beating slower
as the days narrow
until there is this one pale aperture
and the tail sliding through

then the systole, the blackness of heaven. (23)

Thus the end of life is figured as a return into the depths of earthy materiality rather than the transcendence of Christian spirituality.

Harjo suggests a complementary vision in which language and culture, the cycles of human generations, human bodies, and the movement of the earth are all part of an ongoing conversation. White culture and technology have become deadened to the voice of the earth, but three generations of Navajo women in "For Alva Benson and for Those Who Have Learned to Speak" have continued the ancient communication.

And the ground spoke when she was born.
Her mother heard it. In Navajo she answered
as she squatted down against the earth
to give birth. It was now when it happened,
now giving birth to itself again and again
between the legs of women.

Or maybe it was the Indian Hospital
in Gallup. The ground still spoke beneath
mortar and concrete.

... her body went on
talking and the child was born into their
hands, and the child learned to speak
both voices.

She grew up talking in Navajo, in English
and watched the earth around her shift and change
with the people in the towns and in the cities
learning not to hear the ground as it spun around

beneath them. She learned to speak for the ground,
the voice coming through her like roots that
have long hungered for water. Her own daughter
was born, like she had been, in either place
or all places, so she could leave, leap
into the sound she had always heard,
a voice like water, like the gods weaving
against sundown in a scarlet light.

The child now hears names in her sleep.
They change into other names, and into others.
It is the ground murmuring, and Mt. St. Helens
erupts as the harmonic motion of a child turning
inside her mother's belly waiting to be born
to begin another time

And we go on, keep giving birth and watch
ourselves die, over and over.
And the ground spinning beneath us
goes on talking. (*Horses* 18-19)

European/American environmentalists, poets, and various New Age proponents have been drawn to Indian traditions honoring the sanctity of the earth, but too often they sentimentalize and colonize for their own ideological purposes. Poets like Harjo and Erdrich speak unsentimentally from within their traditions, insisting that we face the violence, betrayal, and destruction in the white American heritage, but also offering visions of human life enmeshed in the living earth.

Works Cited

- Erdrich, Louise. *Baptism of Desire*. New York: Harper, 1989.
—. *Jacklight*. New York: Holt, 1984.
Harjo, Joy. *In Mad Love and War*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1990.
—. *She Had Some Horses*. New York: Thunder's Mouth, 1983.

University of Oregon

CATBIRD

As I touch the piano keys
"Fur Elise" fills the leafgreen room.
Slips through the window
into the cherry tree.

Some one outside whistles the tune.
I go to the window.

A catbird sits,
my music filling its throat.

Soon my notes melt one by one
into its own song.

The bird flies off
into its own silence.

Virginia Terris
Freeport, New York

MARY OLIVER'S QUESTION

John Elder

Mary Oliver's *House of Light* (1990) teems with highly detailed renderings of species and seasons, hours and tides. Such concrete observations give rise, however, to explicit questioning about the significance of this physical creation for a human being. Some of Oliver's poems proceed from description at the beginning to a more meditative mode at the end, while in others a declarative or questioning voice may burst out for a line or two right in the middle. But, regardless of their sequence, almost all of them manifest a dual impulse, at once to acknowledge the intricate, dynamic realities of non-human life and to convey the intense meaning of those realities for one who regards them long and clearly.

"Spring" is the poem that expresses Oliver's dual impulse in its most condensed and direct form. The poem begins,

Somewhere
a black bear
has just risen from sleep
and is staring
down the mountain.

By the second-to-last stanza (of nine), we find the bear, envisioned by Oliver as "this dazzling darkness," "coming down the mountain./breathing and tasting." But between those two moments in the narrative Oliver injects, as a separate sentence that links the end of stanza four with the beginning of the stanza five, "There is only one question://how to love this world" (6, 7).

Reverberating throughout *House of Light*, this question seems to represent two main challenges for the poet. One is, most directly, to register this world, to make room within human consciousness for as many of nature's specifics as possible. Oliver's effort here is akin to Annie Dillard's in "The Present," from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. Dillard strives to become conscious, at least for a moment, of the manifold life in that particular patch of earth on which she sits: "Keeping the subsoil world under trees in mind, in intelligence, is the least I can do" (94).

The fact that "Spring" is also the title of a chapter in *Walden* is just one among many connections that might be drawn between Oliver and Thoreau, too. When she attends to the first stirrings of a pond, or watches the world awake in "Five A.M. in the Pinewoods," she is attempting, as Thoreau does, to live "in infinite expectation of the dawn." His desire was to break through abstraction and convention, so that he might discern the individuality within nature: "O the evening robin, at the end of a New England summer day! If I could ever find the twig he sits upon! I mean *he*; I mean *the twig*" (213). In her poem "The Summer Day," Oliver similarly moves beyond her Blakean question—"Who made the grasshopper?"—to a much fuller and more individuated reference:

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away. (60)

Such specificity recalls, as well, the haiku tradition with which both the Thoreauvian genre of prose nature writing and contemporary American poetry have such strong connections. Like the haiku poet Basho, Oliver pursues the deepest significance of the seasons. But, also like him, she brings the broad contours of nature into focus through pointed particulars. The connection may be illustrated by

juxtaposing her lines "It is January, and there are the crows/like black flowers on the snow" ("Crows," 75), with his haiku "A barren branch/ on which a crow alights—/the end of autumn" (translation mine). Local, and interestingly similar, details convey the drama of a landscape's year, and of earth's tilted, spinning circle round the sun.

A second dimension of Oliver's central question is evoked in her poem "Turtle." The vision with which this poem opens is of "the little brown teal/who is leading her soft children/from one side of the pond to the other," when a snapping turtle pulls one of "the tender children" under with a "murky splash." This death, shocking to Oliver as well as to the "frantic" mother, shifts suddenly, as in "Spring," to a brusque assertion at the poem's center:

But, listen,
what's important?
Nothing's important

except that the great and cruel mystery of the world,
of which this is a part,
not be denied. (22)

Taking in the particulars of nature presents, it seems, an emotional as well as a cognitive challenge. There is no place for sentimental love or simple affirmation in a world like ours, where a predatory snapper cruises the lake. Oliver insists upon this fact, as she repeatedly goes in for the kill in *House of Light*. In "The Kingfisher" we see a bird "religiously" swallowing "the silver leaf/with its broken red river" (18), while in "Nature" she gives us the relentless owl:
the beads of blood

scarcely dry on the hooked beak before

hunger again seized him
and he fell, snipping
the life from some plush breather...(55)

Oliver is drawn to such moments not simply because of a desire to present the whole picture honestly, but also because in the predators' single-mindedness she recognizes a special purity of concentration and intention. At the end of "The Kingfisher" she portrays that creature flying back "over the bright sea to do the same thing, to do it/(as I long to do something, anything) perfectly." And at the conclusion of "The Turtle," after having witnessed the harrowing snatch of the teal chick, she tells of how "once" she found a snapper in a city.

I looked it right in the eyes, and I caught it—
I put it, like a small mountain range,
into a knapsack, and I took it out
of the city, and I let it

down into the dark pond, into
the cool water
and the light of the lilies,
to live. (23)

Concluding the poem with this memory, Oliver identifies herself with the moment of horror in which it begins. Like the mountain range to which she compares it, the snapper is part of nature, not a violation of it—no matter if seeing it at work brings a shiver to the soft flesh and tender feelings of the human observer. But Oliver's achievement in *House of Light* is more than just presenting nature in a closely observed and ecologically informed way, more than simply emphasizing the lurker in the depths, or the continuum of decay

through which a field of lilies blooms. The ecology of her poems presents her own emotions and ideas as fully integral to nature. Her feelings arise and die like gusts of wind; her assertions burst through the dense under-story of description like unforeseen and clarifying owls. Such inclusiveness is reinforced by the two- or three-beat line with which she most often works, allowing for a suspension of clustered images without excessive foregrounding or emphasis upon the linearity of syntax. Into such a medium strong sentences, containing direct statements or questions, crash and fracture. They are suspended across the short, pulsing lines, just as in the ever-changing particulars of this surprising yet recognizable world, the human spirit and all the lives and forms surrounding us are mysteriously made one.

In "The Loon on Oak-Head Pond" Oliver transcribes, with characteristic high resolution, the three days of a loon's crying. She shows us the bird in gray mist, longing for the north, in all the specificity of its diving, fishing, swallowing, and blinking life. The poem concludes:

you come every afternoon, and wait to hear it.
you sit a long time, quiet, under the thick pines,
in the silence that follows.

as though it were your own twilight.
as though it were your own vanishing song. (25)

Her sense of identification with the bird's desires and expression is so elusive that it can only be framed "as though it were." But such an experience of connection is at the same time deeply sustaining, and continually ratified by whatever natural details Oliver can muster into awareness. Through her characteristic shuttle of observation and sympathy, she enacts her own answers to the perpetual challenge of "how to love this world."

Works Cited

- Dillard, Annie. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. New York: Harper and Row, 1985.
Oliver, Mary. *House of Light*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1990.
Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden and Civil Disobedience*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960.

Middlebury College

GRAY GRAY SKY

Today, I'm sitting in a room. The gray sky
is gray. Every fifteen seconds or so,
I look at the salt and pepper shakers
or the stack of wrinkled clothes
on the ironing board (is nature
wrinkled naturally?) and think,

if we can't have a better politics,
we can at least arrange a stanza break.
A stanza break for two, some wine, some glue.
Reconstituted headlines. How to think
in a radioactive blizzard. What
to wear to watch the condor disappear.

Roger Mitchell
Bloomington, Indiana

"...ALWAYS LISTENING TO WORDS LISTENING TO THE WORLD":

William Stafford, 1914-1993

Wayne Dodd

I speak of William Stafford only in the present tense.

Who among us who cares about and is aware of poetry does not know William Stafford, has not had some poem of his enter the mind so fully that it then becomes a part of one's own interior landscape? has not felt that moment of enlarged awareness those poems come to us as? Not many, I suspect. William Stafford is simply a part of us; has been so for a long time. He has been for us a constant witness to the great presence of mystery in the world, and in our lives.

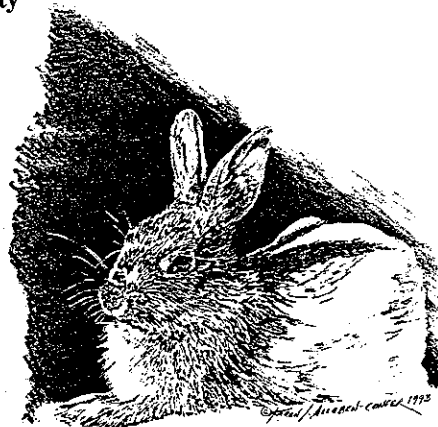
And in language, that place where interior and exterior worlds intersect.

In his poems, William Stafford is always listening to words listening to the world. Listening. Looking. Allowing the world, in its mystery, to come into one's awareness. It has been said of his poems that they find the miraculous in the common. And that is no doubt true. But that statement is too soft for what happens in those poems. It doesn't touch the courage of the poems, the courage in the poems. And that courage is essential to the strength and the power of William Stafford's work. It's an essential part of why his work has lodged so indelibly inside us, why he has been so important to us. For it encourages us: i.e., it puts courage into us, gives us courage. His poems bring an anticipation, a faith, that the world is always ready to come alive—if we pay attention, and if we speak truly. His poems do believe in truth, and in the need to bear witness to it. But they also know that what they know—what they can know—is provisional, ambiguous. And they have the courage to dwell in the moments when and the places where one knows this condition—those moments, we might say, when mortality and immortality cross.

We love their quiet courage, and their witness. Their faith, we might even say. For William Stafford's poems are truly what he says they are: a process, a journeying forth—hopeful, trusting in the genius of the spontaneous self. Trusting in our lives to have shape, and for that shape to have meaning. Trusting language, that very presence of the spirit among us, to find something out.

"A poem is the language of an act of attention," as Charles Hartman has said. "Absolute and unmixed attention," Simone Weil tells us, "is prayer." And, we might add, a poem by our friend, our teacher, our better self, William Stafford.

Ohio University



Summer's sun, 1993, graphite on etching paper,
captive cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), named "MacGregor
Smudge," sunbathing

THE STANDING DEAD

From the porch a seemingly endless
stretch of trees—hillsides, valleys, ridgetops—

in early March their tips a haze
of tan and orange and yellow,

their trunks bright silver
in the sharp new light.

*Giant flowers, my friend once called them,
clearly the most remarkable things*

on the planet.

Today, I note, down the slope

from the house, the standing
dead, which, cut up in summer

will keep us alive
next winter. Still sound and dense

with their loss
of moisture, they stand motionless

among swaying trunks
that will again bloom

above the spill and scree our lives
grind down to, countless bodies red sandstone

has pressed and saved
like flowers

in its hard, paleozoic bed.
Year after year, tall

above us, they open their soft petals out
to the sky

like semaphore,
across distances even geologic time

can't measure.
God, I love them

for it, the graceful,
uncomplaining stance they take,

anywhere and everywhere, drinking
from the earth and breathing

for us, like planetary
lungs, each time we walk out

among them, the air so sharp
with their remembered smells,

it takes our breath away.
I want to go out now and put my arms

around one, hold my cheek
against its cool bark and feel

that firm hold
as it sways and sways

against me, the steady
push and pull of winds

above
and around us.

Wayne Dodd
Athens, Ohio

CLASSROOM NOTES

Teaching Environmental Themes in Poetry

Thomas Stuckert edits the Classroom Notes section of the newsletter and seeks contributions for future columns (see his note in the "Calls for Papers" section of this newsletter). The author of the following two notes, Marianna Hofer, teaches developmental and intermediate writing as well as creative writing at the University of Findlay, Findlay, Ohio.

Nature as a Specific Image

For most young writers who teach, getting the chance to teach creative writing can seem like a dream come true. But, like any too good to be true dream, there is a nightmare aspect to beginning creative writing classes, especially when the genre is poetry. For example, in my English 208, Creative Writing—Poetry, I know that a good 60%, if not more, of the first set of poems I get from my students, even after weeks of discussing technique and reading samples of current poetry, will deal, in the most vague and abstract terms they can find, with love, death, and life—all in capital letters.

To try to head off this little problem, and to get the students to realize not just the role of specific detail but how to control the images they do try to work with, I tend to assign only poets who do a great deal with images and details in the early part of the class. One of my favorite poems to use, and I spend almost an entire class on it alone, is Chase Twitchell's "Watercress & Ice."

Since most of my budding poets want to write love poems at some point in the term, this poem helps me avoid the usual 'June-moon-spoon' thing. To help class discussion, I have this poem on an overhead, so I can underline and trace the images through the poem.

The poem itself revolves around the falling apart of a relationship, but Twitchell immediately takes everything out into the world and far away from the typical emotional vortex beginning poets head for. The speaker addresses a 'you' who has found himself "thigh-deep in water so cold/it made you forget yourself." Quickly we find out "the brilliant, green-white substance/you walked through was watercress./watercress and ice..." Meanwhile, the speaker cuts lilacs, "half-bloomed, cold to the touch," and points out their difference from the "delicious bitterness you walk through." By now my students start to figure out how these images show us more than the actions, but also reflect emotions. I point out the cold, the exotic, the wild—especially as she introduces "blue heron," "transient heron," which reinforces the fragile, the exotic.

What I hope the students get from this poem in particular is how details can reflect not just the real, but the emotional impact of a poem. This one, with the natural world as setting, especially the slightly exotic flavor of watercress, blue heron, and even lilacs, shows not just that, but how to make writing as much a personal statement as a way to communicate. I point out how the rest of the selections of Twitchell's we look at revolve around nature imagery, so it's something she uses as a stamp to make her own work distinctive from other poets', even though the story told is one we all tell—love gone bad. But in this particular case, it's most obviously her love story gone bad, and no one else's.

Marianna Hofer
Assistant Professor of English
University of Findlay

Poetry in Composition

One of the more interesting topics I teach is the research process, in a class vaguely titled Composition II, where the catalogue copy for this 200-level class is wonderfully vague—"students learn how to write a researched, documented paper." Sometimes I think this is why I love the class—there's no clear-cut idea as to what it should be, so I go off with whatever experiment I've come up with for the term, and see how it flies. Some terms it's wonderful, and every once in awhile I find myself asking, 'what was I thinking?'

So last term, the experiment involved using contemporary

midwestern writers—essayists, short story writers, and a poet. I chose Jared Carter for a couple of reasons—he's very midwestern, he writes pretty straightforward poems, and he's an old friend whom I don't think enough people read.

Now remember, this is a basic intermediate composition class, peopled by an incredibly varied student body—everything from the education majors who didn't make a B in Comp I, and need a C here to get into sophomore block, social work majors, communications majors, prevets who need a second writing course for vet school, and assorted others who thought it might be a fun course. And I have to reach them all at some point. I've yet to find the perfect map, so I usually shoot toward the upper end of the class and hope the rest will strive to come along. And while that may sound elitist, it's not meant to—it simply means I expect a level of professionalism and creativity in their writings.

The Carter poems I use, for the most part, concern themselves with a fictional county, Mississinewa, where Monument City is in the process of being covered over by a man-made reservoir. Before we discuss the poems, the sense of nature being changed and altered by man to suit his purpose, I let them create Mississinewa. In small groups, armed with the poems and a map of Indiana, students create towns, people, jobs, histories, and landscapes. Previous to this point, we've read Sanders's essay on the dying limestone quarrying in southern Indiana, and watched the movie *Falling from Grace*, which has some wonderful shots of rural Indiana. Plus, the poems themselves are rich in creating not just the sense of onrushing progress overtaking a rural way of life, but in images that draw a fairly complete picture.

These group discussions are then shared, and after each group puts its ideas on the board, we're able to look at the issues of rural vs. progress, small towns vs. big cities, the whole issue of just what is the midwest, which is, in many ways, the underlying topic throughout the entire class.

Believe me, while this sounds like all goes well, there is the typical student—"what's poetry got to do with writing?"—who refuses to allow the possibility of poetry being able to convey any message to him or her. But most of the students find themselves discovering a type of poetry they might not have ever seen before—poetry they can understand, and since most of our students are from somewhere in the midwest, poetry about them, what they see around them. This little experiment went so well that spring term, when I teach Comp II again, I'm planning on using an entire chapbook of Carter's which goes beyond Mississinewa into other concerns of the midwest.

Marianna Hofer
Assistant Professor of English
University of Findlay

BOOK REVIEWS

Poems for a Small Planet: Contemporary American Nature Poetry. Edited by Robert Pack and Jay Parini. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993. 300 pages. \$16.95 paperback.

Julian Jaynes has discussed consciousness as an analog of the external world, a model or map which is at all points generated by that which it represents. In *Poems for a Small Planet*, Jay Parini and Robert Pack interpret the term "nature poetry" to mean poems that "in some way reflect a highly developed consciousness of the natural world." If poems reflect consciousness as consciousness reflects the natural world—metaphorically—then an anthology of nature poetry is an atlas of sorts: a collection of maps.

In his introduction to the book, Parini says he and Pack want *Small Planet* to serve as "a defense of nature." In my view, the function of a verse atlas is to recreate the natural world and remap its relation to the poetic brain—a brain which is also a compass, distinguished from other sorts of brains by its peculiar habit of throbbing, murmuring, aching, and skipping beats. However, something as potentially abstract as a book will only defend nature if it brings the poetic brain closer to the body of the world and does justice to both in the process. I think of the children's game, "Hot and Cold," in which players direct a blindfolded child toward the hidden object by remarking on her temperature. The poetic mind similarly warms or cools in the chest, providing the reader an alternative method of ethical orienteering—one that's not derived from law or reason alone.

In order to get a sense of this book, I asked the same questions a good Girl Scout would ask about her map as she journeyed with it. Does it accurately represent the terrain I already know is out there or within? Does it show me places I never knew existed in the world or in myself?

The book did take me on a spirited trek through the external world—from the pit with its snake "left alone like a solitary zipper" to the chameleon who stares at a human, "waiting for [her] to change"; from "the cottonwoods all week/flinging their sex outward and down," and "the squirm of catkins/fattening on the schoolyard poplars" to moleholes where, in the "mutual dream" of neuter females, the queen mole "is dead and her urine/no longer arrests their development"; from the Bitterroot Mountains in Montana, where we celebrate pileated woodpeckers by dancing "the dance/of the smart, hard-headed, flashy/creatures of the world" to the other side of America where "Wind from the Blue Ridge tumbles the hat/of daylight farther and farther/into the eastern counties."* I heard words I'd only seen before in field guides, brilliant words that belong more properly in poems than in three changes of water: stickleback, umbel, groundsel, rowan, shadblow, linden, flax; sicklepear, yarrow, turnstone and dunlin, heathrush, rabbitbrush, chub; curlew, gallinule, scoters, snipes, eiders, jackdaws, fernbirds, and rails. In this sense, the maps intricately rendered the external world and led me to new curiosities about it.

Unfortunately, only a few trails wove through the thicket of the internal landscape. Many of the poems read like emotional pavement over the complex synthesis of joy and grief, peace and rage, protectiveness and regret that the condition of nature brings forth from me. The book as a whole neither took me places I hadn't been before nor accurately represented the landscape I knew already to exist inside: a good guide to the far reaches of the heart it is not.

The emotional flatline of the poetry isn't helped by Pack's concluding essay. Although elsewhere it would work well as a model for an ecological re-reading of the canon, here the essay sounds like an apology for any academic truancy that might have been instigated by the poetry preceding it. Its placement at the end of the book implies that prose is need to legitimize poetry, and the internal structure of the essay reinforces this point. Pack finishes the essay by abandoning poetry and citing two scientific essays which appeal to reason as the new basis for ethical action. He alludes to the

importance of the aesthetic attitude but never directly connects aesthetic response with ethical responsibility. It is clear to me that poetry is indispensable to the environmental movement exactly because its power is of a different order than that of scientific data or analytic argumentation: poetry grounds reason in particular somatic experiences and shows that the embodied mindfulness which informs both the reading and writing of verse is *itself* an ethical compass. I hope that this lack of faith—and not the quality of creativity emerging from sustained contact with a “diminished” landscape (as Parini calls twentieth-century nature)—is responsible for the number of formulaic nature poems in the collection. If the creative potential of the poet’s internal landscape is directly proportional to that of the external, though, the soul impoverishment of this book may simply reflect our culture’s success in monocropping wild places.

Small Planet doesn’t claim to be a comprehensive anthology, but the sheer volume (83 poets and 270 close-formatted pages) made me hope for a broad survey of contemporary American nature poetry. In the field, however, there are still charismatic megafauna like Galway Kinnell, elusive indicator species like W.S. Merwin and Mary Oliver, expert cartographers of the embodied mind like Jorie Graham and Robert Hass. To make an anthology of this size without including such poets implies that the territory is far more diminished than it is.

That said, the book does contain many poems I want to keep visiting and living with—poems I haven’t seen anthologized elsewhere. William Matthews’s scary clown of a poem, “Names,” casts extinction in a fast-passing slang which belies righteous anger: “Seventeen kinds of rail are out of here/and five of finch,” and “There are four/kinds of sucker not born any minute/anymore.” Richard Jackson’s “For a Long Time I Have Wanted to Write a Happy Poem” and Gerald Stern’s “Bitter Thoughts” wind through psychic ravines where reading becomes as compelling as stumbling upon a bloody, size-15 boot two days from the nearest road.

The advantage for culling charismatic megafauna is that more niches are created for lesser-known poets; in fact, my favorite poem of the book was written by someone whose work was new to me. Gary Young’s “Four Poems” is as elegant a lullaby as the sound of water; more than a map, it’s a little world in which the boundary between mapped and map folds into its own legend—where the “highly developed consciousness” of nature and the words which metaphorically represent it are revealed to be elements of nature themselves. A few other little worlds in this book have a similar effect. The feelings of tenderness and protectiveness that arise in their presence do catalyze the defense of nature: lived by, they make the brain grow warmer, and the small planet shrink less quickly.

* Excerpts are from Marvin Bell’s “An Old Trembling,” Judith Ortiz Cofer’s “Chameleon,” David Baker’s “Sex,” Amy Clampitt’s “Seed,” Carol Frost’s “Sexual Jealousy,” Sandra Alcosser’s “Woodpecker,” and Charles Wright’s “Reading Lao Tzu Again in the New Year.”
Leslie Ryan, University of Montana

The Forgotten Language: Contemporary Poets and Nature. Edited by Christopher Merrill. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1991. 176 pages. \$14.95 paperback.

In his introduction to *The Forgotten Language*, editor Christopher Merrill states that “almost every first-rate poet in America has written first-rate nature poems,” a claim this collection bears out to a certain extent. The flip side to that proposition, also apparent here, is that many American poets have written some rather mediocre nature poems. Although Merrill has succeeded in providing a diverse and representative sampling of how modern poets are responding to nature in their work, a reader disposed to quibble with the editor’s selection of poets and poems will undoubtedly find a number of debatable choices. The unifying theme of the anthology, loosely construed in order to cover a wide range of responses, is the

question of what our relationship to nature should be.

To borrow a phrase from Lucille Alder, whose work is represented here, one of the roles of the poet writing about nature is to point out “warning signs we still can’t read.” This critical element of nature poetry (and perhaps of all poetry) is epitomized by W.S. Merwin, who writes, “I want to tell what the forests/were like/I will have to speak/in a forgotten language.” Along with this interpretive component, there is also a spiritual aspect to nature poetry (what Wendell Berry has called “a secular pilgrimage”), and a political element that, as Merrill notes, is “embedded in the tradition of nature poetry.” Most of the poems in this anthology incorporate one or more of these themes.

Some of the works included here, such as Galway Kinnell’s “The Porcupine,” Stanley Kunitz’s “The Wellfleet Whale,” and W.S. Merwin’s “The Last One” will be familiar to many readers, but given the quality of such works, it is hard to count this a fault. Placed in the context of this collection, the environmental sensitivity and poetic grace of such poems serve to remind us that many of our best poets are also keen observers of nature. Whitman’s belief that a good poet should be able to “find the world in a blade of grass” is exemplified by a writer such as Kunitz, for whom the simple act of touching a garden snake has implications that hint at a long (and often tragic) history of human relationships with the land and its creatures: “I put out my hand and stroke/the fine, dry grit of their skins./After all,/we are partners in this land,/co-signers of a covenant./At my touch the wild/braid of creation/trembles.”

Instances in which the “wild braid of creation” has suffered far more damaging assaults than the sympathetic touch of a poet have given rise to a sub-genre of elegiac nature poems that is amply—perhaps too amply—represented here. After reading poems such as Margaret Atwood’s “Elegy for the Giant Tortoises,” James Dickey’s “For the Last Wolverine,” and Norman Dubie’s “Elegy to the Sioux,” Pattiann Rogers’s “Eulogy for a Hermit Crab” seemed an unintentional parody of the form. The overabundance of such poetry may be explained, as Hayden Carruth reminds us in “Essay,” a poem in which he discusses the “outrageous number” of such elegies and mourns his own regrettable hardening towards them, “not merely because/part of my being had been violated and annulled,/but because all these poems over the years/have been necessary—suitable and correct. This/has been the time of the finishing off of the animals.” Still, the numbing effect of gathering together so many elegies remains.

Many of the poems in this anthology reflect an empathy for wild creatures that is refreshingly free of the cloying sentimentality that mars some nature poetry. In “What Makes Grizzlies Dance” and “A Night on Goat Haunt,” Sandra Alcosser conveys an insight and sympathy with the grizzly bear that leads to a quiet deference in “his territory.” David Wagoner’s “Meeting a Bear,” in addition to containing sound advice for the hiker who unexpectedly encounters a bear, also reveals some of the forgotten language alluded to in the title of the anthology. To the bear, something as simple as standing erect is a sign, “[w]hich in his world, like a down-swayed head and humped shoulders,/Is a standing offer to fight for territory/And a mate to go with it.” To be sure, something is occasionally lost in translation, as Heather McHugh whimsically notes in “The Field”: “I lowed so the cow would/but the cow looked up, misquoted.”

Given the theme of this collection, it was rather surprising to find so many poems that seemed preoccupied with the subject of “me, looking at nature,” or, even more inexplicably, “me, looking at me.” For example, when Pattiann Rogers states that “[t]he only function of the red-cupped fruit/Hanging from the red stem of the sassafras/Is to reveal the same shiny blue orb of berry/Existing in me,” this seems to shoot straight past anthropocentrism to sheer egocentrism. Not every poet can be expected to display a connection with nature that transcends the self and counters the anthropocentric bias of mainstream American culture, but when one of the stated goals of the anthology is “to counter the kind of thinking that leads men to believe they can burn down an aspen stand with impunity,”

it is hard to see how this goal is furthered by poets who still speak of nature as though it were something apart from us and created merely to provide resources or symbols for humankind. As an introduction to nature poetry, *The Forgotten Language* is excellent; as a survey of the new, non-anthropocentric emphasis of contemporary nature poetry, it falls a bit short.

Daniel G. Payne
Honeoye, New York



Patterns, 1993, pen and ink on scratchboard,
autumn-dyed quaking aspen leaves, slightly air-conditioned by larvae

GENERAL NOTES AND NEWS

ASLE E-MAIL NETWORK IS DOWN (FOR NOW). Due to a change of mainframe computers at the University of Nevada, Reno, the ASLE e-mail network is now dysfunctional. We need help! John LeMon set up the original network, but is no longer in a position to continue to help us. The best plan seems to be to get ASLE hooked up with an existing news group program, such as listserv or newsgroup. Does anyone know how to pursue this option? The e-mail network that we had for awhile was very worthwhile, and it would be nice to get a new one set up as quickly as possible. If you have advice of any kind or if you could take this on as your project, please contact Cheryll Glotfelty (glotfelt@shadow.scs.unr.edu).

ENCYCLOPEDIA EDITOR NEEDED. Garland Publishing Incorporated would like to publish an encyclopedia (800-1,000 dense pages) on the general subject of literature and the environment. ASLE would be an ideal group to collaborate on such a project, but the project will need an editor. If you are interested in taking on this gargantuan task, contact one of the ASLE officers.

PLEASE RETURN GRADUATE HANDBOOK SURVEY FORMS. Graduate liaisons Dan Philippon and George Hart are putting together a handbook for the study of literature and environment. They need ASLE member input and information. Please return the survey form (distributed at the ASLE business meeting and mailed with the ASLE membership directory) to them soon: Dan Philippon, English Department, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

NEXT ASLE BUSINESS MEETING. The next ASLE business meeting will be held in conjunction with the Western American Literature Conference, October 5-8, 1994, in Salt Lake City, Utah. Some of the WLA conference speakers will be James Welch, William Kittredge, Linda Hogan, and Terry Tempest Williams. For conference information, write Stephen Tatum, President WLA, English Department, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84112.

The **SOUTHERN HUMANITIES COUNCIL** will hold its 47th annual conference at the East Memphis Hilton, February 17-20, 1994. The conference theme will be "The Humanities: Health of the Body, Health of the Planet." Speakers include Dr. Oliver Sacks (*The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*), and B.C. Hall and C.T. Wood, authors of *Big Muddy: Down the Mississippi Through America's Heartland*. For registration information, write Dr. Louis Charles Stagg, Department of English, Memphis State University, Memphis, TN 38152.

THE TASMANIAN CONNECTION. Faculty and graduate students at the University of Tasmania, are planning to host a conference on literature and the environment in July 1995. Information will be posted as plans develop.

SPECIAL ISSUE OF STUDIES IN ROMANTICISM. Jonathan Bates (author of *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*, London: Routledge, 1991) is currently guest editing a special issue of *Studies in Romanticism* to be entitled "Green Romanticism." Watch for it.

MLA/ALA/MMLA. ASLE has organized paper sessions at the Modern Language Association, the American Literature Association, and the Midwest Modern Language Association conferences. The MLA panel, session 480, is entitled "Woods, Words, and World: Thoreau and the Cultural Construction of Nature"; it will be held Wednesday, December 29, 1993, 3:30-4:45 p.m., Norfolk, Sheraton Centre Toronto. The ALA session is entitled "ASLE Panel on Literature and the Environment"; ALA meets June 2-4, 1994, in San Diego. The MMLA session is entitled "Native American Nature/Environmental Writing"; MMLA meets Nov. 11-13, 1994, in Chicago. Attending these sessions will be a good way to meet other ASLE members.

CONFERENCE TO INFILTRATE. We think that ASLE ought to organize a couple of panels at the following conference: "New Economic Criticism," an Interdisciplinary Conference sponsored by the Society for Critical Exchange and the Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry, to explore the relations of economics and literary studies. Case Western Reserve University, October 21-23, 1994. Address inquiries and proposals for panels to the conference organizer. To be considered for inclusion, papers (or 750 word abstracts) must be received by March 15, 1994. Write to: Martha Woodmansee, Department of English, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH 44106.

HOW TO ORGANIZE AN ASLE-SPONSORED PANEL. A great way for ASLE members to contribute to ASLE and to further the study of literature and environment is to organize a conference panel on behalf of ASLE. Here is how to do so:

1. Choose a conference.
2. Find out how and when to propose paper panels at that conference.
3. Decide upon a panel topic that will also fit the rubric of the general conference, and recruit people for your panel.
4. When you propose the panel, request that the conference program

MINUTES OF THE 1993 ASLE ANNUAL MEETING

- indicate that the panel is organized by ASLE.
5. Write to the ASLE Public Relations officer or to any ASLE officer, notifying him/her of your plans and requesting an ASLE announcement and membership form. (Current PR person: Tom Dean, English Department, Cardinal Stritch College, 6801 N. Yates Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53217)
 6. Make about 30-50 copies of the ASLE form, to have available for distribution at your session.
 7. At the session itself, make a brief statement about ASLE and mention that information about ASLE is available. (Wave the stack of announcements in the air.)
 8. Send the ASLE archivist your panel title and the conference name, place, and date, along with copies of the panel papers. (Current archivist: Mike Munley, English Department, RB 246, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306)

FOR THE MEEK AND THE MIGHTY. Meek people, rather than organizing a whole panel (see above), might wish simply to present their individual paper on behalf of ASLE. Again, it is helpful to bring a supply of ASLE announcements and membership forms. Mighty people might wish to seek a permanent ASLE-affiliation with the conference, entitling ASLE to annual paper sessions and representation there. To do so, contact the leaders of the conference. They will normally require submission of ASLE By-Laws, which ASLE officers can provide to you, upon request. Presently, ASLE enjoys such affiliations with ALA and with MMLA.



Gone to seed, 1993, graphite on etching paper
sunflower head in late autumn, seed-heavy, leaf withered, brittle-stemmed

On October 8, at the Western Literature Association Conference in Wichita, Kansas, fifty ASLE members gathered to celebrate ASLE's first anniversary and to discuss future plans for the organization. We would like to thank WLA president Diane Quantic for generously making a place on the WLA conference program for our business meeting. The WLA has been cordial and very accommodating to the needs of our growing association.

Vice President Cheryl Glotfelty began the meeting by recalling the initial 1992 meeting in which ASLE was very nearly named "A.L.E." or "G.E.L.," and in which members voted the organization into existence using a set of by-laws bootlegged at the eleventh hour from the Stephen Crane Society. Greetings were then offered on behalf of President Scott Slovic, who is currently on a Fulbright teaching American nature writing in Japan. It was reported that Scott is forming a branch of ASLE in Japan, and that he hopes to help establish an international nature writing endowment which will provide funding for conferences, student scholarships, research fellowships, and publications.

Cheryl then reviewed ASLE's accomplishments in the first year, noting that the group had:

- gathered a superb advisory board;
- produced a logo, letterhead, and announcements;
- created an e-mail network for the exchange of information among members;
- established an archives and syllabus exchange, to be coordinated by ASLE's archivist, Mike Munley (send environmentally related syllabi and conference papers to Mike at: English Department, RB 246, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306);
- adopted *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* (formerly an independent publication, now to be directly affiliated with ASLE);
- cultivated affiliations with many related organizations and publications;
- and, organized a number of panels to MLA, MMLA, ALA, WLA, CEA, the Wilderness Conference, and other conferences.

Secretary-Treasurer Michael Branch then reported on membership and finances. Mike indicated that the current membership stood at about 330, and noted that ASLE was continuing to grow at a rate of 5-10 members per week. Inquiries have been numerous, appreciative, and enthusiastic, and ASLE has already begun to provide a sense of community to scholars of literature and the environment. The membership is remarkably diverse and now includes nearly all American states and at least four countries. The ASLE bank account—which stood at approximately \$2,000—had been drawn upon to pay for letterhead and announcements, two mailings to the membership, a mailing to 500 English department chairs, and a mailing to editors which resulted in ASLE receiving notice in nearly twenty literary and environmental journals. Expenses not yet reimbursed included the production and mailing of the following: a letter to several hundred graduate directors (handled by 1993 ASLE graduate liaisons Mark Schlenz and David Taylor), the first annual membership directory, and the fall issue of *The American Nature Writing Newsletter*.

Cheryl then proceeded to describe ASLE's current projects, which include:

- an annotated bibliography of literature and the environment to be edited by Zita Ingham (Zita briefly described the project, acknowledged the contributions of approximately twenty ASLE volunteers, and invited additional volunteers to contact her at: Box 1057, State University, AR, 72467);
- an on-line bibliography to be developed by William Howarth through

Princeton University;

- the expansion of the ASLE archives to include a syllabus exchange as well as a collection of conference papers presented at ASLE-organized panels;
- an audio archives, to be coordinated by Tommy Meyers, which would make cassettes of selected conference sessions on literature and the environment available to ASLE members;
- a graduate student "Handbook on the Study of Literature and Environment," to be produced by 1994 graduate liaisons George Hart and Dan Philippon;
- a series of guest-edited special issues of the *Newsletter* (Fall 1993, guest edited by Chris Cokinos, will be on contemporary American nature poetry; Spring 1994, guest edited by Molly Westling, will be on Gaia; Fall 1994, guest edited by Matthias Schubnell, will be on Native Americans and nature writing);
- and, an expansion of the *Newsletter* to include columns entitled "To the Members" and "From the Membership" (from now on you must be an ASLE member to receive the *Newsletter*, and all ASLE members will automatically receive the *Newsletter*).

The next item on the agenda concerned ASLE officer terms and rotations. After some discussion and several suggestions from the floor, the members present unanimously approved the following package:

- advisory board members serve a four-year term, after which they may be immediately reinstated (advisory board members will be recruited by the officers);
- president serves a one-year term and then rotates onto the advisory board;
- vice-president serves a one-year term and then rotates up to president;
- secretary is a two-year, elected position;
- and, graduate liaisons are chosen by the officers and serve a one-year term.

It was suggested that the new package be put in place after Scott returns from Japan and serves out his term as president, which was defined by the original by-laws as a two-year term (the new rotation would become effective in Fall 1995). Cheryl then described the need for volunteers to serve as interim vice-president (during Scott's absence Cheryl will serve as president and will therefore need a temporary vice president), treasurer, public relations person (both of which have been handled by the Secretary-Treasurer but which now need to be made distinct positions), a conference organizer, and a grant seeker. Within a week of the meeting, this call for volunteers has resulted in the appointment of the following volunteers: Tom Dean (Cardinal Stritch College) as interim vice-president, Allison Wallace (Unity College of Maine) as treasurer, and Dave Teague (University

of Houston) as conference organizer. Paul Bryant (Radford University) offered to edit and revise the ASLE bylaws. ASLE wishes to express its deep thanks to these willing and able volunteers.

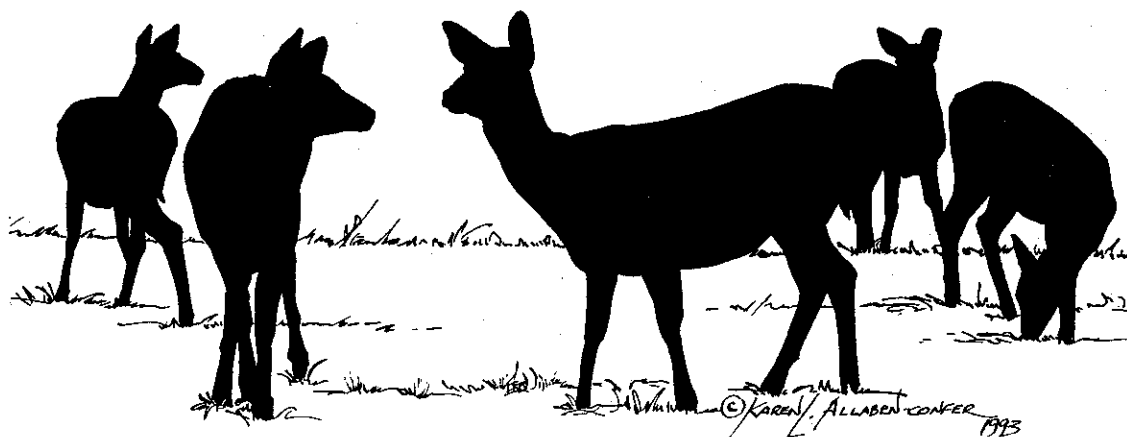
The officers then reiterated the many ways in which members may become more involved in ASLE:

- encourage others to join;
- volunteer to help with the bibliography project;
- organize conference panels and/or seek an ASLE affiliation with a regularly held conference;
- send environmentally concerned conference papers and syllabi to archivist Mike Munley;
- submit articles to *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*;
- renew your membership (your annual membership includes all mailings, two issues of the *Newsletter*, an annual membership directory, and access to the ASLE e-mail net);
- return your graduate handbook questionnaires to Dan Philippon;
- donate funds (ASLE is non-profit and welcomes contributions);
- think about how your particular skills may be of use to the organization;
- and, contribute your ideas and suggestions to ASLE as we grow.

The meeting concluded with brief mention of two possible future projects. First, Garland Publishers is interested in having ASLE produce an encyclopedia of literature and the environment (anyone interested in editing this project should contact one of the officers). Second, ASLE members in Tasmania may soon be hosting a conference on literature and the environment.

In the evening ASLE held a second, less formal meeting allowing members to talk with each other and with the officers, to make suggestions and ask questions, and to get to know each other a bit. Later that night Ian Marshall and Mark Schlenz (among others) treated us to rousing rounds of Celtic music, and the following day a group of ASLE folks adjourned to the salt marsh wildlife refuges west of Wichita. The sojourn, graciously organized by Chris Cokinos and Elizabeth Dodd, included excellent birdwatching, hiking, stargazing, and more fine music, including the howling of nearby coyotes throughout the night. We have already received several suggestions about the many beautiful places where ASLE might have a conference of its own. Of course, coyotes will be invited...

Michael Branch
Secretary-Treasurer, ASLE
Florida International University



Does see doe, pen and ink, white tailed deer grazing in our yard

CALLS FOR PAPERS

Wanted: Information leading to the discovery of individuals who are teaching: 1) how to write poetry and prose with environmental, wilderness, or nature themes and/or 2) the study of poetry and prose relating to these themes. Particularly interested in teaching relating to Gaia for the Spring 1994 issue of *The American Nature Writing Newsletter*. Send information to: Tom Stuckert, English Department, University of Findlay, Findlay, OH 45840. (419) 424-4720

The Fall 1994 issue of *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* will focus on "Native Americans and American Nature Writing." Short critical articles or essays (750-1,000 words) are invited on such issues as the presence of Native Americans in American nature writing, the reflection of Native American religions and philosophies in American nature writing, or the image of the Indian as a natural environmentalist, to name only a few possibilities. Original essays by Native American writers are particularly welcome. Please submit typescripts before September 15, 1994, to: Matthias Schubnell, Department of English, Incarnate Word College, 4301 Broadway, San Antonio, TX 78209.

Tom Dean is organizing an ASLE panel for the MMLA conference, Nov. 11-13, 1994, in Chicago. His session is entitled "Native American Nature/Environmental Writing." Please direct papers, proposals, or inquiries to him by March 28, 1994. Thomas Dean, English Department, Cardinal Stritch College, 6801 N. Yates Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53217.

Weber Studies invites submissions pertaining to the concept and/or experience of "Wilderness" for the Fall 1994 wilderness special issue. Critical/personal essays, fiction, and poetry welcome. 15-20 pages, double-spaced. Send manuscripts, by 31 December 1993, to: Dr. Neila C. Seshachari, Editor, *Weber Studies*, Department of English, Weber State University, Ogden, UT 84408-1214.

John E. Becker will be guest editing a special issue of *The Literary Review*, featuring recent and previously unpublished nature writing from around the world. The *Review* identifies itself by its international emphasis. The *Review* will be publishing only in English translation. Manuscripts may be sent to John Becker, English Department, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 285 Madison Avenue, Madison, NJ 07940.

ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment invites submissions in the following categories: Theory and Criticism (essays 15-40 ms. pp.); Classroom and Community Practice (essays 10-20 ms. pp.); Notes - in both of the preceding areas (2-10 ms. pp.); Dialogues: Responses, Positions, Proposals (1-5 ms. pp.); Book Reviews (1-5 ms. pp.); Book Notes (1 paragraph each). Submissions should be sent in triplicate, current MLA style of parenthetical documentation with a works cited page, along with a cover page suitable for blind review, and an SASE. Please send submissions to: Patrick Murphy, editor, *ISLE*, English Department, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705-1094.

Society and Nature is the only international journal of social and political ecology which provides a comprehensive forum for an open dialogue between social ecologists, ecosocialists, radical greens, feminists, and activists in the land-based and indigenous movements. The aim of the dialogue is to foster a new liberatory project towards a free and ecological society through a synthesis of the autonomous-democratic, libertarian socialists, and radical green traditions. For information regarding subscriptions or writers guidelines, write *Society and*

Nature, P.O. Box 637, Littleton, CO 80160-0637.

Talking Leaves: A Journal of Ecology & Earthen Spirituality is soliciting non-academic, but highly perceptive and challenging essays, poetry and artwork for upcoming issues. *TL* has featured Bill Devall, Joanna Macy, Terry Tempest Williams, Thich Nhat Hanh, David Suzuki, Winona LaDuke, Christopher Manes and Lone Wolf Circles. Each issue is built around a particular theme, each explored through the diverse approaches within "spiritual ecology" and primal world-view. Upcoming themes include Death and Dying, Endangered Species, Tools of Deeper Connection, the Green Man, Gaian Woman, Earth Education, Eco-Fiction, and Ancient Ways. For deadlines and a sample issue contact Carolyn Moran, Editor, *Talking Leaves*, 1430 Willamette, #367, Eugene, OR 97401. (503) 342-2974.

EXCHANGE SUBSCRIPTIONS AND MEMBERSHIPS

The following organizations and publications have joined ASLE and have printed announcements of ASLE in their newsletters/journals. We would like to thank them and to make them known to ASLE members.

Talking Leaves DEEP (Deep Ecology Education Project), a nonprofit adventure you can be part of, incl. subscription to the journal of deep ecology & spiritual activism, for \$18(8 issues). 1430 Willamette #367, Eugene, OR 97405.

Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology, pub. three times a year, is a forum and clearing house for research and design that incorporate a qualitative approach to environmental and architectural experience. One key concern of EAP is design, education, and policy supporting and enhancing natural and built environments that are beautiful, alive, and humane. Subscription \$6.00/yr. David Seamon, Editor, Architecture Dept., College of Architecture and Design, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-2901.

Ecologue, the newsletter of a group seeking affiliation with the Speech Communication Association. Michael Netzley, Editor, Department of Communication, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55414-1434.

The New Crucible: An Environmental Magazine. Garry De Young, Editor, Rt. 1, Box 76, Stark, KS 66775.

Undercurrents is a journal of critical environmental studies that promotes social change by challenging conventional conceptions of nature, culture, self, and the relationships among these. The journal is a forum for the presentation of innovative and interdisciplinary student work in this area. Issue themes still available include: Vol. 2, Nature, Culture, Self; Vol. 3, The Representation and Domination of Nature; Vol. 4, Situated Knowledge; Vol. 5, Fragmenting Authority. Sample issue, \$5. Please make checks payable to *Undercurrents*, 355 Lumbers Building, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, 4700 Keele St., Downsview, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3.

Upriver Downriver is an extended correspondence among people who live in northern California, a place we regard as a distinct biologic/cultural region. Our primary concern as a publication is to provide reliable information and useful ideas about life in this region. Subscriptions are \$10 for four issues. Submissions, subscriptions, and correspondence should be addressed to *Upriver Downriver*, P.O. Box 103, Petrolia, CA 95558.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND CHECKLIST

Name _____

Affiliation (if not listed below) _____

Mailing Address _____

Telephone Number(s) _____ (o); _____ (h)

FAX Number _____

E-mail Address _____

Research/writing interests: _____

(This information will be published in the annual ASLE Directory. Please indicate if you do not want any of the above information to appear in the Directory.)

Amount Enclosed

ASLE Membership (\$15/ students \$10)

Donation (tax deductible) to ASLE

Subscription to *ISLE: Interdisciplinary
Studies in Literature and Environment*
(ASLE members \$8/ nonmembers \$10)

Total



Please make checks payable to **ASLE** and return dues and fees with this form to:

Michael Branch
Secretary, ASLE
English Department
Florida International University
University Park
Miami, FL 33199



ASLE
c/o Cheryl Glotfelty
English Department
University of Nevada
Reno, NV 89557

