



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 1994

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LETTERS TO ASLE MEMBERS

Dear ASLE Members,

I hope you will be able to attend ASLE's first conference, June 9-11, 1995, at Colorado State University in Fort Collins (please see the back cover of this issue). This conference will give us all a chance to meet one another in person, to share scholarly work, to enjoy excellent speakers, musicians, and outdoor activities in the Rocky Mountains, and, collectively, to chart a course for ASLE's future.

Important decisions lie ahead. Thanks to the efforts of many faithful volunteers, after only two years of existence ASLE already has a record of substantial accomplishments, which include publication of a membership directory with close to 600 names, an annotated bibliography, a handbook for graduate study, and this biannual newsletter. We have set up an e-mail network, a conference database, an archive, and a syllabus exchange. We hold annual business meetings at the Western Literature Association Conference, organize panels at a variety of national conferences, and are planning our first independent conference.

If these projects and services are to continue—namely, if ASLE is to make the transition from youth to maturity—we must establish an "infrastructure" that will both distribute the work load and allow for the smooth rotation of officers. Following the good advice of ASLE's advisory board, we are currently working to adopt a committee structure for the governance of our organization. While the word "committee" causes many to shudder, still, it is difficult to imagine a better way for a large organization to achieve the goals of democracy, camaraderie, and stability. At the ASLE business meeting in Salt Lake City last month, the officers received approval from the members (about sixty people were present) to appoint an initial Executive Council, the first of several planned committees. Future members of the Executive Council will be elected to this position, but we will start out with an appointment system because the ASLE officers need immediate help in organizing the upcoming conference.

Because returning president and newsletter editor Scott Slovic will share this space, I have promised to be brief. (Welcome home, Scott!) Sadly, there is not room to name everyone who deserves mention, but I would like each of you to know that your work has made all the difference. ASLE is blessed with people of talent, humor, energy, and commitment. I do want to extend special thanks to outgoing secretary Mike Branch, to Christine Geschwill (Mike's student assistant at FIU), to incoming secretary David Teague, to conference host

Carol Cantrell, and to guest editor Matthias Schubnell who gathered the material for this newsletter issue on "Native Americans and Nature Writing."

See you next summer in Fort Collins!

Cheryll
Cheryll Glotfelty,
ASLE Co-President

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Konnichi-wa! I've been back in Texas for more than three months now, but I'm still drawing heavily from the invigorating energy, the excitement, that sustained me last year while I was teaching environmental literature in Tokyo. As many of you may have noticed in the Spring 1994 issue of the newsletter, there is now an active Japanese branch of ASLE; while many of us were gathering in Salt Lake City last month for the Western Literature Association meeting, a group of ASLE-Japan members got together in Nagoya for a roundtable discussion of John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra* during the American Literary Society of Japan Conference. There were about thirty people at the ASLE-J organizational meeting this past May, but I've heard that more than eighty people have now joined. ASLE-J has many activities planned, from study groups to research projects, and the *ASLE-J Newsletter* is already a handsome and substantial publication. I strongly encourage other ASLE-USA members—from graduate students to tenured faculty—to apply for Fulbrights and other grants to spend a year abroad (in Japan or elsewhere), teaching, studying, and doing research in the field of literature and environment. Please contact me anytime if you'd like information or advice about this.

On August 5th, just a few hours after I'd arrived back home in San Marcos, having completed the 1,000-kilometer drive from El Paso in the middle of the night, the phone rang—and it was Cheryll, full of her usual energy and cheerfulness, calling to give me an assignment: contact Scott Russell Sanders and ask him to be one of our keynote speakers at the first ASLE Conference in Colorado next June. When I spoke to Scott the next morning, he happily agreed to participate. The author of *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless Universe* (1993), *Secrets of the Universe* (1991), *The Paradise of Bombs* (1987), and many other volumes of fiction and essays, Sanders (who teaches at Indiana University) should strike the valuable note of "community" when he talks to us next summer—see his essay "The Common Life" in *The Georgia Review* (Spring 1994).

We will have the pleasure of bringing Navajo writer Luci Tapahonso (University of Kansas), a wonderful poet, fiction writer, and essayist on the subject of place and community, as our other keynote writer. Luci's most recent book is *Sáanii Dahataa/The Women Are Singing: Poems and Stories* (1993). Three important scholars, SueEllen Campbell (Colorado State University), John Elder (Middlebury College), and William Howarth (Princeton University), have also accepted our invitations to serve as keynote presenters in Colorado. Many of you have probably seen SueEllen's recent essay, "Feasting in the Wilderness: The Language of Food in American Wilderness Narratives" (*American Literary History*, Spring 1994). John Elder, the co-editor of *The Norton Book of Nature Writing* (1989) and more recently *Family of Earth and Sky: Indigenous Tales of Nature from Around the World* (1994), is currently serving as editor of the Scribner's reference book on *American Nature Writers*. William Howarth has written and edited numerous works in the field of literature and environment, including the influential study *The Book of Concord: Thoreau's Life as a Writer* (1982).

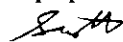
We have now issued the open call for papers as well, and we hope to receive a wide range of submissions (both papers and panel proposals) by January 15, 1995. Don't be afraid to propose innovative sessions as well as more traditional academic panels. I would like to thank Rochelle Johnson, Daniel Patterson, Terrell Dixon, Mike Branch, SueEllen Campbell, Kent Ryden, and Don Scheese for offering to help me read and select papers for the June conference. Please do send us your ideas—we'd like as many of you as possible to be able to join us in Fort Collins.

The American Nature Writing Newsletter is published twice a year and contains brief essays, poetry, book reviews, classroom notes, and information about activities relating to the study of literature and 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.

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So much has happened with ASLE during my year out of the country, and I'm delighted to see how the organization has thrived under Cheryll Glotfelty's wonderful leadership. (Even the Native American pictographs for this issue of the newsletter are Cheryll's idea.) Thanks, Cheryll, for all your hard work and for agreeing to guide ASLE with me for one more year. Mike Branch has been an extraordinarily industrious ASLE secretary for two years, and his election as the new ASLE vice president at the business meeting in Utah last month means that we can look forward to his continued clear-sighted, energetic administration. Matthias Schubnell has done a wonderful job and has been a pleasure to work with in setting up this special issue of the newsletter; Anne Phillips (Kansas State University) is now getting to work on the Spring 1995 issue which will be devoted to Children's Literature and the Environment.

Keep up the great work, y'all!


Scott Slovic,
ASLE Co-President

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For Pablo
September 8, 1994 - October 18, 1994



GUEST EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Matthias Schubnell

Much of American literature deals with the transformation of nature, or "wilderness," into civilization, and the Indian figures prominently in it, both as commenting voice and subject. Native American contributions are both ancient and modern, ranging from tribal oral traditions to contemporary works by such writers as N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Simon Ortiz, Linda Hogan, Louise Erdrich, and many more. Creation myths from across this continent recount the emergence of tribal peoples from a primordial earth womb into the present world, accompanied by animal peoples who are respected for their assistance at the beginning of time and their continuing support of tribal life. Traditional oral stories celebrate the reciprocal relationship between humans and other life forms and caution against the breach of this sacred trust. These collective voices constitute a rich area of American nature writing and convey an alternative perception of the natural world. Contemporary Native American writers draw on these oral literatures and share their environmental ethics as they speak to us of their concern for the integrity of the earth.

As a subject, the Indian has, by and large, played a double role in the canon of American literature. As Ignoble Savage, he represents the human incarnation of a detestable wilderness that needed to be eradicated, wild men, beasts, and all. European and American romantics and the critics of rapacious empire-building embraced the Noble Savage as a model of a simpler, more fulfilling, yet doomed way of life close to nature. In either case, the respective treatment of the Indian mirrors that of the American wilderness. If William Bradford and Mary Rowlandson show us Indians as the "howling wilderness" incarnate, James Fenimore Cooper chronicles the deplorable demise of a vanishing race, while his daughter, Susan, writing in her 1850 *Rural Hours*, can only conjure up the spirit of aboriginal people in a landscape from which they have been erased. Willa Cather's dead cliff-dwellers in *The Song of the Lark* and *The Professor's House* represent an ideal, earthbound civilization in her critique of American urban mass society. The Indian half-breed, Sam Fathers, and Old Ben die together at the close of Faulkner's famous lament for the vanishing wilderness, "The Bear." And at the end of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Ken Kesey's Chief Bromden holds out only the most tenuous prospect of escaping the madness of modern civilization by returning to his tribal homeland along the Columbia River.

While there has been no shortage of works celebrating the Indian's closeness to nature, the question of whether Native American thinking about the earth can guide us to a new, ecological consciousness has been hotly debated. In his 1864 study, *Man and Nature*, George Perkins Marsh contends that "the wandering savage" has only a minimal impact on his local ecology, while man in "the pastoral state" attacks nature with a vengeance (40). Since then, a steady stream of articles has either affirmed Indian ecological wisdom or demystified the idea of the Indian ecologist. Among the skeptics is W. H. Hutchinson who raises "A dissenting voice ... against the resurrection of the myth of the noble savage" (18) by arguing that native peoples had no choice but to revere and propitiate

nature, because they had no way to control it. Yet once European technology afforded them effective means of domination, they assaulted nature with as much gusto as the colonists did. While this argument is reinforced by Calvin Martin's *Keepers of the Game*, a study of the French and Micmac fur trade, both Hutchinson and Martin acknowledge that Native Americans maintained a spiritual and ecological balance prior to their encounter with alien people and technologies. Even Daniel A. Guthrie, having claimed that "primitive man was no better in his attitude toward the environment than we are today" (721), concedes that "many Indian actions were and are ecologically sound" (722). Most recently, questions about the ecological sophistication of Native Americans have been raised in Dan Flores's *Caprock Canyonlands* and Martin W. Lewis's *Green Delusions*. Despite these detractors, there can be no doubt that, on the whole, Native American cultures have developed an ecological and spiritual integration into their respective environments that has supported complex and sustainable economies.

This special issue of the *Newsletter* offers new and recent Native American contributions to American nature writing and three critical essays on the presence of the Indian in American literature about the environment. I have kept the definition of nature writing deliberately broad to accommodate poetry as well as prose. Eight Native American writers have contributed to this issue, sharing their particular responses to such ideas as the "sacred earth," "nature," and "wilderness," and offering insights into an appropriate human-earth relationship as it is embodied in Native American traditions. In two excerpts from his essay, "Sacred Places," Kiowa novelist and poet N. Scott Momaday reminds us that beyond the ecological imperative for conservation there is a compelling spiritual dimension to preserving the sacred sites on the American continent. In "The American Indian Wilderness," Louis Owens (Chokta/Cherokee) notes that "wilderness" is a European invention, signifying an unpopulated geography which, in fact, has been home to indigenous populations for thousands of years. In "The Four Directions Are Alive," Joseph Bruchac approaches the idea of wilderness from an Abenaki perspective, arguing that "wilderness" reflects the inherent separation of modern civilization from nature, a distance unfamiliar to Native American peoples. He credits them with offering a model for making nature our home. This at-homeness in a tribal landscape of physical, spiritual, and mythic significance is beautifully captured in Charmaine Benz's Chippewa poems, "I am Anishnabe" and "Along the Edge of the Woods," and in Marilou Awiakta's Cherokee "Star Vision." Laura Tohe (Navajo) relates her personal struggle to recenter her life in the Nebraska landscape through an act of the imagination.

In "Wolf Warrior," Joy Harjo (Creek) illustrates how the oral tradition informs and perpetuates an indigenous ecological sophistication worthy our careful attention. Carter Revard (Osage) brings nature and technology into startling and provocative confrontation in his "Jetliner From Angel City," and Marilou Awiakta (Cherokee) gives voice to an angry Earth in a memo to her most destructive species, *homo sapiens*.

Three critical studies examine the presence of the Indian in the writings of American and Native American nature writers. Bill Rossi's "Thoreau and Native Americans" takes a fresh look at Thoreau's complex involvement with Native American cultures. Tom Lynch's "The Osage Seasons in John Joseph Mathews's *Talking to the Moon*" deals with a rare example of natural history writing by a Native American author and notes some illuminating connections between Mathews and Thoreau. In "Mary Austin and Northern Paiute Religion(s)," Mark Hoyer draws an analogy between the religious syncretism reflected in the Ghost dance movement and Austin's blending of tribal and Christian traditions in her nature writing.

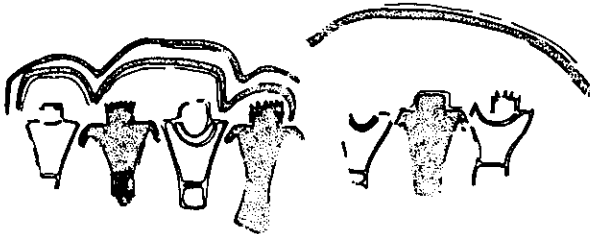
Mike Branch selected three book reviews on a new anthology of indigenous nature writing, a collection of stories by Coeur d'Alene Indian writer, Sherman Alexie, and a scholarly study on the role of landscape in the works of three contemporary Native American writers. Tom Stuckert has compiled and edited the Classroom Notes for this issue. Thanks to both of them, and to Scott Slovic and Cheryll Glotfelty for their guidance and enthusiasm!

I hope that these essays and poems will help deepen the appreciation of Native American voices in American environmental literature, encourage the teaching of Native American oral traditions as the earliest examples of American nature writing, and draw new attention to the portrayal of Indians in canonical American texts dealing with nature and the environment.

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FROM SACRED PLACES

N. Scott Momaday

To encounter the sacred is to be alive to the deepest center of human existence. Sacred places are the truest definitions of the earth. They stand for the earth immediately and forever; they are its flags and shields. If you would know the earth for what it really is, learn it through its sacred places. At Devils Tower or Canyon de Chelly or the Cahokia Mounds you touch the pulse of the living planet, you feel its breath upon you. You become one with a spirit that pervades geologic time, that indeed confounds time and space. When I stand on the edge of Monument Valley and behold the great red and blue and purple monoliths floating in the distance, I have the certain sense that I see beyond time. There the earth lies in eternity.

The sacred places of North America are threatened, even as the sacred earth is threatened. In my generation we have taken steps, small, tentative steps, to preserve forests and rivers and animals. We must also, and above all, take steps to preserve the spiritual centers of our earth, those places that are invested with the dreams of our ancestors and the well-being of our children.

It is good for us to touch the earth. We, and our children, need the chance to walk our sacred earth, this final abiding place of all that lives. We must preserve our sacred places in order to know our place in time, our reach to eternity.

(Reprinted with permission of the author and Sierra Club Books from *Sacred Places: Native American Sites*. A *Sierra Club Special Edition Calendar* 1993. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1992.)

University of Arizona



WOLF WARRIOR FOR ALL THE WARRIORS

Joy Harjo

A white butterfly speckled with pollen joined me in my prayers yesterday as I thought of you in Washington. I didn't want the pain of repeated history to break your back. In my blanket of hope I walked with you, wolf warrior and the council of tribes, to what used to be the Department of War to discuss justice.

(When a people institute a bureaucratic department to serve justice then be suspicious. False justice is not justified by massive structure, just as the sacred is not confineable to buildings constructed for the purpose of worship.)

I pray these words don't obstruct the meaning I am searching to give you, a gift like love so you can approach that strange mind without going insane. So we can all walk with you, sober, our children empowered with the clothes of memory in which they are never hungry for love, or justice.

An old Cherokee who prizes wisdom above the decisions rendered by departments of justice in this world told me this story. It isn't Cherokee but a gift given to him from the people in the North. I know I carried this story for a reason and now I understand I am to give it to you.

A young man, about your age, or mine went camping with his dogs. It was just a few years ago, not long after the eruption of Mount St. Helens, when white ash covered the northern cities, an event predicting a turning of the worlds.

I imagine October and bears fat with berries of the brilliant harvest, before the freezing breath of the north settles in and the moon is easier to reach by flight without planes.

His journey was a journey towards the unknowable, and that night as he built a fire out of twigs and broken boughs he remembered the thousand white butterflies climbing toward the sun when he had camped there last summer.

Dogs were his beloved companions in the land that had chosen him through the door of his mother. His mother continued to teach him well and it was she who had reminded him that the sound of pumping oil wells might kill him, turn him towards money.

So he and his dogs traveled out into the land that remembered everything, including butterflies, and the stories that were told when light flickered from grease.

That night as he boiled water for coffee and peeled potatoes he saw a wolf walking toward camp on her hind legs. It had been generations since wolves had visited his people. The dogs were awed to see their ancient relatives and moved over to make room for them at the fire. The lead wolf motioned for her companions to come with her and they approached humbly, welcomed by the young man who had heard of such goings on but the people had not been so blessed since the church had fought for their souls.

He did not quite know the protocol, but knew the wolves as relatives and offered them coffee, store meat, and fried potatoes which they relished in silence. He stoked the fire and sat quiet with them as the moon in the form of a knife for scaling fish came up and a light wind ruffled the flame.

The soundlessness in which they communed is what I imagined when I talked with the sun yesterday. It is the current in the river of your spinal cord that carries memory from sacred places, the sound of a thousand butterflies taking flight in windlessness.

He knew this meeting was unusual and she concurred, then told the story of how the world as they knew it had changed and could no longer support the sacred purpose of life. Food was scarce, pups were being born deformed, and their migrations which were in essence a ceremony for renewal were restricted by fences. The world as all life on earth knew it would end and there was still time in the circle of hope to turn back the destruction.

That's why they had waited for him, called him here from the town a day away over the rolling hills, from his job constructing offices for the immigrants.

They shared a smoke and he took the story into his blood, while the stars nodded their heads, while the dogs murmured their agreement. "We can't stay long," the wolf said. "We have others with whom to speak and we haven't much time."

He packed the wolf people some food to take with them, some tobacco and they prayed together for safety on this journey. As they left the first flakes of winter began falling and covered their tracks. It was as if they had never been there.

But the story burned in the heart of this human from the north and he told it to everyone who would listen, including my elder friend who told it to me one day over biscuits and eggs.

The story now belongs to you too, and much as pollen on the legs of a butterfly is nourishment carried by the butterfly from one flowering to another, this is an ongoing prayer for strength for us all.

(Previously published in *Village Voice Literary Supplement* Nov. 1991: 19; reprinted by permission of the author.)

University of New Mexico, Albuquerque



THE AMERICAN INDIAN WILDERNESS

Louis Owens

In the center of the Glacier Peak Wilderness in northern Washington, a magnificent, fully glaciated white volcano rises over a stunningly beautiful region of the North Cascades. On maps, the mountain is called Glacier Peak. To the Salishan people who have always lived in this part of the Cascades, however, the mountain is *Dakobed*, or the Great Mother, the place of emergence. For more than eighty years, a small, three-sided log shelter stood in a place called White Pass just below one shoulder of the great mountain, tucked securely into a meadow between thick stands of mountain hemlock and alpine fir.

In the early fall of seventy-six, while working as a seasonal ranger for the U.S. Forest Service, I drew the task of burning the White Pass shelter. After all those years, the shelter roof had collapsed like a broken bird wing under the weight of winter snow, and the time was right for fire and replanting. It was part of a Forest Service plan to remove all human-made objects from wilderness areas, a plan of which I heartily approved. So I backpacked eleven miles to the pass and set up camp, and for five days, while a bitter early storm sent snow driving horizontally out of the north, I dismantled the shelter and burned the old logs, piling and burning and piling and burning until nothing remained. The antique, hand-forged spikes that had held the shelter together I put into gunny sacks and cached to be packed out later by mule. I spaded up the earth beaten hard for nearly a century by boot and hoof, and transplanted plugs of vegetation from hidden spots on the nearby ridge.

At the end of those five days, not a trace of the shelter remained, and I felt good, very smug in fact, about returning the White Pass meadow to its "original" state. As I packed up my camp, the snowstorm had subsided to a few flurries and a chill that felt bone-deep with the promise of winter. My season was almost over, and as I started the steep hike down to the trailhead my mind was on the winter I was going to spend in sunny Arizona.

A half-mile from the pass I saw the two old women. At first they were dark, hunched forms far down on the last long switchback up the snowy ridge. But as we drew closer to one another, I began to feel a growing amazement that, by the time we were face-to-face, had become awe. Almost swallowed up in their baggy wool pants, heavy sweaters and parkas, silver braids hanging below thick wool caps, they seemed ancient, each weighted with at least seventy years as well as a small backpack. They paused every few steps to lean on their staffs and look out over the North Fork drainage below, a deep, heavily forested river valley that rose on the far side to the glaciers and sawtoothed black granite of the Monte Cristo Range. And they smiled hugely upon seeing me, clearly surprised and delighted to find another person in the mountains at such a time.

We stood and chatted for a moment, and as I did with all backpackers, I reluctantly asked them where they were going. The snow quickened a little, obscuring the view, as they told me that they were going to White Pass.

"Our father built a little house up here," one of them said, "when he worked for the Forest Service like you. Way back before we was born, before this century."

"We been coming up here each year since we was little," the other added. "Except last year when Sarah was not well enough."

"A long time ago, this was all our land," the one called Sarah said. "All Indi'n land everywhere you can see. Our people had houses up in the mountains, for gathering berries every year."

As they took turns speaking, the smiles never leaving their faces, I wanted to excuse myself, to edge around these elders and flee to the trailhead and my car, drive back to the district station and keep going south. I wanted to say, "I'm Indian too. Choctaw from Mississippi; Cherokee from Oklahoma"—as if mixed blood could pardon me for what I had done. Instead, I said, "The shelter is gone." Cravenly I added, "It was crushed by snow, so I was sent up to burn it. It's gone now."

I expected outrage, anger, sadness, but instead the sisters continued to smile at me, their smiles changing only slightly. They had a plastic tarp and would stay dry, they said, because a person always had to be prepared in the mountains. They would put up their tarp inside the hemlock grove above the meadow, and the scaly hemlock branches would turn back the snow. They forgave me without saying it—my ignorance and my part in the long pattern of loss which they knew so well.

Hiking out those eleven miles, as the snow of the high country became a drumming rain in the forests below, I had long hours to ponder my encounter with the sisters. Gradually, almost painfully, I began to understand that what I called "wilderness" was an absurdity, nothing more than a figment of the European imagination. Before the European invasion, there was no wilderness in North America; there was only the fertile continent where people lived in a hard-learned balance with the natural world. In embracing a philosophy that saw the White Pass shelter—and all traces of humanity—as a shameful stain upon the "pure" wilderness, I had succumbed to a five-hundred-year-old pattern of deadly thinking that separates us from the natural world. This is not to say that what we call wilderness today does not need careful safeguarding. I believe that White Pass really is better off now that the shelter doesn't serve as a magnet to backpackers and horsepackers who compact the soil, disturb and kill the wildlife, cut down centuries-old trees for firewood, and leave their litter strewn about. And I believe the man who built the shelter would agree. But despite this unfortunate reality, the global environmental crisis that sends species into extinction daily and threatens to destroy all life surely has its roots in the Western pattern of thought that sees humanity and "wilderness" as mutually exclusive.

In old-growth forests in the North Cascades, deep inside the official Wilderness Area, I have come upon faint traces of log shelters built by Suiattle and Upper Skagit people for berry harvesting a century or more ago—just as the sisters said. Those human-made structures were as natural a part of the Cascade ecosystem as the burrows of marmots in the steep scree slopes. Our Native ancestors all over this continent lived within a complex web of relations with the natural world, and in doing so they assumed a responsibility for their world that contempo-

rary Americans cannot even imagine. Unless Americans, and all human beings, can learn to imagine themselves as intimately and inextricably related to every aspect of the world they inhabit, with the extraordinary responsibilities such relationship entails—unless they can learn what the indigenous peoples of the Americas knew and often still know—the earth simply will not survive. A few square miles of something called wilderness will become the sign of failure everywhere.

University of New Mexico, Albuquerque



THE FOUR DIRECTIONS ARE ALIVE

Joseph Bruchac

In Abenaki, an Algonquin language of the Northeast woodlands, there is no way to say that we must “get back to nature,” a phrase and concept which has enjoyed great popularity in Western culture during the 20th century. In fact, in Abenaki, a language my great-great grandparents spoke every day and a language in which my 22-year-old son Jesse now writes poems and songs, there appears to have been no word for “nature.” Yet it is surprisingly easy in that language, and virtually every other Native language on this continent, to praise and describe the beauty of what Western culture has described as the “natural world” or, more recently, as “wilderness.” In fact, it is hard to say anything at any length in Abenaki without talking in intimate terms about what the West calls “nature.” The four directions, for example, are alive, animate beings. I cannot say the Abenaki word for the North without seeing the powerful white shape of the great bear or envisioning the cold strength of the breath held by that living direction. North is not just a point on the compass.

Implicit in such words in English as “natural world” or “wilderness” is a sense of separation. “Nature” is out there. We are here, in civilization. We can sometimes go out into nature—hunting, fishing, observing, camping, even meditating—but we must inevitably come back to a life in which nature is controlled or excluded. But in the Native view of things, we never leave nature behind because we are a part of it. It is Creation, it is Ktsi Nwaskw, the “Great Mysteriousness.” It is not just around us, it is in us and in all things.

American nature writing has been more deeply influenced by the Native American understanding of nature than is generally acknowledged. Thoreau, for example, is regarded by many as one of the real fathers of American Nature writing, yet a close study of his work shows that he formed many of his most crucial ideas as a result of his study of and contact with the Native Americans of New England. This influence is acknowledged in a number of ways in his journals.

Ironically, some of the early European Americans who

wrote about nature on this continent—though they believed white men were above nature—included the Indian as a part of the natural scene because they felt such savage beings, scarcely human, were no higher than the beasts of the field. There was nothing to be learned from the Indian, “noble savage” though he might be. Double irony, for most Native Americans still feel that the animal people and the human people are indeed at the same level and that the animal people hold greater wisdom in many things than do humans.

Traditional Native stories—the first real “Nature writing” done on this continent (long before Europeans arrived) which in some tribal nations were written down as well as “published” through oral traditions—show tremendous sophistication about biological and ecological principles, often couching that knowledge in memorable and easily interpreted symbolism. One Abenaki story tells how Gluskabe, a culture hero, caught all the animals in his game bag. He released them when his wise grandmother reminded him that no one person could own all the animals. In captivity they would sicken and die, while hunting makes both animals and hunter stronger.

By the time the first National Parks were established in the United States, scientists had begun to differentiate between Indians and nature—so much so that the Native people still living in Yosemite at the time of its establishment were forcibly removed from an environment which had been, not an idealized wilderness, but the home of their people for thousands of years.

The long, sophisticated interaction between human beings and the natural environment on this continent is only now beginning to be understood—for example in the ways Native people in the West deliberately started forest and grassland fires, both to create new growth and to prevent the kind of disastrous blazes which inevitably result from a “no burning” policy.

Learning to see “nature” as home, not only writing through but also *living* with that conscious vision, is both the American Indian way and one of the greatest gifts which Native people have offered.

Greenfield Center, New York



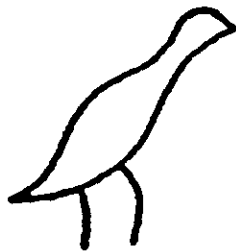
JETLINER FROM ANGEL CITY

Carter Revard

Earthborn of white
Titanium sand in Magnesium shell from
the foamy sea, I stretch forth from
their silver ark long wings over
four hells jetting heavenward my private
Cave of Vulcan where frozen

chicken boogies high with microwaves over
 a shimmer of crimson cloud's gym-floor, high
 over Our Mother Of Snowy Wrinkles with all
 her dark pines, bears, mountain lions, the
 Grand Canyon's sliding silence,
 among faint stars around full moon, high
 over a neon-jeweled octopus raping the seashore as
 I cocoon in home and history strangers hurtling
 to England, to Peru, to outer space where the
 moon is white gold among snowbank clouds over
 rivers, oceans, volcanoes,
 time-warps ahead and behind us, looking down on
 Greenland's icy mountains, pyramids
 of San Francisco, Chicago, Cairo, Chichen Itza,
 walk in from Siberian winter,
 step out in Rio summer—
 AH FOLKS, THIS IS YOUR CAPTAIN SPEAKING,
 NOTICE THAT FLIGHT OF SWANS
 OR WHOOPING CRANES PASSING BELOW,
 AND OVER THERE A SPECTACULAR
 THUNDERCLOUD'S CHARCOAL AND SALMON CASTLE
 GOLD-LIT BY SWARMS OF LIGHTNING BUGS
 LAID ON ESPECIALLY FOR OUR FLIGHT—
 NEXT WEEK WE RACE THIS CENTURY'S LAST
 TOTAL ECLIPSE'S SHADOW INTO NIGHT, TODAY WE'RE JUST
 YOUR SILVER DOVE RETURNING TO THE EARTH.

Washington University, St. Louis



RESTORING THE CREATIVE VOICE THROUGH LANDSCAPE

Laura Tohe

The prairie spread out on both sides of the car as far as the eye could see. It was late summer and the rain was coming down in sprinkles. The dense clouds seemed to be closing in: I felt like I could reach out and touch one. Ahead, the road disappeared into the horizon.

During those early years after moving to Nebraska from the Southwest, I wrote very little. In those periods when I made time to write, I found myself staring out the window and listening to the monotonous drone of traffic on Maple Street. I had nothing to say. No poems about children, about moving to a new place, about the feelings of separation, about rivers or about people. All those stories would come later. For now I was living in a vacuum. I had been uprooted from "shikeyah."

"Shikeyah" in the Navajo language means "my homeland." The word is made up of three ideas, and literally translated, means "my feet below." "Shikeyah" speaks of standing on

one's homeland. It suggests a harmonious relationship between people and the earth: the Navajos believe they belong to the land. When "shikeyah" prevails, one walks with the power of the Earth Mother emanating up from the feet, throughout the body, to the top of the head. "Shikeyah" also suggests the ties that bind family, clan, and ancestors. And finally, the term alludes to the stories that hold the kinship system together in the Navajos' oral culture, that strengthen and nurture just as a plant's root system nourishes it and helps it stand upright. The people, the land, and the stories are how we define ourselves.

So in this midwestern landscape I had no roots, no family, and no stories with which I could connect. I felt out of place and distanced from my surroundings. I couldn't write.

In 1985 I was pregnant with my second child. At that time I was also commuting between Omaha and Lincoln to attend classes at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. During those hours behind the wheel, I watched the landscape change from shades of gray and white to black and green in the spring as the farmers plowed their fields. I drove past hawks that perched on fence posts along the highway. I learned where deer were most likely to get hit. Most of all, though, I discovered the Platte River.

I recalled reading somewhere that the Plains tribes once called the Platte River the Moonshell River because trappers brought sea shells up this waterway to trade for skins and other valuables. What a beautiful name and how unfortunate that it had been changed, I thought. I decided that if the child I was carrying was female, Moonshell might make a good name for her.

The Moonshell River, like a woman, retains a lifeline that extends farther back than anyone can remember. How much this river had given and taken. My grandmother once told me how to meet an unfamiliar body of water—how to stroke it as if to shake hands, to make a connection. Sometimes at night as I looked out the window at the moon I would think about her and imagine the moon shining on her the way it shines on long dark hair. Although my advanced stage of pregnancy made it difficult to sit for long periods, I looked forward to seeing the Moonshell. One day, without my consciously realizing it, she began to influence my writing.

I usually begin a piece by writing a single line. Then that line becomes a starting point or an ending. "She would be my daughter, the Moonshell River" emerged one day as I neared the river. The Moonshell connected me to the landscape. She helped to restore my faith in my creativity. Place is an important ingredient in my writing process, and she helped get me in touch with a landscape that could inspire me just as the landscape of "shikeyah" does. She reminded me that we were not separate: we were both life-giving—she with creativity, and I with my expected child. We had stories yet to tell and songs yet to sing. The poem I wrote about her goes like this:

THE PLATTE

She would be my daughter
 the Moonshell River

tonight she has caught the full moon

and holds it inside the fluid motion
of her eyes dancing in a winter blue Nebraska night

the song she hums in this miracle singing inside me.

(Previously published in *Nebraska Humanities* and reprinted by permission of the author.)

Arizona State University



THE OSAGE SEASONS IN JOHN JOSEPH MATHEWS'S *TALKING TO THE MOON*

Tom Lynch

One of the few book-length works in the genre of natural history writing to be composed by a Native American is John Joseph Mathews's *Talking to the Moon*. One-eighth Osage, Mathews was intimately familiar with Osage culture, moderately fluent in the language, a registered tribal member, but not a participant in the more traditional tribal lifestyle maintained by the full-bloods (Wilson 266-68). He refers to the full-blooded Osage as "them," and never mentions in the book his own lineage with the tribe.

Talking to the Moon recounts ten years (1933-1943) of his life in an isolated sandstone house in the hills of north central Oklahoma on the Osage Agency. He called this place "Black-jack" after the area's prevalent blackjack oaks (*Quercus marilandica*). Like Thoreau, who was a prominent influence (see Ruoff), Mathews telescopes several years into one and follows the seasonal cycle.

A principle theme of the book is how the "primal urge" of biological organisms is related to the artistic and philosophical urges of human beings. "I realized," Mathews says, "that man's artistic creations and his dreams, often resulting in beauty, as well as his fumbling toward God, must be primal, possibly the results of the biological urge which inspires the wood thrush to sing and the coyote to talk to the moon" (3). In his seasonal round, Mathews employs traditional Osage "moons" rather than the European months. In the designation for these moons, Mathews garners an insight from the Osage as to the most significant characteristics of the "primal urge" of each season. The Osage sense of time and place as expressed through the names of the moons forms the matrix for his own experiences with the perennial life force. In a sense, Mathews draws an analogy between his own talking to the Osage "moons" and the coyotes howling at the actual moon.

For example, in *Just-Doing-That Moon* (March), Mathews tells us that for the Osage, "this is the time of great restlessness in nature; and when they said that the Moon Woman was 'just doing that,' they made a futile attempt to describe her actions. She is like a pampered, temperamental woman who changes

from tears and tragic weeping to ecstatic laughter within the hour, during the period of change from winter to summer" (34). He shows how the weather exhibits these traits, with sudden changes in temperature, high winds, and even tornadoes, and how his animal and human neighbors respond to this whimsical climate. Amidst nature's seeming chaos, Mathews looks for that which is steady in this unsteady season. Regardless of weather, for example, the birds reliably return.

The Buffalo-Pawing-Earth Moon (June) reminds Mathews that "the buffalo are gone from the blackjacks and from the headwaters of the Cimarron River, where the Osage once hunted them" (75). Because this month is associated with the Buffalo, central to traditional Osage life, it naturally makes Mathews think of the Osage ceremonies to celebrate the natural order: "It is during this moon that the Osage hold their traditional social dances that in the dim past had some religious meaning; they were interpretive of the swelling life of the prairie earth that carried the frenzied bawling of the bull buffaloes along with their own drum rhythm and the chant of their singers" (78). Pursuing this connection, Mathews links the demise of the Buffalo with the demise of the Osage religion in the provocative statement that "the passing of a concept of God seems to be almost as poignant as the passing of a species" (84).

Life continues, however, as we learn in the Yellow-Flower Moon (August). After the dry heat of the preceding Buffalo-Breeding Moon (July), this month brings rain, yellow flowers, and suddenly "the world that seemed dead springs into life again" (109). This chapter also recounts Mathews's project to hire a painter to make oil portraits of Osage elders for the Osage Indian Museum. His descriptions of these old men adorning themselves in traditional Osage formal garments recapitulate the restoration of life to the withered world brought by the rains of Yellow-Flower Moon.

The Deer-Breeding Moon (October) is the moon of cool weather and the exuberance of renewed activity. Like the black-tailed buck, who is "restive and eager with the mystery that floods him," Mathews too overflows with energy. "I often get up in the mornings and run down the ridge with the dogs until I am exhausted, from the sheer love of action and the feel of the frosty air in my face" (156). This is also the season when Mathews begins to express his restive nature through hunting. He hunts coyotes with his neighbors and stalks bears in the Guadalupe Mountains of New Mexico. His frequent hunting described in the latter half of the book will no doubt disturb many readers today. His tendency to render the chase in exciting details, but to avoid descriptions of the actual kill, suggests, perhaps, his own anxiety about his readers' reaction. (See also Wilson, 283-84).

In contrast to this excitement, *Single Moon By Himself* (January) is the month of loneliness and solitude: "The moon woman floats by herself now. There are no babies or fruits or flowers, say the Osage, and the Moon Woman is lonesome" (210). It is, he says, "the only time, during a year of action that I am able to entertain a series of thoughts and play with conclusions" (215). During this penultimate moon he ponders the meaning of his solitary life in his stone house among the blackjacks. He sees his own philosophizings as ornamental expressions of human nature akin to the way animals express

the "mysterious Force" as it moves beyond the struggle for survival.

Mathews ends with a vision of perennial life renewed. In Light-of-Day>Returns Moon (February), which Mathews prefers to call Coyote-Breeding Moon, the courtship howlings of coyotes in the night suggests to him the vital promise of new life. Like Thoreau's *Walden*, Mathews concludes his chronicle with the return of light, even echoing Thoreau: "There is a promise that life will come again and that the Light-of-Day>Returns Moon is in fact the brightness before dawn" (237).

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Holy Names College, Oakland



I AM ANISHNABE

Charmaine M. Benz

I am Anishnabe
I come from the woods and the water
and
I have been here forever.

I have come from the womb of our Mother
The Earth,
In a handful of soil.

I am the spirit of the forest
Who walks along the shores of Lake Superior,
And lives in the shadows of the
Sacred Cedar.

I exist in consecrated song,

Trickster story and
Ojibwe legend.

If you look,
Like a soaring hawkwing,
I'll be there.
You can taste me like maple sugar,

You can hear me speaking
In pine forests and summer's twilight magic.

I am Anishnabe
I come from the woods and the water
and
I have been here forever.

ALONG THE EDGE OF THE WOODS

Charmaine M. Benz

Along the
Edge of the woods
Last night
I saw
In total blackness
Lightning bugs.

Intermittent glow.
Perhaps it was a Bearwalk
Or
Some old Mide',
Trying to
Steal my soul.
Eerie glances
Frightened me and
Chilled me to my bone.

Waa waa tesi,
Where do you go,
In the light of day?

Mount Pleasant, Michigan



THOREAU AND NATIVE AMERICANS

William Rossi

Just as it is impossible to imagine Thoreau's writing apart from the categories of "wild" and "civilized" that so deeply informed his thinking, so was it virtually impossible for Thoreau himself to think about native peoples outside of the territory these categories defined. As Robert Sayre has shown, particularly during the early stage of his career through *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849), Thoreau participated fully in the ideology of nineteenth-century savagism, representing "the Indian" as "solitary and ancient, simple and heroic, and doomed by fate" to extinction (6). But while Sayre argues that from the mid-1850s Thoreau moved "beyond savagism," that movement was hardly one of clear evolutionary progress. Pondering essential racial characteristics in 1858,

Thoreau asked rhetorically, "Who can doubt that men are by a certain fate what they are ... when he considers a whole race like the Indian, inevitably and resignedly passing away in spite of our efforts to Christianize and educate them?" (*Journal* 10:251).

This belief in inevitable extinction, as pervasively present in mid-century science, historical writing, and government policy as it was in popular literature, may be why Thoreau had little to say about Indian policy, as Lucy Maddox asserts. Yet his satiric remarks on the dispossession of native lands by English settlers at Plymouth in *Cape Cod* (33), his vigorous condemnation of historians who "have spoken slightly of the Indians, as a race possessing so little skill and wit" (*Journal* 11:437), and his complex portrait of Penobscot guide Joe Polis in *The Maine Woods* suggest that Thoreau was not simply captive to the ideology of savagism, however constrained by it. Nor can his interest in a people he thought of as "wild men, so much more like ourselves than they are unlike" (*Journal* 11:437) be reduced simply to an "aesthetic and literary" fascination (Maddox 158).

For one thing, Thoreau had a scholarly and scientific bent matched only by his appetite for huckleberries and wild apples. And by his death in 1862, he had filled eleven notebooks with commentary and extracts from extensive reading on native origins, languages, arts, customs, botany, and other topics, much of it in preparation for a book on Indians which he seems to have abandoned about 1858 (Sayre 101-154, Sattlemeyer 99-110). In the 1840s Thoreau's encounters with individual native people were limited and distant. But after 1850, as part of this project (which for him was both humanistic and scientific), he also sought out survivors of northeastern tribes in Concord, Cape Cod, New Bedford, and Maine, and, on his last journey to Minnesota in 1861 visited the Lower Sioux Agency, usually recording the results of these meetings in the *Journal*. By far the most significant of these was the two weeks he spent with Joe Polis in the Maine woods in 1857. As he wrote to Harrison Blake after returning, "The Indian ... possesses so much intelligence which the white man does not, and it increases my own capacity, as well as faith, to observe it. I rejoice to find that intelligence flows in other channels than I knew" (*Correspondence* 491).

Finally, in the later 1850s this study and experience, although from the beginning bound up with Thoreau's natural history explorations, fed directly into his investigations of the domestication, dispersion, and geographical distribution of plants. Not only did his knowledge of native cultivation practices, common names, and uses of plants distinguish his work from others'. But, as William Howarth notes, Thoreau also linked the advancing Anglo-American culture's displacement of wild fruits to their displacement of native peoples (201-2). Reopening channels of intelligence flowing to and from a lifesaving wild—potentially so much more like ourselves than unlike—was surely his way of resisting the doctrine of inevitability in the one case, if not so surely in the other.

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University of Oregon



MARY AUSTIN AND NORTHERN PAIUTE RELIGION(S)

Mark Hoyer

In her autobiography Mary Austin recounts a spiritual turning point that occurred while she lived in the Owens Valley of California. When her mother became ill, the dissatisfaction she had been feeling with Protestant prayer as she had been trained in it propelled her to begin experimenting with prayer as she learned it from a medicine man of the Northern Paiutes. She learned from him that "[p]rayer had nothing to do with emotion[,] [but was] an outgoing act of the inner self toward something, not a god, toward a responsive activity in the world about you, designated as The-Friend-of-the-Soul-of-Man." The experimentation, she tells us, "began as adventure and became illumination. It went on ... for years, and gradually embraced all the religious gestures accessible...." This willingness to combine "religious gestures," coupled with her conviction that such "inner act[s] [could be] outwardly manifested ... in words," sets the stage for an examination of a crucial but overlooked feature of Austin's work of this period: the desire to synthesize, in the act of writing, seemingly divergent religious philosophies and practices (*Earth Horizon* 276-77; my emphasis).

Austin's writings throughout her life, many of which feature themes and stories derived from Christian and Native

American religions, make clear that her early crisis of spiritual identity did not result in a rejection of the foundational myths of Christianity, but only of its institutional ethos, and testify to her desire to reconcile what are competing modes of thought and practice. They also make clear her familiarity with a Native American religious movement known as the Ghost Dance, which had begun in 1889 among the Northern Paiute of western Nevada not far from Austin's home, a familiarity she claims to have had from at least 1895 (*EH* 267). Because one of its fundamental qualities was the blending of Christian and traditional (Paiute) religious mythologies and rituals, the Ghost Dance may provide an illuminating cultural analogue to Austin's work and help to explain, at least in part, the prevalence of the same characteristic of syncretism in Austin's writings.

The Ghost Dance began on New Year's Day, 1889, when "the sun died" (Wovoka, qtd. in Mooney and rptd. in Hittman 203-210). During this total eclipse, a Paiute named Wovoka, known to the whites as Jack Wilson, fell into a trance. He reported upon reviving that he died and went to heaven, where he talked to God and saw "all the dead people," Indian and white alike, all of whom were dancing and appeared to be young, well-nourished, and happy. God declared that Wilson was to be, in effect, co-president with Benjamin Harrison, and, as proof of his authority, gave Wilson power over the elements. God then gave Wilson several instructions, primary among them that the Indians cease any fighting and work peaceably with whites. He taught Wovoka a dance, a variation of the Paiute's traditional Round Dance, which was to be performed at regular intervals to help bring about a natural cataclysm that would cleanse the earth. Believers in Wovoka's doctrine were to be saved, their reward being rejuvenated youth in the next life, in a world of peace and plenty, where the living would be reunited with the dead (Hittman 63-64).¹

Wovoka's Ghost Dance religion was fundamentally syncretic. According to Michael Hittman, Wovoka combined "traditional [Paiute] religio[us] ... concepts such as shamanic booha [power], supernatural weather control, belief in dreams and visions, invulnerability, trance states, and the Round or 'Father' Dance," with elements of the Presbyterianism he had learned at the ranch of David Wilson, his white employer (183).

The nature of traditional Paiute tribal relationships ensures that the Indians of the Owens Valley could not have avoided the influence of Wovoka's revival—although reports vary as to the degree of its influence there—and therefore suggests that Austin probably first heard of it while living in the Owens Valley. The Paiutes of the Walker and Mason Valleys in Nevada, where Wovoka lived, and the Owens Valley, were very closely related culturally, both belonging to the band known as "Grass Bulb Eaters," or *Tovusidokado*. Additionally, trans-seasonal migrations from Nevada over the Sierra to California's central and coastal valleys to work in the fields of white landowners, a trek leading through the Owens Valley, as well as traditional practices such as intermarriage among the bands, assured the quick and steady flow of news throughout the region. Furthermore, documentary evidence, references in local newspapers, and the memoirs of early Owens Valley settlers make it clear that not only the Indians but also Austin's white neighbors were

aware of the new religion.

Austin's first book, *The Land of Little Rain* (1903), prominently features two Indian characters. More to the point, several chapters reveal Austin's habit of blending religious mythologies. In one chapter we journey, via Austin's imaginative re-creation of the medicine-man Winnenap's syncretic vision, to "Shoshone Land," a journey which is cast as an analogue to a return to Eden. "My Neighbor's Field" is framed by the allusion to the Biblical figure of Naboth; into this frame is inserted the Paiute tale of Winnedumah. These tales, which tell stories about faith (or the lack of it) to one's "brothers," can be read as commentary on that quality (and the lack of it) in relations between Euro- and Native Americans. In "The Basket Maker," Austin's comparison of Seyavi to the Biblical prophet Deborah reminds one not only of her famous desert-as-woman passage in *Lost Borders*, in which the desert becomes a mythic figure, but also of her own self-depictions in *Earth Horizon* (*Stories from the Country of Lost Borders* 160; Pryse xxix).

Austin's next book, *The Basket Woman* (1904), features stories that highlight the blending of pagan and Christian elements in the tradition of the Christmas tree, and again rework the Winnedumah myth to comment on the relative faithfulness of white and Indian ("The Christmas Fir," "Mahala Joe"). A later play, *Fire* (1914), grafts the Gospel stories of the people's refusal to accept Jesus's "gift of light" with the often-told Owens Valley myth of how the gift of fire came to the Paiutes.

The blending of mythologies in these stories and others is crucial to understanding the unique nature of Austin's prophetic project. They do more than just reinforce the point that the new inhabitants of the land must adapt their habits and attitudes to nature's dictates, a point made overtly throughout several of these works; they suggest that those dictates are best perceived via an adaptation of our guiding mythologies and religious practices, an adaptation analogous to a new religious understanding. On the journey to that new understanding, Native Americans serve for Austin as leaders, their stories offering a pattern by which—and a direction in which—our own mythologies might be transformed.

Endnote

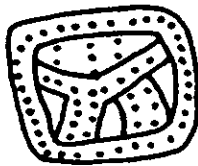
¹ Most anthropologists, following Mooney, associate the Ghost Dance with its manifestation among the Sioux and the massacre at Wounded Knee in December 1890. Thus they assume that Wovoka's doctrine was hostile to whites and further, that the Ghost Dance died out with the Sioux. By contrast, Hittman, the only anthropologist to have studied the Ghost Dance as it originated among the Northern Paiutes, insists on the peaceful nature of Wovoka's doctrine and its alteration in other cultural (tribal) contexts, and demonstrates Wovoka's continued (although curtailed) influence in Nevada as a healer and religious leader.

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University of California, Davis



MOTHER NATURE SENDS A PINK SLIP

Marilou Awiakta

To: Homo Sapiens
Re: Termination

My business is producing life.
The bottom line is
you are not cost-effective workers.
Over the millennia, I have repeatedly
clarified my management goals and objectives.
Your failure to comply is well documented.
It stems from your inability to be
a team player:

- you interact badly with co-workers
- contaminate the workplace
- sabotage the machinery
- hold up production
- consume profits

In short, you are a disloyal species.

Within the last decade

I have given you three warnings:

- made the workplace too hot for you
- shaken up your home office
- utilized plague to cut back personnel

Your failure to take appropriate action
has locked these warnings into
the Phase-Out Mode, which will result
in termination. No appeal.

STAR VISION

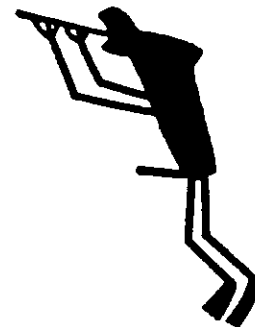
Marilou Awiakta

As I sat against the pine one night
beneath a star-filled sky,
my Cherokee stepped in my mind
and suddenly in every tree,
in every hill and stone,
in my hand lying prone upon
the grass, I could see
each atom's tiny star—
minute millions so far-flung
so bright they swept me up
with earth and sky
in one vast expanse of light.

The moment passed. The pine
was dark, the hill, the stone,
and my hand was bone and flesh
once more, lying on the grass.

(Reprinted with permission from *Selu: Seeking the Corn-Mother's Wisdom*, by Marilou Awiakta, published by Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Colorado.)

Memphis, Tennessee



CLASSROOM NOTES

Common Ground

My environmental literature course should probably be called "American Native Literature." It's just a standard American survey produced by natural selection, "the best of the natives." For me, a native is anyone who lives in a place with careful attention to its cycles and generations, even if their stay is short. In outdoor classes, I show students the campus ecology and urge them to become a part of our place, not just for four years, but for the next generations of students, longleaf pines, squirrels and raccoons, laurel and live oaks, and a mating pair of suburban bald eagles. Students are also shown the tribal culture of the college with its partly feudal, partly democratic human stewardship, a council of trustees, a migrant population of students and administrators, a stable and yet global set of faculty, and a diverse staff of more earthy natives. We hope they'll return to the reservation frequently after graduation and see that it is still a healthy place for all earthkind.

Meanwhile, students keep a journal about their home habitat(s) or natural communities and their personal encounters with nature (mostly from childhood), with the people and animals who bonded them to nature. They write as Whitman did, about and as nature. Some, like Mary Austin, can recall the child-times (before alphabet) when they made little distinction between themselves and nature. Following Whitman, I call this character in each of us, the species self. Every human animal is a creature of habitat and the community of the land is the common ground that writers and readers can share.

The course readings are arranged bioregionally, ending in Florida with an emigrant Yankee adjusting to Cross Creek (Rawlings, *Cross Creek*) and the novel of a young black native who finds her community in nearby Eatonville (Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*). I have tried a variety of writings by and about Native Americans. The problem here is how to escape the stereotype and avoid the counterfeit.

Sometimes form is the best common ground, as with creation accounts and some poetry, but at other times it confuses the cultural diversity issues. Autobiography is problematic and I eventually dropped *Black Elk Speaks*. In its place I adopted Carter's *The Education of Little Tree* because it shows the proper education of the species self and corresponds to what most of my students write in their journals. When the scandal broke out about the author's Klan heritage, I added one more hour to our discussion for the post-modern problem of fraudulent authority. Some still take the text at face value, but many feel cheated and kick themselves for romanticizing the Native American. Even so, each class still insists it is the best reading in the course and should be kept. So now *Little Tree* also teaches us that the search for the authentic in writing, as for the sustainable in land development, is always part of what it means to be native.

As an antidote to *Little Tree*, I have offered the gutsy madness of Silko's *Ceremony*. Students either hate it or find it profoundly moving. The form of the novel, psycho-chaotic mixture of dream, song, and largely non-chronological narrative, frustrates half the class, in spite of my guidance. If Tayo struggles to see his authentic tribal culture, all the more should we. The best chance for understanding any Native American culture belongs to the reader willing to be a "half-breed," with the writer, in the generation of new forms of writing. For simplicity of form, I like the essays and folklore in *I Become Part of It*. Students respond directly to the varieties of voices and especially to the transforming concepts of vision and medicine.

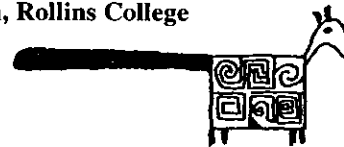
In the Florida finale of the course, we learn the story of Cabeza de Vaca and the grizzly workings of the conquistadors. We see as well Chief Osceola and his fierce refusal to give ground to the U.S. troops in the Seminole Wars. When I take the class to see two of the last remaining specimens of the giant bald cypress at Big Tree Park in Sanford, they see that another native (17 ft. in diameter), estimated to be older than Rome, is still holding on in spite of the pressures of expanding civilization and human population. Park caretakers have surrounded the tree with a fence to prevent inscriptions and have erected a lightning rod. We sit in silence for a half hour and write in our journals. Once a part-Cherokee student wrote an intriguing

dialogue with the sacred spirit of the tree, allowing that the lightning rod was certainly a bad joke.

In another field trip to Hontoon Island, we sit in silence on a long shell mound in the swampy seclusion of a cypress hammock, meditating on the simple life of the river people, Timucuans, who greeted the Spanish and are now extinct. The best way to bridge the gap between native and Native is to explore the common ground where we live.

In my mind Mary Austin has the best comprehension of this correlation between land and native cultures. Like Whitman, she carries a prophetic democracy for the next century. The cultural heritage of mound and museum should never be separated from the land and the rivers that begot them. In wrapping up the course, I ask my students to formulate their own set of ethical principles (ecologue) for the final examination and to adopt a Native American tribe, preferably from Florida or their home state, to see what character of living in the land they hold in common

Steve Phelan, Rollins College



Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko as Nature Writer

Among contemporary Native American writers, almost no one provides a more literate perspective on Native American relationships with landscapes and nature than Leslie Marmon Silko. I have used Silko in a number of teaching contexts, and though she is challenging to most students, the educational rewards have been great.

Our second-semester freshman composition course teaches writing with research, individual instructors choosing a particular focus. Mine has been nature writing, which I also use to illustrate principles of research. Silko's seminal essay "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination" (*Antaeus* 57, 1986) has proven valuable in teaching two important research concepts. The first is that research occurs in the material world, not only in books and articles. As Silko suggests, the landscape is a repository of her people's history which can be accessed through storytelling. Applying this concept beyond the Laguna Pueblo culture, students can see how cultural and historical research can be conducted through direct observation and experience of landscape as well as through interviews with people about their relationships with landscape. As an exercise, I ask my students to talk with family members about a special place and what it means to their family history.

Silko's relationship to place described in this essay—the intimate convergence between landscape, history, culture, and imagination—is usually quite foreign to non-Native students. Research is intended to generate new knowledge, which requires the researcher to be open to new ways of thinking and perceiving. Therefore, I also assign "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination" in my freshman research class to expand my students' imagination about the world. I assign Silko's essay along with a number of other essays that suggest

alternative perception, such as Barry Lopez's "Children in the Woods" from *Crossing Open Ground* (1988). Of course, openness to multiple perspectives is also a major goal generally in critical thinking.

I have taught Silko in upper-division literature courses as well. A "Contemporary Literature" course in which I focused on nature writing included a unit entitled "Native Reconnections." The unit culminated the semester, since most of the nature writing we examined throughout the semester by non-Natives tended to lament human disconnection from nature. Silko's novel *Ceremony* (1977) was the major text of this last unit, and although it also shrieks in horror at the destruction wrought upon the environment, the book offers hope in Tayo's reconnection with his culture. Aside from nature and environmental issues, we also studied the novel as a work of experimental contemporary literature, positing that the novel itself, in its structure as well as its represented events, was a "ceremony."

In studying the "ceremony" of *Ceremony*, we of course learned about Laguna culture as well as nature and literary structure. Silko has also proved valuable, then, in my "Ethnicity in American Literature" course, which focuses on a number of ethnic literatures. A subtheme in this course has been how ethnicity is defined by relationships with landscape and nature, so *Ceremony* has worked well from this perspective, too. I have also taught Silko's *Storyteller* (1981) in this "Ethnicity" class, which folds in the importance of storytelling in Native relationships with nature and culture even more dramatically than in *Ceremony*. On the one hand, some stories in *Storyteller* are rather direct cautionary tales about humanity, culture, and environment. An early story in the collection, itself called "Storyteller," illustrates how white oil workers' insensitive raping of the land leads to the sexual exploitation of a Native woman and the "rape" of the Native culture through the introduction of material attitudes toward landscape into the lives of the Alaskan Natives.

More importantly, though, *Storyteller* provides students with a collection of stories, autobiographical sketches, poems, and photographs that, bundled together, teach not only about Native relationships with nature, but also Native modes of thought. At first, non-Native students, who make up the vast majority of the class, are put off by this text because of its seeming incoherence. We work to unmoor ourselves from our linear thinking and perceive the text in its associative structure, and the links between the various stories, poems, and photographs begin to emerge. (For example, the murder of the trooper in "Tony's Story" becomes understandable in the context of the mythic tales of destroyers interspersed throughout the book.) One way that I encourage students to think associatively, particularly in terms of mythic story, is to ask them to place themselves in a scenario typical of their everyday experience (e.g., deciding whether to study or go out with friends) and then to think of a traditional story they know (usually a fairy tale) that resembles that situation which can provide guidance in how to act.

Once the students see the reverberations possible between myth and contemporary life, *Storyteller's* structure and Native modes of thought become much clearer. Many of these reverberations in Silko's book intersect with issues of humanity,

nature, and landscape. Silko's poem/myth of the creation of white destroyers as a result of a storytelling act leads to discussion of how the stories we tell about ourselves can lead to destruction of the environment as well as its reclamation.

Leslie Marmon Silko has proven to be a Native American writer who can, at the same time, teach my students much about Native relationships with landscape, Native modes of thought and perception, and possibilities for new relationships with nature. Hopefully, their critical thinking abilities, their multicultural understanding, and their environmental ethics are all expanded.

Thomas K. Dean, Cardinal Stritch College



BOOK REVIEWS

Family of Earth and Sky: Indigenous Tales of Nature from around the World. Eds. John Elder and Hertha Wong. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. 323 pages, \$30.00 cloth.)

As ecocriticism orients itself in American culture, collections such as *Family of Earth and Sky: Indigenous Tales of Nature from around the World* will likely be the heirs to anthologies such as Thomas Lyon's *This Incomperable Land* and Robert Finch and John Elder's *The Norton Book of Nature Writing*. In our democratic society, as the current thinking goes, the best hope for affecting positive change lies in conversation, and the greater the diversity of voices we can include in our conversations, the more effective they will be. *Family of Earth and Sky* introduces indigenous voices from around the world into the current conversation about Western civilization's untenable relationship to the natural world.

Included in this collection of indigenous narratives are seventy-one selections ranging from excerpts of the Navajo Emergence Story, to the Finnish *Kalevala*, to the Indian *Jataka* tales. *Family of Earth and Sky* very nearly, in fact, constitutes an embarrassment of riches, because it is difficult to comprehend fully the book's wide array of narratives. Elder and Wong have provided help, however, by arranging their selections according to patterns they have discerned in the material. The book thus has four sections: "Origins," "Animal Tales and Transformations," "Tricksters," and "Tales to Live By." The environmental values espoused by individual stories are meant to "complement the Western tradition of nature writing" because they present various responses to nature based on specific cultural experiences in specific homelands. The organization of the stories is meant to demonstrate convergences between the different responses, common patterns of behavior that Westerners might do well to emulate.

Despite their helpful organization, Elder and Wong seem fully aware that (liberal humanism notwithstanding) there is nothing magic about conversation, that even in the matter of interchanges between cultures in which the stakes may be very

high, some conversations proceed more smoothly than others. One of the strengths of the book is its editors' candor in discussing the difficulties of using literature to recover other environmental traditions. Citizens of the twentieth-century United States cannot, for instance, jump effortlessly into the fifth world of the Navajo. As the collection's organization implies, modern readers need recognizable structures—structures which are not coincidentally current in American literary/critical studies—to make sense of narratives from such vastly different cultures. Such labels as "trickster story" and "origin myth" prove to be remarkably helpful orienting devices in the collection.

Elder and Wong explicitly address this vexed question of the cultural portability of indigenous narratives in their introduction. Obviously, the situation of most indigenous humans exchanging narratives is irretrievable for a citizen of the United States who reads such narratives from a book. As Elder and Wong note, it is unreasonable to draft indigenous values directly into our "environmental" movements. The pronounced Western dichotomy between the natural and the human worlds from which arises the concept "environmentalism" was, and is, for most indigenous cultures, incomprehensible.

The book is intended to help us decide whether, in fact, we can go beyond our "distanced and abstract view of nonhuman life," and if our stories *do* bear on the way we apply our technology to the nonhuman world. While ecocritics like to think it possible to transcend this abstract view through storytelling, the connection between a culture's narratives and its orientations towards the nonhuman world is never quite stable enough to describe so precisely, as Elder and Wong's introduction cautions.

Family of Earth and Sky does provide helpful material with which to begin studying these tenuous connections, although it is far from being an exhaustive study of indigenous literatures. It will probably not be adequate as a class text, for example, because it does not go very far in describing the cultural contexts of the collected stories, but an enterprising instructor should be able to gather such material by starting from the original sources listed in the book's "credits." Because they are so diverse in their origins, the stories tend to remain things-in-themselves, despite the four unifying themes supplied by the editors.

Family of Earth and Sky presents Western readers a diversity of new stories that will certainly complicate their relationship to the natural world. The collection works by analogy: its editors assume that "just as biodiversity contributes to the sustainability of a complex ecosystem, in the same way a diversity of stories may promote a more stable relationship between humanity and the rest of nature." Elder and Wong provide their readers a clear perspective from which to approach this "diversity of stories"; however, readers must be prepared both to grant their foundational analogy, and to negotiate the complex differences of culture, history, and technology that necessarily arise in a collection as ambitious as *Family of Earth and Sky*.

David W. Teague, University of Delaware



The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven. Sherman Alexie. (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993. 223 pages, \$21.00 cloth, \$12.00 paper.)

This new collection of stories by the young Coeur d'Alene Indian Sherman Alexie is deceptively unassuming—one can easily underestimate its accomplishment. His descriptions of reservation life, of the pains and failures of unfulfilled lives, are almost anecdotal: references to colonial injustice appear as afterthoughts by apolitical characters, and spiritualism and ceremony are scarce. But one increasingly reads this casualness as Alexie's very light touch. Even the striking paucity of specific detail, of anything that would locate these stories in a particular place and time—a paucity which could be read as a failure to fully apprehend a world—comes to feel like a truly mythogenetic impulse, one expressed in a delicate mosaic of small evasions and quiet acts of courage.

Alexie's negotiation of transcultural terrain is also wonderfully offhanded, as with the man who offers regular greetings to nobody because his physics-student nephew has told him that 99% of the matter in the universe is invisible. One thinks of James Welch's characters munching on Fritos as they dig a mother's grave: trumping the image of the Indian as trapped in a pre-Columbian past. Alexie also handles the oral process of mythmaking as have other Native writers, such as Leslie Marmon Silko, whose healer Betonie includes old phone books and free calendars among his sacred objects. Alexie's Samuel Builds-the-Fire sees a duck pluck a hot dog off the street, and spins with ease the comic and awful tale of how a

young Indian boy, tired and hungry, steals a hot dog from a sidewalk vendor. He runs away and the vendor chases him through the park. The Indian boy drops the hot dog and jumps into the river. He cannot swim, though, and drowns quickly. The vendor sees what he has caused by his greed, changes himself into a duck, grabs the hot dog, and flies away. Meanwhile, a little white boy watches all this happen and leans over the water to see the Indian boy's body wait at the bottom of the river. His mother refuses to believe him, though, and takes him away, kicking and screaming, into the end of the story.

In the same piece, "A Train is an Order of Occurrence Designed to Lead to Some Result," Samuel Builds-the-Fire has been left alone on the reservation by his children, all of whom have scattered to lead urban lives. He moves into a small studio in town, where the first thing he did was to till the four corners of the room with plaster, to make them round. He painted a black circle in the middle of the ceiling that looked like the smoke hole of a tipi." Samuel takes a job as housekeeper at a seedy motel where he witnesses the prostitution of young Indian women and the drug overdose of a young Indian man. Laid off after years of good work, he wanders into a bar, gets drunk for the first time, and stumbles out onto the train tracks to await his death, a straightforward tale of loss and disintegration, but also a recapitulation of Indian colonial decline: division of family, sexual exploitation, addiction and alcoholism, and the richly symbolic death by steam engine.

Alexie's vision also runs to the apocalyptic, as with "Distances," a Ghost Dance specter of urban collapse. In a

scene blending Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart* with the goodnatured warmth of an Ursula Le Guin future, Alexie offsets the nightmare/fantasy with his ever-present wit, deciding that "Custer could have, must have, pressed the button, cut down all the trees, opened up holes in the ozone, flooded the earth. Since most of the white men died and most of the Indians lived, I decided only Custer could have done something that backward."

Many of these stories just depict moments of misery in frustrated love affairs, and with a remarkable diversity of image. One links a woman's pain to the historical suffering of her people, as we read that, "A century ago she might have been beautiful, her face reflected in the river instead of a mirror." In the book's title story, by contrast, the narrator describes working in a 7-11 convenience store and learning to look people over so he could later describe them to the police. "One of my old girlfriends," he writes, "said I started to look at her that way, too. She left me not long after that." The collection ends with a father and son driving into town; woven through a near-car-wreck, an inconclusive discussion of a disappeared friend, and the father's and son's shared diabetes is a haunting, directionless despair. Many of Alexie's best stories are this way: willfully aimless, with a terrific core of hurt lying just out of reach.

Daniel Duane, University of California, Santa Cruz



Place and Vision: The Function of Landscape in Native American Fiction. Robert M. Nelson. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993. 189 pages, \$36.95 hardcover.)

As editor of the journal *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Robert M. Nelson brings good credentials to his study of Native American fiction and landscape. As a scholar who has chosen to visit the landscapes of which he writes, he brings integrity to his study. As a careful reader who shares his insights through extraordinarily detailed analysis, he brings an admirable intimacy with the texts to bear on his argument. Overall, *Place and Vision* is a respectable, solid, insightful piece of scholarship.

In order to make his general argument truly convincing, however, Nelson could analyze a greater range of Native American fiction. The book covers only three novels and does so in a mere 140 pages of text, exclusive of notes. The novels Nelson focuses on—Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney*—are characterized as "indisputably important" (2), a claim I have no quibble with. I would, however, have gladly sacrificed dozens of pages of close textual analysis of these three works for broader exposure to the functioning of Nelson's thesis in more texts.

Nelson's major idea, though, is interesting. He claims, rightfully, no need to argue that the land is important to Native American culture and literature. Instead, he argues that critics of Native American fiction have burdened readers by suggesting

that Native American cultures animate and give meaning to the landscape. Therefore, readers must have specific foreknowledge of Native American cultures to understand the interrelationships between culture and landscape in the literature. Nelson, on the other hand, posits that the process is actually the reverse—that the landscape itself animates culture and thus its fiction. Accordingly, the reader need only become familiar with the landscape as it is portrayed in the fiction for the "pretext" necessary to understand the culture it animates.

I am finally not convinced, however, by Nelson's argument that the landscapes portrayed in these, or any, texts are free of cultural inscription. As Nelson himself demonstrates, the landscape is articulated by narrators and characters in fictional texts which inherently cannot escape the representation of landscape through language. By its very nature, language is never free of cultural assumptions and perceptions. While the landscape indeed possesses an existence prior to linguistic utterance about it, we cannot access the preverbal through the verbal, so the novels cannot do what Nelson claims they do.

One troubling aspect of the argument is that, ultimately, the linguistic context in which the "Native" landscapes and cultures are placed is not the Native cultures themselves, but rather postmodern existentialism and alienation, certainly a Eurocentric and Euroamerican context. The protagonists of these novels are characterized as "diseased," and the novels part of postmodern America's "literature of illness" (3). Tayo, Ahel, and Jim Loney "cure" their "illness" of alienation through reconnecting with their Native landscapes and thus their Native cultures, and in the process gain identities. While the successful *discovery* of identity in these Native American novels does run counter to the prevailing and persistent *loss* of identity in mainstream postmodern fiction, the ontology of Nelson's argument in mainstream critical paradigms does not give the novels the cultural credit they deserve. "Imbalance" may have been a better, perhaps truer, description of these Native characters' conditions. The book also gets stuck in other "mainstream" critical language. For example, Nelson uses the term "satellite culture" to describe these Native works in their regional contexts, making the cultures secondary to a supposed larger culture, and Tayo experiences a process of "constellation" of images, a term borrowed from Jung. Despite Nelson's swift disclaimers about this language, the fact that he persists in using it at best undermines his claims about our ability to read the novels free from cultural presumptions and at worst imposes Eurocentric paradigms on Native American cultures.

This study does provide intelligent and careful reading of three prominent novels, and anyone interested in Native American relationships with the land and nature will benefit from it if s/he remains aware of the argument's shortcomings. Nelson's readings will prove especially valuable to those who are teaching these particular novels and are seeking thorough analysis of the texts.

Thomas K. Dean, Cardinal Stritch College



MINUTES OF THE 1994 ASLE ANNUAL MEETING

On October 7, approximately sixty ASLE members met during the Western Literature Association Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, for a review of the organization's recent activities and a discussion of important decisions and upcoming events. Once again, the WLA graciously made space on the conference program for the ASLE Business Meeting and also for a plenary roundtable session on ecocriticism that was organized by ASLE members Mike Branch and Sean O'Grady. We deeply appreciate the support of WLA President Steve Tatum.

Cheryll Glotfelty opened the business meeting by summarizing many of the activities ASLE members have been involved with since the organization began in October 1992. These achievements, ranging from the establishment of an archive and syllabus exchange coordinated by Mike Munley (English Department, RB 246, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306) to the organization of numerous panels at academic conferences, have been reported in previous issues of the newsletter. Cheryll announced that returning President Scott Slovic had asked her to serve with him as Co-President during the final year of his term.

Scott then offered a brief report on his year in Japan, encouraging other ASLE members to spend time abroad. He introduced Professor Ken-ichi Takada, from Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo, as a representative of ASLE-Japan; Professor Takada has been a visiting scholar at the University of California-Santa Cruz since last March.

Next, Secretary Mike Branch reported on the "demography" of ASLE, emphasizing the organization's remarkable growth and increasing diversity. Mike noted that we now have close to 600 members and that more and more people from fields outside of literary studies are joining. Growth has now slowed to a more merciful rate (for the overworked secretary), but there continues to be a steady influx of new members.

Treasurer Allison Wallace delivered her statement on ASLE's financial situation at this time, showing that we are "in the black" but have very little cushion. We are hoping that membership renewals and efforts to receive outside funding through grants and donations will boost our bank account; we began the 1993-94 budget year with a balance of \$1,470.72, brought in \$8,444.95 through membership dues, donations, and bibliography sales, and incurred expenses of \$7,428.54 (including printing the fall 1993 directory, two newsletters, the spring 1994 bibliography, and membership mailings), leaving us with \$2,487.13 at the time of Allison's report. This amount will have to cover the printing and mailing of the current newsletter and the printing of the newly completed *ASLE Handbook on Graduate Study in Literature & Environment*.

The next item on the business meeting agenda was the election and selection of new officers and project coordinators. In last spring's issue of the newsletter, it was announced that Mike Branch's term as secretary would end in October and we needed nominations for a new secretary. Only David Teague answered this call, and at the meeting last month he was confirmed as the new ASLE secretary. We then asked for nominations for the vice president's position, and Mike Branch was the unanimous choice of the group present in Salt Lake City—in fact, there were no other nominations. Finally, we asked for volunteers to coordinate our efforts to seek outside funding; Tom Dean will focus on this important task, but he wel-

comes any ideas and assistance that other members can provide. David Taylor has agreed to serve as the new conference tracker, replacing David Teague. And Lisa Spaulding and Julie Seton will be ASLE's new graduate liaisons.

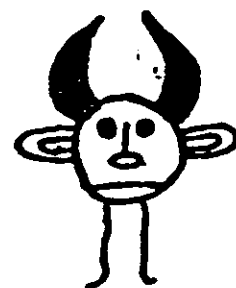
Cheryll then explained that the ASLE officers, in consultation with members of the advisory board, were interested in initiating a new "Executive Council" that would help to give the organization a more democratic "committee structure" and also spread the work of managing ASLE's many projects among more people. The idea of an executive council, modeled after the WLA system, was initially proposed to us in a letter from advisory board member Paul Bryant. ASLE members present at the meeting approved the plan for this new council with six *active* members and gave the current officers leeway to appoint an initial group of six people; in the future, all new members will be elected by the membership to serve three-year terms, with two new people joining the council each year and two completing their terms. As this issue of the newsletter goes to press, we are just about ready to announce the first members of the executive council, but we haven't yet made final decisions—the primary task of the council this year will be to aid with the planning and fundraising for the first ASLE Conference in June.

Patrick Murphy, the editor of *ISLE*, then spoke about the plan for ASLE eventually to "adopt" the journal as the organization's official journal. At this time, there is a very close relationship between ASLE and *ISLE* (most journal subscribers are ASLE members), but ASLE is not formally responsible for the journal. We decided at the Salt Lake City meeting that the decision to assume responsibility (including financial responsibility) for *ISLE* was too important to make without consulting all of our members, so we are planning to issue a mail ballot this fall, the results of which will be reported in the spring issue of the newsletter.

Finally, we turned to the topic of the conference itself. Verne Huser announced that he had spoken with Roderick Nash, who expressed an interest in joining us as an additional featured speaker. Verne and other members also expressed strong interest in organizing various outdoor excursions during and after the conference, in addition to the more academic sessions. The general consensus was that it would be a great idea to have various nontraditional sessions at the conference in addition to standard lectures and that we should also try to offer a number of roundtable discussion meetings. A mailing will be sent out shortly with information about roundtable sessions that people may wish to participate in at the June conference. Representatives from Colorado State University reported that arrangements for the conference are progressing well. We hope to see as many of you as possible in Colorado next summer!

The meeting concluded, as usual, with excitement and enthusiasm. We are all delighted to observe the tremendous achievements of the association, and the infusion of new members and new ideas bodes well for the future.

Scott Slovic, ASLE Co-President
Southwest Texas State University



CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Here are some conferences that might be of interest to ASLE members. If you'd like your conference announcement or call for papers printed here, contact the new ASLE conference tracker: David Taylor, Department of English, Converse College, Spartanburg, SC 29301-0006.

November 3-5, 1994. Third Annual Symposium of the Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest
Power and Place in the North American West
University of Washington, Seattle

Contact:

Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest
Attn: Power and Place Registration
Department of History, DP-20
University of Washington
Seattle WA 98195
206-543-8656 (PNW Center voice-mail)
206-543-5790 (Department of History)
or by electronic mail:
klingle@u.washington.edu
(Matthew Klingle, Graduate Assistant)

November 4-6, 1994. Second Annual Conference
Sponsored by Viet Nam Generation and hosted by Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, CT

Contact:

Viet Nam Generation
18 Center Road, Woodbridge CT 06525
Fax: 203-389-6104
e-mail: kalital@minerva.cis.yale.edu

November 17, 18, and 19, 1994. American Studies Association of Texas 38th Annual Meeting, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas. Topic: "Nature, Culture, and the Individual: Actions and Reactions."

Contact:

Priscilla Leder,
Vice President and Program Chair
American Studies Association of Texas
Department of English
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas 78666
phone: 512-245-2163
fax: 512-245-8546
e-mail: PL01@A1.swt.edu

Fri/Sat, December 2-3, 1994. Enchanted Gardens: A Conference of Exploration. Sponsored by NILAS. Conference will take place at SUNY College at Purchase. Keynote speakers: Poet Maxine Kumin and Storyteller Laura Simms.

Contact:

Dr. Michael O'Loughlin
Prof. of Humanities
SUNY College at Purchase
Purchase, NY 10577
Phone: 914-251-6550

Dr. Boria Sax
Director, NILAS
25 Franklin Ave., 2F
White Plains, NY 10601
Phone: 914-946-6735

Fri, Dec. 2, will be devoted to storytelling. Those who would like to share tales of Enchanted Gardens should contact:

Laura J. Bobrow
380 Summit Ave.
Mount Vernon, NY 10552
Phone: 914-664-5863

Fri/Sat, December 2-3, 1994. Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, will be holding a conference entitled: "The Frontier in the American Imagination." We will welcome papers that focus on this topic in American literature, environment, and history. And we will welcome presenters who are not only professionals but also undergraduates, graduates, and members of the community who hold an interest in this topic. Donald Worster has agreed to keynote for us. He will be comparing the United States and Canadian Wests in terms of nature and development. Submit 150 word abstracts by December 1 to: Jan Keessen, Department of English, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, 61201. For further information call 800-798-8100, ex 7280 or 7671.

March 8-11, 1995. Las Vegas, Nevada: American Society for Environmental History Biannual Meeting, "Gambling with the Environment."

Contact:

Theodore Steinberg, Program Chair
New Jersey Institute of Technology
201-642-4177 or steinberg@admin.njit.edu
Jeffrey Stine, Smithsonian Institution, 202-357-2058
Linda Lear, Smithsonian Archives, 202-357-2787
Sally Fairfax, University of California, Berkeley 510-642-7627.

March 30-April 1, 1995. College English Association Twenty-Sixth Annual Conference. The Sheraton Cleveland City Center Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio.

Contact:

Betsy Hilbert
1995 CEA Program Chair
Independent Studies Department
Miami-Dade Community College
Miami, FL 33176-3393

March 30-April 2, 1995. Communication and Our Environment, An Interdisciplinary Conference, Chattanooga, Tennessee. There will be speakers and panels from academia, government, industry, and non-governmental organizations. The format will allow plenty of opportunities for interchange among scholars, students, public figures, industry representatives, and activists. Tours of the Tennessee Aquarium, projects of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the local countryside will complete the

program. There will be no registration fee; the conference is free and open to the public.

Contact:

Professor M. Jimmie Killingsworth
Department of English
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843
e-mail: mjk1136@tamvm1.tamu.edu
telephone: 409-845-9936

April 12-15, 1995. Proposals for papers and panels in the area of "Hunting, Fishing, Conservation, and Ecology" invited for the Annual Meeting of the Popular Culture Association (PCA) held in Philadelphia.

Contact:

Ralph H. Lutts, Area Chair Hunting, Fishing,
Conservation & Ecology
1025 Jefferson Circle Martinsville, VA 24112
Phone/Fax: 703-666-1295 E-mail:
rhlutts@igc.apc.org

April 26-28, 1995. The Artist in a Cultural and Environmental Context: An Interdisciplinary Conference on the Arts and Environmental Studies. Salisbury State University. Send one-page proposal by January 31, 1995.

Contact:

Dr. Andrew Hepburn
Department of Communication Arts
Salisbury State University
Salisbury, MD 21801-6860
Phone: 410-543-6233; Fax: 410-548-3002

May 19-20, 1995. The Center for Studies in Landscape Architecture at Dumbarton Oaks requests paper proposals for 1995 symposium on the theme "Places of Commemoration, Search for Identity, and Landscape Design." Participants will discuss the role of landscape architecture in the design of commemorative places that help shape and construct people's memory and identity. Contact: Director of Studies in Landscape Architecture, Dumbarton Oaks, 1703 32nd St., NW, Washington, DC 20007.

May 26-28, 1995. American Literature Association Conference. We are planning an ASLE panel.

Contact:

Sean O'Grady
Department of English
Boise State University
Boise, ID 83702
Phone: 208-385-3041

Saturday, June 10, 1995. TCU/Chisholm Trail Western Seminar celebrates the PLAINS INDIAN IN FACT, FICTION & FILM, in conjunction with Fort Worth's Chisholm Trail Round-Up and Quanah Parker National Pow-Wow. For more information call 817-921-7822.

June 21-25, 1995. CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS: Park Plaza Hotel and Towers Boston, MA. "The Interdisciplinary Environmental Association (IEA) in conjunction with Assumption College invites you to participate in the FIRST MAJOR INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT. The conference is open to all ideologies, political persuasions, and academic as well as nonacademic disciplines.

Contact:

CONFERENCE CHAIR:

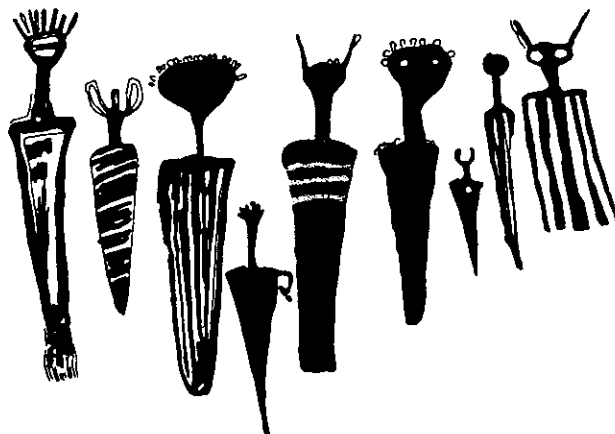
Dr. Dmitri Kantarelis
IEA, Economics, Foreign Affairs Dept.
Assumption College
500 Salisbury Street
Worcester, MA 01615-0005, USA
Tel: 508-752-5615 ext 557
Fax: 508-799-4502
E-mail: dkantar@eve.assumption.edu

July 9-14, 1995. James Fenimore Cooper Conference, State Univ. Col. of New York, Oneonta. Address: James D. Wallace, Dept. of English, Boston Coll., Chestnut Hill, MA 02167.

Fall 1995. Interdisciplinary American Studies Conference in Belgium. The Belgian Luxembourg American Studies Association will be hosting a two or three-day interdisciplinary conference, "Images of America: Through the European Looking-Glass." Contact Vesalius College, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Pleniaan 2, 1050 Brussels, Belgium; Fax 32-2-641.3637; Ph 32-2-642.2577

July 21-26, 1996. International Hemingway Conference: "Hemingway and the Natural World." At the invitation of the University of Idaho, the Hemingway Society will meet for the first time in an American landscape of significance to Ernest Hemingway, Idaho's Ketchum/Sun Valley area.

Send your completed paper or session proposal by September 15, 1995, to Professor Robert Fleming, English Dept., Humanities 217, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131. Other inquiries to Dr. Susan Beegel, Editor, The Hemingway Review, 180 Polpis Road, Nantucket, MA 02554. Voice & Fax: 508-325-7157.



CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

The American Nature Writing Newsletter, Spring 1995.
Special topic: Children's Literature and the Environment.

In the last twenty years, ecologically aware books for children have proliferated. Beginning in 1971 with Dr. Seuss's consciousness-raising *Lorax*, who spoke "for the trees," publishers, reacting to the demands of their readers, have been "greening" children's literature at an extraordinary rate. Although this is certainly reflective of larger global issues, concern for the environment and for humanity's place within the natural world is part of a much longer tradition in children's writing. Nature writing and books about ecology have long been embraced by children—and thus by children's publishing—yet neglected (or in some cases rejected outright) by both the literary profession and the adult literary marketplace.

We invite articles or position papers on all aspects of children's literature and culture in relationship to the environment. We encourage diverse points of view and nontraditional approaches. Manuscripts should conform to the new MLA citation format and not exceed 1,000 words.

Address papers and inquiries to Carolyn Sigler, Anne Phillips, or Naomi Wood, Department of English, Denison Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-0701. Phone: 913-532-6716; Fax: 913-532-7004. Email: csigler@ksuvm.ksu.edu. or annek@ksuvm.ksu.edu.

Southwestern American Literature is seeking submissions for the Fall 1995 special issue on Southwestern Nature Writing. Desired genres include nature poetry, ecofiction, nonfiction nature writing, natural history writing, and journals/field notes. We would also like to receive scholarly articles on nature writing from the American Southwest, including studies of such writers as John C. Van Dyke, Mary Austin, Edward Abbey, John Graves, John Nichols, Terry Tempest Williams, and Ann Zwinger.

Please send inquiries and/or manuscripts by 15 March 1995 to Scott Slovic, Guest Editor, Nature Writing Issue, *Southwestern American Literature*, Department of English, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, TX 78666. Phone: 512-245-3717; Fax: 512-245-8546.

The University of Idaho Library announces the availability of the first issue of the *Electronic Green Journal* (ISSN: 1076-7975). The *Electronic Green Journal* is a professional refereed publication devoted to disseminating information concerning sources on international environmental topics including: assessment, conservation, development, disposal, education, hazards, pollution, resources, technology, and treatment. The journal serves communities as an educational environmental resource, and includes both practical and scholarly articles, bibliographies, reviews, editorial comments, and announcements.

Original contributions from authors are welcome. Guidelines for authors are available from the editors. Send contributions, requests for guidelines or for any other information about the journal to: Maria Jankowska, majanko@uidaho.edu; Francis Griego, fsg@uidaho.edu; Mike Pollastro, mikep@uidaho.edu.

The Popular Culture Association is currently seeking brief encyclopedia entries (250 words) on such writers as John Muir, Sigurd Olson, Rachel Carson, Edward Abbey, John McPhee, Loren Eiseley, Barry Lopez, Annie Dillard, Wendell Berry, Peter Matthiessen, and Gary Snyder. For further information, contact Professor Carl D. Esbjornson, Department of English, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717-0230.

Horrific Nature: The Representation of Nature in Horror Film, Novel, T.V., etc. Papers for the ASLE Conference in Fort Collins, Colorado, June 9-11, 1995. Send papers (about twenty minutes in length) on used one-side paper to Jhan Hochman, 136 W. 17th St., #1B, New York, NY 10011; 212-627-8245; jrh2685@acflcluster.nyu.edu.



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

The *ASLE Handbook on Graduate Study in Literature & Environment*, prepared by 1993-94 Graduate Liaisons Dan Philippon and George Hart, is now available at cost (\$5) from Treasurer Allison Wallace (Unity College). Please contact Allison for your copy of the elegant and extremely informative 56-page document that provides information received from thirty-two ASLE members (a survey was issued last spring to all ASLE members). This handbook will be updated regularly, but the first edition, which includes information about programs around the country and essays on graduate studies in literature and environment, is already a valuable advisory tool for faculty, prospective graduate students, and current graduate students. An order form will accompany the new *ASLE Directory* later this fall.

The *ASLE Bibliography* was published in Spring 1994 and is currently available from Treasurer Allison Wallace. This lengthy, annotated list of recent scholarship in the field of literature and environment was compiled by Zita Ingham and Ron Steffens, aided by a large group of contributing ASLE members. A mailing about the *Bibliography* will accompany the new *ASLE Directory*.

MEMBER INFORMATION AND CHECKLIST

(ASLE membership fee includes subscription to *The American Nature Writing Newsletter*)

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 information to appear in the Directory.)

Amount Enclosed

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

ASLE Sustaining Member (\$30) _____

ASLE Patron (\$50 or more) _____

*(Names of sustaining members and patrons will
be published unless anonymity is requested)*

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:

David Teague,
Secretary, ASLE
University of Delaware Parallel Program
333 Shipley Street
Wilmington, DE 19801

The First Conference of the
**Association for the Study of
Literature and Environment (ASLE)**

JUNE 9-11, 1995

Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado

Featured Speakers and Writers

*Sue Ellen Campbell John Elder William Howarth
Scott Russell Sanders Luci Tapahonso*

Activities and Entertainment

Nature Walks Rocky Mountain National Park field trip
An evening with musician Walkin' Jim Stoltz Book Exhibit

Possible topics for papers and panels:

- the place of ecocriticism in the profession
- nature writing
- ecofeminism
- international studies in literature and environment
- bioregionalism
- controversial books
- interdisciplinary approaches
- place studies
- praxis
- connections with literary theory
- teaching nature writing/issues of pedagogy
- ethnic and race issues in environmental studies
- environmental backlash
- gender and nature
- the future of studies in literature and environment

The University of Idaho Press has expressed
an interest in publishing selected papers.

Selected papers will be considered for inclusion in a special issue of
Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal to be titled *Women and Nature*.

Submission Guidelines:

Send two copies of completed paper and a 125-word abstract to the address below.
apers should be a maximum of 10 double-spaced typed pages, for a reading time of
approximately 15 minutes. Please include name, affiliation, and mailing address on
the first page of the paper.

Panel proposals are welcome, and should consist of three to four completed papers,
c.v. for the chair and each panelist, and a one-page explanation of the rationale for
combining these papers. The panel chair may or may not be one of the panel
resenters.

Roundtable discussion proposals are also welcome and should consist of a c.v. for
each panelist, a proposed format for discussion, and a one-page explanation of the
topic under discussion and the reason(s) for choosing the proposed panelists.

Deadline for submissions: January 15, 1995

Proposals will not be accepted by fax or e-mail. Materials will not be returned.

Send submissions to:

Paper and Panel Proposals)
Scott Slovic
resident, ASLE
nglish Department
outhwest Texas State University
an Marcos, TX 78666

General Information:
(Registration queries)
ASLE

Office of Conference Services
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523
(303) 491-6222
asleconf@vines.colostate.edu



ASLE
c/o Scott Slovic
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