



ASLE News

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

As I contemplate another summer of drought in Texas, I comfort myself with thoughts of a cool June in Michigan. I try to keep that in mind while I put together the program for our third biennial conference, but our conference theme reminds me that "on sunny days a moment overcast," the oven bird's "question that he frames in all but words/ Is what to make of a diminished thing." Many of our panels will frame this question in words, as our keynote speaker, Wendell Berry has done in a passage I came across in one of his essays: "My walks in the hills and hollows around my home have inevitably produced in my mind the awareness that I live in a diminished world."

Far from mountains and deserts we will face this awareness in the middle landscape of the midwest, in topics ranging from the myth of Hercules and the figure of Grendel to very recent environmental literature and current environmental issues. Those immediate concerns of our time will be one important focus of the conference in several panels and roundtables on diversity and environmental justice, and in a reading by the Native American writers Marilou Awiakta and Gloria Bird. But I have also been struck by the extraordinary range of interests that ASLE brings together; we are literally, in person and in thought, all over the map. I hope the conference will represent those varied senses of varied places, but that it will also, as our previous meetings in Fort Collins and Missoula did, remind us of our common ground, our place on the academic map as well as on the earth.

We are beginning to establish some outposts on that academic map that will enhance our presence. There were two fine panels on directions in ecocriticism and on poetry and the environment at the annual conference of the Modern Language Association in San Francisco and we are guaranteed two panels at future MLA meetings. ASLE members have been very active in placing panels at regional MLA meetings as well. Bonney Macdonald has also gotten recognition for us in the American Literature Association and followed that up with a ALA seminar on environmental literature in Puerto Vallarta this fall. Adam Sweeting and Randall Roorda are similarly staking claims in the American Studies Association and the Conference on College Composition and Communication, respectively. All this activity opens up new venues for us and broadens our community.

The news in print is good, too. *ISLE* thrives (always sounds a little odd to me, but perhaps it's true in the double sense), thanks to Scott Slovic's fine team. A collection of essays from our first conference in 1995, *Reading the Earth*, edited by Scott, Mike Branch, Rochelle Johnson and Daniel Patterson, is out from the University of Idaho Press. John Tallmadge and Hank Harrington have edited a collection from the Missoula meeting and it should be forthcoming. Larry Buell has edited an issue of *New Literary History* devoted to ecocriticism which will be out soon, and a forum on the study of environmental literature will probably appear within a year in *PMLA*! I won't try to list all the books members have recently published (see the newly compiled Bookshelf on page 8), but in June we will have a roundtable of ASLE authors talk about their sense of possible directions in ecocriticism.

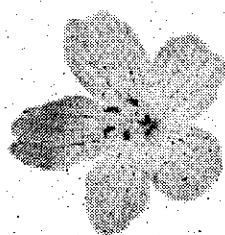
All the people I've mentioned have been a tremendous help to me and all the members. There are others who keep us coherent, and solvent. Allison Wallace deserves more thanks than we are capable of giving her. She has handled the finances and the membership list of ASLE marvelously well for several years. She is passing the task on to a former student of hers, Malika Osborne, but we'll still have Allison's experience to draw on. ASLE would not have gotten where it is without her. Dan Phillipon has done excellent work with our website that not many of us would have been capable of doing. And finally, we'll need to find a replacement for Kenton Temple who has voluntarily taken on the task of compiling the ASLE bibliography in recent years. Kenton's skill will be hard to replace, but if anyone is willing to try please get in touch with me.

I live in two environments, an urban one that seems to change daily, and a rural one that has been much the same for a hundred years. Being a part of ASLE, putting together the conference with Tom Bailey, reading all the diverse proposals you have sent me has given me an even stronger conviction that we must attend even more closely to all our interlocking environments, from urban to rural to wild, and to the words in which we try to frame them in order to begin the work of restoration and keep them from diminishing even further. Then when we walk the hills and hollows and streets, our awareness will give us some cause for hope.

Walter Isle, ASLE President, *Rice University*

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*stay together
learn the flowers
go light*

—Gary Snyder



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ASLE News

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ASLE News is the biannual newsletter of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, reporting ASLE's business to and publishing letters from its membership. Items of interest, including news about conferences, forthcoming publications, and work in progress, should be sent to the editor's attention: Ralph Black, Dept. of English, Wake Forest University, Box 7387 Reynolda Station Winston-Salem, NC 27109.

VICE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

First, thanks to everyone who voted in the last ASLE election for voting, and thanks to the relevant parties for the honor of this office. So far I've done only two things: help Walter Isle, Tom Bailey, and Terrell Dixon just a little bit with the conference plans, and read a new category of e-mail in hopes of learning how ASLE works behind the scenes. And, I guess, a third: try to think about what the coming couple of years might—or should—bring.

On this subject, then, two quick questions for ASLE members. One: ASLE's biennial conferences are among our most fundamental acts of scholarship and community. If you would be interested in hosting one of the next big ASLE conferences (during the summers of 2001 or 2003), please be in touch. It's never too soon to start planning such a monolithic and gratifying event. Two: would anyone like to host during the intervening period a smaller get-together of some kind, organized perhaps by topic or by region—symposium, mini-conference, camping trip, or something else? Perhaps there might be enough interest to sustain several small events.

If so, please get in touch with me or with Walter Isle, either in person in Kalamazoo or by snail- or e-mail.

SueEllen Campbell, *Colorado State University*

A NOTE FROM THE TREASURER

The registration brochure for ASLE's third biennial conference, to be held June 2-5, 1999, in Kalamazoo, Michigan, inadvertently published outdated membership fees. (Those of you who have been with us for awhile will recognize the lower prices as coming from the days when ASLE membership did not automatically include subscription to the journal *ISLE*). ASLE regrets the error and the confusion this may cause, especially for those of you who have recently received a renewal solicitation letter from me, which lists the fees that have been in effect since fall 1997. If you renewed your membership at the same time that you registered for the conference, rest assured that we will honor the lower membership fee that you probably paid by going that route. An additional check sent to my office in order to cover the difference would be a nice gesture in fairness to others who maintain their memberships at the regular prices, but since the mistake was ours, we are not insisting upon it. If you did not renew your membership through conference registration, you may do so with the enclosed membership form. Please note the actual fee levels: \$25 for professionals, \$15 for students, \$35 for couples, \$50 for Sustaining Members, and \$75 for Patrons. International members should add \$10 to the appropriate category.

Thanks very much for your patience! And by the way, anytime you'd like to check out ASLE's latest financial report, feel free to look for it on our website, where it's updated every six months.

Allison Wallace, *Unity College of Maine*

THE THIRD BIENNIAL ASLE CONFERENCE:

"WHAT TO MAKE OF A DIMINISHED THING"

KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN JUNE 2-5, 1999

AN UPDATE

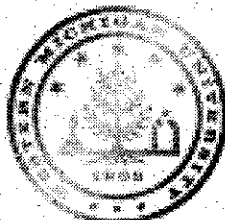
Planning picked up steam when Wendell Berry accepted ASLE's invitation to be speaker at the banquet for the 3rd Biennial Conference in Kalamazoo. He joins an impressive array of other writers, poets and scholars scheduled to address the conference: John Elder, Conrad Hilberry, Scott Russell Sanders, David Orr, Stephanie Mills, Gloria Bird, Marilou Awiakta, Evan Eisenberg, and Paul Gruchow. Over 350 papers have been accepted. If conference materials (schedules, brochures and registration forms) have not arrived at your doorstep yet, they should very soon. Updated information (including an on-line registration form, housing options, descriptions of field trips, etc.) is available on the ASLE website: www.asle.umn.edu.

In accord with the conference's theme of "What to Make of a Diminished Thing," a series of field trips to

recovering land, restored prairies, brownfield developments, and three long canoe trips on the Kalamazoo River, which is at once an EPA Superfund Site and a National Protected Waterways of astounding natural beauty, have been planned.

Housing will be available at nearby motels and in Western's most modern residence hall; all meetings will be held in the Bernhard Student Center in the heart of WMU's campus. There will be plenary readings each night, but the Center will stay open until midnight each night, with cash bar, troubadours, impromptu poetry karaoke, etc. ASLE's tradition of high spirits will be, one hopes, greatly in evidence.

The Board will meet on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning in the Edwin and Mary Meader Rare Book Room, in Waldo Library.



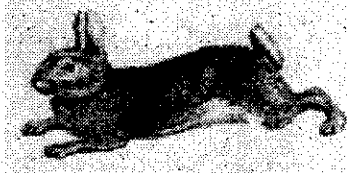
Ecocriticism at the MLA: A Roundtable

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

On Tuesday, December 29, 1998, ecocriticism officially arrived at the Modern Language Association. After a six-year battle, former ASLE President Cheryl Glotfelty was able to win MLA Allied Group status for ASLE, thus entitling us to two sessions at every MLA convention from 1998 on. The first of our two sessions this year was "Contemporary American Ecopoetry," chaired by Elizabeth Dodd and including papers by Ralph Black, J. Scott Bryson, and John Elder. The second was "Ecocriticism: Trajectories in Theory and Practice," moderated by myself and including presentations by Lawrence Buell, Michael P. Cohen, Cheryl Glotfelty, Scott Slovic, and Louise Westling. Both panels were assembled by ASLE's MLA Liaison, Bonney MacDonald, and both were very well attended and received.

"Ecocriticism: Trajectories in Theory and Practice" is the subject of the following constellation of short pieces by the five panel participants. Although the session was dynamic, interactive, and focused largely around questions from the audience, the short statements found here are distillations of the opening remarks offered by each of the panelists. Each participant was invited to comment on the current and future role of ecocriticism in literary and environmental studies, and each was encouraged to identify important growth and problem areas within the study of literature and environment. I believe the diversity and richness of the following responses helps to indicate the vitality of ecocritical studies at the millennium.

Michael P. Branch,
University of Nevada,
Reno



WHAT WOULD BE AN ECOLOGICAL HUMANISM?

Ever since David Ehrenfeld's *The Arrogance of Humanism* twenty years ago, the realization has been growing that a major paradigm shift is needed in human culture. I believe that shift began with quantum physics in science and the closely associated modernist formal innovations and skepticism that have dominated the twentieth century. Yet in the popular mind—indeed in the assumptions that motivate most activities in the dominant countries of the globe—the radical ideas of indeterminacy, contingency, and the interrelatedness of beings and phenomena have not yet been absorbed. It is time for ecocriticism and environmental philosophy to articulate the world view that is required as much by the new physics as by ecological sciences and the increasing evidence of global environmental problems. Such

a world view must be non-dualistic, anit-Platonic, embodied, and relational. It must define human-consciousness and action within an enormously complex, interdependent community of life on earth.

We need to be aware of the basic notions of human superiority we inherited from Renaissance Humanism. Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* articulated a confident vision of man's ability to transcend "the fermenting dung heap of the inferior world" and withdraw from the body into "the inner chambers of the mind" and in order to become "neither a creature of earth nor a heavenly creature, but some higher divinity, clothed with human flesh" (trans. Robert Caponigri. 1956, pp. 10-11). Cartesian philosophy and Newtonian mechanics of the Enlightenment era grew out of such notions, but the mechanistic model of the universe was thoroughly debunked in the earliest decades of the twentieth century.

An ecological humanism would restore us to appropriate humility, accepting the lessons of quantum physics and reawakening us to cooperative participation within the community of planetary life. In studies of our primate relatives, by Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey as well as many others, we have learned that most of the traits we claimed as demonstrative of human superiority—toolmaking, language, reasoning and innovative adaptation, cooperative social structures—are shared with animals still considered savage beasts in popular parlance. Birds also use tools, wolves have complex social arrangements much like our own, and even viruses and plants communicate and are active agents in shaping their environments and destinies. I spoke recently with a microbiologist who witnessed a geranium turning off a gene that had been introduced into it in order to prevent it from blossoming. Humans are not the unique agents among living creatures on earth.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty articulated a philosophy in *The Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible* that is remarkably congruent with quantum physics regarding the interrelation of space and time; the situatedness of our knowing, our participatory relationship with the things we perceive, and the indeterminacy of our access to precise apprehension of the world in which we are embedded. Given such an understanding, we should develop a sacramental awareness of the world, perhaps through the concept of an "ecological sublime" that accepts "confirmation of its astonishment" (*Visible and the Invisible*, p. 102) rather than seeking or presuming control.

Louise Westling, University of
Oregon



CLIMATE IN LITERARY STUDY

When I sent *The Garden of Bristlecones* to the environmental historian Richard White, he noted that one section—about reading past climates from timberline trees of the White Mountains—followed the interior logic of a particular investigator, Valmore LaMarche, Jr. LaMarche's contribution to paleoclimatology was to make a "relatively narrow spatial study of a biotic line in a particular place extend out to encompass events across the globe."

LaMarche studied geology at Berkeley and Harvard, and ended in Tucson correlating climate change to volcanic events. He was a sort of "Nature Reader." Like most scientists, before he did his writing he accumulated data, created models, made detailed small-scale maps, and then extended them through time and space until, as Professor White said, they encompassed the globe.

Like LaMarche, I engage in case studies. Like him, I am imperialistic, aim to construct from them a more than local discourse about the natural—and the way humans read themselves into and out of the natural. This has not normally been called literary study. Like LaMarche, I have failed to settle on a single discipline.

So much for introduction and apology. Humans read themselves into the natural in diverse ways. For instance, we imagine most people living historically in temperate climates. Do they, or does our discourse distract us from our situation? Here might be a little case study, of global climate, and of our own, of global conditions and of migration of humans to particular places. I read recently in a piece of literature of the genre DEIS (Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument) that "Because experience of stockmen was in more temperate climates, they knew little about the carrying capacity of these arid lands. Consequently, the range was stocked beyond its capacity, causing changes in plant, soil, and water relationships. Some speculate that the changes were permanent and irreversible . . ."

When the DEIS calls these people stockmen, it also calls their region rangeland. These stockmen were at work in my region during the era when the modern idea of climate was being established by climatologists.

People don't easily adapt to changes in conditions. But, what temperate climates constituted the previous experiences of these hypothetical stockmen? Climate is normally spoken of in terms of "zones," derives from Greek, meaning "belt," and from classical Greek ideas about the world's body. Ptolemy conceived global climatic differences in terms of "daylength," or differentially illuminated zones. Indeed, the term climate, coming from *klimata*, indicates inclination of the sun, and suggests perspective.

After investigators decided that heat rather than daylength identified climatic zones, Alexander von Humboldt used observed data in 1817, to draw the first isothermal map. Over several decades, maps of temperature were more accurately scaled to represent worldwide averages during individual months.

All of these maps represent hot (tropical), and cold (arctic) zones, with the temperate falling between them. Clearly,

the classical idea of the temperate reads a human desire into global climate.

These zonal maps are relational. Data on vegetation is used to imply temperature, and temperature data is used to imply vegetative growth. By the middle of this century, maps correlated zonal climates and vegetative growth, and led to maps of growing seasons for such species as deciduous trees.

Unfortunately, zones are not historically fixed. They shift. Worse, the Temperate Zone "contained some of the most extreme conditions on earth and was in fact highly in-temperate in regard to temperature," as one climatologist puts it.

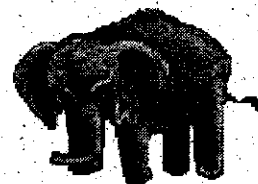
Among climatologists, some question whether the concept of zones ought to be used at all, since "the contours of the continents, the arrangement of mountains, and the courses of ocean currents introduce modifications."

No surprise here. A particular kind of culturally sanctioned reading by an interpretive community created the discourse that we now use, to judge our past and plan our future. But my brief survey leads to a set of questions for which I have no ready answers. Is there such a thing as a temperate climate? If so, what do we mean when we use the phrase? What reading or mapping of the world does our public discourse create with that phrase?

How shall writers now speak of my region and its recent human history, or place it in a global context? Some of my friends continue to speak of wilderness. Others in my region prefer the term rangeland. Neither term is rooted in data about local conditions, or takes cognizance of changing global climates. Ought they? Is it possible that unexamined uses of language lead to careless decisions?

I believe these kinds of questions can shape an important and socially useful arena for ecocriticism.

Michael Cohen, *Southern Utah University*



ECOCRITICISM: CONTAINING MULTITUDES, PRACTICING DOCTRINE

Each of us has only a few minutes to speak at today's session, so I suppose I'd like to use my time to make two central points about the field of ecocriticism.

I'll anchor each of my points in a well-known quotation. The first is a parenthetical statement from the end of a famous American poem: "I am large, I contain multitudes." This is one of my favorite lines from Whitman's "Song of Myself."

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cont. from p. 5

I use it whenever someone tells me of strange goings-on in the organization ASLE, such as fracasos on the e-mail list or odd presentations at a conference of one kind or another. Well, I say, "ASLE is large and it contains multitudes"—it's my way of saying, "It takes all kinds of people...." The same is true of ecocriticism as a scholarly perspective, as an academic "movement." There is no single, dominant worldview guiding ecocritical practice—no single strategy at work from example to example of ecocritical writing or teaching. Cheryl Glotfelty neatly defines "ecocriticism" as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty and Fromm, *Ecocriticism Reader*, xviii). My own definition, when asked for a broad description of the field, is "the study of explicitly environmental texts by way of any scholarly approach or, conversely, the scrutiny of ecological implications and human-nature relationships in any literary text, even texts that seem, at first glance, oblivious of the non-human world." In other words, any conceivable style of scholarship becomes a form of ecocriticism if it's applied to certain kinds of literary works; and, on the other hand, there is not a single literary work anywhere that utterly defies ecocritical interpretation, that is "off limits" to green reading. How's that for an encompassing definition?

This is actually an important point, because I often find that, despite my best efforts and the efforts of colleagues like those sitting up here with me this afternoon, many people continue to have a rather narrow and dismissive attitude toward ecocriticism and environmental literature, as if we somehow represent merely a nostalgic, millennialist fad, a yearning to resurrect and re-explain a limited tradition of hackneyed pastoral or wilderness texts. In the fall of 1997, I proposed a special issue of the journal *PMLA* devoted to ecocriticism and environmental literature, taking great pains to indicate that ecocriticism does not merely mean studying a narrow body of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature. In February of 1998, I heard that the proposal had been turned down by the *PMLA* board, in part because, as editor Martha Banta put it in her sympathetic letter, "Environmental literature is generally deemed to be almost entirely an 'Americanist' issue, and the Board feared being taken one more time around the track with a flood of essays about Emerson, Thoreau, etc. MLA members still need to be educated to the realization that this is a global concern, not tied to the American situation" (Banta, letter, 4 Feb. 1998). Hence my ceaseless effort, as the editor of *ISLE*: to recruit studies of international environmental literature and to solicit submissions from practicing environmental writers throughout the world; hence the importance of such recent books as John Elder and Hertha Wong's *Family of Earth and Sky: Indigenous Tales of Nature from Around the World* (Beacon, 1994), Robert M. Torrance's *Encompassing Nature: A Sourcebook* (Counterpoint, 1998), and Patrick D. Murphy's *Literature of Nature: An International Sourcebook* (Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998); and hence my reiteration that both ecocriticism and environmental literature "are large and contain multitudes."

My second point, if I have time, is that ecocriticism has no central, dominant doctrine or theoretical apparatus—rather,

ecocritical theory, such as it is, is being re-defined daily by the actual practice of thousands of literary scholars around the world. The quotation that always surfaces when someone asks me about the 'theory of ecocriticism' comes from Edward Abbey's 1975 novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* in which a brief dialogue near the beginning of this narrative of eco-sabotage goes as follows:

"Do we know what we're doing and why?"

"No."

"Do we care?"

"We'll work it all out as we go along. Let our practice form our doctrine, thus assuring precise theoretical coherence" (Abbey, 65).

Another routine way of dismissing ecocriticism is to claim that the field has no "theory," no substance. In her letter to me about the proposed special issue of *PMLA*, Professor Banta's second key point about the board's response was as follows: "However unfair this may be, another general perception is that environmental studies is 'soft.' As several board members put it (although they themselves know better), it is characterized as 'hug-the-tree stuff' (Banta, letter, 4 Feb. 1998). Of course, all of us actually working in the field can point to any number of examples of lucid, practical "ecocritical theory," ranging from Larry Buell's far-reaching perceptions of American culture to the insights of Molly Westling, Annette Kolodny, Patrick Murphy, Greta Gaard, and many others regarding the gendered understanding of landscape. We have many ecocritics helping to demonstrate a new theory and praxis of "narrative scholarship." Still others are finding ways of applying rhetorical theory, geographical discourse of "place," and concepts from ecology and conservation biology to the study of literature. Perhaps the overriding feature of ecocritical theory, though, is that it is nearly always attached to an accessible, helpful application, sometimes making it almost unrecognizable as theory. We do not (yet) have any Lacans or Foucaults in our ranks (although we certainly have our share of colleagues and students applying Lacanian and Foucaultian perspectives to green texts). If you're looking for ecocritical theory, look for it in our practice.



Scott Slovic, *University of Nevada, Reno*

WHAT'S NEXT FOR ECOCRITICISM?

Today ecocriticism is being published at an astounding rate. In the last two issues of *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, for example, 67 new books were reviewed, and another 177 were briefly noted. More than 200 books in this field in the last five years! We've made it. We're there. We're here at the MLA. We've become institutionalized.

Now what? What's in store for ecocriticism? Well, earlier this month I attended an ALA-sponsored symposium

sium on Nature and Environmental Writing. The paper titles were stunning: "Sublimity and Ethics: Relating Natural and Social Othernesses," "Coming Out of the Country: The Theory of Environmental Constructivism and the Problem of Cultural Dualism," "The Word Incarnate: Language, Landscape and the Sacred," "Next to Nature: Intimacy and Desire in Frost," "Luminence and Luminescence in Thoreau," and so on. My prediction is that these sorts of intellectual projects will proliferate for many years to come. Why? Because they're interesting. These are the sorts of things we think about when we're in this profession. And that's okay. That's just fine.

But now I'm thinking maybe we should also take some initiative to investigate the environmental policies of our professional institutions. We now have a voice in the profession; maybe we ought to exercise it a little for environmentally friendly policies in our universities and professional organizations. I'm thinking of David Orr's book, *Ecological Literacy*, in which he argues that "Environmental education ought to change the way people live, not just how they talk" (91). He advocates a study of institutional resource flows that would result in "a set of policies governing food, energy, water, materials, . . . and waste flows that meet standards for sustainability" (106-07).

In our profession of literary studies, paper use and waste must certainly rank high on the list of environmental impacts we make on the earth. Why not start with paper in reforming our praxis? For example, all those 200-plus recent books on literature and environment—what kind of paper were they printed on? What kind of paper are our conference papers printed on? Our syllabi? Is your university's letterhead printed on recycled paper? Mine's not. How about the MLA? Does it use recycled paper? Can paper use be reduced in the MLA?

I did a little investigating. I called the MLA and spoke with Judith Altruder in publications and with executive director Phyllis Franklin. Both Judy and Phyllis told me that the number one criterion for MLA paper use is "preservation." "Preservation" made me think of John Muir, so I was puzzled until I realized that they meant preservation of the MLA documents themselves. Namely, their first mandate is to use acid-free paper so that MLA publications will last as long as possible. Beyond that mandate, the MLA does, when possible, try to print materials on recycled paper, but they could not tell me what percentage of the time it is in fact possible.

From the production end, there are multiple factors to consider, primarily cost and time. The MLA staff is always under the gun to keep costs down because MLA members complain bitterly when dues are raised. Furthermore, pressing deadlines have to be met; if no recycled paper is available and affordable when production must happen, then they have to go with whatever acid-free paper is available. The MLA uses a number of different printers, and paper availability and costs vary from printer to printer.

So, my understanding of the MLA's paper use policy is that there is no written guideline that the MLA should

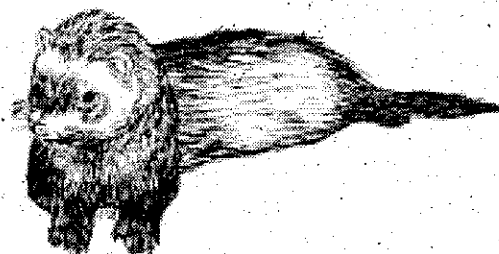
strive to use recycled paper, but the current MLA staff is environmentally sympathetic and does their best within the constraints they face. I asked Phyllis whether it might be possible to reduce paper use by giving MLA members the option of not receiving some of the MLA publications. Problematic, she said, because the MLA depends upon paid advertisements, and advertisers base their payment on circulation. Large circulation equals more money. Ahhhh, the light begins to dawn. The MLA operates in the context of a capitalist economy as, of course, do our own universities.

The MLA has a Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, a Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession, a Task Force against Campus Bigotry, and many others. Why not form a Committee or Task Force on Environmental Practices in the Profession, I wonder? We could ask a variety of questions about the policies and procedures of the MLA, but also of universities in general, with the goal, of course, of reforming those practices.

I queried Phyllis about how one goes about establishing such a committee. She answered that she would be the one to establish a committee, with the approval of the Executive Council. BUT, she warned me, committees cost the MLA money, because the MLA pays transportation, meeting, and lodging costs for its committees. The bottom line is that the MLA is short on money. Her suggestion is that ASLE establish a committee through its own channels and that this committee come up with a list of desirable standards—some criteria, a core set of good practices, a page of recommendations—that she would then be happy to publish in the MLA Newsletter to elicit feedback from the membership, the Executive Council, and the Delegate Assembly. This seems to me to be a reasonable first step. It is a direction I would like to see ASLE pursue. One way to begin might be to hold a planning session on "Paper Use in Literary Studies" at the upcoming ASLE conference in June.

If we're not going to take responsibility for the environmental practices of our institutions, who will? We're demonstrating that we can think interesting ecocritical thoughts. Let's also be willing to take ecological action in this our home profession.

Cheryll Glotfelty, *University of Nevada, Reno*



THE VIEW FROM HERE

NATURE WRITING, PASTORAL, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

*Among the numerous watershed events scattered across the ecocritical landscape, the publication of Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* is surely worth special note. It was thirty-five years ago that Professor Marx's work urged us to rethink categories of the pastoral, and the relationships between literature and the natural world, broadly writ. I think the following incarnation of "The View From Here" will continue to prompt us in useful, interesting ways.—ed"*

Of the two literary kinds, nature writing and the pastoral, which is the more effective means of raising the environmental consciousness? The question is Prompted by my recent struggle to come to terms with Lawrence Buell's daunting, wonderfully provocative opus, *The Environmental Imagination*.^{*} An admirably committed, ecocentrically-minded environmentalist, Buell assumes that the power of a literary work to enlist readers in the defense of the environment is chiefly determined by the extent to which it takes nonhuman nature as its primary subject. To Buell, nature writing is the literary mode of choice, for its practitioners deal with the natural world "in itself" or, as he also puts it, "for its own sake." (The two phrases are a kind of joint mantra of his literary creed.) By the same token, he dismisses writing in the pastoral mode for its failure to direct readers' attention to the nature of nature.

I think Buell is mistaken, and for reasons that illuminate the shortcomings of ecocentric doctrine. As an example of his critical judgment, take his puzzling dismissal, early in *The Environmental Imagination*, of the ecological import of *Moby-Dick* because "Melville's interest in whales was subordinate to his interest in whaling" (p.4). As I understand this, he thinks that a book exclusively devoted to whales "for their own sake" — as they exist wholly independent of *Homo sapiens* — is more likely to intensify environmentalist convictions of its readers than one that takes account of humanity's efficient methods of slaughtering whales. A work of unadulterated nature writing, in other words, creates that close bond between readers and nonhuman nature on which, according to Buell's ecocentric literary doctrine, the defense of Earth's integrity ultimately depends.

The pastoral mode recommends itself for precisely the opposite reason. Granted that the tenor of much of pastoral literature has been frivolous and intellectually lightweight, it nonetheless often embodies an unstated, potentially serious view of humanity's relations with nature. Ever since its emer-

gence in the ancient Near East, more than two millennia ago, the hallmark of pastoral has been the contrast, explicit or tacit, between two ways of life, one complex and the other relatively simple, each grounded in a distinct set of relations with nature. So far as Melville introduces elements of romantic pastoralism in *Moby-Dick*, he does so most effectively, I think, in establishing the contrast between Ahab's and Ishmael's attitudes to nature. When Ishmael, who at the time lives "as in a musky meadow," disavows Ahab's murderous quest of the White Whale, he shifts his conceit of attainable felicity to "the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country." (Chapter 94). Nothing could be further from Ahab's identification with the emblems of the emerging technological power of American industrial capitalism.

Pastoral is an unabashedly anthropocentric mode. To writers who work in it and to the characters who inhabit the imagined worlds of their creation, nature is interesting and significant chiefly — perhaps only — so far as it bears on human experience. The view of nature inherent in pastoralism accords with a phenomenological outlook. We are inextricably enmeshed in nonhuman nature, yet our power to modify it exceeds that of all other species by orders of magnitude. Hence our Appreciation of nonhuman nature "for its own sake," is not likely to be very useful in resolving the ineluctably human problem of environmental degradation. More important, in fact, is an appreciation of the environmental consequences of humanity's essentially socio-economic and political choices. They in effect determine our choice of alternative relationships with nature, which always have constituted the subject of pastoral.

^{*} My essay on Thoreau, Buell, and ecocentric literary theory and practice is forthcoming in the *New York Review of Books*.

Leo Marx, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

CONFERENCES AND GATHERINGS

April 30-May 1, 1999. *Biodiversity and Climate Change: Conservation in the Face of Uncertainty.* Hosted by the Center for Biodiversity and Conservation at the American Museum of Natural History Kaufmann Theater, American Museum of Natural History, New York City. For info: 212-769-5200.

June 25-27, 1999. *Living in a Material World.* Held at the Coventry Univ. School of Art and Design. The three main

themes of the conference are Materialism, Materiality and After, Working Cultures and The Environment as Discourse. Inquiries to Peter Playdon: lsx086@coventry.ac.uk.

July 3-4, 1999. *Animals in History and Culture.* The Faculty of Humanities at Bath Spa University College will offer a cross-disciplinary conference on the place, role and function of animals in western culture from pre-history to the present. The

conference will offer a forum for debate within an area of increasing academic interest in the fields of history, cultural studies, literature, the history of art, the history of science and medicine, and philosophy. Contact Erica Fudge or Tracey Hill by email at: e.fudge@bathspa.ac.uk or t.hill@bathspa.ac.uk.

July 8-11, 1999. *The Thoreau Society 1999 Annual Gathering* in Concord, MA. Featured speakers include Arun Gandhi, Dale R. Schwie, and Stephen F. Ells. For more information, visit the web site: www.walden.org/society.



July 9-10, 1999. *A National Initiative: Place, Persona, and the Creative Process.* "Art, Culture, and Nature: An Association for the Study of Arts and the Environment" will hold its second international conference at the Univ. of Washington in Seattle. Contact Andrew Hepburn, Conference Coordinator: phone: (410) 543-6233; fax: (410) 548-3002; email: axhepburn@ssu.edu.

July 11-16, 1999. *Father and Daughter: James Fenimore Cooper & Susan Fenimore Cooper.* The 12th International James Fenimore Cooper Seminar and Summer Course will broaden its traditional focus this year and feature presentations on the daughter of the famous novelist. Graduate and undergraduate credit is available. The keynote speaker is Wayne Franklin. Inquiries: James Devlin, Professor of English, SUNY Oneonta, Oneonta, NY 13820; (607) 436-3033; or F. Daniel Larkin, Dean of Academic Support Services, SUNY Oneonta; (607) 436-2522.

July 23-24, 1999. *Southern Writers, Southern Writing.* A graduate student conference sponsored by the Departments of English and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS. Critical and creative presentations will focus on southern politics or economics; southern communities; teaching composition in the South; re-writing southern history; ethnographic research; the construction of identity in the South. Online information: <http://www.olemiss.edu/conf/swsw>. struction of identity in the South.

August 7-9, 1999. *The Baltic-Scandinavian Interdisciplinary Conference on Culture and Nature.* To be held at Palmse, Lahemaa National Park, Estonia. Featured speakers include Peter Quigley and Sigmund Kvalsy. The main objective of this Baltic-Scandinavian interdisciplinary gathering is to bring together scholars working in different environmental fields and to map purposes and directions of ecocritical research in Scandinavian and Baltic cultures and literatures. Contact Tiit Speak: tiit@ehi.ee.

September 17-18, 1999. *The Limits of Southern Literature.* The 15th Southern Writers Symposium will be held at Methodist College. For information contact Mary Wheeling, Dept. of English, Methodist College, 5400 Ramsey St., Fayetteville, NC 28311-1420; phone: (910) 630-7493; fax: (910) 630-2356; email: wheeling@methodist.edu. Online info: <http://home.earthlink.net/~mwheeling>.

October 14-16, 1999. *Writing on Masks: Women's Lives in the South.* Wesleyan College, Macon, GA. The conference aims to reflect a diversity of women's southern experiences, both in terms of who southern women are (European American, African American, Native American, etc.) and how their lives are written about. Poet and autobiographer Nikki Giovanni will be the featured speaker. Contact: Matthew R. Martin: mmartin@post.wesleyan-college.edu.

October 21, 1999. *The Second Harvest Lecture* will be held at the Old Brick Church, Iowa City, IA. Contact Steve Semken for more information: (319) 626-2055 or (319) 338-7868; email: icecube@sol.iinav.net.

October 21-22, 1999. *Literature and Science.* The 13th Leiden October Conference will focus on the relationship between literature and science, particularly since the early stages of Romanticism. Inquiries to: Valeria Tinkler-Villani and Annemarie Estor, English Dept., Leiden University, PO Box 9515, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands; email: tinkler@rullet.leidenuniv.nl or amestor@hotmail.com.

October 21-23, 1999. *Intersections: Science and the Arts.* This multidisciplinary conference will be held at DePaul University. Direct inquiries to Patricia Monaghanby: pmonagha@wppost.depaul.edu.

CALLS FOR PAPERS

June 15, 1999. *West of the West: California and the American West.* 1999 marks the 150th anniversary of the California Gold Rush. As part of the state's sesquicentennial activities, the Western Literature Association will hold its annual meeting from October 13-16, 1999, in Sacramento, CA. WLA welcomes papers, readings, and proposals for sessions on all aspects of western writing, society, and culture; WLA particularly welcomes papers that relate to this year's theme. Topics might include: the gold rush and its legacies; exploration narratives and the literature of migration/immigration; Latino and Native Californian literary/artistic traditions; Asian American writing and the Pacific Rim; the Great Central Valley as a literary region; John Muir's literary and environmental legacies; the Los Angeles novel; the New Urban and Suburban West; and new critical perspectives on California writers. Proposals and inquiries to: Michael Kowalewski, President, WLA, Department of English, Carleton College, Northfield, MN, 55057; phone: (507) 646-4323; fax: (507) 646-5601; email: mkowalew@carleton.edu.

July 1, 1999. *Bison: The Past, Present, and Future of the Great Plains.* The Univ. of Nebraska's Center for Great Plains Studies presents its 24th annual interdisciplinary

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symposium, to be held April 6-8, 2000. Bison—as a spiritual force, a food source, a commercial product, and an active part of the ecology of the Plains—are the focus of this interdisciplinary symposium. The Center invites submissions of papers, panels, and other proposals, including displays, posters, graphics, stories, dramatic presentations, and films focusing on the past, present, and future role of bison on the Plains. Proposals and inquiries (by July 1, 1999) to: Charlene Porsild & Ken Winkle, Co-Chairs, Bison 2000 Symposium, Center for Great Plains Studies, Univ. of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68588-0314; phone: (402) 472-3082; fax: (402) 472-0463; email: cgps@unlinfo.unl.edu. Online info: <http://www.unl.edu/plains/2000symp.htm>.

July 15, 1999. *Into the Next Millenium: The Past and Promise of Environmental History.* The American Society for Environmental History invites proposals for its annual meeting from March 16-19, 2000, in Tacoma, WA. Paper and session proposals that examine any aspect of human interaction with the physical environment over time are welcome. The program committee especially encourages proposals (for individual papers and entire panels) that focus on the relationships among the practice of environmental history and environmental problems and solutions, and that suggest possibilities for future environmental histories. Proposals, postmarked by July 15, 1999, to Mart Stewart, Department of History, Western Washington Univ., Bellingham, WA 98225-9506; phone: (360) 650-3455; fax: (360) 650-7789; email: smar4@cc.wvu.edu.

November 30, 1999. *Women's Studies Quarterly* announces a one-year postponement of its special double issue, *Women and The Environment*, now scheduled for publication in Spring/Summer 2001. *Women's Studies Quarterly* publishes contributions that introduce new feminist scholarship and theory applied to teaching and the curriculum, original sources and resources of direct use in course and program development, and reflective essays and original creative work on various themes of concern to women's studies practitioners. Guest editors Diane Hope and Vandana Shiva invite 9-20-page manuscripts that are written in a language that is accessible to the nonspecialist. Send two copies and an SASE to: Diane Hope, Interim Dean, College of Liberal Arts, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY 14623; email: dshgpt@rit.edu.

January 1, 2000. *The Mississippi Quarterly* invites contributions for a special issue, "Ecocritical Approaches to Southern Literary History." Essays may address ecocritical issues in any Southern literary text or texts, broadly defined. Possible topics include: peculiarly Southern versions of the sublime; the environmentalism or anti-envi-

ronmentalism of Jeffersonian agrarianism; Southern literature and environmental history; comparative accounts of Southern and Western bioregionalism and Southern identities. Send two hard copies of essays to: *Mississippi Quarterly*, PO Box 5272, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

Open Call. The journal *Radical Teacher* is calling for articles on Teaching and Organizing Around Matters of Consumption. Proposals or inquiries to: Marjorie Feld, 28 Hamilton Road, Somerville, MA 02144; email: feld@binah.cc.brandeis.edu; or to Erica Rand, Art Department/Olin Arts Center, Bates College, Lewiston, ME 04240; email: erand@bates.edu.

Open Call. The *New Mexico Historical Review*, a quarterly journal that provides a forum for quality research and writing on New Mexico, the Southwest, and Borderlands, seeks articles on any aspect of these categories, and particularly on the history of women, Native Americans, and U.S.-Mexico relations. Inquiries to Evelyn A. Schlatter, Assistant Editor, at evsch@unm.edu. For guidelines, please write to: Managing Editor, *New Mexico Historical Review*, 1013 Mesa Vista Hall, Univ. of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131; e-mail: nmhr@unm.edu.

Open Call. *Old-Time New England*, the biannual refereed journal of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, seeks manuscripts devoted to the description and analysis of the architecture, landscapes, and material culture of New England from the seventeenth century to the present. Editors encourage essays that make ample and imaginative use of material evidence. Especially welcome are manuscripts considering architecture and artifacts of historical, cultural, and/or aesthetic interest; describing methods of identifying, interpreting, and preserving artifacts, historic landscapes, and structures; and exploring the material aspects of social history, regional craftsmanship, and daily life in New England. Annotated bibliographies, research notes, and comprehensive review articles will also be considered. Direct inquiries and manuscripts to Kathryn Grover, Editor, 1115 Pleasant Street, New Bedford, MA 02740; queries only to: kgrover@aol.com.

Open Call. *Ambient Culture, Green Romanticism.* Romantic Circles is hosting a new website on issues involving Romantic-period literature and ecology, ecocriticism, ambience, atmosphere, space, place, tropics and topics. Articles are sought which: look at Romantic-period literature in an ecocritical way; study another period's literature using ecocriticism; investigate the methodologies of Romantic-period ecocriticism. Proposals or manuscripts to the editor: Timothy Morton, Department of English, Univ. of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309-0226. Online info: <http://www.colorado.edu/English/romcir.html>.

ASLE BOOKSHELF, SPRING 1999

Once again, ASLE members are proving themselves to be a most imaginative and productive lot. This edition of the "bookshelf" features all manner of books, finding their ontological and aesthetic trajectories from some interaction with or response to the natural world. Here are critical and personal essays, poetry collections and anthologies, field guides, memoirs, and biographies. Let your independent bookseller set you up with the crispest copy on the block. My apologies to everyone I've overlooked; if you have a new book that you'd like ASLE members to know about, please send word of it (or of them) to me—ed.

Chris Agee, *The Sierra de Zacatecas*. Mexico City:

Ediciones Papeles Privados, 1995.

Pamela Banting, editor, *Fresh Tracks: Writing the Western Landscape*. Polestar Books, 1998.

Michael P. Branch, Rochelle Johnson, Daniel Patterson, Scott Slovic, eds. *Reading the Earth: New Direction in the Study of Literature and Environment*. Idaho, 1998.

Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy, eds. *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretations, Pedagogy*. Illinois, 1998.

Terry Gifford, John Sewell, Colin Sutherill and Diana Syder, *The Blue Bang Theory: New Nature Poetry*. Redbeck Press, 1997.

Terry Gifford, *Whale Watching With A Boy And A Goat*. Redbeck Press, 1998.

Mark T. Hoyer, *Dancing Ghosts: Native American and Christian Syncretism in Mary Austin's Work*. Nevada, 1998.

John Lane, *Weed Time: Essays from the Edge of a Country Road*. Rpt. Holocene Publishing, 1995.

Gary Lawless, *Caribouddhism*. Blackberry Books, 1998.

Linda Lear, ed. *Lost Woods: The Discovered Writing of Rachel Carson*. Beacon, 1998.

Ralph H. Lutts, Arnold Arluke, Clinton R. Sanders, eds. *The Wild Animal Story (Animals, Culture, and Society)*. Temple, 1998.

Randy Malamud, *Reading Zoos: Representations of Animals and Captivity*. NYU, 1998.

David B. Morris, *Illness and Culture in the Postmodern Age*. California, 1998.

Patrick Murphy, ed. *The Literature of Nature: an International Sourcebook*.

Ted Olson, *Blue Ridge Folklife*. Mississippi, 1998.

C.L. Rawlins, *In Gravity National Park*. Nevada, 1998.

Randall Roorda, *Dramas of Solitude: Narratives of Retreat in American Nature Writing*. SUNY Press, 1998.

Boria Sax, *The Serpent and the Swan: Animal Brides in Literature and Folklore*. McDonald & Woodward, 1998.

Daniel R. White, *Postmodern Ecology: Communication, Evolution, and Play*. SUNY, 1998.



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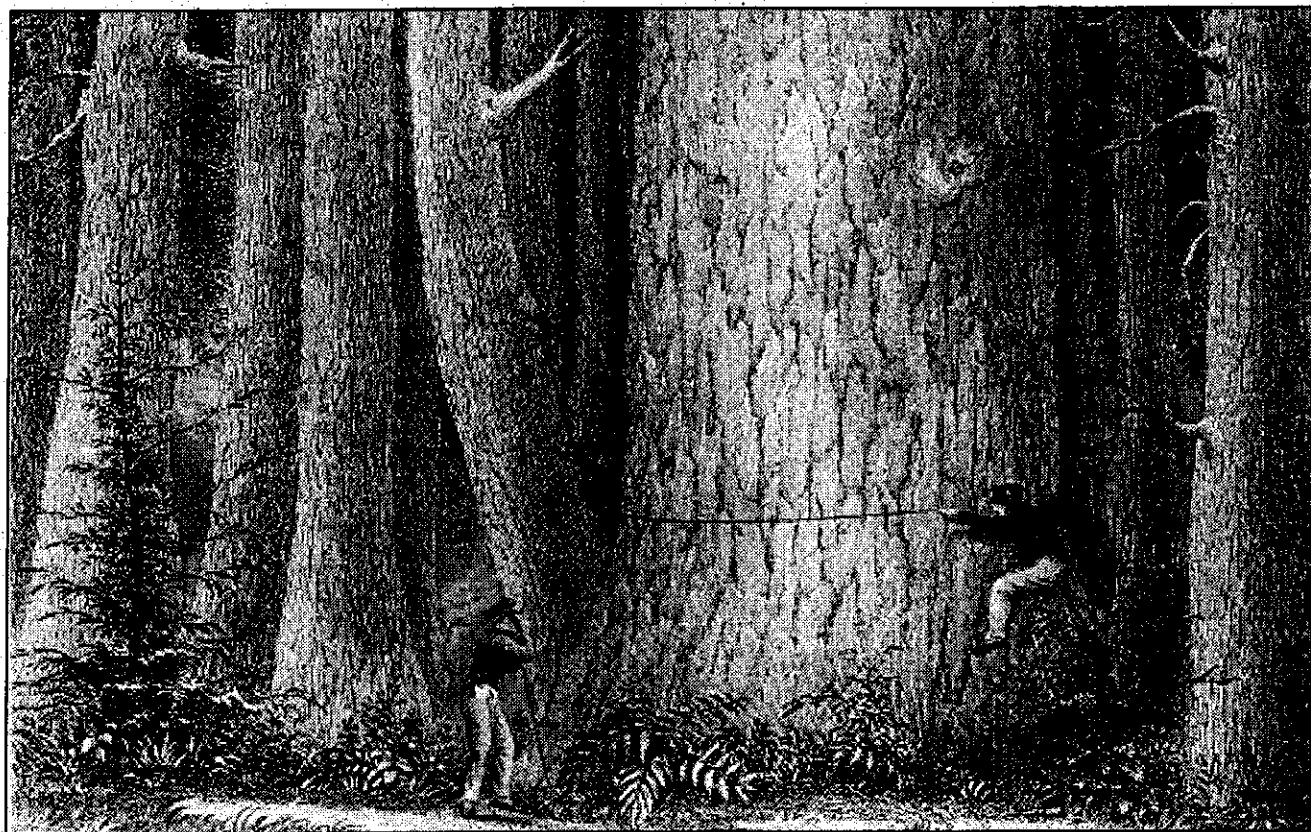
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Pine Forest. Engraving by William E. Tucker, after Alfred Agate, 1844.



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