

# 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

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## LETTER TO ASLE MEMBERS

Dear fellow ASLE members,

I trust that your spring has not been silent. I'd like to use this space to add some humming ASLE news to the other sounds in your life.

The big, good news is that the dates are now set for **ASLE's first conference: June 9-11, 1995**, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado. Carol Cantrell and her team of graduate students at CSU will be making local arrangements. The Rocky Mountains promise to be a sublime setting for our first rendezvous. An ASLE planning committee is currently forming to work on program details; we welcome your input. A general Call for Papers will be issued at the end of this summer.

Until ASLE has regular, annual conferences, we will continue to hold business meetings at the Western American Literature conference, which kindly indulges our presence. This year, the WLA conference meets in Salt Lake City, Utah, October 5-8, 1994 (see "Conference Announcements"). Agenda items for the ASLE business meeting appear in the "Agenda" section of this newsletter.

One agenda item to which I would like to call your particular attention is a proposed formal affiliation between ASLE and the journal ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment. ISLE's editor, Patrick Murphy, supports this idea, as do I. Formal affiliation between ASLE and ISLE makes good sense: ASLE, like many other professional associations, would have its own journal; since ASLE membership and the ISLE subscribers' list already overlap considerably, record-keeping for both ASLE and ISLE would be streamlined by a merger; fund raising for ASLE would be easier if we have a visible product to parade; our newsletter could shrink to a more manageable size when the longer articles are published in the journal; ASLE would have another forum for its announcements; more non-members will find out about ASLE, as the journal will be carried by libraries nationwide. If you will not be able to attend the ASLE business meeting at the WLA but would like to vote on this matter, please send your proxy to me before October.

The other big, good news is that Zita Ingham and her editorial contributors have nearly finished the first **ASLE Annotated Bibliography on Literature and Environment**. More than one hundred pages in length and keyed by topic, the bibliography contains 640 entries for items published between 1990 and 1993. We had hoped to make the bibliography free to ASLE members, but due to its length and to ASLE's limited budget, we have decided to offer the bibliography at cost. We will soon be sending you a separate letter describing the bibliography in more detail and providing ordering information. Ron Steffens is currently figuring out how to make the bibliography available

electronically to e-mail users for free.

Speaking of e-mail, ASLE now has a functioning e-mail network on Literature and Environment, to which all interested parties are welcome to subscribe. So far, traffic over the network has consisted of conference announcements, calls for papers, research inquiries and answers, book recommendations, film suggestions, and debates about specific environmental texts. The e-mail network is an ideal way to stay in communication, and I would again urge low-tech ASLE members to break on through to the other side and get e-mail accounts. If you would like to subscribe to the ASLE network, simply send your request to: [<asle-request@unr.edu>](mailto:asle-request@unr.edu).

ASLE membership continues to grow, now topping 500. Our membership is showing greater professional diversity than before (more freelance writers, activists, scholars in disciplines other than literary studies) and more geographical diversity (48 states and several foreign countries, including Australia, Canada, Japan, England, and India). We would especially like to welcome our international members and to encourage others to join; the price for internationals remains the same as for nationals. Spring renewal notices will be mailed in June, and we humbly request that you renew promptly—it makes our lives ever so much easier.

ASLE has been extremely fortunate to have Michael Branch as secretary, ably assisted by his student intern, Diana Van Wyk, and his computer-whiz friend, Jeremy Shanahan. Handling all the paperwork for an organization that has grown from 50 to 500 in eighteen months has required unusual dedication. Mike has gone far beyond the call of secretarial duty by organizing ASLE panels at national conferences, by getting ASLE announcements published in a host of journals, by directing the creation of an ASLE tri-fold brochure, by gaining (with Scott Slovic) ASLE "Participating Society" status with the ALA, by serving as diplomatic intermediary between ASLE and various publishers, and the list goes on. Like many secretaries in the corporate world, Mike is the person actually running this organization. My grateful thanks. The fact that Mike's term as secretary ends this coming October is cause for a tremor of anxiety. If any of you would be willing to serve as ASLE's next two-year secretary, please let either Mike or me know. Although we won't expect you to repeat Mike's performance, still, the job will demand organizational skills and conscientious attention to detail. Eventually, we hope that ASLE will be prosperous enough to afford a permanent, paid secretary, but for now we still must rely on volunteers.

In the last newsletter I wrote that my goal as ASLE president would be to put ASLE on firm financial footing.

Thanks to new membership and renewal fees, and to two new categories of membership (sustaining member and patron), we are in a comfortable position to print and mail this newsletter and the next. Unfortunately, however, the bad news is that I've proven to be a dismal failure at fund raising. In fact, so far, I haven't written a single grant. I regret to say that I simply have not had the time. I am hoping that time will open up, but, honestly, it looks doubtful. I would sincerely appreciate a phone call from a motivated ASLE member who would be willing to serve as ASLE's "development officer." This would not be a sordid job, but, on the contrary, a noble one, for it alone will ensure that ASLE has the wherewithal to pay for our many worthy existing projects and services, and for the new ones being planned (including our conference, scholarships, and awards).

As ASLE grows and our activities multiply, the roster of people who deserve thanks has become sesquipedalian. I would like to extend a special thanks to Louise Westling, who beautifully guest-edited the Gaia materials in this newsletter, and to artist Karen Allaben-Confer, who continues to donate her fine illustrations. Thanks to the work of ASLE's conference tracker, David Teague, we now have an excellent "Conference Announcements" section in the newsletter. ASLE's graduate liaisons George Hart and Dan Philippon are nearing completion of a big project, the *ASLE Handbook for Graduate Study in Literature and Environment* (see "General Notes and News"). ASLE treasurer Allison Wallace deserves an orienteering award for successfully navigating through the I.R.S. paper maze in pursuit of Non-Profit designation for ASLE (pending). Interim Vice President, Tom Dean, has contributed many good ideas about fund raising and has successfully arranged for ASLE's "Associated Organization" status with the MMLA. ASLE's president-in-absentia, Scott Slovic, has been very active on his

Fulbright in Japan this year, as you will see in the news item on the formation of ASLE-Japan. Scott will resume his duties as ASLE's president and managing editor of the newsletter upon his return to America this August. Finally, a special thanks to the newsletter contributors and editors, to the ASLE officers and advisory board members, and to ASLE's sustaining members and patrons. There are still plenty of niches for new volunteers, so, if your reed bends that way, we'd love to hear from you.

May your summer continue to buzz, chirp, and ribbit.

Best,

*Cheryll Glotfelty*

Cheryll Glotfelty

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

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\*All drawings are donated by Karen Allaben-Confer. "The Laughing Loon" is the distributor for Karen's art, which includes prints, notecards, and t-shirts. For a free catalog, please write to The Laughing Loon, 651 Hammond Hill Rd., Brooktondale, NY 14817.

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## GUEST EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Louise Westling

By now, New Age gurus and manufacturers of ecological trinkets have made the public aware of the Gaia Hypothesis, even if the average mall shopper or person on the street has never heard of James Lovelock. This brand of Gaia-think must seem distressing or perhaps only ridiculous to Lovelock, who took pains in the 1987 Preface to the revised edition of *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* to distinguish his theory from religion and to warn readers of "the twin blights of anthropomorphism and teleology" when using the Gaia metaphor (ix, xii). His purpose was to apply the scientific data he had accumulated for atmospheric analysis, to reintegrate our thinking about life on earth. It was his neighbor the novelist William Golding who suggested that Lovelock's concept of Earth as a self-regulating complex organism be called "Gaia, after the Greek Earth goddess also known as Ge, from which root the sciences of geography and geology derive their names" (10). Lovelock sees this gendering as no different from the traditional feminine references to ships or cars. While the name has been a convenient and easily remembered tag, consistent with centuries of classical nomenclature in science, its mythological origins and gender have seemed to encourage associations which undermine its credibility as science. Lawrence Joseph's history of the theory's development, *Gaia: The Growth of an Idea*, offers unfortunate evidence of how the feminine connotations of the name can be trivialized. Patrick Murphy's 1988 essay "Sex-Typing the Planet: Gaia Imagery and the Problem of Subverting Patriarchy" examines the more serious dangers of these gender connotations.

And then there are the scientific attacks upon the Gaia Hypothesis, which have created an increasingly lively debate among biologists and theorists of evolution. Lovelock describes the theory as a way of thinking about the whole life of the planet that has proved its usefulness "by giving rise to experimental questions and answers which were profitable exercises in themselves" (11). Whatever the fate of the explicit hypothesis advanced by Lovelock and his associates, attention has been focused in the way he wished.

The scientific debate will continue, as ecology becomes more central in global planning and policy, but for humanists the metaphoric possibilities of the concept will remain intriguing. This special Gaia issue of *The Nature Writing Newsletter* exists to examine these possibilities and their relation to the theoretical and scientific context of the mid-1990s. I have assembled a medley for the following pages that includes the thoughts of a poet, a poem, an excerpt from a forthcoming novel, scientific perspectives, and cautionary considerations. Christopher Cokinos explores two contrasting metaphoric possibilities for poetry: Gaia and Shiva. David Ignatow contributes a poem informed by the Gaia metaphor. Novelist Diana Abu-Jaber writes of cultural intersections for Palestinian Americans in *Arabian Jazz*, published last year, and also in a forthcoming new novel, *Memories of Birth*, from which she has offered us a glimpse of magical childhood space and its involvement with racial identity. Tom Kealy reviews the scientific status of the Gaia Hypothesis at the present, and Paul Lindholdt takes a practical "Gaian" look at land use in the West. Paul Shepard, whose *Man in the Landscape* (1967) was the pioneering effort to see the human relation to the

land in terms of global evolution, takes a sobering look at the dangers of the Gaian metaphor. A recent book linking Gaia to economics and ethics is evaluated by Patrick Murphy in light of theoretical issues he originally raised in "Sex-Typing the Planet," and the work of Simon Ortiz and Paula Gunn Allen is presented as a salutary contrast. The Classroom Notes section includes teaching ideas related to Gaia that Thomas Stuckert has brought together for this issue. Book Review Editor Michael Branch has assembled reviews of three important new books on the subject from scientific, ecofeminist, and theological perspectives. Altogether, the writers included in this issue of the *Newsletter* provide a lively group of voices to help readers come to their own decisions about whether or how the Gaia Hypothesis can stimulate their own efforts to reconsider the relations of human culture to the biota.

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## GAIA, SHIVA, POETRY

Christopher Cokinos

*Poetry has to stop playing word games with itself...and begin to recapture the regard it used to have for nature as the central focus of experience.*

—Brendan Galvin

Inventor, scientist, and medical doctor James Lovelock—the modern co-originator of the Gaia Hypothesis—defines the controversial idea in his recent book *Healing Gaia*:

...Gaia is the Earth seen as a single physiological system, an entity that is alive at least to the extent that, like other living organisms, its chemistry and temperature are self-regulated at a state favourable for life...Gaia is an evolving system, a system made up from all living things and their surface environment...In this system, the self-regulation of climate and chemical composition are entirely automatic. Self-regulation emerges as the system evolves. No foresight, planning, or teleology...are involved. (11)

Lovelock means here for us to take this as *paradigm*, as *fact*—or as *potential fact*. But, of course, Gaia is also a metaphor, regardless of its undecided scientific plausibility or its apparently worthy, multidisciplinary investigative value. To say that the earth is a living meta-organism is, until this is actually proven (and one wonders if it can be), a comparatively big leap. So, it is hypothesis and metaphor both. This duality, I think, has caused much confusion and backlash, aided in no small part by crystal-toting New Age silliness that disregards the seriousness of actual Gaian research and the implications of Gaia as a functional reality.

The passage quoted above is interesting in another way as well. Those who have watched Lovelock and Gaia co-evolve since he and microbiologist Lynn Margulis first postulated the notion in 1972 will note the explicit retreat from Gaia as a conscious entity. (This is lost on many people.) In fact, following the seminal 1988 American Geophysical Union Chapman conference on Gaia, Lovelock has tended at times to back off what many now call “hard Gaia”: that Gaia is self-regulating in the “best interests” of the biosphere.” Lovelock and those working to elucidate the complex feedback mechanisms that may weave through Gaia have instead tended to take “the softer position of biospheric regulation of the environment within certain limits favorable for life” (Rampino 382). But even this leaves the question open: what kind of life? A large question, indeed.

For the writer, Gaia presents a kind of paradigm that is not unlike the radical vision that Darwin gave us a century ago. What can we make of this in our art? This too is a broad issue, and one I address more substantially in “The Gaian Muse: Nature Poetry at the End of Nature” (forthcoming, *Kansas Quarterly*), so here I’ll complicate things (as I have for myself) with another evolutionary theory that, on surface, appears to be in contradiction to Gaia.

Michael R. Rampino and others posit a theory of extraterrestrial impact events that he calls Shiva. On what seems to this humanist to be stronger evidence than Gaia is founded on, Shiva theory suggests that “periodic or episodic catastrophic destruction of life by comet or asteroid impacts” are responsible for the mass

extinctions we find so clearly in the fossil record. As Rampino notes of Gaia and Shiva, “The theories seem to occupy two ends of the spectrum of our view of the natural environment.” He continues:

In one the environment is cared for and preserved by the biosphere, which is capable of responding to relatively slow geological and astrophysical changes (overcoming changes in the atmospheric condition and the faint early sun problem, for example). In the other, the biosphere is overwhelmed by sudden catastrophes from space that could, theoretically, snuff out life on Earth entirely, and perhaps has in other places in the Universe. (382)

These impacts are related to the Solar System’s established “up and down” movement “through the central plane of the Milky Way Galaxy.” As Rampino suggests, “The Earth system may be responding to an external galactic forcing. This would make earthly Gaia not only a planetary property” but a cosmic one as well. (388) How Gaia might be related to Shiva is a fascinating issue, another in a series of difficult, open-ended questions about the biosphere and its apparent resiliency to previously life-threatening changes.

Gaia and Shiva—research, metaphors, and (for me) hoped-for actualities—represent ways to re-image a nature poetry beyond our understandable, though woefully inadequate, bias for the visible present. If written into images, and not deployed as Yeatsian metaphysical symbol factories, Gaia and Shiva can infuse massive energies and scales into nature poetry. This is the challenge, at least, I’m feeling in myself and with what is working onto the page, tentative but glistening. It’s one way, I have decided, to move beyond despair over what we are doing to present nature. After all, Lovelock writes that Gaia can help us relocate human actions and ethics within a wider context: we are part of a singular meta-system. The Earth. This, he notes, “helps us to reject sentimentality about pain and death, and accept mortality, for us as well as for our species” (Ages 236). The same can be said for Shiva’s even wider scope: the Earth as part of a great cosmic impact cycle. (Let me hasten to add that in no way do I consider Gaia and Shiva to be excuses for inaction on present environmental fronts.)

I must, out of artistic (psychic) necessity, find a way beyond futility, anger, and sadness. A poetry beyond grief. A poetry of hard, bright-green-dark truth. To stay sane. To accept mortality, yes, to find clarity past present human error. To use the poem as a time machine to travel to before human beginnings. To use the poem as a microscope to find pre-human traces in the present. To use the poem as a telescope to chart the cosmological implications burning in the sharp stars and comets and planets and galaxy clusters we blot out with our streetlights.

Not that I’m alone in this desire, though I certainly will be alone with any failures, poems dead on the page. Both Robinson Jeffers and Kenneth Rexroth had this sense of scale and connec-

tion. And this is part of what Gary Snyder writes in "Little Songs for Gaia":

hawk dipping and circling  
over salt marsh

ah, this slow-paced  
system of systems, whirling and turning

a five-thousand-year span  
about all that a human can figure,

grasshopper man in his car driving through (49)

I'm reminded of what W.H. Auden said—something to the effect of how difficult a poet makes the compositional task if he or she puts truth before music, instead of music before truth. Ah, master poet, too late now! The need: a truth—or ways of getting at truth (posited facts, dazzling metaphors)—that *is* music. Gaia. Shiva. Those elegant words. Those myths become theophany, become science. Gaia and Shiva, I can't lose sight of this, are ways of finding out how the universe works. As those research endeavors continue, I want to be right there, translating the insights of technical prose into a connective poetry, a form of music and ethics.

Understand, I'm saying this because I have notes for poems on my desk. So I find myself looking back to the night sky as I haven't since I was a child, when I peered through an inexpensive, fiberboard Edmund Scientific three-inch reflector. And I find myself thinking more and more in cosmic and geologic time-scales. Needing to, in order to put the mail and nightly news in perspective. (Try this: meditate on the relative ages of our earliest human ancestor and, say, the sandhill crane.) This is what I must write.

Today, when I see a Flint Hills cattle ranch, I try to look beyond the overgrazed prairie, and yet keep it there in the looking, and note the spring grass burnings and the ancient, persistent blue-green cyanobacterial pond scum in the watering holes. I think of the Perseids' greeny blurs over the hot Kansas ranches this past August. There, quick lights perhaps like Shiva's great rocks. Here, old, tough, tiny lives like Gaia's subtle breaths. Cycles. Survivals. I'm after microbes and comets now, bacteria and meteors, the trace of light between them. Light to show us something. Something consequential.

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Kansas State University

## THE LIVING

David Ignatow

Death provides the food:  
the zebra lay on its side,  
clawed into silence.  
the tigress on her belly  
gnawing at the belly of the zebra  
with bloody teeth.

And the living zebras  
at a distance, heads bowed  
towards earth, eat  
of the living grass.

East Hampton, New York



*The Volunteer*

Common sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), fruiting and fattening in the shadows of its golden petals, emblazoning Nature's garden, anticipating late summer harvest as it bends its heady weight earthward having been in a former life just one fertile seed about to become many. Pen and ink on scratchboard, 1994.

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## JERSEY SKY

(an excerpt from "Memories of Birth")

Diana Abu-Jaber

Hindee was entranced by the night corridors of shopping malls, the stifling highschool passages, the housing subdivisions that ranged out of the school, radiating like heartlines, where she thought, if she dug in deep enough, that she could be lost. The beautiful American names she'd imagined for herself—Emily, Katey, Lucy—would rise, given half a chance, shimmering to light through her new pale skin, and the old, unwanted Hindee Abdel Nadir would fall away, dried stalk. She imagined that her best friend Doll was the woman she might have been if she had been blessed with Doll's bloodlines—a father who was never home, whose name was George Washington Mashpee, whose mother, Francis Mashpee, actually wore an apron. Even after she'd moved West, Hindee still found herself thinking of her lost twin, left in New Jersey, the one she might have been, drifting and waiting for her like Madame Butterfly, poor Madame Butterfly, waiting for her to come back to herself. Mam's true granddaughter she would have been, loving, tucked at her knee, not always querulous, taking issue with every observation, always niggling, *why, why, why*—as if life was a fabric she could worry apart.

Doll and Hindee drove around the strips of franchises, moving companies, gas stations. Everything Hindee saw caught at her, snags in the memory, everything, as she came back to it all from months of absence, was infused with Mam: streets they'd walked together, sound of the Jersey blue jay screaming in the sky over Mam's house, over the streets of Elizabeth. She wondered how she could ever have gone away, how it was that she would go away again.

She remembered Mam standing outside the sloped front yard of their house. It was built on a hill, and Hindee had repeated dreams of the house breaking from its foundations, tumbling down with her inside, over the endless, floating hillside. Mam wore pants rolled above her ankles—she called them her peddle pushers—lashed and stained with every color Hindee had ever imagined. Mam drew a fat, white paint brush up and down the slats of the picket fence that lined the yard. Inside, the TV dashed images against the couch and wall where Hindee abandoned it to go watch her grandmother. Mammy was singing a song to her in another language, in German: *Ride a ride a russ*.

She'd put down her paint brush and was bouncing Hindee on her lap, chanting out the words to the song, a pony ride, each bump jogging out new words. Hindee didn't understand the words, they sounded like:

In bussel slate de sluss  
Er rider inter kleiner kinde  
Deina nick a ridi since  
A rida buss a sacksa....

This is German, the only language, Mammy said, she spoke as a little girl, as little as Hindee, four years old. Now her songs are the only bits of it Mam remembers. Mam holds her hands tightly as they ride on the deep slope of the lawn where Mam has a tall fence to hold them in. From down the hill at the bottom, the smells of cars and trucks rushing by float up so they mix with the clear air at the top. There are the bright bird cries that Hindee listens to every afternoon, trying to unpuzzle them, to hear the melody that makes people call them song. Mam holds

her tightly and her hands, she sees, look brown as chocolate, as brown pearls, Mam tells her, against the milky white of her grandmother's hands.

"Cookies and cream," her grandmother sings.

Later they will walk through the back parts, the tall trees, and pick the berries. Or maybe she will go with the big Steiner kids from next door and help them fly their kites.

She leans back in her grandmother's lap, as far back as their joined hands will reach, and the sky opens over her—was that here all this time? Clouds shape and unshape, moving as quick as the grass, just as busy, so deep she could fall and fall and fall forever, and her hands tighten on Mam's but she doesn't sit up, not yet. Just a moment more, to see the sky that is the whole world, stirring like pieces of soup, over New Jersey. How far does it go? How long until the mysterious other one that comes, unfolding its black hands and shivering with dots of light?

Mammy is tugging at her, up, up, all the blood will run to her head and push at her eyes, but she stretches farther and sees shadows breaking the lawn, feels the breaking bits of air that tell her: *someone is there*. She sees, upside down, her father standing over them.

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## THE SCIENCE OF GAIA

Thomas Kealy

It is commonplace to assume that the way an individual looks at an object deeply affects the conclusions s/he will make about it. If this is true, certainly the Gaia theory challenges the scientific community to consider both a "new look at life on earth," and new ways to value life itself. The "new look" proposed by this theory is one of perspective. It is suggested that some of the most important questions about life will be answered not only by looking at the way an individual cell or organism functions, but also by considering the ways biotic and abiotic components of the entire globe function together to create and maintain an environment hospitable for life.

James Lovelock accuses modern biology of being hostile to the shift required to investigate the biosphere as a system. He perceives biology as being "imprisoned in a narrow, almost puritan reductionism . . . [which has] made holism a pejorative term" ("Hands" 102). In order to understand how organisms shape and are shaped by the atmosphere, the oceans and the soil, it is necessary to make this move towards a holistic perspective which Lovelock calls "geophysiology." Some scientists respond by claiming that the Gaia theory offers no new or interesting ideas to the study of life. John Postgate notes that

There is nothing in the Gaia metaphor that has not been utterly familiar to biologists for the whole of this century, except the name. It has been axiomatic among biologists (1) that biological systems modify the environment to suit themselves; (2) that the terrestrial environment is the resultant of interactions among the living and non-living components of the biosphere; (3) that evolutionary changes in these living and non-living components are a necessary consequence of these interactions. (60)

What must be clarified, however, is that Postgate's description of the interaction between the biotic and abiotic components of the planet is quite different from most descriptions of the Gaia theory. The difference is one of scale.

Postgate's understanding of the way life influences the environment is based on the identification of change at the interface of the organism and its immediate surroundings. Any changes which the organism enacts will, presumably, increase the fitness of the local environment for that organism. This is an example of co-evolution: life and its surroundings develop together. The Gaia theory widens the scale of this process by showing how the activities of life can cause changes in the immediate environment which have no correlation to the ability of the individual organism to survive, but which may have a profound effect on the global atmosphere in terms of its ability to sustain life. In this interpretation of Gaia, life optimizes conditions in the inorganic world to sustain even more life.

An example which is often used to show how the mechanisms of Gaia may work to change the global environment is the "faint early sun paradox" (for additional explanation please see Schneider 7, and Resnik 576). Four billion years ago the sun's intensity was twenty-five percent lower than it is now. This means that if the chemical composition of the atmosphere had been identical to its present mixture, the earth would have been an infertile sphere of ice. Since the fossil records indicate that, indeed, the globe supported life 3.8 billion years ago, it must

have been warmed by an atmosphere composed of high levels of greenhouse gasses (ammonia, water vapor, carbon dioxide). Yet if the atmosphere's composition remained unchanged as the sun's intensity increased, one would expect the temperature of the earth's surface to rise a proportionate amount, surpassing the heat tolerance of life as it exists today. Clearly there must have been some mechanism for the removal of greenhouse gasses which resulted in the cooling of the planet.

Some geochemists hypothesize that carbon dioxide was removed from the atmosphere through the chemical weathering of rock. As the sun's luminescence increased, more water evaporated from the oceans and returned to the earth's surface as rain. Atmospheric carbon dioxide reacted with the droplets of water to form a dilute carbonic acid which eroded the calcium silicates in rocks to create carbon-based sediments. Yet Schwartzman and Volk contend that this abiotic process would not have removed a sufficient amount of carbon dioxide to cool the planet to its current level. They claim that without the intervention of living organisms, the temperature of the earth's surface might be 45 degrees centigrade higher than it is today. Some of the earliest forms of life on the planet, thermophilic microbes which colonized on the land as bacterial mats, increased the chemical weathering of rock up to "at least one hundred times" (Schwartzman 35). This biotic process significantly increased the amounts of carbon dioxide which could be fixed in the earth's sediments, thereby counterbalancing the increase in the sun's intensity.

As described by Schwartzman and Volk, this system is a negative feedback loop. This means that if the carbon dioxide levels dropped too low due to the actions of the microbes, the earth's surface would cool, evaporation and precipitation would slow, and the rate of chemical and biological weathering would diminish. Thus the removal rate of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere would be a direct result of the interplay between temperature and the activity of life. Supporters of the Gaia theory claim that negative feedback loops such as this which link biotic processes with the constitution of the abiotic environment have created and maintained suitable conditions for a diversity of life. Lovelock calls the self-regulatory aspects of these feedback loops "cybernetic control." He also claims that "[t]he key to understanding cybernetic systems is that, like life itself, they are always more than the mere assembly of constituent parts" (*Gaia* 54). It is this notion that the earth is more than the sum of its parts which allows Lovelock to claim that it is "quasi-living."

Many scientists assert that while the specific details of the way life and the atmosphere interact need to be worked out, the Gaia theory itself may prove to have heuristic value. Yet because of, and in spite of, the influence of new studies on the biosphere's feedback mechanisms, and due to the persistent critique of the science community, the Gaia theory has undergone an evolution of its own. In 1972 Margulis and Lovelock wrote that "[l]ife, or the biosphere, regulates or maintains the climate and the atmospheric composition at an optimum for itself" (qtd. in Lewin 114, emphasis added). Yet in 1990 Lovelock had altered this basic thesis and protested that "neither Lynn Margulis nor I have ever proposed a teleological hypothesis." Instead, he asserts, Gaia is



the theory of an evolving system. . . . This evolutionary theory views the self-regulation of the climate and chemical composition as emergent properties of the system. The emergence is entirely automatic.

Gaia evolves as a system during long periods of homeostasis that are punctuated by sudden simultaneous changes in both organisms and environments. ("Hands" 100)

In other words, Gaia is no longer understood to be an enduring, living organism. Now the theory is that Gaia is a dynamic, non-linear system with feedback loops which have arisen as epiphenomena (emergent properties) of complex interactions between living and non-living processes. The ordered cycles of energy and materials in the biosphere are no longer interpreted to indicate self-replication or self-optimization, instead they indicate properties of a system arising from chaotic conditions.

This explanation, while it is in accord with the current theories of non-linear dynamics, profoundly affects the implications of Gaia's metaphor. On the one hand, theories of non-linear dynamics stress the profound impact of slight changes in the conditions of a system on its stability. In this interpretation, the actions of a single component of the biosphere, for instance humans, and even the actions of a single individual in that component, can have a dramatic (but unforeseen) effect on the overall system. On the other hand, there can be no ethical imperative in this version of Gaia. There is no guarantee that by attempting to maintain the current state of the planet through environmental conservation practices we will maintain the homeostasis of the system. This is due to the difficulty of knowing how close a system may be to falling out of equilibrium, and what might cause it to happen. In addition, the notion that the current manifestation of Gaia is not the best or the only example of planetary homeostasis implies that any attempts to preserve the system as it exists now must be grounded in anthropomorphic, rather than geo-centered values.

In conclusion, the Gaia theory has challenged the scientific community to look at life from a global perspective. While there has been some resistance, there has also been a significant amount of work done to accumulate and evaluate new research on this theory. Yet while the scientific validation of Gaia may come from the number of articles written and experiments performed in its name, it is important to notice the metaphoric cost of that validation. In light of the evolution of his theory and its implications, Lovelock's claim that "Gaia may turn out to be the first religion to have a testable scientific theory embedded in it" (qtd. in Barlow, *From Gaia* 35) may have been a bit premature.

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*Fiddleheads*

A cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*) unfurls its leafbuds in the festival of emerging spring.  
Pen and ink on scratchboard, 1994.

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## EVOLUTION AND THE GAIA HYPOTHESIS

Paul Lindholdt

During the 1980's, open-range grazing of sheep and cattle on public lands in the western United States came under scrutiny by scientists, environmentalists, and economists alike. Critics of the practice argued that public lands leased to ranchers had been overgrazed for a century, managed for livestock production instead of wildlife, and maintained by government subsidies of which the average taxpayer was unaware. Apologists of grazing countered that abuses of the resource are an aspect of the past, and that the advent of the range management profession now insures responsible use of the land by livestock ranchers.

Amid all this political wrangling, the Earth itself seems to be responding to human inattention to ecological processes. More specifically, in the American West the incursions of beef cattle at human behest are changing Gaia, changing range ecology and the evolution of species to favor opportunistic or so-called weedy varieties, much to the detriment of native breeds. Beef cattle represent a rising and increasingly dominant mammalian paradigm that parallels the dominance of white Anglo-Saxon culture and its extractive industries that are now flourishing in the West.

Foreign to the Americas, beef cattle would not be able to survive in the far West if left to their own devices. Meager vegetation, extremes of temperature, stingy water supplies, and natural predators would quickly decimate any cows allowed to roam the range year-round. Only by means of feed supplements and water troughs, vaccinations and poison baits against predators, can the rancher keep his or her animals alive even under the best of conditions. Cattle are exotics ill adapted to the arid West.

Probably the most telling emblem of grazing impacts in the West is the brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). The name derives from the bird's habit of gathering near cattle herds to feed on insects attracted to or disturbed by cattle. As grazing allotments and forest clearcuts have proliferated in the West, so has the cowbird, much to the detriment of songbird populations. The impact of cattle on western landscapes has an evolutionary ripple effect that eradicates some and promotes other species.

A member of the blackbird family *Icteridae*, the cowbird is remarkable for having evolved away from building its own nest. Instead it lays an egg in the nest of an unrelated and usually smaller bird that unwittingly broods the cowbird's egg until it hatches, a process resembling European colonial paradigms in the Americas, where native landscapes are exploited for the invaders' welfare. The cowbird nestling—often larger and more voracious than the host chicks, often larger than the host itself—starves its nest mates or shoves them from the nest and to the ground.

This highly developed habit of nest parasitism parallels the incursions of the cow. On the range, cattle trample vegetation and effectively compete with indigenous species. They displace elk, moose, bighorn sheep, and even deer in severely overgrazed areas. A single print from a half-ton hoof may take years to heal over, for heavy cattle seriously disrupt cryptogamic crusts (or soil lichen layers). Constituted of cyanobacteria—formerly known as blue-green algae, the oldest form of life there is—such cryptogamic crusts may also contain tiny mosses, lichens, liverworts, microfungi, and bacteria. These plants, taken collectively, “form a ‘living skin’ over much of the soil surface and are in essence the topsoil of much of the West” (Jacobs 63).

In much the same way a body beset with infection will summon antibodies to combat the invading germ or virus, so the West now seems to be generating mechanisms to defend itself. Grazing permittees, range science specialists, and US Forest Service employees alike have been chagrined to witness the migration and proliferation of weedy species like Russian and star thistles, halogeton, white top, cheatgrass, tansy ragwort, and knapweed. Many such species are poisonous and spiny, and all adapt well to newly degraded conditions in the West. Some of these exotic and weedy species ironically prove toxic to domestic livestock.

The introduction and proliferation of beef cattle in the far West has had vast impacts on Gaia, especially on the evolution of species. Such human intervention into ecological processes is changing the face of the land, degrading wildlife habitat, and extirpating sensitive indigenes. Nest parasitism by the cowbird remarkably parallels the ecological parasitism practiced at human behest by beef cattle. Disrupted cryptogamic crusts, the “living skin” of Gaia in the West, similarly invite the onslaught of noxious exotic plants that prove poisonous to the beef cattle herds responsible for the spread of the weeds in the first place.

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## GAIA DOUBTS

Paul Shepard

The recovery of the widespread and ancient tradition of "mother earth," has been so great an improvement over the industrial metaphysics of the planet as a kind of a mechanized cornucopia that the imagery associated with Gaia is hard to criticize. James Lovelock was cautious about its mythic reference. His own use of the figure carried scarcely a whisper of the cultural associations. His book was almost disappointingly restrained, limited to describing the biochemical process, energy flow and meteorological patterns without further reference to the cult figure which the title invoked. The theory that inherently self-stabilizing processes keep, for example, sea salt and air oxygen within narrow variation, along with the equally complex regulation of two dozen other substances and physical qualities—that idea elevated our perspective to a planetary level in a more convincing way than any poetic ideal of the maternal or the feminine body could have done.

Lovelock's organic paradigm was preceded by ecologist Eugene Odum's analogies to the body, the ecosystem or natural community as having an anatomy (its species and physical structure), a physiology (energy and material processing systems) and an ontogeny-like development (succession). Odum's concept followed earlier, emergent-evolution and superorganism theories other biologists such as William Morton Wheeler in the first decades of the century, all pointing to natural systems as organic entities without requiring the deities who, in earlier civilizations, embodied complexes of natural powers in the imagination.

Of course the image of "mother earth" has been with us all the time, and there has been no shortage of observation in the last twenty years that women themselves have historically shared the same status as nature, and that the celebration or abuse of one often coincided with the worship or depreciation of the other. Apparently there is a widespread inclination to see shared essences which set women and nature off from men and culture. Having tapped this vein once again, this time with Lovelock's biochemical evidence, other writers have assumed that a full-blown epiphany of earth as sacred woman is at hand.

In this era of the adoration of celebrity, and the rush to recover the madonna or her other incarnations as the symbol of the life of the planet, there is a cautionary perspective. Judging from the archaeological "Venus figures" and some occasional humanoid petroglyphs, there have been some anthropomorphic deities for a very long time. But they did not dominate the iconography of any human culture in the archaeological record until the late Neolithic, as human reproduction and farm crops—extensions of the association of the feminine and the natural—began to obsess crowded and increasingly malnourished peoples who were subject to the variations of weather, declining soil fertility and unstable dependence on a small number of domesticated organisms. Mother nature seemed to have the same power over our lives as that woman whose milk was redirected to some younger sibling and replaced with cow's milk. Political subordination to increasingly powerful, centralized regimes rewarded the more dependent, submissive majority of individuals—in effect, favored infantile ideals and behavior with its worship of mother.

Gaia, by this or any other name, did not dominate the symbolic repertoire of sacred power until people began to see

themselves as 'children' of human-like deities who ruled the world much as they themselves ruled the domestic community. However arbitrary that Great Mother might act, her image illustrated the inflated notion that the human figure was the ruling form on the planet. Then, with the arrival of the horse and metals, the need for slaves and conflict over the holding of land, a wider scale of civilized bellicosity subordinated women to men and swept the male image into mythic prominence.

The assumption now that we should shift from one holy, anthropomorphic sex to the other, replace pastoral arrogance with agrarian puerility, cast out Gilgamesh, Moses, Zeus, and Paul for Gaia, Isis, Demeter or Mary overlooks the previous two million years, during which we apparently did not perceive ourselves as the inheritors of a holy mantle, but rather as participants in an inscrutable cosmos. Gaia takes us forward to the recovery of the organic metaphor for the planet as a living being, but not far enough and at a cost. Ultimately I suspect that the world is not a mono-anything, even a mono-matriarchy, but rather some kind of plurality, at present plagued by our unfortunate, human overabundance. At worst, a simpering adulation of nature as mother or the sentimental fawning before an earth-queen instead of a sky-king in the search for the ecological Grail (images still further twisted by the chic of "empowerment") fall far short of a mature metaphor.

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## MY MOTHER'S NAME IS EVELYN, NOT GAIA

Patrick D. Murphy

As far as I'm concerned, sex-typing the planet has become a greater problem than it was a decade ago when I started working up the ideas that eventually became "Sex-Typing the Planet," because today people are hanging onto the practice despite the problems and limitations that have been pointed out from various quarters. At the same time, I think some distinctions need to be made in terms of the conflation of hypothesis and metaphor, the particularities of cultural survival, and the needs of mythopoeia and culture-building. And within all three of these areas the hierarchical and oppressive characteristics of sexism and patriarchy need to be addressed.

A few years ago, Alan S. Miller wrote *Gaia Connections*. Where does he get the goddess name and why does he use it? He opens his book with a Homeric Hymn epigraph and starts his introduction with a claim that "the worship of Earth—its creatures and its creative forces—is a theme common to us all" (1; I have no idea who the "us" is supposed to be here). Then Miller immediately moves to Lovelock and the Gaia hypothesis he popularized, but backs off from a scientific endorsement: "whether or not the Gaia concept—Earth as a single, self-regulating organism—holds up within the formal boundaries of the earth sciences, it is metaphysically correct" (2). Miller's use of "Gaia" thus seems sort of religious and sort of scientific. But really, I think it's founded on liberal humanism, which places humanity at the apex, and which relies on "science" and rationalism for solutions. Miller claims that "it is today humankind that has the power to determine Gaia's future" (2). And he sees "danger in overly romanticized Gaia imagery if it ignores the overall context of ecology, the strictures of economics, and the imperatives of ethics in the quest for planetary healing" (2).

The relationships or contradictions between science and metaphysics, rationalistic concepts and aesthetic images, spirituality and physicality, free will and determinism, and Miller's sociocultural specificity and "us," seem a complete muddle. And the use of "Gaia," whether as a scientific hypothesis, a spiritual entity, or a metaphor, serves to blanket this muddle under the emblem of a superficially unifying image. Miller works through a series of issues that require far-reaching reforms but never addresses fundamental questions of epistemology, ontology, or ontics. The failure to rethink ontology is perhaps most obvious in his inability to address the connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature as defined by ecofeminism. In the section labeled "Ecofeminism: Women, Men, and Nature," he rushes to seek an identity of male and female rather than a difference by claiming that much of the suffering that men and children (apparently undifferentiated by gender) experience "may not be all that different from the similar insults forced on women throughout the ages: (21). The various historical manifestations of women's oppression are reduced here to "insults" so that no fundamental inequality and experiential difference may be claimed. Miller's use of Gaia imagery appears to me to be part of a pattern of superficial sensitivity that substitutes for a necessary and significant ongoing self-critique by male ecological thinkers.

Miller's invocation of "Gaia" has no apparently significant cultural, philosophical, or ethical resonances. He attaches the label as an image to what he already believes, and

this image carries no fundamental meaning or depth. In contrast, writers such as Simon Ortiz and Paula Gunn Allen use various gendered images of the earth. Throughout *Woven Stone* Ortiz uses the phrase "Mother Earth" and various female images for the earth as a nurturer of humanity. Allen not only uses such gendered imagery but also invokes in her creative and critical works, such as *Grandmothers of the Light* and *The Sacred Hoop*, various goddesses associated with the Earth and its creation, such as Thought Woman and Grandmother Spider. I believe these images are fundamentally different from Gaia imagery and need to be supported within their specific cultural contexts.

Both Allen and Ortiz are speaking out of Pueblo culture and invoke traditional imagery in the service of the cultural survival of oppressed indigenous peoples and the restoration of an inhabitory spirituality. The restoration and continuation of these traditions form part of a worldwide effort to maintain, promote, and expand natured cultures in opposition to the denatured monoculture of multinational corporate capitalism. Allen and Ortiz's sex-typing of the planet arises from and nurtures life-affirming, world-preserving cultural and spiritual values arising from and cognizant of the specificity of the situated knowledges and bioregional practices of particular inhabitory peoples. They are speaking from a non-patriarchal tradition that challenges the naturalization of women's oppression and gender hierarchy that continues unabated in American popular culture. They are also speaking from positions that suggest that anthropomorphic imagery need not necessarily reinforce anthropocentric philosophy.

Gaia imagery, in contrast, does not arise in the service of the restoration and continuation of a life-affirming, world-preserving inhabitory culture. The Gaia goddess is part of a "mythology," which to me means a dead religion. The people who invoke "Gaia" do not do so to revive or maintain ancient Greek culture, agricultural practices, or gender relations. Rather, some are engaging in an unconscious masking of the need for a radical disruption of cultural continuity among those peoples whose cultures and political entities remain founded on "western civilization," which in its idealized singularity is also a mythology. Others are attempting to utilize recognizable archetypal imagery in order to engage in mythopoeia for the building of a new culture here in North America. I don't think Greek mythology is of any use in this context.

Ecocritics ought to clarify what they think they are doing when they use Gaia imagery or praise its use by others. Where do they stand in relation to a scientific hypothesis of biosphere as single organism, and have they even read the original hypothesis? How do they square the use of imagery based on a dyadic structure of sexuality in the naming of a hypothesis that purports to define an organism that encompasses manifold varieties of sexual and asexual reproduction? We are not, after all, obligated to use Lovelock's pet name for it. If ecocritics are not basing their imagery on the hypothesis, then on what are they basing it? If religion or spirituality, should not the specifics of the belief be identified and the degree to which the critic is accepting or attempting to redefine the predominant conceptualization of the human/rest-of-nature relationship in that belief? If ecocritics are

choosing Gaia imagery for its aesthetic effect, to what degree are they identifying its historical cultural specificity and the relevance of that history to the present, and to what degree are they recognizing their own cultural horizons and specificities? Who are they speaking for and speaking to; and, in particular, what is the perceived relationship of their mythopoeia to the dominant and oppressed cultures within their social horizon, such as the United States? A couple of decades ago, U.S. feminist poets debated the use of western mythology with all its patriarchal baggage and the need for revisionist mythmaking. They disagreed vehemently, and out of that process came some very powerful poetry. Let's see what we can do with ecocriticism.

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## CLASSROOM NOTES

### Food For Thought

Plerk (play+work) embraces all I do. It is the sacred acknowledgment of life as a part of Gaia. It's the celebration of each day, the performance of ritual in growing, preparing and eating food.

In order to share this, I've developed a plerkshop called "Food for Thought." Experiential, it involves setting an atmosphere of attention. Sitting in a circle where all have an equal voice, it is made clear that this is a sharing, that all voices are welcome. In the center is a bucket filled with freshly picked local edible plants, a small seedling pot or two, some dried herbs from the garden, and certainly flowers—whatever the season. All seasons are with us every day; something is always budding, something blooming, something falling, and something resting. Bringing that alive to listeners helps to create the atmosphere of the circle of time, the cycle of life that we can all observe daily and in which we all participate.

As we become more aware of the value of food in all dimensions of our lives, I notice that we begin to pay more attention to it. Growing some of our own food—even a pot of parsley on the windowsill—deepens our connection with the Earth. We begin to notice the seasons, the sun and rain, the phases of the moon, the passage of natural time. The ritual of life and death becomes a part of everyday experience.

We have simply forgotten that this wisdom is inherent in each of us. *Paying attention* is the key. After that first major step, the rest falls into place (or springs into place, depending on the season). Our inner resources serve us well, once we re-learn. I have always been drawn to elders and their stories, which have become my own. As the folksong asks, "if we fail to tell our story, were we ever really here?"

All of the classic nature writers can be "fodder" for those who choose to read, but the main text is life itself. As we pay attention to our involvement each step we take, we recognize new connections in every moment. Once we see them, we can share them. That's the plerk we can each do, every moment.

In my plerkshop, I pass the plants around the circle, while telling stories about them or some anecdote from the garden that day. Participants are welcome to taste, comment, take a snip home to plant. Then the group is asked to write some thoughts about plants, either those they have just experienced or others meaningful in their own lives. Everyone has food plant memories, and they flow quickly; afterwards some are shared with the group.

The plerkshop always ends with food I've brought, cooked fresh and honored in ritual together: the food is placed in the center of the circle, covered, as we sit in silence for a few minutes to honor its source and ours, and the use to which we will put it. Then it is passed for each to share, as we share our combined energy and take our experience outward to share with others.

**Harriet Kofalk, author, teacher and associate editor of *Talking Leaves*, Eugene, Oregon**

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## CLASSROOM NOTES

### A Gaian Mirror: Teaching Nature Writing

Nature Writing is an evocation, merging contemplation and experience. Teaching nature writing presents a particular challenge. Students must at once reflect upon their philosophical views of nature and then discard the lens of epistemology to see, as Dillard suggests, without the obstructive camera of verbalization, to "see truly." The theme of Gaia provides a dynamic mirror for students to reflect upon how their philosophical views shape the nature they experience. We consider John Lovelock's first articulation of the Gaia hypothesis, *Gaia: A New Look at Life of Earth*, in addition to Carolyn Merchant's ecofeminist perspective in *The Death of Nature*. We discuss various scientific accounts of the origin of life—from polymers arising in the hot thin soup to spores arriving from outer space. We also read a number of creation myths, Native American, African, Mayan, Asian, Indian, Maori. We then consider various religious accounts of creation. I ask students to write an essay exploring the question: "What is the relationship between human beings and nature?" They may allude to Gaia as they articulate their views.

Not surprisingly, the class is multivocal. In workshops and discussions, we respect each individual's perspective. Some students embrace the Gaian notion of the earth as a living organism, of holism and cooperation. Other students adhere to Darwinian notions of struggle, survival and competition. Still others equate nature with human emotion. For Tabra McCray, a plant prompts memories of a grandfather. RueDonna Martin, meanwhile, writes that her nature is emotion. A Darwinian student, Ron Fink, says the seed pods on a large tree remind him of medieval torture balls. A Jungian student, Melissa Green, sees the leafless tree as a metaphor for the self stripped of the false foliage of culture. A technical writing student, Jennifer Graham, sees the tree as habitat for the spotted owl. A Gaian student, Shannon Wooden, is one with the tree. It is almost impossible, they discover, to separate their experiences of nature from their views of nature. We begin to consider not only the observation of external nature, but also the workings of the mind.

Students attempt two exercises in mindfulness. In the first, they watch the mind for an hour, just noting thoughts, neither judging nor analyzing, just noting. Most students stop after several minutes. There are too many worries, too many thoughts, to notice the thinking itself. One student falls asleep. Another cannot sit still. The student who watches for an hour does so because she has set aside the time to take a bath. In the second exercise, students walk out in nature, observing whatever arises in the moment. They write nothing, say nothing. We discuss these mindfulness exercises in light of Gaia. If Gaia responds to our actions, and thought prompts action, then we can observe how thought creates what Eiseley calls the internal "wilderness." How does Gaia respond to silence?

Both Eiseley and Dillard provide excellent prose models for a course in Nature Writing. We analyze *The Immense Journey* and *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. What are Eiseley's and Dillard's views of nature? How do accounts of creation, whether scientific or religious, reveal the philosophical view and shape the literary essay? I ask the students to write a critical analysis of a Dillard essay using the approach with which they are most comfortable. I then ask the students to examine how their critical

approaches relate to their philosophical views of nature. In this way, they begin to develop their own critical epistemologies.

Students are now ready to return to nature writing, to revise earlier pieces they began while observing trees or squirrels over the weekend or on campus walks. We write and workshop and revise. Integral to revision is a consideration of audience. The students must write their pieces for possible publication in specific magazines or literary journals. At this time, many return to Gaia. For Chad Hunter, the return to nature comes through childhood memories, "I'm from the earth, I know, but it seems so hard to comprehend because I feel so separate now...when I was young, the trees and the wind and the water were my friends. Now I've learned too much and I know that my yard is just property." Shannon Wooden writes, "Have you noticed that the really good things are the things we can't put into words?...there is a part of me that is a thinking thing and there is a part of me which just *knows*...How do I say this? I want to *dance* with god. I want to feel that rhythm. I want to know god with my cells and my fluids. I am earth. That is where my spirit leads me." It is the voice of Gaia, laughing.

**Marianthe Karanikas, Southwest Missouri State University**

## BOOK REVIEWS

*From Gaia to Selfish Genes: Selected Writings in the Life Sciences*. Ed. Connie Barlow. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992. 273 pages, \$14.95 paper, \$21.95 cloth.)

In our discipline's almost exclusive focus upon "cultural constructions"—of nature or any other reality—one of the important functions of ASLE scholars and ecocritics may be to redirect attention to the biological constructions of nature. Fredric Jameson reminds his vast following to "Always historicize." Ecocriticism might counter with the equally valid imperative, "Always biologize."

In this context, *From Gaia to Selfish Genes* presents from the life sciences a half-dozen subjects of great current interest and significance. Moreover, editor Connie Barlow has chosen her experts as much for the clarity of their prose as for the importance of their research. Through judicious editing she has woven the arguments and conclusions of her contributors into a highly readable and progressively interrelated discussion. The book improves upon its anthology substructure by being carefully shaped to a firm rhetorical purpose. A valuable biological survey is transformed into a good read.

Topics covered range from the near-philosophical to the intensely materialistic. They include the following, with a sample of commentators for each: "Is Earth Itself Alive?" (James Lovelock, Lewis Thomas, Gary Snyder, Joseph Campbell); "Merged Beings" (Lynn Margulis, Dorion Sagan, Julian Huxley); "A Systems View of Life" (Arthur Koestler, Gerald Weinberg); "Game Theory and the Evolution of Cooperation" (Robert Axelrod, William D. Hamilton, Douglas Hofstadter); "Nature, Nurture, and Sociobiology" (Edward O. Wilson, Richard D. Alexander, Richard Lewontin, Ashley Montagu); "Selfish Genes" (Richard Dawkins, Stephen Jay Gould, Francis Crick). A "Reflections" section closes the topics with summary comments from several of the most articulate contributors, and a masterful final evaluation by science writer and *New Republic* senior editor Robert Wright.

One of the most important contributions of this volume, especially for those of us in the humanities, is to bring us up to date on some of the most influential and important new research in the field of biology. Science-bashing, unfortunately, is much in evidence today in the humanities. It may be seen in the tendency of some to find in linguistic indeterminacy and other theoretical delights the license for wholesale denials of reality. It may be seen in attempts to denigrate all scientific investigation by pointing to some weak or fraudulent cases. It may be seen in political attacks wherein certain scientific studies are adjudged ideologically unacceptable prior to and despite evidence. Bertrand Russell once defined the essence of the scientific outlook as the refusal to regard our own desires as affording a key to the understanding of the world. Science bashers argue that scientists are no more capable than anyone else of divorcing their own desires from the work they do. Rather than describing the norm in science, however, these detractors must search out examples of bad science and ignore good science in order to make their argument. Would they claim that Darwin's monumental discoveries were motivated by a desire to undermine traditional Christianity?

Much of this science-bashing is born out of ignorance. The future of ecocriticism will, I believe, increasingly involve us in a knowledge of biology and other natural sciences. A century and a half after Darwin, the humanities are still conducted as if evolutionary biology and the subsequent discoveries in genetics had never occurred. We have clung to the belief that culture and language effectively separate us from the animal world, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. *From Gaia to Selfish Genes* offers a useful corrective, a spectrum of biological coverage from the holistic to the reductionist. There are materials here by which all of us might profitably re-examine our conceptions of nature from a contemporary life sciences perspective.

Glen A. Love, University of Oregon



Blue flagge and babchick

Blue Flag (*Iris versicolor*) punctuates greening wetland's borders and decorates bashel-basket-sized nest mounds of the secretive Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) whose haunting cries from the cover of marsh vegetation reveal this "little diver" more than mere passing illusion. Pen and ink on scratchboard, 1994.

***Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing.***

Rosemary Radford Ruether. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992. 310 pages, \$22.00 hardcover, \$12.00 paper.)

In her insightful new book, *Gaia and God*, Rosemary Radford Ruether examines Western Judeo-Christian traditions in order to understand why we have become a culture that focuses too heavily upon domination and exploitation of both human beings and the environment. More important for our ability to deal with environmental crisis is her analysis of the ways in which we might reinterpret Judeo-Christian myths in environmentally healthy ways. She believes that while there are many problems with the interpretations of these myths there is still much that is useful in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and she suggests that we would do better to reinterpret and expand on that tradition than to start over with a new myth.

The book is divided into four sections. The first three—"Creation," "Destruction," and "Domination and Deceit"—analyze the mythical and scientific metaphors we have used to understand our world. The last section—"Healing"—traces the covenantal and sacramental traditions within the Christian tradition that could be used today in order to relieve the human/ecological crisis that we face. Because the damage caused by our exploitation of the environment is directly related to our exploitation of other human beings, the two must be addressed together. Ruether observes that

Classical Western cultural traditions...of which Christianity is a major expression, have justified and sacralized these relationships of domination. Thus we inherit not only a legacy of systems of domination, but also cultures that teach us to see such relations as the "natural order" and the will of God.

In Part I, "Creation," Ruether juxtaposes Mesopotamian, Hebrew, Greek and Christian creation stories with scientific creation stories from Copernicus and Galileo through the "Big Bang" and the ecological approach to biological communities. While she says that the ecological approach implies an important ethical stance she also believes that insufficient emphasis has been placed upon it. According to Ruether, we have denied spirituality as an important part of our understanding of ourselves and the rest of the natural world:

Westernized consciousness must heal itself of its split-off divisions that have separated knowledge from wonder, reverence, and love before we can learn how to tell the cosmic story in a way that will rekindle an ethic and spirituality capable of calling us to the tasks of healing and sustaining the earth.

Part II, "Destruction," similarly juxtaposes Mesopotamian, Hebrew and Christian apocalypticism with recent narratives of world destruction. While the ancient, apocalyptic stories prophesied a Golden Age of the Future, our contemporary stories of "population and poverty," "feeding the worlds' human population," energy, climate, and pollution," "extinction," and "militarism and war" anticipate no happy outcome. Instead, these narratives warn that, unless we change our approach to life, there will be no life for our descendants.

Part III, "Domination and Deceit," juxtaposes the "Classical Narratives of Sin and Evil" and the contemporary ecofeminist narrative of "Paradise Lost and the Fall into Patriarchy" with the construction of systems of domination in Western society. She criticizes the ecofeminist narrative of an ancient, paradisiacal,

egalitarian society worshipping the natural goddess whose "fall" came with patriarchal devotion to a dominating male god that was anti-nature as well as anti-woman. Ruether is concerned that adoption of a feminine metaphor for divinity will devalue males just as the patriarchy devalued females. Nevertheless, she does recognize that this new narrative of ancient, matri-centered societies gives hope that we can change our future from one of ecological crisis to one of egalitarian relationships among people and the rest of the natural world.

In Part IV, "Healing," Ruether addresses the ways in which the Christian tradition can be reclaimed through reemphasis and reinterpretation of the Christian myth. She shows us how the covenantal tradition of Christianity can be used to emphasize community relationships and the ethical duties of humans to other life forms. The sacramental tradition, she argues, can be reinterpreted to "restore for today the cosmological center of theology and spirituality." The things Ruether claims are necessary for "ecological spirituality" are the very things I believe are being emphasized by new ecofeminist religious groups which worship the goddess: the recognition of the cycle of life and death in connection with the self, the need for new songs and rituals, and the need for "compassion for all living things."

In her last chapter, "Creating a Healed World: Spirituality and Politics," Ruether finally points out our need to recognize that "evil lies in 'wrong relationships,'" rather than in blaming evil on "the 'other,' whether woman or animal or body, pagans, gentiles, or barbarians." She concludes that an ecologically balanced society can only be created by a

change in heart and consciousness. This change of consciousness is one that recognizes that real "security" lies, not in dominating power and the impossible quest for total invulnerability, but rather in the acceptance of vulnerability, limits, and interdependency with others, with other humans and with the earth.

**Carol Mitchell, Colorado State University**



*Gaia's Hidden Life: The Unseen Intelligence of Nature.*  
Compiled by Shirley Nicholson and Brenda Rosen. (Wheaton,  
IL: Quest Books, 1992. 290 pages, \$14.00 paper.)

Generous readers of *Gaia's Hidden Life*, a collection of twenty-six essays compiled by Shirley Nicholson and Brenda Rosen, may appreciate the book's sweeping diversity of intriguing responses to James Lovelock's by now (in)famous hypothesis, and they may value its comprehensive spectrum of historical and multicultural organicist cosmologies as context for contemporary Gaian epistemology. Sympathetic readers may find it an exhaustive documentation of traditional, contemporary, and emerging alternatives to scientific and philosophical reductionism as resources for more truly ecological paradigms of human and environmental interaction. Willing readers may follow its exploration of ancient questions raised anew by Lovelock's (post?)modern figuration of our planet and its atmosphere as a dialectical system of biota and environment—enduring questions such as “what is life?” and “where is it all going?”

More critical readers, however, will certainly question why Lovelock's biogeochemical definition of the earth and its biosphere as a non-teleological “‘coevolution’ of life and the inorganic” should generate such an uneven, if not incoherent, offering of sentimental and regressive primitivism, medievalism, orientalism, quasi-science, and metaphysical indulgence as is collected here. Concerned readers will wonder about the extent to which such nonscientific (read mystical) discussion of a concept that could potentially foreshadow a revolutionary scientific paradigm shift will ultimately inhibit analysis and appreciation of its critical ecological and social implications.

Shirley Nicholson's opening essay, “The Living Cosmos,” establishes the theosophical agenda of the compilation by claiming continuity between the esoteric philosophy of H.P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* (1988) and possibilities for reawakening “the radical unity of the essence of each constituent part of the compounds in Nature” inherent, as she sees it, in the Gaia hypothesis. In the following essay, “The Dance of Life,” Elisabet Sahtouris completes the appropriation of Lovelock's biogeochemical model of a homeostatic planetary system for anthropomorphic, vitalist speculation by deconstructing its systems or mechanistic aspects. Lovelock's Gaian “cybernetic feedback system,” she concludes, is more properly understood as a “superorganism.” From there the following essays give full license to almost any characterization of the nature, functioning, purpose, and—at their anthropomorphic extreme—the personality of that organism.

If the Gaia hypothesis presents a postmodern alternative to the objectification of nature at the hands of modern science, these collected essays would suggest that any and all pre-modern, pre-scientific—together with any contemporary extra-rational—conceptions of nature's subjectivity somehow deserve celebration as glimpses of ecological truth. Traditional Native American views, Buddhism, clairvoyance, Celtic fairy-lore, shamanism, Rosicrucian mythology, deep ecology, Findhorn's devic spirits, and even depth psychology all provide some essential insight into the “intelligence of life” and, thus, can somehow establish continuity with Lovelock's hypothesis.

The collected essays achieve this effect, however, as a collage—a compilation—as no attempt is made to articulate explicit interconnections between such a diversity of cosmologies. Perhaps a stronger scaffold of editorial comment

and apparatus—a solid introduction and conclusion to the collection, introductions to the essays, and index—would help articulate the relevance of theological entities, such as “angelic beings,” to the contribution ecosystemic models of biogeochemical science and theory might make toward meeting actual environmental conditions and crises. Unfortunately, such connections remain for the reader to draw unassisted. Struggling through the assorted other worlds invoked by the various authors, this reader could only find that the book's metaphysical treatment of the Gaia hypothesis facilitates an enthusiastic overcorrection from mechanism to myth—from hypothesis to hype—that can only contribute to an unfortunate reluctance on the part of scientific researchers to explore interdynamics of self-regulating systems of life and environment more energetically.

These essays never directly address the critical questions that have so far vexed serious Gaian discussion and debate: questions as to whether the Gaia hypothesis is “testable” or properly an “hypothesis” at all or only an appealing new—or persistent old—metaphor; questions as to whether the conception of an internally regulated, homeostatic atmosphere absolves rather than enforces human responsibility for atmospheric contamination; and, questions as to whether the particular figure of Gaia to designate a planetary ecosystem doesn't invoke a host of race, class, and social issues historically exacerbated by “Mother Earth” tropology in patriarchal hegemony.

For a more cogent introduction to the Gaia hypothesis—and for extended scientific, philosophical, and social considerations of critical questions confronting its implications—see *Scientists on Gaia* (Eds. Stephen H. Schneider and Penelope J. Boston. Cambridge: MIT, 1991). For an orgy of organicist wish-fulfillment fantasy—or perhaps for a glimpse into where environmental-backlash critics find material for their damning caricatures of ecological thought and discourse—see *Gaia's Hidden Life*.

**Mark Schlenz, University of California, Santa Barbara**

## GENERAL NOTES AND NEWS

**ASLE e-mail network** is up and running and has about 140 subscribers. To subscribe/unsubscribe: [asle-request@unr.edu](mailto:asle-request@unr.edu). To post a message: [asle@unr.edu](mailto:asle@unr.edu).

**ASLE Goes International: Announcing ASLE-Japan.** Before the fall of 1993, only a handful of Japanese scholars knew about ASLE, although literature scholars in Japan have long been interested in literature and environment. Since September 1993, ASLE's founding president, Scott Slovic, has been teaching in Tokyo as a Fulbright lecturer and traveling to many other cities to give talks on American nature writing and meet with scholars interested in establishing a Japanese branch of ASLE. After four planning sessions (three in Tokyo and one in Kyoto), ASLE-Japan was formally established during the annual meeting of the English Literary Society of Japan in Kumamoto (Kyushu) on May 22nd. approximately sixty scholars and writers, representing universities from Hokkaido to Okinawa, have joined "ASLE-J" so far.

The formation of ASLE's Japanese branch will support research and teaching in the field, just as "ASLE-USA" aims to do. Ongoing and expected ASLE-J projects include: compiling bibliographies of Japanese scholarship on nature in Japanese, American, and British literature and a bibliography of Japanese environmental literature; 2) creating a syllabus exchange program for courses on literature and environment; 3) writing proposals to corporations and the Japanese government to support research, conferences, and publications; 4) the translation of numerous works of American nature writing into Japanese and, with the assistance of interested ASLE-USA members, the translation of Japanese environmental writing into English; 5) the publication of *The Culture of Nature: New Approaches to the Study of Literature and Environment* (Kyoto: Minerva Press, Spring 1995), edited by Scott Slovic and Ken-ichi Noda; the publication of *The ASLE-Japan Newsletter*, edited by Joji Okanda.

For information regarding ASLE-J, contact Professor Ken-ichi Noda, Faculty of Education, Kanazawa University, Kakuma-Machi, Kanazawa 920-11 JAPAN. ASLE members from other countries who wish to organize an official ASLE branch may contact Scott Slovic about advice on how to do so.

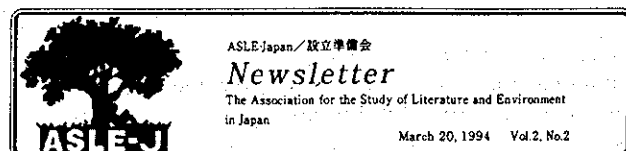
- ・現在、準備会代表世話人が把握しているメンバーは 42 名。
- ・各地域で積極的に study group を編成する。
- ・ASLE-Japan の日本語名称 [次回要討議]
- ・文部省科研費請求、その他の研究基金



ASLE-Japan organizers following March 1994 planning session at Koka Women's College, Kyoto.

**Graduate Handbook for the Study of Literature and Environment.** Graduate liaisons Dan Philippon and George Hart have been preparing the graduate handbook and expect to have it completed by early summer. It will include information about the state of the discipline, how to choose a school, how to get in, what to do if you're already there, and how to get a job when you're done. In addition, the handbook will contain profiles of select programs, advice from ASLE members, brief biographies of representative scholars in the field, a bibliography of introductory works, and a list of contacts. Information about schools and programs is still being accepted. Write to: Dan Philippon, Department of English, Wilson Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903. E-mail: [djp2n@Virginia.edu](mailto:djp2n@Virginia.edu).

**ASLE's new tri-fold brochure.** ASLE secretary Mike Branch's student intern, Diana Van Wyk, has designed an attractive, up-to-date, and informative new brochure, which provides a description of ASLE, benefits of membership, and a membership form. These brochures will be perfect to distribute at conference sessions and to your acquaintances who might like to learn of our association. For free copies of the brochure, please write to Mike Branch, ASLE secretary, English Department, Florida International University, University Park, Miami, FL 33199. Please specify how many brochures you need.



### 第3回 ASLE-Japan設立準備会ミーティング報告

去る3月5日(日)、京都の光華女子大学洋風館内会議室で3回目の準備会会合をもちました。参加者は次の14名の方です。(順不同、敬称略)

スコット・スロヴィック(サウスウェスト・テキサス州立大学)、大神田文二(山梨学院大学)、太田雅幸(大東文化大学)、中村邦生(大東文化大学)、高田賢一(青山学院大学)、伊藤節子(広島大学)、木下卓(愛媛大学)、西村誠男(西天寺学園大学)、若田誠(光華女子大学)、村上清敏(金沢大学)、結城正美(金沢大学・院)、生田省悟(金沢大学)、野田研一(金沢大学)、吉田純子(広島大学)

関西方面の方を交えた今回は、かなり具体的かつ現実的な議論を行うことができました。話題は概ね次のような事柄です。以下、概要をご報告します。

1. ASLE-Japan 設立に関する意見交換。
2. 設立の時期
3. 性格
4. 活動内容
5. 組織
6. 規約
7. その他

1. ASLE-Japan 設立に関する意見交換より(提出されたご意見を端的にご紹介します。ただし、これは野田のメモよりまとめたもので、網羅的にも正確でもないことをお断りしておきます。)

- ・従来分散していた作家別研究組織が、自然という共通のテーマで関与できる点の特長となる。
- ・人数は問題ではない。
- ・活力を失わない求心性が必要。
- ・主眼の普遍性から見て、大きな可能性がある。
- ・Japanese Nature Writingの研究は発展型の研究組織となる可能性を持っている。ASLEの国際化に貢献できる。
- ・ひとりひとりが既領域になる必要。
- ・American Nature Writingに関する読みの蓄積と情報の共有から始まる。

- ・現在のそれぞれの研究対象作家を基礎に考えてゆく。個別研究のコンテクストを拡大できる。
- ・E-Mailの活用など、コンピューター・ネットワークを積極的に利用し、情報化社会の中の学会のありかたを模索する。
- ・文学の内部にとどまらない広がりが見られる。
- ・Nature Writingというジャンルの存在は、文学という固有領域を不確定にする。
- ・女性の視点からの自然の問題。フェミニズムとの関連や身体性の問題。
- ・日本的な「うつし」の自然をどう位置づけるか。
- ・「上田三三三」の作品
- ・環境問題を介して社会的な発言を行う責任。
- ・Native Americansの文学と自然の問題。

次に今回の会議で確認した事項を報告します。(1)内は今後の課題。)

2. 設立の時期  
5月期で開かれる日本英文学会大会2日目の15日(日)午後1:00より、発足会を開催する。
3. 性格  
あくまでも文学研究を中心に据える。ただし、多面からの参加を排除するわけではない。
4. 活動内容  
Japanese Nature WritingとAmerican Nature Writingに関する研究グループを組織し、当面書籍の刊行を目標とする。また連絡や研究会の便を考慮し、地域ごとに代表幹事を置く。現在了承を得ている方のみご紹介いたします。
5. 組織  
当面、金沢大学/野田研究室を事務局とし、会計も兼ねる。また連絡や研究会の便を考慮し、地域ごとに代表幹事を置く。現在了承を得ている方のみご紹介いたします。
6. 規約  
ASLE-U.S.の規約を基礎に、なるべくシンプルなものにまとめる。14月の第4回会合で草案を検討する。

**Job Market.** Although the job market continues to be grim, ASLE members fared comparatively well this year. At least five ASLEers, running on a "green ticket," found tenure track positions. Congratulations! Despite these successes, there are many graduate students in ASLE who still have to face The Market in the next few years. The forthcoming ASLE Graduate Handbook will help these job seekers prepare themselves, but there is more that we can do for them. The ASLE officers would like to set up a mentoring program, whereby ASLE graduate students are paired up with ASLE professors. The professor could dispense advice, be a supporting shoulder to lean on, serve as an outside reader for the dissertation, write letters of recommendation, make phone calls, do some hustling, and generally be the student's advocate in making a successful entrance into the profession. We need someone to volunteer to coordinate this graduate mentoring program. The mentoring coordinator would function as a clearinghouse and match-maker. Graduate students desiring mentors could write to the coordinator; faculty willing to be mentors could do likewise. The coordinator, using the new ASLE Directory (which lists research interests) could then match students with professors. If you would be willing to serve as ASLE's first Graduate Mentoring Coordinator, please contact Cheryll Glotfelty, (702) 784-6223.

**Garland Publishing Incorporated** has offered a contract to ASLE member Patrick Murphy, who will be general editor of the *Garland Encyclopedia on Literature and the Environment*. Thanks are due to Mike Branch, whom Garland first approached with the idea and who did an outstanding job of making this opportunity available to ASLE members and of helping to choose the person best qualified for this monumental job. Patrick Murphy will be attending the WLA conference this October in Salt Lake and will share his plans with ASLE members there. There will be lots of opportunity for ASLE members to contribute to this 1,000-page volume.

**ALA.** The annual American Literature Association conference (this year from June 2-5, in San Diego) is widely regarded as an excellent conference, notorious for being difficult to obtain information about. For ALA conference information, write to conference director Professor Susan Belasco Smith, English Department, California State University, Los Angeles, CA 90032-8110. E-mail: ssmith@cakes.calstatela.edu.

**MLA.** If numbers of special session proposals (35+) are any indication, this year's MLA convention promises to include an unusually large, and perhaps unprecedented, number of sessions on literature and environment. MLA convention dates are December 27-30, 1994, in San Diego, CA. For information, write MLA Convention Office, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003-6981.

**The Guide to Biological Field Stations** lists 150 such establishments in North and Central America and is available from Dr. Richard W. Coles, Secretary/Treasurer, Organization of Biological Field Stations, Tyson Research Station, Washington University, P.O. Box 258, Eureka, MO 63025. Cost is about \$10.00.

**Ecologue** is a newsletter on communications, rhetoric, and the environment. For information, write to Michael Netzley, Box 14225, 1311 SE 4th St. Minneapolis, MN 55414.

## AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE 1994 ASLE BUSINESS MEETING

(to be held in conjunction with the Western American Literature Conference, October 5-8, 1994, Salt Lake City, Utah)

If you would like to voice your opinion about any of these agenda items but will not be able to attend the conference, please send them to Cheryll Glotfelty, English Dept., University of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557.

- Officer terms, rotation, and nomination procedures
- Election of a new Vice President and Secretary
- Establishment of an elected Executive Committee
- Formal affiliation between ASLE and *ISLE*
- Plans for ASLE's first conference in June 1995
- New positions: ASLE Development Officer  
ASLE Graduate Mentoring Coordinator
- Vote on amended ASLE By-Laws
- Reports from ASLE secretary, treasurer, and other officers
- Discussion of ASLE's role in the Garland Encyclopedia project
- Report from returning President Scott Slovic about ASLE-Japan
- Open forum for announcements from the membership

## CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Following is a list of conferences that may be of interest to ASLE members. The list is not exhaustive, because at this time, ASLE has limited means and limited space with which to publicize conferences, but this state of affairs may change. If there seems to be enough interest, I'll make available a more complete ASLE conference directory on request. Ideally, I would simply act as a conference broker, keeping track of conferences and relaying that information to the rest of ASLE so that individual members may submit paper and panel proposals to their program committees.

A second conference-related project underway in the machinery of ASLE is a move to gain ASLE "associated organization" status with the regional MLAs so that we'll be guaranteed spots on their conference programs. In order to present ourselves in the best light, we'd probably do best to get panels together first, propose them and present them, and then follow up by going to the regional MLAs to ask for associated status, because it would be no good to secure a permanent ASLE conference spot and then have no panel to fill it the first year. Again, I'll act as a broker here. Please, if you're interested in being an ASLE representative to your local MLA, contact me, and I'll put you in touch with others who have expressed similar interests. This will facilitate the formation of strong regional MLA panel proposals for next year.

If you're interested in working to affiliate ASLE with your regional MLA, or if you know of a conference that ought to be on the following list, please notify me: David Teague, 505 Harvard Street, Houston, TX 77007, or teague@dt.uh.edu. If you'd be interested in having ASLE compile a more complete conference list, notify me of that, as well.

**June 19-21, 1994**, Natural History and Nature Writing Workshop at Coolfont Resort, Berkeley Springs, WV, presented by Ecosystems Recovery Institute, Inc. For more information or to register, contact Ecosystem Recovery Institute, 332-140 Village Road Suite 6-198, Westminster, MD 21157

**June 19-24, 1994**. OUR WEST: Loving the Land. For information, write or call Marcia Hensley, OUR WEST Director, Western Wyoming Community College, P.O. Box 428, Rock Springs, WY 89202-9428. (307) 382-1725.

**July 7-9, 1994**. The Thoreau Society Meeting, Concord, Mass. For information, write or e-mail Brad Dean, Secretary of the Thoreau Society, English Dept., East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858 (endeand@ecuvm.cis.ecu.edu).

**July 8-10, 1994**. Writing the Land Conference: panel discussion, presentations, readings and natural history workshops to explore and celebrate our relationship with nature. For information, write or call Writing the Land Conference, P.O. Box 428, Eastend, Saskatchewan, Canada S0N 0T0. tel. Sharon Butala at 295-3810.

Workshops with Dolores LaChapelle:

1) **BREAKING THROUGH, July 9-17, 1994**. For more information, write: Outdoor Leadership Training Seminars (OLTS),

P.O. Box 20281, Denver CO 80220

2) **Deep Ecology Workshop, July 17-22, 1994**. Sponsored by the Way of the Mountain Center and The Aspen Center for Environmental Studies. Academic credit: 3 CEU's available. Workshop presenters include Dolores LaChapelle, George Sessions, Max Oelschlaeger, Penny Woodward, and Jody Cardamone. For more information, write Jody Cardamone, Aspen Center for Environmental Studies, P.O. Box 8777, Aspen, CO 81612.

**July 20-24, 1994**, The Ometeca Institute 3rd Working session on the Relationship of Science and the Humanities, University of Costa Rica, (Sede Occidente), San Ramon, Costa Rica. Any questions may be referred to:

Dr. Rafael Catala, President, The Ometeca Institute  
Universidad de Costa Rica Apdo. Postal 16-4250, San Ramon, Alajuela, Costa Rica

Telephone 506/45-55-33, ext. 202 or 337; Fax 506/45-60-05  
Registration fees: US \$150 U.S.A., Canada, Japan, and the European Community; US \$90 Third World Countries  
Registration deadline June 1, 1994.

Contact Dr. James D. Anderson, Treasurer, The Ometeca Institute P.O. Box 38, New Brunswick, NJ, 08903-0038

**July 24-30, 1994**. John Burroughs and Environmental Writing in America, A Summer Conference at the State University of New York College at Oneonta with travel to Burroughs sites in the Catskills and Hudson Valley. For information, write to: Continuing Education, SUNY Oneonta, Oneonta, NY 13820.

**Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 1994**. Second Biennial Jack London Society Symposium, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino. Address: Jeanne Campbell Reesman, Div. of English, Classics, and Philosophy, Univ. of Texas, San Antonio TX 78249.

**Sept. 29-Oct. 2, 1994**. "Power and Beauty: Horses of the Plains Indians," Plains Indians Museum of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY. Contact: Lillian Turner, Public Programs Coordinator, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, P.O. Box 1000, Cody WY 82414; 307/587-4771 ext. 248

**October 5-8, 1994**. Call for Papers: 29th Annual Western Literature Association Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah. Send a manuscript of no more than ten typed double-spaced pages and 20 minutes' reading time and a 125-word abstract by June 15, 1994 to: Stephen Tatum, President, Western Literature Association, Department of English, The University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84112. Telephone: (801) 581-3393; e-mail address: s.tatum@m.cc.utah.edu

**Oct. 6-9, 1994**. "Annual Communal Studies Assn. Conference, The Architecture of Community, Religious, Social and Economic Dimensions," Oneida, NY. Contact Mark Wimer, E.S. Bird Library, Syracuse Univ., Syracuse, NY 13244-2010; 315/443-2697.

**Oct. 14-16, 1994**. The first annual Aboriginal Peoples' Conference, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario. For information, write to Dr. Douglas A. West, Dept. of Political Studies, Lakehead University, 955 Oliver Rd., Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada P7B 5KY telephone: (807) 343-8304.

**October 22, 1994:** The New England Historical Association (NEHA) Fall conference meets at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge. Papers or proposals on any historical topic, area, or period may be submitted by July 15. For membership or proposal information, contact Peter Holloran, NEHA Executive Secretary, Pine Manor College, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167; (617) 731-7066.

**Nov. 10-12, 1994.** The North American Interdisciplinary Wilderness Conference. For information and a Call for Papers, write to Continuing Education, Weber State University, Ogden, UT 84408-4007.

**Nov. 10-12, 1994.** Women Shaping Science, the Environment, Society: Images, Activism, Transformation. University of Wisconsin System Women's Studies Conference, to be held at Stevens Point, WI. Guest speakers include Sandra Harding, Karen Warren, Andy Smith. For information, write Anne Statham, UW-Parkside Women's Studies, 900 Wood Rd., Box 2000, Kenosha, WI 53141-2000.

**November 17-19, 1994.** Call for Papers: American Studies Association of Texas 38th Annual Meeting Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas. "Nature, Culture, and the Individual: Actions and Reactions. Send a completed paper (about 15 minutes reading time), and abstract of about 100 words, and a large SASE (if you would like your paper returned) to: 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, Deadline: July 15, 1994

**March 8-11, 1995,** Las Vegas, Nevada: American Society for Environmental History Biannual Meeting, "Gambling with the Environment." Call for papers. Please contact members of the Program Committee for more information. Theodore Steinberg, Program Chair, New Jersey Institute of Technology, 201-642-4177 or [steinberg@admin.njit.edu](mailto: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.

Proposals should sent to arrive no later than September 1, 1994 to: Thomas Steinberg, Department of Humanities, New Jersey Institute of Technology, University Heights, Newark, NJ 07102-1982.

**March 30-April 2, 1995.** Call for Papers. Communication and Our Environment: An Interdisciplinary Conference, Chattanooga, Tennessee. Address inquiries to Professor M. Jimmie Killingsworth, Department of English, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843. e-mail: [mjk1136@tamvm1.tamu.edu](mailto:mjk1136@tamvm1.tamu.edu); telephone: (409) 845-9936. Deadline for submissions: Oct. 15, 1994.

**April 27-29, 1995.** Symposium: "Crossing Borders: The Challenge of Ecological Thinking," University of Oregon, Eugene. Speakers include Carolyn Merchant, Y Fu Tuan, Joseph Meeker, Anne Spirn, and others. For information, write Oregon Humanities Center, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-5211.

**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 should discuss the role of landscape architecture in the design of commemorative places that help shape and construct people's memory and identity. Abstracts of no more than 2 pages must be received by July 31, 1994. Contact: Director of Studies in Landscape Architecture, Dumbarton Oaks, 1703 32nd St., NW, Washington, DC 20007

**June 9-11, 1995.** First conference of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE), Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO. For information, please write Carol Cantrell, English Department, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80521.

**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. For more information or for anything else you might need, please Mail, Call, Fax, or E-mail to: 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](mailto: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.

**Oct. 18-22, 1995.** Pacific Bridges Project: Rewriting the Pacific: Cultures, Frontiers, and the Migration of Metaphors, Univ. of California, Davis 95616.

**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, Plenlaan 2, 1050 Brussels, Belgium; Fax 32-2-641.3637; Ph 32-2-642.2577

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## CALLS FOR PAPERS

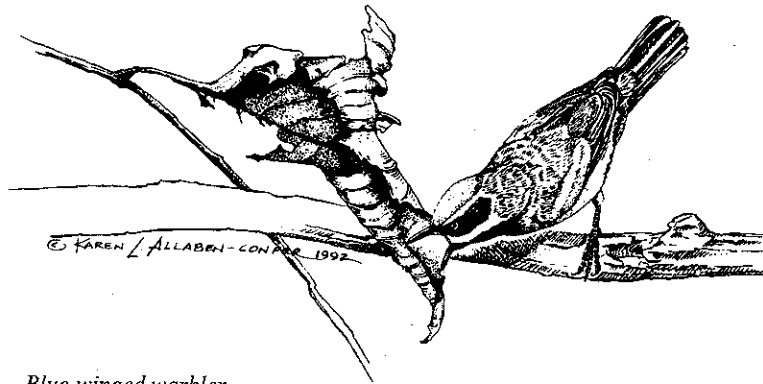
Christopher Cokinos is the new Poetry Editor for *The American Nature Writing Newsletter*. He is seeking poems for the next two issues of the newsletter, which will focus on Native American Literature and Children's Literature, respectively. If you would like your poems considered for these issues, please send them to Christopher Cokinos, English Department, Denison Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506.

**WANTED:** Information leading to the discovery of individuals who are teaching the relationship between Native Americans and nature writing and/or the environment for the Fall 1994 issue of *The American Nature Writing Newsletter*. Send information to: Tom Stuckert, English Department, University of Findlay, Findlay, OH 45840. (419) 424-4720.

*Environment & Security* is a new journal scheduled for Fall 1994. This journal is a social scientific journal devoted to the analysis of environmental forms of insecurity and to national and international efforts to address them. The term security is applicable to situations in which the fundamental values and interests of human communities are endangered. Among the topics appropriate for paper submission are philosophical issues involving environmental security and other human values, such as equity and social and economic development. For information, please contact the International Consortium for the Study of Environmental Security (ICSE), c/o GERPE, Universit Laval, Edifice Jean-Durand, 2336 chemin Sainte-Foy, Sainte-Foy, Quebec, Canada G1K 7P4.

**Call for Encyclopedia Entries.** A reference volume entitled *American Environmentalists: A Selective Biographical Encyclopedia, 1850-1990*, is being planned by Scarecrow Press. The work is to be edited by Professor Richard Harmond and G.A. Cevasco. They would like to hear from authorities interested in contributing signed entries of 500 to 2,500 words on assigned topics. For further information, kindly write to either Dr. Richard Harmond (Dept. of History) or Dr. G.A. Cevasco (Dept. of English), St. John's University, Jamaica, NY 11439.

*ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* is a journal which reflects the rapid growth of ecological criticism in the United States and around the world in recent years, which in turn reflects the steady increase in the production of environmental literature and nature writing over the past several decades and the attendant increased visibility of such writing in college classrooms. *ISLE* serves to spur such criticism and teaching, while facilitating the development of a more self-conscious and publicly shared theoretical foundation for that practice. It also serves to bridge the gap between classroom and community practice. *ISLE* invites submissions in a number of different categories, including Classroom and Community Practice, Theory and Criticism, Dialogues, Positions, and Reviews. For submission and subscription information, please write to Patrick Murphy, Editor, *ISLE*, English Department, IUP, Indiana, PA 15705-1094.



Blue-winged warbler

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