



ASLE News

A Biannual Publication of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment

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President's Column

I trust everyone has settled well into autumn after a summer of research, travel, and contemplation. For many of us the summer's high point was the conference in Missoula, a joyous rendezvous and landmark achievement for ASLE. Five hundred people attended, and more than 350 presented papers, posters, or readings of original poetry and nature writing. There were more than a dozen roundtables on topics of general interest and concern, and keynote panel presentations by noted scholars and writers. Rick Bass, Barry Lopez, and Pattiann Rogers also graced us with readings from their inspiring and impassioned work. And, as if all this were not enough, we came in ahead of budget! For more details on the conference, see the features later in this issue as well as the fine photo album posted by Dan Philippon on our web page.

In addition to its manifest contribution to the maturation of our field, the conference was also important for the growth of ASLE as an organization. Many people were involved in planning and bringing it off, first and foremost our conference director, Hank Harrington, and his associates at the University of Montana's Office of Continuing Education, Sharyl Hayes and Gerry Baertsch. Their astute budgeting, sure grasp of housing and amenities issues, mastery of information, and attention to detail insured a smooth and memorable flow of people and events. Throughout the conference, Hank was a conscientious and indefatigable host, responsive, unflappable, gracious to a fault. ASLE could not have found itself in better hands.

The conference program included several innovations that worked unexpectedly well and will, we hope, become standard fare. Among them were the poster session devoted to pedagogy, curriculum, and institutional ventures, which provoked some of the liveliest conversations I witnessed, and the authors' reception, where more than fifty ASLE authors were on hand to sign and discuss their books. We continued the tradition of including readings of original creative writing as well as afternoon outings. The numerous excursions and field trips that Hank organized were heavily subscribed and, by all reports, great fun.

For the first time, also, the entire executive council was involved in the planning and preparation for the conference, from delegated tasks such as the author's reception, organization of roundtables, and designing the program to gathering for our first-ever long range planning retreat two days before the conference (see McKay Jenkins' report on page 7). This was the first of what will become a series of annual meetings of the leadership, not only to do business but to build teamwork and nurture a shared vision of ASLE as a community. From now on, the executive council will be actively involved in running and growing the organization, with opportunities to initiate special projects. The next planning meeting will be held this February in Reno, in conjunction with the North

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The Second Biennial ASLE Conference

On the cusp of the millennium we may even be in danger of success," John Tallmadge, ASLE-President, observed in his opening remarks to the second biennial conference of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment. The three day event was held in mid-July in Missoula, Montana, and featured almost four hundred presenters, from five countries. Academic discourse mixed with creative works, eco-criticism with psychology, philosophy, the natural sciences, ranching, urban studies, and spirituality. Holding it all together was the awareness that our species' relationship to the places we live matters in profound and pervasive ways. This ferment, Tallmadge noted, is a far cry from the sense of isolation many participants have felt in their home departments, their graduate studies, and their communities, where the idea of blending an environmental sensibility with serious intellectual discipline is often scoffed at by those engaged in "loftier" theoretical pursuits.

Though there was no lack of intellectual rigor at the conference, the heart—as is true for all literature—was appealed to as often as the mind. The conference keynote was given by Rick Bass, whose tearful reading of his short story "Fiber" gave voice to a grief at the destruction of the remote and wild Yaak valley in northwestern Montana, where both Bass and his story's narrator make their home.

Bass' reading was a visceral example of what the widely published author Barry Lopez spoke of on several occasions at the conference. With his customary eloquence Lopez noted the ravages that capitalism has made on our landscapes and spirits.

Perhaps the saddest aspect of this imperative to consume in the West is that we're asked to accept a piece of certifiable rubbish: more satisfaction is ultimately to be found in a product—a style of trouser, a personally-tailored system of electronic communication, an exercise regime, a career—than in another human being.

"We know our way out of this," said Lopez. "It is love." Lopez spoke at one of the conference's plenary sessions and at an evening of music and reading on the banks of the Clark Fork river, organized cooperatively with Wilderness Watch, a Montana-based advocacy organization which held a concurrent conference in Missoula. This theme of love colored many of Lopez' readings and remarks. At the plenary session he noted he was talking about love with others, with place, and "with the patterns we see in others and in nature that we call God." The goal of this love, he read from an essay called "A Literature of Place," is to "become a companion with a place. It is more important to be in love than to be in power, because those who can not take care of landscape very soon won't be able to take care of each other." What Rick Bass showed through his story "Fiber" was the complex development and inherent pain of such a love for place in the waning years of the Twentieth-century.

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*Special thanks to Susan Hanson for the author photos from Missoula;
and to Charles Bergman for the NEH photo at Cooperstown*

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ASLE News is the biannual newsletter of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, reporting ASLE's business to and publishing letters from its membership. Items of interest, including news about conferences, forthcoming publications, and work in progress, should be sent to the editor's attention: Ralph Black, Dept. of English, Wake Forest Univ., Winston-Salem, NC 27109.

(President's Column continued from page 1)

American Interdisciplinary Conference on Environment & Community (announcement on page 9). So, feed your ideas to executive council members, and consider running for office yourself!

Much of the meeting was devoted to ISLE and general questions of membership and financing. We adopted a general working budget and a plan for a consolidated fee structure under which ISLE subscription and ASLE membership would be part of a single package, there would be a single database, and all business correspondence would go to a single office. The treasurer's job was redefined to handle all accounting and membership as well as the "ASLE Store" (T-shirts and publications), while the secretary's job was redefined to include publicity and external relations, elections, and conference tracking. All this should make for much smoother operations, insure accountability, and prevent membership and subscription snafus of the sort that have plagued us in the past. We expect to post an annual financial report in the newsletter and on the web page.

We also received a full report from past presidents Mike Branch and Cheryll Glotfelty about our successful bid to become an affiliate organization of the MLA. Cheryll and Mike worked very hard on this venture, and their perseverance and diplomacy really paid off. MLA affiliation means that starting in 1998 we will be able to organize two panels and hold a meeting at the annual convention, thus promoting our field while providing increased exposure for our members. Although many of us would rather go camping, there are tangible benefits from working the mainstream, particularly for those in search of jobs.

Finally, during the town meeting, it was officially decided that ASLE's motto will be the last lines from Gary Snyder's poem "For the Children": "Stay together/ learn the flowers/ go light"

The aim of all this activity, of course, is to help ASLE grow into a smooth-running, high-class organization devoted to good green thinking, transformative scholarship, and liberating opportunities for our members. I believe we can diversify and expand without losing either our dream of a healthy, holistic academy or the wonderful sense of fun and community that we now enjoy. When a small group of scholars met at the Western Literature Association in 1992 to found ASLE, a rendezvous like the one we held in Missoula was only a dream. I suspect most of those in attendance this summer shared the feelings that motivated our founders: concern for the earth, alienation from the academic mainstream, and devotion to a kind of scholarship grounded equally in encounters with landscapes and books.

When I was in grad school twenty years ago, there were only a handful of American scholars who had heard of nature writing, and none were in my department; I had to make the rounds twice before finding a dissertation advisor. In the ensuing decades, I got used to living on the margin, breathing the risky, clean, and sometimes costly air of true academic freedom. It was often lonely, but also exciting. As ecologists and beachcombers know, the margin is where change and creativity occur, where grace abounds, where the vessels are broken and life flourishes most extravagantly and unpredictably. In dark times, I admit, I used to console myself with dreams, of a time when English departments would achieve true wildness and biodiversity, peopled not only by bookworms and poetasters but by river rats and mountain goats, where students would learn freshman English from tawny grammarians, on campuses where natural history would be considered a liberal art and

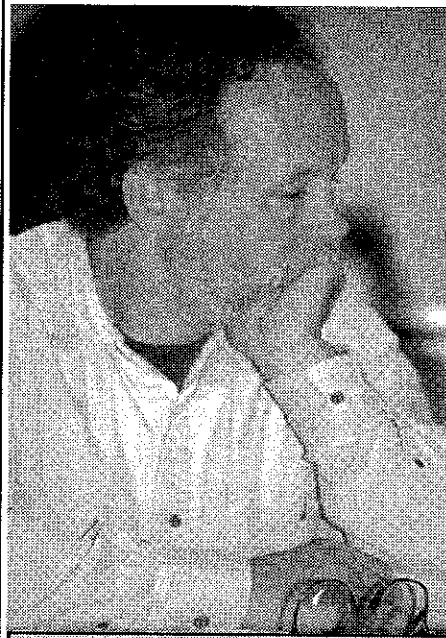
ecological literacy would be required for graduation, where exploration had replaced deconstruction and walking was offered as an essential life skill instead of a phys ed elective, where general education meant not only critical thinking, but thinking like a mountain.

Now all this may no be longer just a dream. Now we have conferences, journals, NEH summer institutes, even centers of environmental arts and humanities springing up all over the land. On the cusp of the millennium, we may be in danger of success.

Meanwhile, it seems healthy to cultivate a marginal outlook, to live and work on the edges of culture and institutions, aware of the mainstream but not ruled by it. Like Thoreau, I've found that I love a broad margin to my life. I'd like to live between the village and the woods, drawing strength and inspiration from both. I'd rather go camping and attend the MLA. Perhaps ASLE can help us all to realize that ideal of a balanced life, by providing opportunities to gather for fun, games, learning, and storytelling in beautiful places. Let us encourage each other so that we can return to the real work with renewed energy and hope, whether as teachers, writers or activists, blessed by the knowledge that we do not work alone, and inspired by the wisdom and example of our own teachers, both human and wild.

John Tallmadge, ASLE President
Union Institute

Conference Excerpt: Barry Lopez



Barry Lopez, author of *Lessons from the Wolverine*, speaks at the ASLE Conference.

We are on the verge, as we have not been since the days of the Enlightenment, of a willingness to include other epistemologies in our inquiry, to see that the concerted and deeply historic observation of landscape by indigenous peoples is as rigorous as anything we have ever managed in Western society. And it behooves us to go to people and listen to them....

There is a wisdom, I believe in every fiber of my being, deeper than we can appreciate because we've been raised in a system that teaches us arrogance about the animation that is alive in the wind. We all are moved by these things, and we're all taught in universities that it is unsophisticated, a mark of callowness to discuss them in public or to show passionate embrace of them. And I would tell you, on the basis of the privilege I have had being with many other kinds of people, it is not a mark of a lack of sophistication, it is not a mark of callowness, it is a mark of gladness. To banish the numinous, to denigrate the spiritual, is a mark of insanity.

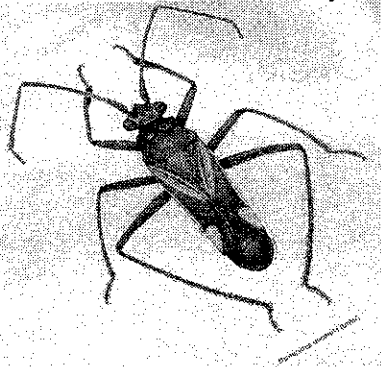
(ASLE Conference continued from page 1)

Many speakers took up similar themes. To recount just a few: Thomas Lyon, editor of *Western American Literature* and of the early and seminal anthology, *This Incomperable Land*, referred to Thich Nhat Hanh's concept of "interbeing," and noted that, "Relationship is the whole basis of ecological practice. We need to live as if we do not see the world as object." Many of the poems that Pattiann Rogers shared at her evening reading were playful celebrations of an ecstatic union with the natural world. David Abram, author of *The Spell of the Sensuous*, spoke of a "carnal embedment in the thick of the more-than-human world," and repeatedly questioned whether we are in any way separate from what some call nature and others call wilderness or merely "other." Addressing the human quality many philosophers cite as that which separates us from other beings—consciousness—he asked, "How do we know that our thoughts are ours and not those of the wind around us or the air we breath?"

Despite John Tallmadge's hopeful opening remarks, perspectives such as Abram's, Lyon's, or Lopez's may still be a bit unconventional from the perspective of our home departments, graduate schools, and communities. The great value of ASLE's biennial conferences is the intellectual and personal nourishment participants draw from the community such gatherings create: A discovery, over the hurried lunch between Montana downpours, of kindred spirits from Texas and Ohio who see in the short poems of long dead Californian, Robinson Jeffers, a means to give voice to the yet abiding horrors our species visits on ourselves and the places we live and love. The striking similarities in syllabi exchanged between Tennessee and Oregon for wetlands courses team-taught by English and Biology departments. The parallel theme and structure of an original essay about visiting a chemical factory in a dirt-poor Louisiana parish and a new short story set at a waste storage site on a South Dakota reservation.

As Louise Westling, ASLE Vice-President, observed, there are challenges for our emerging field. To name just a few of those she mentioned, most ASLE members are white, middle class, and privileged. Much of what we do can be classified as essentially recreational. Westling asked, "What of those who can't afford to live in or go to pristine places? Why do poor and underprivileged peoples often beg for toxic waste dumps?" As so many speakers at this year's conference suggested, the answers may lie in what we do with our hearts in addition to our minds. If the answers are in how we live, then organizations like ASLE will continue to play an important role for many of us in and out of the academy—we teachers, writers, readers...and dwellers in the land.

Simeon Dreyfuss, Marylhurst College



Conference Excerpt: Ann Zwinger



Ann Zwinger, author of *Down Canyon*, speaks at the ASLE Conference

Thoreau said rather than love, rather than money, rather than fame, give me truth. It seems to me that the natural world is too fragile and too precious to apply anything other than the most rigorous values of ethics if we are bent on saving this best of all possible worlds. It has to be saved with the tools of logic and I know that this does

not fit with the definition of knowledge as power. But if we have the conviction of our ideas and our ideals, take the kind of emotional intensity that is necessary, so much the better. You cannot sell the facts on hard words alone. That doesn't mean that we won't make mistakes, but it means that you subject your own work...to the most difficult kind of analysis.

The danger of course is that when you try to explain or talk about these things you become combative, and that is one of the big dangers of nature writing—how do you keep the poetry and not become a predator? I worry about that all the time...I wake up in the middle of the night and worry about that. Yet if I had my druthers between a purely beautiful poetic passage that maybe glossed over a couple of inaccuracies, give me the truth and let me be offended and let me say it like it is.

As we storm the walls we are armed with accuracy, truth, beauty—and conviction. And if we turn out to be wrong, well then let us fall on our swords. But if we're right, then we have won a lasting victory for the natural world which is why all of us are here.

Thoreau and Environmental Writing: New Essays in Ecocriticism

is seeking proposals on:

Thoreau & 19th century science—Ecocritical readings of Thoreau's work—Thoreau & his contemporaries (Emerson, Susan Fenimore Cooper, Margaret Fuller, George Perkins Marsh)—Thoreau & early 20th century nature writers & environmentalists. (Burroughs, Muir, Pinchot, Liberty Hyde Bailey, Austin)—Thoreau & writers from the "Age of Ecology"—Thoreau & writers of scientific & cross-disciplinary works (Eiseley, E. O. Wilson).

The aim of this volume is to demonstrate both the range of Thoreau's impact on environmental writing and the various perspectives, literary and interdisciplinary, offered by ecocriticism.

Send essay proposals and/or queries to:

Richard Schneider, English Department, Wartburg College, Waverly, IA 50677. Email: schneider@wartburg.edu; Phone 319-352-8435.

Ecocriticism on the Hudson: Reflections from an NEH Summer Institute

By the time we'd all looked through the microscope at the "nymph of the assassin bug," half of us were screaming and the other half were laughing. It was the first week in the NEH Summer Institute on "The Environmental Imagination." We had already had intense theoretical discussions on the poetics of nature—so intense you could have begun to doubt whether nature actually existed.

But now we were on a science field trip, gathering bugs in the fields of Vassar College and studying them under the microscope. My lab partners had shaken this show-stopper of an insect under our microscope. Fiercely red, dangerously spiked all over its exoskeleton, it lay in drugged contortions under the scope, its gangly legs bent awkwardly like broken skewers. I don't remember eyes—it was blind, the assassin bug in one of its youthful, or "nymph," stages. On its head, it sported a single long and fearsome lance. It was an entomological unicorn.

The biologist told us that the adult assassin bug lives by impaling other insects on its long tusk. Its oxymoronic name suggests more than a sense of humor among biologists, but rather a poetics all its own, at once erotic and murderous.

It was a buggy moment, magnified and memorable. I shouted when I saw it in disbelief and delight. And some of us found our own poetics impaled on the horn of the assassin bug. Last summer, faculty interested in literature and the environment had an embarrassment of riches to choose from: the biennial ASLE Conference, and the six-week NEH Institute at Vassar College on "The Environmental Imagination." Most of the twenty-five participants in the Institute were from the humanities, though we were lucky to have three scientists as well.

Every week we had a scientific field trip, in entomology, geology, zoology, chemistry. The field trips generally gave humanists a chance to experience the practicalities and discourses of science. Beyond that, the nymph of the assassin bug illustrates one of the fundamental features of the Institute. We found ourselves confronting many of the basic dualities that characterize our discourses about nature, and grappling with what often seems their thorny incommensurability:

humanities and science, words and things, theory and experience, representation and referentiality, order and energy.

The nymph of the assassin bug entered our consciousness and our vocabulary about the same time that an ecological concept became a critical term for us. Ecotones in nature are boundaries where two biological zones meet: the margin between field and forest, say. They are among the most fertile, biologically diverse

places in nature. The NEH Institute was a space and a place where we were able to explore the ecotones of discourses, exploring the relations between centers and margins. It was fertile territory.

The reading schedule was a sometimes exhausting if not exhaustive study of nature in the American literary tradition. The credit for the excellent structure and content goes to H. Daniel Peck, the Director of the Institute. A well-known Cooper and Thoreau scholar, Peck organized the Institute with a brilliant thoroughness, a graciousness of spirit for the participants, and an awesome attention to detail. Each week was devoted to a theme, with distinguished faculty coming in for the week to give lectures and lead discussions. The themes included the poetics and the history of nature, with John Elder and Elisa New; the Thoreauvian tradition, with Lawrence Buell and William Howarth; wild versus domestic visions of nature, with Lawrence Buell and Frank Bergon; place and bioregionalism, with Lawrence Buell and Wayne Franklin; women, nature, and narrative, with Carolyn Merchant and Vera Norwood; and Native American conceptions of landscape, with Lawrence Buell and Hertha Wong.

One of the great surprises to me was the range and differences of perspective among us. The persistence of these differences—whether imagined as ecotones or faultlines—gave the Institute its special character, and gave it the clear sense of us as a group engaged in a common and real project—that we ourselves were grappling with the meanings of nature.

Among the issues that shaped our discussions, and our differences, were the following: If there are two landscapes, following Barry Lopez's valuable distinction, what is the relationship be-

tween the outer and the inner landscape? Is there an inner landscape? (Not everyone was willing to grant this, but most were.) What is the relation between the same and the other, subject and object? Should we collapse difference into unity in our own human responses to nature, or should we respect difference and otherness and identity? If there is a correspondence between inner and outer in nature, spiritual and empirical, what constitutes an ad-

equated and responsible approximation of them to each other? A related question: what are the ethics of representation in nature, what are the ethics of metaphor? If an animal becomes metaphor or symbol, what responsibilities ought we feel to the creature itself, and what are the dangers of transforming it into a figure of speech—for us and for it? How do we experience spirituality in nature, or, as



NEH Institute Members Gather at the Feet of the Proto-Literary Ecologist, James Fenimore Cooper

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(NEH Institute, continued from page 5)

one participant put it beautifully, what is the texture of spirit and desire? What constitutes an effective and appropriate foregrounding of the self in nature writing? If there is a poetics of nature, which is perhaps inevitably abstracted and utopian, what would be an effective rhetoric of nature, a more civic discourse of social engagement?

The impact of the Institute went beyond intellectual growth and stimulation. Many of us changed our views, found them enriched and usefully complicated. More fundamental, many of us were changed. One participant asked early and often in our discussions, "What's at stake?" It was a question that the literature of nature, always looking beyond itself, makes especially relevant. The intensities of the Institute left many of us examining our personal investments in nature.

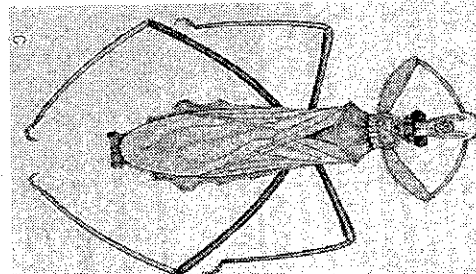
One incident illustrates the way this literature and Institute reached toward the personal and communal. We were blessed with four great writers who visited us: A. R. Ammons, Barry Lopez, Terry Tempest Williams, and Linda Hogan. Terry Tempest Williams came during the week on ecofeminism. She left us transformed.

In one long session with us, she asked us each to speak about the issues in the Institute that burned inside us, that "kept us awake at

night." We knew each other well by this point, but as we listened to each other, we found ourselves moving to deeper levels of self-discovery and self-disclosure. At the end, Terry lingered in a powerful silence. Then, she began to read. She read from notes she had taken as we spoke. She read back to us our own words.

Out of our self-disclosures, she had made a communal poem. Out of our varied voices and commitments, she gave us back our own sense of community in nature. For the summer, we lived in the company of surprise. Surprised by nature. Surprised by each other. Small wonder, for many of us, our summer at Vassar College was a transformative experience.

Charles Bergman, Pacific Lutheran University



(*Reduviidae kodormus*) The Assassin Bug

ASLE Mentoring Program Needs Volunteers

The ASLE Mentoring Program is alive and well. This fall I sent out a letter to all graduate students listed in the ASLE directory and encouraged them to take advantage of our mentoring program. As a result, I have received a number of new requests for mentors, but now need more folks to do the mentoring. What follows are brief sketches of students who have indicated they need mentors. If you see a good fit between one of these students and your expertise, won't you please volunteer your services? Just send me your address so that I can mail you a "Request to be a Mentor" form, and be sure to tell me which student looks like a good fit to you.

Even if a student doesn't match your expertise, please consider requesting a "Mentoring Form" so that I can keep your name on file. (Students who got missed in the previous mailing should feel free to request a student form now).

Student 1: A master's student in geography/environmental studies (and published nature writer) wants to incorporate the study of nature writing into his/her course of study. Specific interests include our practical and spiritual relationship to water; our relationship with animals and wildlife, especially roadkill; and chronicles of journeys.

Student 2: A master's student who has read widely in the field of nature writing, but is in a program with no ecocriticism or literature of the environment, is in the early stages of his/her thesis. This will likely address riparian landscapes in literature by looking (ecocritically) at several canoe exploration/travel narratives.

Student 3: A doctoral student with a wide interest in literature and the environment who is currently writing his/her dissertation is particularly interested in receiving a mentor with expertise in environmental ethics and/or Henry David Thoreau.

Student 4: A doctoral student in 19th- & 20th-century British literature, with a particular interest in Dorothy Wordsworth, will be writing a dissertation on romantic autobiography and would like help in finding relevant ecological theory and in finding primary texts and appropriate applications.

Student 5: A doctoral student who has completed a dissertation on the conflicts between late 19th-century American literature and science, is particularly interested in a mentor from the West or Midwest to assist in the job search, publishing, etc.

Student 6: An MFA student with an emphasis in poetry and nature poetry who has written two nature oriented books—one fiction and one nonfiction—and who lives in San Diego, would like a mentor/kindred spirit who can help with career concerns and who might also go hiking.

Student 7: A doctoral student who hasn't yet narrowed his/her dissertation topic seeks a mentor with expertise in literary hermits (to explore the tension between the solitary life and the more public act of writing, e.g. Rick Bass, Thoreau, Dickinson, Merton), and/or Cormac McCarthy and contemporary nonfiction naturalists (e.g. Abbey, Dillard). Needs a mentor for idea generation/brainstorming.

Student 8: A doctoral student who is most interested in the intersection of social oppressions—gender, race, class—and environmental degradation (i.e. environmental justice issues) and who is working on a dissertation concerning the social construction of nature, would like a mentor to help make connections and to provide inspiration.

Student 9: A recent MA in literature, with a thesis that looks at *The Blue Jay's Dance*, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, and *Refuge*, would like a mentor to help guide further research/revisions of the thesis in order to publish portions of it and to make suggestions on the integration of nature themes into Freshmen composition courses.

Thanks to everyone who is currently participating in this worthwhile program.

Andrea "Andy" W. Herrmann~ASLE Mentoring Coordinator
Department of Rhetoric & Writing~University of Arkansas
at Little Rock~Little Rock, AR 72204-1099~(501) 569-8331
Fax:(501) 569-8279~Email: awherrmann@ualr.edu

ASLE Secretary's Report on the Pre-Conference Leadership Retreat

For the two days prior to the Missoula conference, ASLE's officers and executive council members got together to hash out group business and plans for the future. After meeting in a shopping mall parking lot in downtown Missoula, we drove an hour to the University of Montana's Lubrecht Experimental Forest, where cabins, a dining hall, and a forest of Ponderosa Pine and Douglas Fir created the appropriate atmosphere for the work at hand. Thanks in part to the volcanic rhetoric of Mike Branch and Peter Blakemore, grizzly bears sensed it best to take a powder.

The Wednesday evening session, dubbed a "visioning" by John Tallmadge, had officers sitting around a large circle freely holding forth on memories of the group's origins. A number of pragmatic and philosophical ideas were bandied about this first evening, including the determination to recruit high-profile writers and scholars to accept seats on the executive committee; to cultivate institutional memory by encouraging experienced members and officers to continue serving the group in official capacities; and to strive to diversify the ASLE family by inviting African-American, Native Americans, and other non-Anglo members to join, and participate in ASLE projects. It was also decided (unanimously, of course) that ASLE should remain an organization devoted to irreverence and enjoyment as well as serious scholarship and advocacy. Suggestions were made for future projects like wilderness trips led by ASLE leaders who would teach literature alongside programs in natural history.

Thursday's day-long session was devoted to two primary discussions: the realignment of ASLE's administration, and the restructuring of annual membership fees. In the former category, it was decided in the interest of efficiency that all record-keeping duties be shifted from the secretary's office to the treasurer's office. New and renewed memberships will now be directed to Allison Wallace's office at Unity College, Maine, where she will maintain the organization's database and maintain all financial records. The secretary, freed from membership responsibilities, will now handle internal and external relations: coordinating and monitoring ASLE participation with various scholarly, creative and activist organizations and publications, such as the MLA, ALA, and WLA. The actual work of advertising and staffing such panels will be done by interested members who have a history with said organizations. The Secretary will publicise and coordinate such efforts, to avoid conflicts and duplication. The Secretary will also serve as conference tracker for the Newsletter (calls for papers and conference notes should now be sent to the Secretary), and will continue to officiate annual elections. And speaking of elections, please note that the election ballot (see the tear-out ballot on page 15) is due by December 15, 1997.

In the dues department, we discussed the need to adopt a new fee structure that would align ASLE membership with its journal, *ISLE*. The proposed fee structure was introduced at the "town-meeting" at the end of the conference, discussed, and subsequently adopted unanimously by all in attendance. Effective Jan. 1, 1998, all ASLE members will receive the journal *ISLE* as part of their annual membership dues by either joining ASLE anew or renewing their membership. The new dues structure is as follows: Regular membership: \$25; Students: \$15; Couples: \$35; Donors: \$50; Patrons: \$75; Institutional subscribers to *ISLE* only: \$25/yr or \$60/3 yrs. International members: add \$10 to the appropriate category.

In other news, Cheryll Glotfelty reported that ASLE has been named an "affiliated organization" within the MLA, meaning, among other things, that we will be allowed to organize two panels every year. It was recommended that panels be devoted regularly to graduate student scholarship.

A new bibliographer has agreed to lend her services to ASLE. Her name is B. Kenton Temple, and she works as a reference librarian at the University of Tennessee. See her notice, and call for contributing editors, on page eleven.

The next ASLE Conference will be held during the summer of 1999 on the campus of Western Michigan University, under the guiding hand of Tom Bailey. Motions were made to ensure that ASLE does not appear to become too uniform in its attention to western regions and western literature; to that end, suggestions were put forward to have ASLE meetings take place in urban areas, in the South, and on the East Coast. Several ideas for future national meetings were discussed, including an attractive proposal from Salisbury State University, on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

One of ASLE's more contentious discussions over the last year has been over the degree to which the group should become politically active. Over the objections of bison activists particularly, it was decided, following the sentiment of the officers, that ASLE should remain primarily devoted to education, debate, and the free exchange of ideas, rather than overt activism.

McKay Jenkins, University of Delaware

CULTURE & ENVIRONMENT: An Interdisciplinary Conference in the Humanities

At Bath Spa University College, England
In Association with ASLE
July 3-5, 1998

This conference aims to draw together different strands of contemporary ecocriticism, introduce the work of ASLE to Britain, and begin to define a British ecocriticism.

Proposals are invited for (30 minute) papers on the following:

ecocritical readings of literature, television, film, popular culture • ecocritical history & theory • ecofeminism & gender
British, North American, European, & world ecocriticism •
historical & new nature-writing • eco-thrillers & apocalyptic
disaster movies • environmentalism & activism, colonialism &
post-colonialism • & related topics

Bath is famous for its 18th-century architecture and beautiful countryside. There will be a conference dinner in the centre of Bath. A guided walk through nearby "Hardy Country" and the Dorset cliffs will be available following the conference.

Send Enquiries & Proposals (by 28 February, 1998) to:
Richard Kerridge and Greg Garrard-Faculty of Humanities
Bath Spa University College-Newton Park-Newton St Loe
Bath-BA2 9BN-England-Tel: 01225 875875-Fax: 01225 875503
e-mail: r.kerridge@bathspa.ac.uk

Shoko Itoh Speaks at ASLE Conference

Japanese literary culture has often been called a culture of translation. Since the beginning of the Nara age, in the 8th-century, Japan imported Kanji culture—a p hierographic letter system that originated in the age of Kan, of old China (BC 202 to AC 200), and integrated a masculine based literary culture with an original Japanese kana system—a phonetic symbol system consisting of primarily female characteristics.

With the tremendous volume of translation of western literatures, especially after World War II, Japanese literary culture has become a kind of androgynous and mingled stratification of western and oriental multicultural language systems, based on the natural animistic religion of Shinto brought up by the faith in trees and forests.

A unique characteristic of the Japanese language comes from the compounded structure of and our belief in the miraculous

power of language. In Japanese, Kotodama is spirit and kotoba means "word." The kanji for Kotoba consists of two symbols, one meaning "leaf" and one, "spoken." So the word for "word" is "spoken leaf." When we utter the word "flower," the flower uttered is evoked and made apparent before us, because each word comes from the earth to become leaves forming letters.

A word exists not only in the network of meaning but as a holistic organization of the real and the imaginative world. Not only a word but all things from the earth—rice, straw, paper, a needle, even tofu—have their own spirits, so we have memorial services and even tombstones for used up things: needles, cutters, soybeans, and so on.

Shoko Itoh, Professor of American Literature at Hiroshima University, is the Japanese translator of Thoreau's *Faith in a Seed*.

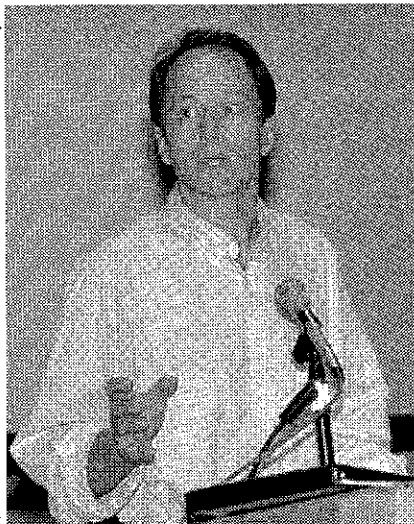
Of Art and Advocacy: Rick Bass at the ASLE Conference

On Saturday, July 19, 1997, the morning plenary session at the ASLE conference in Missoula was devoted to a public reading by Montana nature writer Rick Bass. A member of ASLE's Advisory Board since the inception of the organization in 1992, Bass is well known for his scores of magazine pieces and his ten books of environmental nonfiction and fiction, the most recent of which are *In the Loyal Mountains*, *The Lost Grizzlies*, and *The Book of Yaak*. Bass is a recent recipient of the Guggenheim, and has a new collection of novellas, *The Sky, the Stars, the Wilderness*.

Bass began his reading with a brief slide show depicting the wild country and endangered species of the Yaak, the remote valley in Northwestern Montana where he and his family have lived for many years. The ecological health of the Yaak and the survival of its nonhuman inhabitants has long been a matter of deep concern to Bass, who has been tireless in his efforts to win protective legislation for the last remaining roadless areas of the valley. At one point in the show a misloaded slide of an old-growth Douglas Fir flashed on the screen with the tree in a horizontal rather than a vertical position. "If we could figure out how to grow 'em that way," remarked Bass somewhat bitterly, "I suppose we could just roll 'em onto the trucks."

Following the slide show Bass read a new story called "Fiber," a four-part narrative that combines art and activism, fiction and non-fiction, autobiography and literary natural history, celebration and loss, personal storytelling and political appeal in extremely unusual ways. Bass's story explores the dilemma of the artist (especially the literary naturalist) at century's end: how can the writer live a life of poetic celebration amidst the rampant degradation of the natural environments upon which human health, inspiration, and art depend? What price is paid by a literary artist whose energies are sapped by endless political battles to protect the biodiversity and beauty of his home ecosystem? Conversely, what moral, spiritual, and ecological price would be exacted from the artist who refused to

respond to the environmental holocaust to which he finds himself witness? "Fiber" offers a painful, honest measurement of how individual lives suffer and are transformed when they must be devoted not to the artistic celebration of nature, but to the exhausting and heartbreaking work of trying to defend the natural world against violent threats to its foundational ecological integrity. In this story, Bass speculates that perhaps "[t]he activist is the artist's ashes."



In the fourth and final part of "Fiber," the author opens with the surprising declaration that "[t]here is, of course, no story," a move which throws the fictional personae of the first three sections into relief, recasting "Fiber" as the autobiographical narrative of a frustrated environmental writer-activist. The tone of this fourth section, then, contrasts starkly with the earlier voice(s) of the story, suddenly stripping fiction away to reveal the anger and pain of a person whose desire to write imaginative literature has been overwhelmed by his desperate passion to save the last remaining wild places in the Yaak, his home valley in Montana's northern Rockies. The story, which in the final section poignantly

ceases to be a story, concludes with a forceful, direct appeal to the reader, as if to suggest that only writers and readers working together can save the natural world upon which art depends.

As he moved into the final moments of his reading, Bass became visibly emotional, pausing several times before proceeding with a passionate plea on behalf of the endangered wild country of the Yaak. The sympathetic and enthusiastic response of the large crowd suggested that listeners recognized in "Fiber" and in its presentation the love, anger, fatigue, desperation, and hope that comes from a life of fighting for those places that make life worth fighting for. "Fiber" is forthcoming in *DoubleTake* magazine, and is expected to be published as a book by the University of Georgia Press next fall.

For information about conservation efforts on behalf of the Yaak Valley, see the conclusion to Bass' *The Book of Yaak*.

Michael P. Branch, University of Nevada, Reno

The North American Interdisciplinary Conference on Environment and Community

February 19-21, 1998

Hosted by the Center for Environmental Arts and Humanities
at the University of Nevada, Reno

A gathering of scholars (representing such fields as biology, economics, geology, history, literary studies, philosophy, and psychology), artists, natural resource managers, ranchers, rural dwellers and city dwellers, government officials, and recreational wilderness users. We hope to include participants from across the United States and are actively seeking speakers from Canada and Mexico; international participants from other parts of the world are welcome, too.

Featuring

David Abram~Keith Basso~Sam Bingham~Daniel Botkin~Michael P. Cohen~Robert Hass~
Barry Lopez~Reed Noss~Pattiann Rogers~Hal K. Rothman~Running-Grass~Sharman Apt Russell~
Rebecca Solnit~Judy Temple (as Mary Austin)~Patrick Zentz~& other distinguished speakers

We invite submissions of abstracts, completed papers (fifteen-minute reading time), suggestions for roundtable discussion sections, workshops, and traditional paper panels. Please direct inquiries and submissions by 15 December 1997 to:

Professor Scott Slovic, Director
Center for Environmental Arts and Humanities/098
University of Nevada, Reno
Reno, NV 89557 USA

Phone 702-784-8015
FAX: 702-784-6266
E-mail: slovic@unr.edu

Possible topics: environmental activism in developing nations~environment and the visual arts~
indigenous cultures and natural resources~art, literature, and community building~sense of place/time~
living off the land~urban nature~Deep Ecology~Wise Use~government-community cooperation~ecocriticism~tourism

Conferences and Gatherings

March 5-7, 1998. "Terrains: Landscape/Bodyscape: A Graduate Student Cultural Studies Conference." SUNY-Stony Brook. Speakers: Anne McClintock & J. Paul Hunter. Paper topics include: landscapes of literature, culture, nation and technology. Contact: Melissa Chinchillo, email: chinchil@ic.sunysb.edu

March 12-14, 1998. "Violence Incorporated." The 7th Annual Cultural Studies Symposium, Kansas St. Univ., Manhattan, KS. Contact: Director of Cultural Studies, Dept. of English, Denison Hall, Kansas St. Univ., Manhattan, KS 66506.

March 19-22, 1998. "Nineteenth-Century Geographies," sponsored by the Rice University Center for the Study of Culture. Contact: Helena Michie, English Dept., MS 30, Rice Univ., 6100 Main St., Houston, TX 77005-1892.

April 1-4, 1998. Conference on College Composition & Communications. Chicago. ASLE-sponsored panel, "Ecology and Composition: Towards a Dialogue of Place." Contact: Randall Roorda, English Dept., Univ. of Missouri-Kansas City, Cockefair Hall, 5100 Rockhill Rd, Kansas City, MO 64110-2499.

April 2-4, 1998. "Literature of the Sea." San Antonio, Texas. Contact: Jill Gidmark, Univ. of Minnesota General College, 140 Appleby Hall, 128 Pleasant St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455, email: gidma001@maroon.tc.edUniv.

April 8-11, 1998. Popular Culture Association. Theme: "Environment and Popular Culture," Buena Vista Palace, Orlando, FL. Contact: David Taylor, English Dept., Converse College, Spartanburg, SC 29302-0006.

April 16-19, 1998. Southern Women Writers Conference. A conference devoted to the writing of well-known and emerging Southern women writers, Berry College, Georgia. Contact: Emily Wright, English Dept., Berry College, PO Box 495010, Mount Berry, GA 30149. Email: swwc@berry.edu

April 17-19, 1998. "19th-Century Money & Culture Conference," sponsored by *Interdisciplinary Nineteenth Century Studies*. Contact: Richard Johnson, English Dept., Loyola Univ., New Orleans, LA 70118.

April 24-26, 1998. "The Pacific Century," sponsored by the JohnMuir Center for Regional Studies, to be held at the Univ. of the Pacific, Stockton, CA. Panels on topics such as immigration, musical diffusion, gold rushes, and other regional issues. Contact: Dennis O. Flynn, Economics Dept., Univ. of the Pacific, Stockton, CA 95211. email: doflynn@uop.edu

May 1-2, 1998. Conference on Christianity and Literature: "Emotion and Religious Discourse." Santa Clara Univ., Santa Clara, CA. Contact: John C. Hawley, English Dept., Santa Clara Univ., Santa Clara, CA 95053. email: jhawley@scuacc.scuniv.edu

May 15-16, 1998. "Environmentalism in Landscape Architecture," a conference at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC. Topics: to what degree has landscape architecture adopted ecological principles? Under what conditions has landscape architecture become environmentalist? Contact: Dir. of Studies in Landscape Architecture, Dumbarton Oaks, 1703 32nd St. NW, Washington, DC 20007, 202-339-6460. Email: landscape@doaks.org.

May 27-31, 1998. Seventh International Symposium on Society and Resource Management, Columbia, MO. This year's conference will focus on the humanities and the social and natural sciences. "The goal is to foster increased dialogue among natural resource managers, social scientists, policymakers, and resource science management scientists." Contact: Sandy Rikoon, Univ. of Missouri-Columbia, Rural Sociology, Sociology Building 108, Columbia, MO 65211. email: srsrjsr@muccmail.missouri.edu

June 9-14, 1998. An international conference on acoustic ecology is planned to take place in Stockholm, organized by the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, in co-operation with the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, as an event of the Stockholm Cultural Capital program. The conference will focus on: City Sounds, Sound Design, and New Technologies and Sound. Deadline for abstracts: Dec. 1, 1997. Contact: Henrik Karlsson, Royal Swedish Academy of Music, Blasieholmstorg 8, S-111 48, Stockholm, Sweden. Phone: (46) 8 611 2399. Fax (46) 8 611 8718.

June 19-21, 1998. "American Women Nature Writers," an interdisciplinary conference devoted to all aspects of women writing about nature. Contact: Elizabeth DeWolfe, American Studies, Univ. of New England, Westbrook College Campus, 716 Stevens Ave., Portland, ME 04103.

August 16-21, 1998. "20th-Century European Narratives: Tradition & Innovation." A conference of the Intern'l Society for the Study of European Ideas, Haifa Univ., Israel. Contact: Ezra Talmor, Conference Chair, Univ. of Haifa, Dept. of Philosophy, Mount Carmel, 31905 Haifa, Israel. email: talmor@post.taUniv.ac.il



Pattiann Rogers, author of *Eating Bread and Honey*, at the ASLE Conference, in Missoula

Calls for Papers

June 15, 1998. *Crossing the West(s): Inventing Frontiers.* The Western Literature Association and the Canadian Association for American Studies Joint Annual Meeting, October 14-18, 1998. Banff Center for Conferences, Banff Alberta. The conference welcome submissions which encourage new voices, new approaches and multidisciplinary work on The West. Particular interest in discussions that consider the theoretical, material, social and cultural issues in the ongoing "invention" of the The West: Aboriginal cultures; economics and settlement; comparative politics; spiritualist; the Asian West; film; North/South "Wests;" Mexico as "West;" gender; Western environments; music, visual arts; the West and the museum; fashion. One-page proposals by June 15, 1998 to Robert Thacker, president-elect WLA. Canadian Studies Program, St. Lawrence Univ., Canton, NY 13617, Phone: (315) 229-5970 Fax (315) 229-5802. Email: rtha@ccmaillink.stlawu.edu.

January 30, 1998. American Literature Association, May 28-31, 1998. San Diego. Deadline for proposed papers and panels is Jan. 30, 1998. Contact: Jeanne Reesman. Division of English, Classics, Philosophy & Communications, Univ. of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, TX 78249 email: reesman@lonestar.utsa.edu.

February 1, 1998. *Transformations: Natural and Social.* The XXIX Annual Meeting of EC/ASECS: Salisbury State Univ., Salisbury, MD on Oct. 8-11, 1998. Plenary Speaker: Christopher Ricks. Papers and session proposals welcome on evolutions in and developing attitudes toward nature or society in the 18th-century. We especially encourage papers and sessions on transformations in relationships between nature and society, nature and culture, or nature and art. Particular sessions on research in progress and on teaching the 18th-century will be offered. Proposals and requests to chair a session should be submitted by 1 Feb., 1998, to Wm. C. Horne, Dept. of English, Salisbury State Univ., 1101 Camden Ave., Salisbury, MD 21801. Fax: (410) 543-6068. For papers, one-page abstracts by 1 May, 1998. Email: wchorne@ssu.edu.

February 20, 1998. *John Clare: New Approaches & New Voices.* The Clare Forum at the Nottingham Trent Univ., in association with the John Clare Society, will run a one-day conference on July 18, 1998 at Nottingham Trent. Confirmed speakers: Jonathan Bate, Paul Chirico, Bridget Keegan, John Lucas, Tom Paulin. There's a particular interest in papers which break new ground in Clare studies, or in approaches which have not been fully explored before. 400 word proposals to: John Goodridge and Simon Kvesi, John Clare Conference, Dept. of English & Media Studies, The Nottingham Trent Univ., Clifton Campus, Nottingham, NG11 8NS. Website: <http://human.ntu.ac.uk/foh/ems/clare/conference.html>

November 5-7, 1998. "The Pedagogy of Nature Writing." A panel for the MMLA Conference in St. Louis. We're looking for presentations that focus on how teachers define and teach "nature writing," what teachers include in nature writing courses, how they present material, what students do with the material, problems and success stories. Send a one-page abstract, by 15 December, 1997, or queries to: Isaiah Smithson, Department of English Language and Literature, Southern Illinois Univ. Edwardsville, IL 62026. Email: ismiths@siue.edu.

Special Announcements

MLA Welcomes ASLE. The Modern Language Association recently voted to accept ASLE as an Allied Organization. Beginning with the 1998 MLA convention in San Francisco, ASLE will be entitled to two sessions at every MLA convention. We may also announce an off-site social gathering in the convention notes. Participation in ASLE's paper sessions will be made available to the ASLE membership, coordinated through an ASLE member who will serve as our MLA liaison. If you would like to volunteer to be the MLA liaison, please contact ASLE president John Tallmadge. The MLA liaison should be someone who is both an ASLE and an MLA member and who regularly attends MLA conventions.

Ambient Culture, Green Romanticism. Romantic Circles are hosting a new website on issues involving Romantic-period literature and ecology, ecocriticism, ambience, atmosphere, space, place, tropics and topics. Timothy Morton, of the Univ. of Colorado at Boulder, is the site's editor. Articles are sought which: 1) look at Romantic-period literature in an ecocritical way; 2) study another period's literature using ecocriticism; 3) investigate the methodologies of Romantic-period ecocriticism. This site will break new ground, most notably in its exploration of ambient poetics and ambient reading. Please send a proposal (500 words) or a manuscript (500-6000 words) to: Timothy Morton, Dept. of English, the Univ. of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309-0226. WWW: <http://www.colorado.edu/English/romcir.html>

The Electronic Drummer is the Thoreau Institute's WWW newsletter. *The Drummer* will present Thoreau Institute reports, articles, excerpts from *Different Drummer* magazine, and data responding to Thoreau's call for preserving the environment without big government. Inspired both by Thoreau's love of the natural world and his dislike of big government, the Thoreau Institute seeks ways to protect the environment without regulation or bureaucracy. The Institute was founded in 1975, as Cascade Holistic Economic Consultants to help environmentalists and others understand and influence public land management. Since then, the Institute has worked as a consultant to or partner with national environmental groups as well as state and local groups. *The Electronic Drummer* updates include new articles, new data bases, and any major reports published by the Thoreau Institute. WWW: <http://www.teleport.com/~rot/>

*stay together
learn the flowers
go light*

—Gary Snyder

Kenton Temple Takes on ASLE Bibliography Project.

I'm excited about taking the job as ASLE's Bibliographer, not only because it's fun to collect titles of books and articles about which I've a special interest, but also because of the contact with other persons to whom those titles are important. I hope to work with all of you who have assisted with the Bibliography in the past, and hope that new persons will join the network of contributors. Please let me know if you'd like to get involved with the Bibliography Project: It will take the work of us all to maintain the high standards of previous annual bibliographies.

I've been a reference librarian for 25 years and am now a reference librarian in the Humanities Group focusing on English Literature, at the University of Tennessee. I also have an M.A. in English. Before coming to UT, I worked in the U.S. Dept of Energy's Environmental Restoration program in Oak Ridge, specifically as manager of the project that made the records on which clean-up decisions were made available to the public. I'm particularly interested in river literature and am an avid white-water kayaker.

Kenton Temple, University of Tennessee

Northern Arizona University announces The Frances McAllister Endowed Chair in Community, Culture & Environment,

establishing a vital collaboration between the university and its community partners in Flagstaff and Northern Arizona. As Endowed Professor in the Department of Humanities, Arts, and Religion, this dynamic leader will:

- establish outreach to local & regional environmental and arts organizations
- stimulate curricular innovation that integrates the arts, environment & community service
- facilitate student activities such as internships, service-learning opportunities & dialogue with community leaders
- teach one course per semester to prepare future leaders in educational & community organizations
- promote the role of the arts in shaping community & environmental values

Applicants must have academic and community experience, with demonstrated skills in working with faculty and students across disciplines. A Ph.D. in a discipline complementary to the humanities is preferred.

The Northern Arizona and Flagstaff communities are composed of people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Applicants should have experience in and be committed to working with such a diverse population. To learn more about Northern Arizona Univ., visit our website: <http://www.nau.edu>.

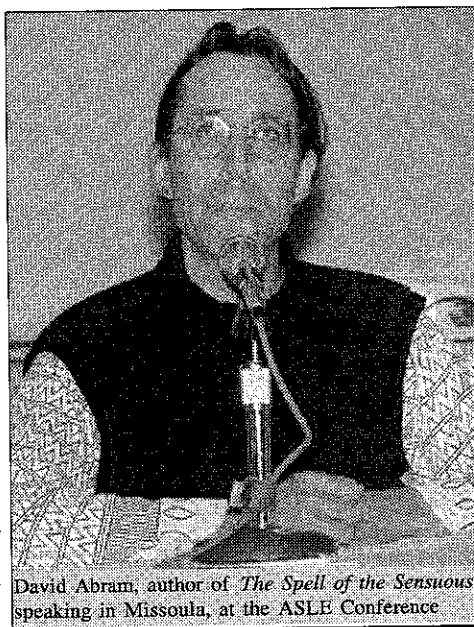
Review of applications begins November 15, 1997 and continues until the position is filled. Application materials should include a letter demonstrating evidence of community and interdisciplinary skills; a *vitae*; the names, titles, and phone numbers of three references. References will not be contacted until candidates have been notified. Direct all correspondence to:

Office of the Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, Box 5621,
Northern Arizona Univ.; Flagstaff, AZ; 86011-5621. Northern Arizona Univ. is an EO/AA institution. Minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and veterans are encouraged to apply.

Conference Excerpt: David Abram

Consider all the knowledge necessary to survive, to get on in the world. Knowledge about how to exist without destroying each other, and how to find certain plants—which parts to prepare, which are good for healing what, which parts are poisonous, how to prepare them—where to find the critters, how to prepare those for food, for skins, for shelter. All the knowledge, the accumulated ancestral knowledge of a culture—how is it preserved and maintained in the absence of writing? For us, it is fairly easy, we go to the library, or to our bookshelf and we find the appropriate book and look it up and there it is right there on the page. But without writing, without text, how is all this accumulated, ancestral knowledge preserved? Most of us, and most of you who have pondered this for more than a moment, have realized that the knowledge is carried in stories. It is preserved and stored in stories. I suppose that is why we call them stories—because things are stored in them. But, how then are the stories preserved? How is it that the stories are maintained? And this has not been as well recognized, this business that they're repeated over and over again and so gradually people learn them. But some of these story cycles are not repeated for years, and yet they're kept alive. What is missed is that the stories are associated so often with particular animals, particular elements, particular aspects of the surrounding sensuous world; and when

you encounter those beings you remember the story and associate it with that being. But most importantly, the stories are so often associated with particular places—where those stories happened, or where they are believed to have happened. And when you encounter one of those places, you remember the stories associated with that site.



David Abram, author of *The Spell of the Sensuous*, speaking in Missoula, at the ASLE Conference

Now, as writing comes into such a culture for the first time, often brought by Christian missionaries, the stories begin to be written down, and so the page begins to become the primary mnemonic, or memory trigger, for remembering the oral stories. The ink traces made by the pen as it traverses the page are replacing the tracts made by the animals, or by ones animal ancestors, as they moved across the land. As the stories are written down they begin to be able to be taken elsewhere. Read in distance cities and on distant continents, and that specific, place-specific character of those stories is often forgotten, or written out of the stories entirely. Meanwhile, the land itself, stripped of all of the particularizing stories that once sprouted from

every cluster of trees and stream bed and bunch of boulders—the land begins to lose its multiplicitous power. It begins to become, or even to seem, superfluous to the act of thinking. We no longer need to see these mountains, these streams, in order to think. Slowly the land resides back into kind of a backdrop against which human history unfolds.

From the Editor's Desk

I've been reading a lot and hearing a lot about the Missoula conference lately. And though it's part of my job description to attend to such stories, I am relishing them for strictly personal reasons: I was unable to make it to Missoula in July, and so my editorial proclivities have given me a way to reimagine (if vicariously, if retrospectively) what seems like a singular gathering. I hope that the several "versions" of the conference gathered here (literary and pictorial) give others a way in—or a way back.

As usual, this has been a year of evolution and fruition for ASLE. A growing and increasingly active membership, a new fee structure, a redefining of key ASLE leadership positions, a rash of new books (*be sure to send me the vital statistics on your recent work so I can "shelve" it in the spring "ASLE Bookshelf"*), new conferences, new energies. The fall issue also marks the changing of the ASLE guard—and we can only hope that, as John Tallmadge catches his breath at the Union Institute, he will allow us to make use of his magisterial managing and "envisioning" skills, his fine sense of diplomacy, and his economic acumen in less formal ways. His tenure at the ASLE helm has helped to shape and codify not just an academic organization, but a wide-ranging and multivalent human community of readers, teachers, and writers. The possibility of success that John mentions in his column is played out by the announcements for conferences in Nevada (page 9) and England (page 7)—evidence that the Missoula and Ft. Collins gatherings were just the beginning of our efforts to reimagine and reinvigorate the Academy.

The Spring issue of the *News* will feature Molly Westling's inaugural column as ASLE President, a piece by our soon-to-be-elected Vice-President (*don't forget to vote: see candidates' statements and the ballot form on page 13-15.*), updates on ASLE Projects, and a miscellany of announcements. I would also like to include your voices/opinions/ideas: so if you have responses to anything in this issue, or to other things ASLE-related, please send a letter—publishable to ASLE-at-Large—to me at WFU. Finally, I remain interested in hearing from ASLE members with ideas about and suggestions for how the *Newsletter* might best serve your needs.

Here, at the cusp of winter, I hope El Niño treats you well. From the Piedmont,

Ralph Black, Wake Forest University

ASLE ELECTIONS: CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

(mark your choices on the tear-out ballot on page 15)

Vice-President

Carol H. Cantrell, Colorado State University

ASLE's remarkable growth in recent years suggests how much this organization has been needed. There is an urgent need to develop spaces within the academic community where responses to environments are honored as vital areas of inquiry, and discussion of human relationships with nature—especially as they are represented in writing—can take place in a full and open way.

ASLE's rapid growth also implies an obligation to keep track of and continue what is unique. For me, this includes the mix of writers and academics that has been a hallmark of conferences and smaller ASLE gatherings. No less important is the mix of graduate students, college deans, and people outside the academy in genuine dialogue. Another distinctive element of ASLE is its inherent interdisciplinarity. These are connections I want to nurture.

We also have opportunities to build on what has already been established. We can build on the international connections that have already been made, and work on developing dialogue between world citizens of the North and South. Within the narrower world of English departments and the MLA, we can work for a greater recognition of the importance of environmental concerns in academic programs.

I would bring to a leadership position in ASLE administrative experience as a chair of the Women's Studies program at Colorado State University, as Graduate Coordinator in the English department, and as local Conference Coordinator of the first ASLE conference. My research and writing focus is on using ecofeminist thought in relation to modernism. In a leadership position, I would look for issues and projects that are do-able and which have substantial support among the membership.

Walter W. Isle, Rice University

Iam honored to have been nominated for ASLE Vice-President. Serving ASLE would mean more to me than almost any job I have taken on in my academic career. I have been a department chair for a number of years; I am serving as head of our faculty senate; and, more significant, I am now involved in the creation of an interdisciplinary environmental studies program and will have a role in the directing the program. In this project I have found working with colleagues from all across the university to be extremely rewarding.

It is this linking with other disciplines that share our interest in the environment that I would like encourage in ASLE. Now that we are affiliated with the MLA, we should extend that connection to the regional MLA's; but even more important, we need to create relationships with environmental historians, conservation biologists, ecologists and earth scientists. These are the people I have been working with on our new program, and I have been amazed at how much we have all learned from this interaction.

Other matters I would like to pursue: we are now large enough that we could begin thinking about an annual conference, or some alternative meetings in our non-conference summers; we need to build on some of the international links that have been established (I would particularly like to see us develop contacts in Mexico); all of us together also need to work very hard on graduate placement and establishing our presence in literature departments.

ASLE has been blessed with strong leadership from the start, and I would not only want to build on what Scott, Cheryl, Mike, John have accomplished, while depending on their wisdom and counsel. A final disclaimer: our journal was not named after me, and if elected I promise not to try to change the name of the organization to match that of the journal.

Executive Council

J. Gerard Dollar, Siena College

I'm a professor of English at Siena College, in upstate New York, and I'm now in my tenth year of teaching "Literature and the Environment," as well as an interdisciplinary, outings-intensive course on the Adirondack Environment. I have enthusiastically embraced ASLE, and now wish to serve on its Executive Council, for several reasons. The wonderful body of literature centered on the natural world has too long been neglected by "The Academy," and those of us who love it must band together to assert its importance and help each other teach it better. Even more significantly, and as keynote speakers at both our conferences have pointed out, we are facing a crisis—call it cultural or spiritual—in which we find, among so many young people, a profound ignorance of and alienation from the natural world. (I have just returned from a camping trip to the Adirondacks with twelve students, and predictably many were amazed to find such a beautiful environment just a few hours from our campus.) I believe we in ASLE are committed not just to teaching environmental literature but to helping our students connect in meaningful ways with their environment, so that they can ground themselves in the natural rather than the materialistic and high-tech. The recent exciting conference in Missoula has energized me to work to expand the reach of ASLE, to develop new colloquia and programs, and to ensure another successful conference in 1999. Thanks to its founding members, our organization has gotten off to a great start; it now has tremendous potential—world-wide—to help educate a new generation of environmentally literate and sensitive young people.

Ann Fisher-Wirth, University of Mississippi

Iam an Associate Professor and Graduate Director in English at the University of Mississippi, where I teach 20th-century literature, gender studies, poetry, and literature/nature. I have published a book on William Carlos Williams, and essays on Willa Cather, Cormac McCarthy, Robert Hass, and Louise Gluck. I'm also a poet and have completed a book manuscript, *The Blue Window*.

It has been an eventful year since my previous nomination for the Executive Council. ASLE is growing here; three graduate students, in fact, presented work at the conference in Missoula. And more importantly, what both my students and I learned from our involvement with ASLE played its part in the past year's struggles to increase environmental awareness in Oxford. The climax of these struggles was the arrest of the "Oxford Nine" for civil disobedience—we (students, professors, and townspeople) sat in front of old growth trees about to be bulldozed for a five-lane highway project the community was vehemently protesting. Partly as a result of the outcry, a new city government was elected last June, and a community-wide group called Concerned Citizens for Oxford came into being; we maintain an active, watchdog role in issues concerning development.

I've been a member of ASLE since its inception. At the 1996 symposium in Honolulu, at last July's conference in Missoula, and daily on the e-mail Listserv, I have benefited so much from taking part in the organization. I am eager to contribute to the Executive Council with my energy and experience. I'd love to help ASLE grow in the South, where environmental awareness may lag but so much knowledge of the country and folkways survives. And finally, I'm eager to expand the connection between ASLE, poets, and poetry. Thank you for considering me.

Annie Ingram, Davidson College

I'm an assistant professor in English at a small college in the south-central North Carolina Piedmont. I've been a member of ASLE since its inception, when I was a graduate student teaching my first course on American Nature Writing. My current research combines ecocritical, feminist, and ethnocritical approaches to women's writing about the West. I teach a course on environmental issues with a community service component—the perfect meeting ground for my scholarly interests in literature and environment, pedagogical commitment to service learning, and desire to share with students the joys and challenges of environmental activism.

Like many members, I've found a terrific intellectual and professional home in ASLE, and I'm grateful for everything the organization offers. If elected to the Executive Council, I will: work on developing a more racially diverse membership; foster links between activism and scholarship; and encourage the intellectual climate that makes ASLE a vanguard in areas such as ecocriticism and ecofeminism. I hope that as ASLE continues to grow, we will preserve our genuinely friendly and supportive community, as well as our commitment to enriching our professional lives with respect and concern for environment.

Rochelle Johnson, The Claremont Graduate University

I am thrilled by the prospect of directing my creative energies and organizational experience toward the work of the Executive Council. I have eagerly assisted ASLE by helping organize the Ft. Collins conference, contributing reviews to *ISLE* and the *Newsletter*, and co-editing for Idaho Press the essay collection that emerged from Ft. Collins. My scholarship includes an edition of Susan Fenimore Cooper's *Rural Hours* (U of Georgia P, 1998) and a special nature issue of *Women's Studies*. The focus of my work is on alternative traditions of nature writing.

ASLE is big now, but we've grown fast, and I want to help firm up our base. Standing ASLE sessions at the regional MLA's are a good way to do this. Such representation would encourage high-quality ecocritical work by creating more opportunities for sharing that work. I am working toward this goal in my region, and my recent election to PAMLA's Executive Committee puts me in a good position to continue this work.

ASLE is rightfully proud to be an organization that fosters a sense of common purpose and community among a diverse group, including students, adjuncts, and independent scholars. As a dissertating adjunct instructor at two universities, I feel that I could help constructively represent the many non-tenure track ASLE'ers—people who are the source of much of our energy. My past experience as a conference administrator at Claremont would also prove useful as the Executive Council undertakes ASLE's conference planning. I am committed to the good work ASLE is now doing and have a deep desire to help shape its future.

Rebecca Raglon, Simon Fraser University, Canada

I've been a Canadian member with ASLE since its inception in Reno. Nature writing was the subject of my MA and Ph.D. dissertations and I have been teaching, researching and publishing in the field since the early 1980s. I have especially enjoyed the conferences, discussions and collegiality of ASLE and would like to continue the fine work undertaken by previous executives in making it all happen.

If elected to the Executive Council I would like to focus on continuing to raise the profile of ASLE within Canada and would encourage activities with this end in mind. My home is on an island off the coast of British Columbia, but I grew up in the United States. Because of my "cross border" experiences, I've been sensitized to the different understandings of nature which arise from different environments, histories, and political boundaries. The "vast northland" of Northern Minnesota is "south" when viewed from Yellowknife, and "bio-region" can mean two very different things, depending which side of the border you're on. I believe increased Canadian involvement contributes an interesting dimension to the organization.

Both my fiction and non-fiction works deal with themes familiar to ASLE members. My book of short stories, *The Gridlock Mechanism*, was published by Oberon Press in 1992. I have published academic articles on topics ranging from green advertising (in *Environmental History Review*) and green cities (in *Environments*), to concepts of narrativity in contemporary nature-writing (in *Environmental Ethics*) and women's experiences in the Canadian north (in *Women's Studies*). I've also contributed chapters to various volumes including the Scribner book of *American Nature Writers* and the forthcoming sourcebook, *The Literature of Nature*. I've taught in several settings including the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University, Toronto, and the Department of English at the University of British Columbia. I currently teach in the Humanities Program at Simon Fraser University and am a Research Fellow at the Institute of Governance Studies.

William Stowe, Wesleyan University

I am an enthusiastic newcomer to ASLE, much impressed by the tone and the substance of the Missoula conference, and eager to get involved in the organization. My field is nineteenth-century American literature: I have published books on James and Balzac, detective fiction, and travel writing, and given papers on Bartram, Fuller, Thoreau, and Jewett, among others; I am working on a new book, "Excursions and Sojourns: 19c Americans in the Country, the Wilderness, and the Natural World." Since 1978 I have taught at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, serving for several years as chair of the English Department. A description and syllabus for my course on "American Pastoral" can be found at <<http://www.wesleyan.edu/~wstowe>>

ASLE is the most genuinely collegial, cooperative academic organization I know. As a member of the executive council, I would work to preserve the ethos of the society, as well as our unique multiple focus on scholarship, writing, environmental activism, and pedagogy. I am also interested in finding ways to attract members of currently underrepresented groups to ASLE and encouraging the establishment of informal regional reading and writing groups to complement the biennial ASLE conferences.

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION & CHECKLIST

(ASLE membership fee includes subscriptions to *ISLE* and *ASLE News*)



Name _____ Affiliation _____

Mailing Address _____

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

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Research/Writing Interests _____

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Department of English
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