



The Association  
for the Study of  
**Literature &  
Environment**



# ASLE News

Winter 2012

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

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## President's Column: ASLE in 2012 and Beyond

by Joni Adamson

A recent Hollywood film, *2012*, links a day, December 21, supposedly predicted as the end of time by the ancient Mayan calendar, to environmental cataclysm. As the Earth's core overheats and solar radiation bombards the planet, world leaders race to build "arks" they are secretly marketing only to the wealthy. Meanwhile, a writer tries to warn everyone while struggling to save his own family before it is too late.

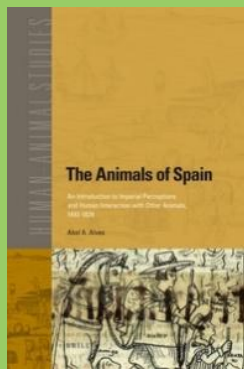
Mayanists reject sensationalist misreadings of the sophisticated system of 20 interlocking, astronomically-precise calendars that began to be calculated as far back as the 5th century BCE. Mayan calendars, including the Long Count and the Round, are still in use today in many highland communities in Mexico and Guatemala. The 21st of December will be celebrated in these communities as an auspicious day not only because it marks a transition from one 5,125-year cycle on the Long Count calendar to the next, but because, simultaneously, it marks the end of a 52-year Round cycle. Since most humans live long enough to see the end of only one Calendar Round, the day will be celebrated as a time of reflection on beginnings, on the next 52 years, and beyond, on the next 5,125 years.

The year 2012 also promises to be a productive, reflective year for ASLE. As it enters its milestone 20th year as an organization, it has moved from a time in which it struggled to prove its legitimacy to a moment in which scholars in many fields are now looking to ecocritics for some of the most exciting new research in environmental studies. Two new books, for example, are directing attention to what might be termed "Long Count" spans of time and calling upon us to reflect upon why concepts of "deep time" or "geologic time" matter to those of us teaching and researching in the Environmental Humanities. In *Slow Violence* (Harvard UP 2011), Rob Nixon contrasts an inattention to the attritional lethality of climate change, deforestation, oil spills and the aftermath of war with spectacle-driven messaging about environmental disasters such as the Chernobyl nuclear disaster or the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. In *Bodily Natures* (Indiana UP 2010), which won the 2011 ASLE Book Award, Stacy Alaimo grapples with the powerful and pervasive material forces, often invisible, often toxic, often moving in and through bodies and ecosystems. Since climate change or toxic drift are neither instantaneous nor spectacular, representing how these forces work over time presents a formidable challenge for critics and activists seeking to help mobilize an international environmental response large enough to make a difference. What forces, Nixon asks, "imaginative, scientific, and activist-can help extend the temporal horizons of our gaze not just retrospectively but prospectively as well"? (62). In an age when films like *2012* sensationalize environmental disaster and ask us to care about only one generation of one (heteronormative human) family, how do we make the intergenerational, evolutionary space and time required for the survival of all species (not just the human) more visible?

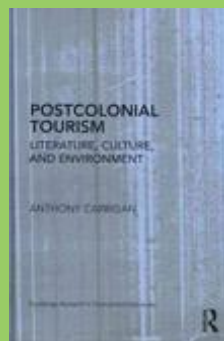
## ASLE Bookshelf

The following works were recently published by ASLE members. If we've missed your publication, please send bibliographic information to Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)).

**Alves, Abel A.** *The Animals of Spain: An Introduction to Imperial Perceptions and Human Interaction with Other Animals, 1492-1826.* Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011.



**Carrigan, Anthony.** *Postcolonial Tourism: Literature, Culture, and Environment.* London and New York: Routledge, 2011.



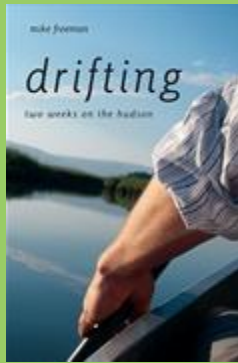
**Freeman, Mike.** *Drifting: Two Weeks on the Hudson.* Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2011.

In June, ASLE's off-year symposium, held in Juneau, Alaska (<http://www.uas.alaska.edu/asle/>), will focus on questions such as these and set them into debates about the "Global North" and Global South." "Environment, Culture and Place in a Rapidly Changing North" will offer participants a wonderful opportunity to examine stereotypes about a "North" that is supposedly far from the economic and environmental woes of industrialized nations to the south. The symposium will also offer participants an opportunity to consider how networked actors, groups and campaigns from the global South are emerging as leaders in efforts to extend our gaze across larger spans of time. For example, one of the Diversity Caucus' panels will feature discussion of the 2010 Conference on the Rights of Mother Earth and Climate Change which was held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, site of a famous popular movement to resist privatization of the city's water supply. The Cochabamba Conference brought together Inuits from Alaska with Amayra from the Andes, among many of the other ethnic minority groups around the world affected by climate change. This assembly offered high-profile evidence, writes Andrew Ross in *Bird on Fire* (Oxford UP, 2011), that environmentalism has "decisively outgrown its reputation as a feel-good cause for the affluent" and become a survival toolkit for the indigenous and rural poor of the global South (204). The meeting was also significant for calling attention to a political reconfiguration currently taking place in South America that is leading to adoption of policies and passage of legislation recognizing the "rights" of "Mother Earth" to exist in cycles of time as large as those calculated by the Mayan Long Count calendar. Ecuador, for example, has revised its constitution to grant "Pachamama" the right to maintain and regenerate its "life cycles, structures, functions, and evolutionary processes" [Asamblea Nacional Constituyente 2008, Chapter 7]).

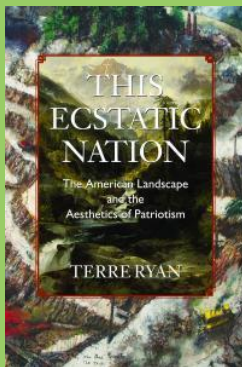
This month, ASLE's officers and Executive Council will meet to reflect on the organization's last twenty years and plan for its continued sustainable growth. They will gather at Biosphere 2, near Oracle, Arizona. Since being managed by Columbia University, and now, the University of Arizona, Biosphere 2 has become the site of some fascinating studies of how landscape and ecology co-evolve. But in its early days, eight biospherians entered the facility to live for two years among rare species of plants and animals collected from the rain forests and deserts of the world. Their mission was to discover how humans might survive environmental collapse. Financed by a Texas billionaire, the facility was widely parodied by creative writers and critiqued by journalists as an example of "biopiracy" and "eco-apartheid." In fact, like the "arks" in 2012, early exposés of B2 called attention to proliferating "green" communities from the U.S. to South Africa that are marketing sustainable lifestyles to the world's wealthiest people living behind secure gates that shield them from increasing patterns of chronic social inequity exacerbated by melting glaciers, desertification and flooding associated with climate change. While the writers of 2012 may have skewed their references to the Mayan Calendar, the film's "arks" could be seen, like early exposés of B2, as a critique of communities, states and nations building walls and fences meant to keep people from densely populated countries experiencing the



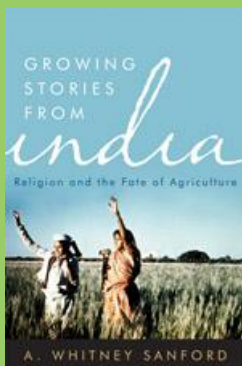
Deep Green Resistance rally, Occupy Oakland, Oakland, CA. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.



**Ryan, Terre.** *This Ecstatic Nation: The American Landscape and the Aesthetics of Patriotism.* Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.



**Sanford, A. Whitney.** *Growing Stories from India: Religion and the Fate of Agriculture.* Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2011.



**Sivaramakrishnan, Murali**

effects of climate change from moving to the more temperate zones of the North.

Biosphere 2, then, will be an interesting place to retreat for discussion of ASLE's Strategic Plan (<http://www.asle.org/site/about/policies/strategicplan/>) and its demographic, diversity and development goals, all of which aim to support our mission "to promote the understanding of nature and culture for a sustainable world by fostering a community of scholars, teachers, and writers who study the relationships among literature, culture, and the physical environment." Most importantly, new Vice President, Paul Outka, together with Ian Finseth (who will serve as local arrangements organizer at the University of North Texas) will launch the planning of our 2013 conference. In the next issue of ASLE News, we will update you on all these conversations and plans. Finally, a big congratulations to ASLE, for thriving into its 20th year. With 1400 members in 41 countries and growing, it looks like we are in for the Long Count!

## New Officers Join ASLE Leadership

As 2012 gets well underway, ASLE warmly welcomes our new officers, chosen in the annual fall election. Once again, members had several difficult choices to make; each candidate on the ballot brought a wealth of experience, outlined thoughtful goals for ASLE's future, and extended much goodwill. **Paul Outka** has been elected Vice President of ASLE for 2012 and will serve as President in 2013 and Immediate Past President in 2014. **Christoph Irmischer** and **Stephanie LeMenager** have been elected to the Executive Council as members-at-large, and will each serve three-year terms.



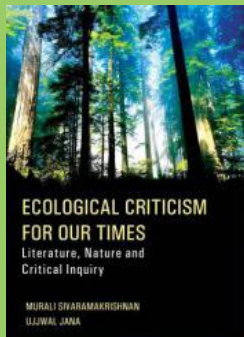
2012 ASLE Vice President Paul Outka

Outka currently teaches at the University of Kansas with a senior appointment in literature and science, with an ecocritical focus on nineteenth-century US literature and culture. His book *Race and Nature from Transcendentalism to the Harlem Renaissance* won ASLE's Book Award for ecocriticism at the 2009 conference in Victoria. Outka's ambitious and exciting plans in his leadership role with ASLE center around finding ways to "expand our membership and dialogue" with intersecting and overlapping fields at "the nexus of representation, nature, politics, science, aesthetics, and identity" where ASLE sits. "ASLE remains a collectivity united in its

commitment to planet and locality, but it brings difference to its conversations far more often than it has in the past," Outka explains. At ASLE's helm, he says his



(ed). *Ecological Criticism for Our Times: Literature, Nature and the Critical Inquiry*. Delhi: Authors Press, 2011.



**Taylor, Jesse O.**, Daniel C. Taylor, and Carl E. Taylor. *Empowerment on an Unstable Planet: From Seeds of Human Energy to a Scale of Global Change*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.



**Waugh, Charles and Huy Lien, eds.** *Family of Fallen Leaves: Stories of Agent Orange by Vietnamese Writers*. Translated by Charles Waugh, Huy Lien, Tran Thi Quynh Hoa, and Lena Le. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010.

"actions will be guided by a deep commitment to develop this emerging strength, working hard to make [ASLE] larger and more diverse, to help ecocriticism talk in a range of literal and theoretical languages, to not impose, explicitly or implicitly, a false consensus, but to strive for real ones."

Both newly elected Executive Council members bring a set of skills and interests that are sure to contribute to such goals. Irmscher, who served as local host for ASLE's recent conference at his home institution of the University of Indiana in Bloomington, explains that "in recent years, I have enjoyed extensive collaborative relationships with art historians, historians of science, and biologists, with the goal of developing, in constant conversation with the sciences, a workable concept of environmental humanities." The 2009 anthology Irmscher co-edited with art historian Alan Braddock, *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, is just one product of these conversations. LeMenager, of the University of California, Santa Barbara, also stresses the importance of conversation and collaboration. While serving on the Executive Council, LeMenager plans to "bring to ASLE emphases on direct engagement with corporate culture, activist publication in the digital commons, and collective arts practice in the service of ecological goals."

As we welcome our new officers, ASLE would also like to say a heartfelt thank you to those whose terms are coming to an end this year. First, Chia-ju Chang and Amy Patrick Mossman rotate off of the Executive Council as members-at-large. Their three-year terms have been active and productive, and their experience will undoubtedly be relied upon by ASLE in the years to come. Also, Annie Ingram ends her three-year term as Vice President, President, and, last year, Immediate Past President. As this year's Immediate Past President Ursula Heise noted in her announcement to members in mid-December, "Annie's commitment to linking ecocritical scholarship with pedagogy, activism, and the lived experience of diverse communities, as well as her foresight and discipline in leading ASLE and overseeing its remarkable growth, are models for anyone coming after her."

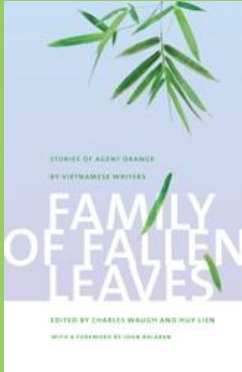
ASLE members are deeply grateful for the service of these individuals, and thrilled to welcome new voices to the leadership of the organization. Both new and existing officers will soon be getting down to work at ASLE's Officers Retreat, coming up in mid-February - look for news from the retreat in the Spring issue of *ASLE News*.

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## ASA Conference and ECC Business Meeting

by Ivan Grabovac, Mount Royal University (Canada)

The 2011 American Studies Association conference and Environment and Culture Caucus business meeting were held in November in Baltimore. As usual, the conference featured a number of fascinating environmentally-themed panels. In addition, the ECC sponsored two panels: "Fantasy, Reparation, and Ideology in the Environmental Imagination," featuring presentations by Erica Hannickel, Laura Rigal, Sarah Moore, and Brian McCammack; and "Imagining (and Transforming) the Future of Environmental Studies," a roundtable discussion with Joni Adamson, Stephanie LeMenager, Hsin-ya Huang, and Nik Heynen. Each year the ECC works to get as many environmentally-themed panels accepted to the conference as possible; then, after acceptance by the ASA Program Committee, ECC members vote to sponsor a panel. In 2011, for the first time, we were allowed to sponsor two panels.



**White, Steven F.** *Arando el aire: la ecología en la poesía y la música de Nicaragua.* Managua: 400 Elefantes/ Alcaldía Municipal de León, 2011.



*Injured Great Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus) rescued by Ohio Wildlife Center, Franklin County, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.*

the Early American Matters Caucus at a local pub, which is a great way to mingle informally, eat, drink, and be merry.

The 2012 ASA conference and ECC business meeting will be held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, from November 15-18. The deadline for session and individual paper proposals has already passed. The 2013 ASA conference and ECC business meeting will be held in Washington, DC, from November 21-24. The deadline for proposals should be in late January 2013. All proposal submitters must be current ASA members. Each panel submission should also include a second current ASA member; other panelists must become ASA members if their proposal is accepted.

Please visit our website, [http://www.theasa.net/caucus\\_environment/](http://www.theasa.net/caucus_environment/), for information about the Environment and Culture Caucus, or contact Ivan Grabovac at [igrabovac@mtroyal.ca](mailto:igrabovac@mtroyal.ca). To join our listserv, please contact Joni Adamson at [Joni.Adamson@asu.edu](mailto:Joni.Adamson@asu.edu).

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## ASLE Co-Sponsored Ecocriticism Panels at PAMLA 2011

by Jessica Carey and Kevin Hutchings, University of Northern British Columbia

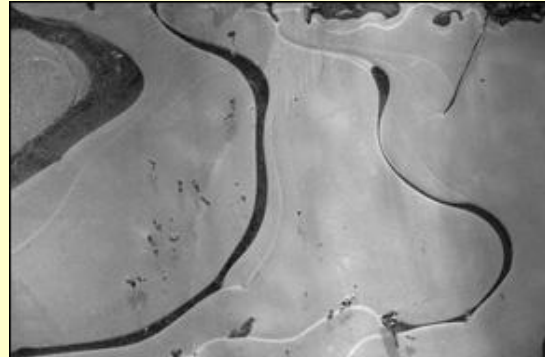
In 2011, for the second year in a row, ASLE joined forces with the Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association (PAMLA) to ensure that ecocriticism and environmental literature were well represented at PAMLA's annual conference. Held November 5-6 at Scripps College in Claremont, California, the conference-PAMLA's 109th annual meeting-featured two ASLE co-sponsored Ecocriticism panels, the first focused on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literatures and the second examining a range of topics in ecocritical theory and media studies.

The ECC also awards the Annette Kolodny Prize for the best paper on nature and culture presented at the ASA conference. The 2011 recipient was Stephanie LeMenager for her paper, "Aesthetics of Petroleum II: Petro-Melancholia and Gulf Coast Subsidence." The Kolodny Prize is generously supported by Orion Magazine and Duke University Press and includes a cash award.

At the ECC Business Meeting, which is open to everyone, we brainstorm proposals for sessions for the next conference and facilitate networking. We also co-host a reception with

Chaired by Kevin Hutchings, "Ecocriticism I" investigated related environmental and cultural concerns. Caroline Schaumann (Emory) opened the discussion by considering tensions between pastoral idealism in Albrecht von Haller's "Die Alpen" and "the harsh realities of rural labor" among actual members of the Alpine peasantry. Kathryn Dolan (South Florida) made a lively case for considering Harriet Beecher Stowe as "the Florida Thoreau," an avid

naturalist whose ecological interests were intertwined with her activist concern to improve the lives of free black plantation laborers. In the next paper, ASLE past-president Rochelle Johnson (The College of Idaho) offered nuanced readings of landscape, race, and Native American culture in Susan Fenimore Cooper's "Mission to the Oneidas," showing that while Cooper did not escape the racist assumptions of her era she nevertheless offered a strident and self-reflexive critique of settler culture's adverse effects on indigenous peoples and environments. Finally, John Miller (Northern British Columbia) considered representations of the Canadian fur trade in Victorian juvenile adventure fiction, showing how images of wildness and animality supported masculinist ideals of Victorian civility and imperial power.



Ice formations, Clear Creek Metro Park, Hocking County, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.

The second panel, "Ecocriticism II," was chaired by Jessica Carey, and examined the ecocritical provocations of a range of cultural texts. Kyle Bladow (Nevada, Reno) began the discussion by positing the productive excess of "thinking oceanically" in his comparison of texts by Walt Whitman and J.M.G. Le Clézio. In the following paper, Melissa Yinger (California, Santa Cruz) discussed key questions in work by Derrida and Montaigne, identifying critically fruitful vulnerabilities in ontological and epistemological systems, as revealed by the philosophers' respective gestures to unresolvable absences of knowledge. Michelle Stuckey (Arizona State) explored our framing of environmental illness with reference to the films *Safe* and *Maquilopolis*, suggesting that our current individualistic, genetic readings of illness cannot fully capture the environmental dimensions of health. In the final paper, Tanya Torres (Hawai'i) argued that the video game *Portal* reflexively engages the speculative and imaginative possibilities of ethics, by calling into question the prescriptive norms of recognition-based, exclusively human ethical rubrics of care. While diverse in subject matter, together the panel's papers made a compelling contribution to ecocriticism through their shared emphasis on the various ways that life spills beyond the edges of any given human framework of meaning.

In addition to the ASLE co-sponsored panels, PAMLA 2011 hosted two plenary talks focusing on the Environmental Humanities. In the first plenary, entitled "Towards an Aesthetic of Environmentality: Narrating and Depicting Nature in the Age of Environmentalism," PAMLA president Sabine Wilke (Washington) examined works by Georg Forster and Alexander von Humboldt, arguing for their status as "foundational texts in the emergence of a modern notion of the environment." ASLE's president, Ursula Heise, gave the second plenary talk, which was entitled "Plasmatic Nature: Environmentalist Thought and Animated Film." Heise argued that the conventions of animated film, especially key examples of Japanese animation, undermine the supposed mastery and autonomy of "the human" by insisting upon the intrinsic dynamism of natural systems. She demonstrated how such films produce this effect through their insistence upon both blurring the

distinction between the animate and the inanimate, and continually representing bodies as having a seemingly infinite capacity to mutate into other forms, shapes, and sizes. Ultimately, such representations render a world in which the capacities of the species or ecosystem supersede the impact of the individual, providing us with a critical opportunity to rework our notions of agency and responsibility.

In addition to the Ecocriticism panels and the plenary talks, PAMLA also included two panels on Animals as Self/Other, which echoed the "Species, Space, and the Imagination of the Global" theme of the 2011 ASLE conference. These panels featured papers analyzing PETA's representation of vegetarianism, reading Swift's Gulliver as an animal other, and exploring human-animal kinship in slavery narratives, among others.

All in all, the 2011 PAMLA conference demonstrated that ecocriticism is alive and thriving on the west coast. Hopefully the trend will continue when PAMLA's 110th annual meeting convenes next October 19-21 at Seattle University in Washington. Towards that end, please consider responding to the ASLE co-sponsored Ecocriticism panel CFP, which is posted online at <http://www.asle.org/site/papers/asle-conferences/> and [www.pamla.org](http://www.pamla.org).

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## In Memoriam: James J. Tarter

By Joni Adamson, John Hausdoerffer, Robert Jackson, Sean Prentiss, Rachel Stein, Noël Sturgeon, Michael Wasson and many other colleagues, students and friends

We were saddened last October when we heard news of the passing of Dr. James Tarter, an Associate Professor at Lewis-Clark State College in Idaho. Jim was an important member of our intellectual and political community. He was particularly important to his Nez Perce students in Idaho. His advisee, Michael Wasson ('acqa) remembers him as "a great teacher and outstanding friend of many of us here at LCSC. He was the professor who taught Native American Literature and advocated for the understanding of historical and generational trauma."

Another of his former students, Robert Jackson, now a professor at the University of Tulsa, also remembers him as his teacher in the mid-90s in Los Angeles. "His course on the contemporary US novel was, I realize in retrospect, one of the reasons I became an Americanist. It was full of books I had never encountered but which I've spent many years reading and teaching since, including works by Silko, Pynchon, Cisneros, Morrison, and others. Jim was an extremely thoughtful guy-- sensitive to the varied dynamics of the classroom, attuned to each student's distinct resources, deeply invested in the texts before us, and openly passionate about the values he located therein: ecology, community, culture, and the vocation of the scholar." Robert reconnected with Jim at the ASLE 2003 convention in Boston where Jim encouraged Robert to "trust his own ideas and share them in a spirit of openness and curiosity." Other ASLE members also vividly remember Jim at the 2003 conference. Tzu-I Chung and Yvonne Reineke remember him as "the sweetest and cutest man, chatting with us until midnight. We have never gone to an ASLE conference since without asking where he is and wondering how he is doing."



Northern Harrier Hawk (*Circus cyaneus*), Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park, Franklin County, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.

Jim was well published in some of the anthologies most familiar to ecocritics. He was perhaps best known, however, for "Some Live More Downstream than Others: Cancer, Gender, and Environmental Justice," the most reprinted essay from *The Environmental Justice Reader*, a piece often cited for moving readers beyond mere documentation of the hazards of environmental toxins to the human contexts that are often missing from social science analysis. Rachel Stein remembers not only the genesis of the essay, but its roots in discussions on diversity held at the ASLE 1999 conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan. "I met Jim," Rachel writes, "in the midst of efforts to form the Diversity Caucus." Later, she remembers

sitting on a stool at a diner and listening to the story of cancer in his family, and of how he had left an academic position in order to move in with his sister and care for her while she died. He spoke of how these experiences with cancer had changed the course of his life and shaped his understanding of environmental injustice. I was struck by Jim's open-hearted willingness to put career aside in order to tend his sister, to pursue generous and humane action, even at cost to himself. Jim carried those values into his teaching and scholarship, that inspiring mix of heart, insight, and intelligence that makes academic work worthwhile.

Friend Noël Sturgeon adds, in reference to his now famous *EJ Reader* essay about his sister, "many of us have depended on his clear, complex writing to stir the imagination and understanding of our students." In describing Jim's accomplishment in this essay, Rachel Stein writes, "Jim was someone who achieved what Adrienne Rich describes as learning to connect 'the pain of any one's body with the pain of the body's world.'"

Jim was a gentle and caring person, who gave endlessly of his time for the well-being of his family (including his dogs), students, friends and his community. Many remember him for chance discussions. During a fellowship year at the University of Oregon, Cate Sandilands remembers that Jim (who was teaching there at the time), always made her feel welcome. He was a "gentle soul indeed, and a great thinker: potent combination." Annie Ingram remembers a conference in Reno. "We played hooky from sessions, and took a long walk through town in search of good coffee, sharing stories of cancer survival. Before that walk, we knew each other only casually, but after those few hours of soul-searching talk, I felt privileged indeed to have had that time with him."

Sean Prentiss and John Hausdoerffer remember a time in January of 2003 when they were in the backcountry of Idaho. After an hour long ski in deep powder, they



reached the summit of Moscow Mountain and looked out over the rolling white waves of the Palouse. As the wind blew through the conifers and they were poling their way home from the mountain, they were talking about clear-cutting, debating its sustainability, and beginning a discussion of how they might present the issues of environmental justice and sustainability to their graduate students. In mid-conversation, they turned a corner and saw the back of a man skiing alone. At the sound of their voices, he turned and waved. "His graying hair was wild and unruly, like the overgrown forest." He said, "*I heard you two talking about Moscow Mountain. It's a pretty great place, huh?*" Each party had dogs, who met, tangling in the snow. "*Hi, I'm Jim,*" he said, taking off his gloves, shaking their hands, and adding, "*You've never skied to the giant cedars? You've got to.*" They followed Jim, ducking into the forest, laughing and screaming through those cedars--unfettered play. Then Jim stopped, smiling pure joy. "*Did I overhear you guys talking earlier about environmental justice?*"

After that day, Jim became mentor and friend to Sean and John, even helping one to find his "dream job." Another time, they went to his house for a planned bike ride, but he wasn't there. Jim had seen smoke from a house fire across town and had abruptly left for the clean air of the mountains. Having survived cancer himself, he did not want to risk breathing fumes that might irritate dormant cells. Sean and John now see his empty house as a visceral reminder that Jim never forgot those lost to invisible risks. Now having often taught Jim's most important essay, Sean and John teach their own students that literature and ecocriticism are not merely academic exercises--they can be matters of life and death. And because of this, Jim's life reminds them "to experience every day fully and to love completely the very things we write and fight for." They "can still hear his laugh through those trees. Jim in the giant cedars."

Jim spent a Fulbright semester at Tamkang University in Taiwan, teaching and doing research on environmental justice issues. With his beloved colleagues Yang Ming-tu and Chen Chi-szu, and his students Chang Ya-lan and Wu Jeong-shaiu, he had many long and deep talks and cheerful walks up YangMing and other mountains. Upon hearing the news of Jim's passing, Chen Chi-szu said he believes that the "mountains and rivers of the four directions miss him."

Jim had been at work for some years on a book examining contemporary American fiction emerging from the American Southwest. He often made his base for research the home of his friend Joni Adamson. Together, they explored the Huachuca, Tucson and Catalina mountains, where he was studying the work of Leslie Marmon Silko and Simon Ortiz. There were many discussions that spanned topics as serious as Silko's notion of the "destroyers" to those more mundane, like the healthfulness of oatmeal, yogurt and yoga. On the last of these visits, made during Jim's sabbatical three years ago, he brought his old dog, who could walk haltingly, but not jump, or go up stairs. "*This will be her last trip to the Southwest,*" he said. "*But I don't want her to miss seeing this place she loves one last time.*" Jim would gently gather his beloved old girl into his arms each time they got into and out of his battered-up truck, its bed filled to brim with bike, tent, and assorted camping gear. When they left, Joni stood on the stoop, waving goodbye to the old girl, her head in the open passenger window, her nose sniffing the air. Jim was at the wheel, a big smile on his face as he turned his truck toward the painted deserts of the Navajo Nation, a memory that Joni will treasure forever.

Rachel Stein poignantly recalls the day that Jim told her of a hike he took to visit the place he scattered his sister's ashes. He discovered that "some of the shards had been transformed by exposure, and that they now glistened various colors in the sun." Rachel likes to think that "shards of him are now, too, weathering and catching the light." Professor Yang Ming-tu of Tamkang University adds that "we should not feel sad. Jim is out for a long journey. He is now free like the wind,

crossing a nexus of rebirth in a new territory of time and space and he will be back." Jim's friends have picked a spot on Moscow Mountain where they are planning to install a hand-hewn cedar bench in his memory, just below the summit, looking west.

For pictures and more memories of Jim, visit the "Honoring Jim Tarter" Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Honoring-Jim-Tarter/231985426857627>.

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## ASLE at SAMLA 2011

by Jim Clark, Barton College

ASLE was well represented at the 2011 South Atlantic Modern Language Association (SAMLA) convention in Atlanta, Georgia. Two "affiliated groups" sessions were held, both on the topic of "Spiritualized Nature." The first session on Saturday, November 5, chaired by George Hovis (SUNY-Oneonta), featured four papers: "Closing the Southern Sublime: A Liturgy of Trees in the Poetry of John Lane" - Tara Powell (U. of South Carolina), "Spiritual Autobiography in Primatology Field Narratives: *Reflections of Eden* and *Bonobo Handshake*" - Mary Sanders Pollock (Stetson U.), "Spiritualized Nature: Brian Friel's Irish Paganism in *Dancing at Lughnasa*" - Richard Rankin Russell (Baylor U.), and "Is Ecocriticism Too Provincial?: Beyond the Geocentrism of Green Studies" - Timothy J. Burbery (Marshall U.).

The second session on Sunday, November 6, chaired by Richard Rankin Russell (Baylor U.), also featured four papers: "'Green' Grace: The Heart's Heya-Hey" - Val Czerny (East Georgia College), "What Is the End of Man?: Thoreau's Debt to Puritan Theology" - Jeffrey Bilbro (Baylor U.), "Jaccottet and the Sacrament of Language" - Lynn Anderson (U. of West Georgia), and "Something Deeply Interfused: Spiritualized Nature in the Fiction of Connie May Fowler" - Laura S. Head (U. of South Florida).



Ice formations, Clear Creek Metro Park, Hocking County, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.

For the 2012 SAMLA convention, to be held in November in Raleigh/Durham, NC, Richard Rankin Russell will again chair an ASLE-affiliated panel, titled "Form and Literature of the Environment." In the CFP for the panel, Dr. Russell writes, "While Coleridge's concept of organic form was an important one for some Romantic poets, form remains an under-theorized aspect of much contemporary writing on

literature and the environment. If form and content are one, as Bakhtin claims, then how do particular literary forms illuminate aspects of literature about the environment?" Please send 250-word abstracts for proposed papers to Dr. Russell ([Richard.Russell@baylor.edu](mailto:Richard.Russell@baylor.edu)) by May 1, 2012.

## International Conference on Romanticism CFP

A Special Session of the International Conference on Romanticism 2012 (<http://english.clas.asu.edu/icr2012>) is being organized with the theme "Romanticism and Catastrophe: Ecocritical Perspectives." The conference will take place at Arizona State University, November 8-12, 2012.

Members of ASLE and its affiliates are invited to submit paper proposals for this special session, which is intended to bring an ecocritical perspective to the conference theme of "Catastrophes" in relation to Romantic literature, philosophy, and/or science (<http://english.clas.asu.edu/icr2012-specialsessions>). Please submit paper proposals and abstracts to [Kate.Rigby@monash.edu.au](mailto:Kate.Rigby@monash.edu.au) by April 1, 2012.

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## ASLE Off-Year Symposium Travel Awards

by Sarah Jaquette Ray, Conference Co-Chair

Decisions about the International and Graduate student \$500 travel awards have been made for next summer's off-year symposium, "Environment, Culture, and Place in a Rapidly Changing North," to be held June 14-17, 2012, at the University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau. The graduate student travel awards are going to: Allison Athens, UC Santa Cruz, for her paper, "Making the Way Clear: Becoming Worldly with Seals"; Will Elliot, UC Davis, for his paper, "Losing Alaska to the Name Itself?: Formal and Material Anti-Essentialism in Wilderness Memoirs of Seth Kantner and John Haines"; Joshua P. Griffin, U. Washington, for his paper, "Resilient Identiteis: Risk, Resistance, and Religion in the Arctic North"; and Breanne Reinfort, U. Manitoba, for her paper, "Challenging Colonialism in Communication: The Community-Based Mercury Message." The International Travel Award is going to Hsinya Huang, National Sun Yat-sen U in Taiwan, for her paper, "Global Environment and Local Knowledge in the Arctic North and Trans-Pacific Texts of Ocean and Animals." It's wonderful to be able to set aside some funds for this, and we received many excellent requests and proposals.

Conference registration should open in the next week, see the website for updated information: <http://www.uas.alaska.edu/asle/>.



*Ice formations, Clear Creek Metro Park, Hocking County, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.*

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## Report on the 1st Cross-Strait Ecoliterature Seminar

by Professor Guangwu Xia, Xiamen University

The 1<sup>st</sup> Cross-Strait Ecoliterature Seminar was held in Xiamen, China, October 29-30, 2011. The seminar was hosted by the Team of Ecoliterature Studies at Xiamen University (TESXU) and the Humanities College and the Department of Chinese at Xiamen University, and it was sponsored by ASLE-Taiwan and the Department of English at Tamkang University in Taiwan, and by Renmin University, Tsinghua University, and Shandong Normal University in mainland China. More than sixty scholars from mainland China and Taiwan attended this first collaborative conference for the purpose of discussing ecoliterature.

Professor Sun Shigang, the Deputy Principal of Xiamen University, opened the conference by commenting on the remarkable importance of the first cross-strait ecoliterature seminar. He indicated that the environmental crisis was a common crisis for all human beings, so both mainland China and Taiwan must face reality and cooperate to find a new way to cultivate innovative and reflective approaches to eco-cultural development. As the official representative of the host university, Professor Sun promised that Xiamen University would dedicate more effort in the future to improving campus green spaces, the recycling system, and ways of saving energy as well as supporting student activities devoted to environmental protection.

Papers at the conference fell into three categories: Research on Ecoliterature Theory, Research on Cross-strait Ecoliterature, and Research on Foreign Ecoliterature. Two distinguished speakers opened the conference. They were Professor Zeng Fanren and Professor Gao Boyuan. Zeng, a philosopher, analyzed the relation between Eco-aesthetics and anthropocentrism. He argued that when people rediscover the true beauty of nature, anthropocentrism will decline. Gao described ancient Chinese philosopher Xun Zi's wisdom as a way of approaching environmental ethics.

Papers presented in the conference's regular sessions explored a wide range of topics, but the most obvious emphasis was on how to use Chinese ancient wisdom or philosophy to address modern ecological and environmental issues. Modern Chinese literature was also covered in some reports, especially eco-writing and anti-ecowriting in recent Chinese novels. Some papers focused on indigenous people in Taiwan. A number of researchers mentioned the importance of modern western ecoliterary works, such as the writings of Edward Abbey, Linda Hogan, Alice Walker, and Margaret Atwood. Others discussed classical authors ranging from Tao Yuanming to Herman Melville. Well-known speakers at the conference included Professors Li Jianqiu, Lu Shuyuan, Yang Chunshi, Fu Xiuyan, Lin Yaofu, Huang Yiming, Huang Hsinya, Liang Yiping, and Ruan Xiuli, among many others. One session gave famous Chinese eco-poets the opportunity to present their work to the assembled scholars.

Interesting debates erupted at the conference. Scholars like Zeng Fanren, Gao Boyuan, Huang Hsinya, and Ruan Xiuli had heated discussions about anthropocentrism. Liu Bei, Cheng Xiangzhan, Fang Hong, Hu Zhihong, and Wang Nuo presented competing ideas about the terms "ecoliterature" and "environmental literature." Lu Shuyuan and Wang Xiaohua debated the fundamental validity of ecocriticism.





Seasonal waterfall, Conkle's Hollow State Nature Preserve, Hocking County, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.

One of the central arguments of the conference occurred when Liu Bei and conference host Wang Nuo discussed the pros and cons of Lawrence Buell's phrase "environmental criticism." Wang insisted "ecocriticism" was the best term to develop because the word was neutral and anti-anthropocentric, but Liu felt "environmental criticism" was a useful phrase because it implied more breadth. Afterwards, former Dean of the College of Foreign Languages at Tamkang University, Professor Lin Yaofu, concluded that the argument revealed that scholars in the Far East have started questioning the fundamental ideas in the field, which bodes well for the future of this work.

The closing ceremony was held right after the debate about clarifying ecological-environmental terminology. Senior scholars Lin Yaofu from Taiwan and Zeng Fanren from mainland China offered closing speeches, urging scholars to go

out of their study rooms and observe the real outside world, just as members of Xiamen's Ecoliterature Study Team routinely do when they leave the campus and hike in the nearby mountains or on the beach next to the university.

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## ASLE Emeritus

ASLE would like to congratulate long-time member **Thomas C. Bailey** on his retirement. Bailey writes for *ASLE News*: "I am retiring from WMU at the end of this semester, after a 48 year career in college teaching. I taught my first classes at the University of Missouri in 1963; taught from 1964 to '66 at Westminster College in Fulton Missouri, from 1966 to '69 at Washington University, and from 1970 until next month at Western Michigan University, in Kalamazoo, MI. Walt Isle and I hosted the third ASLE Conference in Kalamazoo in 1999.

I found my way into the study of 'nature writing,' as did many of us old hands, by reading Rachel Carson, Annie Dillard, John McPhee, Edwards Abbey, and Edward Hoagland, as they appeared in print, for pleasure and education, writers who seemed consonant with my interests in Wordsworth, Keats, George Eliot, Walt Whitman. So, when Terrell Dixon told me, at the national meeting of The Association of English Departments in Galveston in 1994, about a new organization called ASLE, which at that time met at national meetings of WLA, I knew I'd better get my butt to Salt Lake City that fall, and sign up. It was the most pleasing and rewarding shift in a long career, one that has, like all careers, had its variations, but which has an arc that is defined by the relationship of literature to the natural

world. I retire as a professor of both English and Environmental Studies.

I plan to start publishing a regular blog about the 65 acre plot of ground Katherine and I have lived on for the last 10 years and which we hopefully and belatedly call The Farm. I walk my dog there several times daily; it is Michigan farmland/woods which, for 71 years, has lain fallow. It recovers slowly, is under continuing assault by old invasives such as garlic mustard and autumn olive, and suffers new insults such as the emerald ash borer and Asian bittersweet. Yet, it daily offers Ferris and me its quiet, patient beauty.

In 1994, my personal life was wrenched by the dreadful accidental death of my daughter, Kate; discovering ASLE that year helped me heal, and having been allowed to participate in ASLE is, for me, the saving grace of my subsequent professional life."

ASLE also congratulates **Bonnie Scott** on her retirement at the end of August, 2011, from San Diego State University. As Scott says, she is "fairly new to ASLE," and in her retirement she "look[s] forward to more diverse writing on the environment and know[s] ASLE will be of help." Most recently, Scott was Professor and Chair of Women's Studies, in which role she introduced a course on "Women and the Environment" to the curriculum. She has a book forthcoming from the University of Virginia Press titled *In the Hollow of the Wave: Virginia Woolf and Modernist Uses of Nature*.

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## Member News

Past ASLE President and current Executive Secretary **Karla Armbruster** (Webster University, St. Louis, MO) recently received the "Distinguished New Course Award" for her course "Perspectives: Werewolves, Seal Wives, Grizzly Men and Other Metamorphoses," as part of the 13th Annual Animals and Society Course Awards from The Humane Society of the United States and Animals and Society Institute. As the press release about the awards stated, "These prestigious awards recognize college and university classes that explore the relationships between animals and people. 'We have honored courses in several dozen disciplines since the launch of the awards in 1998, and this year's entries reflect the fantastic growth of animal studies during that time,' said Kenneth Shapiro, Ph.D., executive director of the Animals and Society Institute. 'The increasing presence of animal studies courses within institutions of higher education worldwide is a true marker of expanding interest in the human-animal bond,' said Dr. Bernard Unti, senior policy adviser and special assistant to the CEO of The HSUS. Judges from The HSUS and the Animals and Society Institute evaluated the submissions using criteria such as depth and rigor within the topic, impact on the study of animals and society, and originality of approach. The academic departments of the course award winners will each receive \$1,500."

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## ASLE News Notes

### ASLE-SFRA Listserv Launched

Eric Otto and Chris Pak, liaisons for the ASLE and ASLE-UKI affiliations with the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA), respectively, recently announced the launch of the ASLE-SFRA Listserv. As the ecocritical study of science fiction continues to grow, the pair hope that this listserv will be a place to share ideas, to announce conferences and CFPs, to discuss courses and texts-in general, to engage in collegial conversation about the intersections between science fiction and environmental thought, and why these intersections matter. They invite all ASLE and ASLE-UKI members to join. Please follow the instructions below to subscribe to the ASLE-SFRA Listserv:

- 1). Click on <http://list.fgcu.edu/cgi-bin/majordomo?module=browse>.
- 2). Enter your email address in the appropriate box, then click "All" under "Browse Which Lists?" Click "Go."
- 3). On the next screen, click "AsleSfra" under "List Name."
- 4). On the next screen, click "Apply."
- 5). Check your email to confirm subscription.

The list address to post messages is: [aslesfra@list.fgcu.edu](mailto:aslesfra@list.fgcu.edu).

### Member News

Whether you got a new job, won an award, or did something interesting, enlightening, or exciting, we want to know what you're up to! If you have some news to share with other ASLE members, and it doesn't "fit" into the Bookshelf, PhD, or Emeritus categories, please contact Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)) with the Subject heading "Member News."

### ASLE Emeritus

ASLE News honors those ASLE members retired or retiring from teaching. If you would like to acknowledge someone in this new feature--or if you yourself will be retiring during the coming academic year--please contact Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)). We will include a brief account of scholarly interests, the institutions of employment and years taught in the next newsletter.

### ASLE PhDs

Have you or one of your students recently defended a dissertation? If so, ASLE News wants to know. Each issue, we include announcements commemorating those members who have recently completed their doctoral work. If you would like to be included in this feature, please contact Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)) with the dissertation title, degree-granting institution, and committee members.