



Dear EASLCE members,  
let me begin with an encouraging piece of statistics: sometime during the past two months or so, EASLCE has passed the mark of 100 members – an increase of almost 50% since our last biannual conference in La Laguna, about a year ago. Our new members come from a wide range of national and disciplinary backgrounds, and what is even more heartening is the fact that a large share of them are graduate and doctoral students. I regard this as a sign of the growing vigor and maturity of ecocriticism in Europe (although it probably also has something to do with the fact that membership dues can now be paid via Paypal, making it much easier to join EASLCE ... we are still working to improve the website, although all the major renovations are now done; if you encounter any difficulties, especially with the new input mask for member profiles, please drop us an email!).

Supporting the next generation of scholars in the environmental humanities is, of course, a primary goal of our organization. For that reason, we were very pleased to be able to provide some support to the recently held post-graduate forum on ecocriticism and globalization, organized by Hannah Strass, Antonia Mehnert, and Karsten Levihn-Kutzler at the University of Frankfurt (see the report in this newsletter). We are hoping that this will develop into an annual event over the next few years, with broader international participation and regular changes of venue, and we will do what we can to realize this goal. We are also planning to coordinate future post-graduate forums with EASLCE's webinar offerings.

On a related note, I want to draw your attention to the upcoming EASLCE graduate student essay

contest (see the announcement in this newsletter). In the past two years, participation was not what we would have wished it to be, so we rely on you: please spread the word among your students and peers, or, if you happen to be a graduate student or doctoral candidate, submit a piece of your own!

Another positive development that deserves mentioning is the fact that two major scholarly associations in Germany – the German Association for General and Comparative Literary Studies (DGAVL) and the German Association for American Studies (DGfA) – have chosen the theme of ecology for their annual conferences in 2014. While the call for papers for the former conference is already closed, the one for the DGfA's conference on the topic of "America after Nature: Democracy, Culture, Environment," which will be organized by EASLCE's former treasurer, Catrin Gersdorf, at the University of Würzburg, will be released soon.

*(to be continued on page 3)*

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<http://www.easlce.eu>

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How to become a member of  
EASLCE

Please, visit our web site at:

<http://www.easlce.eu>

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Please note the **editorial  
deadline** for the next issue:

**December 15, 2013**

Contact: Sylvia Mayer at  
[sylvia.mayer\(at\)uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:sylvia.mayer(at)uni-bayreuth.de)

So keep an eye out for the announcements on our listserver and website – we hope for lively participation by our members!

Preparations for our own biannual conference in Tartu, next April, are well on their way – see the call for papers in this newsletter and make sure you don't miss the deadline for submissions on October 1<sup>st</sup>! Closer on the horizon, of course, is this year's annual membership meeting (AGM), for which ASLE-UKI have graciously offered us a timeslot during their biannual conference at the University of Surrey, on August 31<sup>st</sup>. The agenda for this meeting, which we will be sending out via the listserver shortly, will be a little bit more crowded than is usually the case for off-year AGMs: We need to decide on a few changes to our bylaws, concerning administrative procedures,

which will bring us into better compliance with the German legal framework for registered associations. We will email these suggested changes along with the agenda. An equally important but decidedly less boring item for discussion will be the possibility of lending limited support to EASLCE members who plan to organize ecocritical conferences during off-years if these could serve as a venue for our AGM. The next such occasion would arise in 2015. If you are interested in this possibility, or know someone who might be, please do let us know as soon as possible.

So enjoy the summer, and I hope to see many of you in Surrey or, if not there, in Tartu!

**Hannes Bergthaller**

## EASLCE Biennial Conference / Tartu, Estonia

### **2014 EASLCE-NIES Joint Conference – Framing Nature: Signs, Stories, and Ecologies of Meaning – University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia, April 22-26, 2014**

#### ***The European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and the Environment (EASLCE) Biennial Conference***

#### ***Nordic Network for Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies (NIES) IX. Conference***

#### ***Confirmed keynote speakers:***

Wendy Wheeler (London Metropolitan University)  
Ernest Hess-Lüttich (University of Bern)  
Steven Hartman (Mid Sweden University; Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm) and Thomas McGovern (City University of New York)

“No meaning without a frame” – thus one might boil down the insights yielded by a century of research in the humanities. To interpret something as meaningful is to put it into a context, into a frame of reference within which it can begin to make sense. This holds not only for human signification, but also for the processes of signification that occur in the natural world, as they have been studied by biosemiotics. In a double

take on its title, this conference inquires into the multiple, complex ways in which humans frame nature and are in turn framed by it. It seeks to explore the figure of the frame as an ecological concept which draws attention to the way in which meanings are embedded in and sustained by environments that are at once material and semiotic. At the same time, it invites a closer examination of the strategies of framing and contextualization that are constitutive of ecocritical research, as well as a comparison of ecocritical methodologies with those of neighbouring disciplines in the environmental humanities.

In turning their attention to the way in which natural environments and human cultures have mutually shaped each other, ecocriticism and environmental history can be said to have subverted the traditional hierarchy which subordinates the frame to that which it frames, in a manner reminiscent of Derrida's logic of the supplement. The issue of

framing immediately opens up a host of profound theoretical questions for the environmental humanities. Jakob von Uexküll's theory of "Umwelt" can be seen as conceptualizing the way in which living organisms frame the natural world, each constituting its own environment through the limitations imposed by its perceptual apparatus. Juri Lotman described artistic texts as secondary modelling systems by demonstrating how they reassemble the subject matter according to the rules of the genre, narrative and cultural epochs – an approach with important implications for environmental mimesis. Gregory Bateson, in his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, emphasised the surrounding contexts and environments that precede and surpass all frames and form the prerequisites of any signifying action.

Humans frame nature through visual representations, through the language they use to describe it, and through the stories they tell about it. Sometimes, framing nature entails attributing meanings that are alien to it, even levelling fraudulent accusations, as happened to the wolf in European fairy tales. In framing nature, human collectives also frame themselves: throughout modern history, particular landscapes were idealized as stages for the drama of national self-identification – often by eliding the material processes which had shaped them. Conflicts between different peoples or social groups over the use of natural resources are always also conflicts between different ways of framing nature, which can be told as stories of material and semiotic exclusion. In this context, the translation and transformation of nature representations across linguistic and cultural boundaries, as well as across different genres and media, gains particular salience.

***Possible topics for contributions include, but are not limited to***

- Agency, signs, and stories in living and non-living nature
- Local natural histories, local knowledge and nature representations
- Mapping, modelling and storytelling as ways of cognitively framing nature
- Ecotranslatology: translating nature and nature writing
- Scale effects: temporal and spatial frames in nature and nature representations

- Cultural ecology and ecosemiotics: how do cultural and natural sign systems interact?
- Comparative methodology: how do different disciplines within the environmental humanities frame their objects of study?
- The framing of environmental cognition and conduct in science and policy discourses
- The role of mass media and popular culture in shaping environmental consciousness

***Submission***

To submit a proposal, interested scholars should e-mail an abstract (up to 500 words) for the 20 minute presentation to the address: [framing\\_nature@semiootika.ee](mailto:framing_nature@semiootika.ee). Abstract should be sent as a separate one-page file (.doc or .rtf; download the abstract form [here](#)). Preformed panels (3 presentations) are welcome. The deadline for the abstracts is October 1, 2013. The conference "Framing Nature: Signs, Stories, and Ecologies of Meaning" has an international advisory board. All presentation abstracts will be peer-reviewed.

***Organisers***

The conference is organized by the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and the Environment (EASLCE) and the Nordic Network for Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies (NIES). The conference is hosted by the Department of Semiotics at the University of Tartu in cooperation with the Department of Literature and Theatre Research at the University of Tartu, the Estonian Semiotics Association and the Centre for Environmental History (KAJAK).

***Supporters***

The conference is supported by the European Union European Regional Development Fund (CECT, EU/Estonia), the Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics at the University of Tartu and the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society.

***Contact***

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### – EASLCE Prize for Best Graduate Student Essay in European Ecocriticism –

The European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and the Environment (EASLCE) sponsors a prize for the Best Graduate Student Essay in European Ecocriticism. It consists in a bursary of 400 Euro to help cover the costs of attending the next EASLCE conference (at the University of Tartu, Estonia, in April 2014), as well as publication of the prize-winning essay in our journal Ecozon@.

All students currently enrolled in an M.A. or Ph.D. program are eligible. The essay must be previously unpublished. Unless the author is enrolled at a

European university, the essay must engage explicitly with European literature or ecocritical theory. It must be written in English, following the author guidelines of Ecozon@ (available at [www.ecozona.eu](http://www.ecozona.eu)). Deadline for submission is November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. The winner will be announced on the EASLCE webpage by the end of that month, and the essay will be included in the Spring 2014 issue of Ecozon@.

Please email submissions **by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013** to the selection committee at:

[graduate-essay-prize@easlce.eu](mailto:graduate-essay-prize@easlce.eu)

## International Projects / Call for Contribution

### – New Ecomedia Interest Group –

Scholars in North America and Europe are currently building an Ecomedia Interest Group with the intention to promote the exploration of non-print media and the environment.

Ecomedia studies ([www.ecomediastudies.org/](http://www.ecomediastudies.org/)) encompasses a wide range of subject areas, including film, photography, new media, digital humanities, video games, data visualization, music and sound studies, comics, and other forms of visual and audio art and rhetoric that intersect with environmental understandings. The Ecomedia Interest Group sets out to explore such questions as: How do we negotiate between our interest in ecocriticism and our primary disciplines? How do we make resources in the field available to newcomers? What questions at issue within the field have yet to be addressed? Who are our audiences and how do we find them?

After an initial meeting at the ASLE conference, which drew about 30 people, the list of interested members has grown to more than 80. Over the next few weeks the initiators of the interest group, Salma Monani and Stephen Rust, will be working with ASLE on the best way to coordinate the

American branch of the group. The EASLCE branch of the group will be coordinated by Alexa Weik von Mossner.

Here is an abbreviated version of Stephen Rust's summary of the four action items that have been so far discussed by the group:

- 1) The group would like to see a plenary speaker at the biennial ASLE conference whose work speaks directly to its interests.
- 2) The group expressed interest in creating a Facebook page and developing a more visible web presence and online community to share ideas and resources. Thanks to Nicole Seymour we now have an Ecomedia group Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ecomediagroup/>.
- 3) There is significant interest in organizing an off-year ASLE symposium focused on ecomedia studies. Literary scholars would be encouraged to attend but the primary focus of the conference would be non-print media.

4) This year, ASLE sponsored a panel at the International Environmental Communications Association conference held in Uppsala, Sweden June 6-10. The group also expressed its desire to participate in a concerted effort to organize an environmental interest group within the Society for Cinema and Media Studies and to continue to reach out to the IECA and other organizations.

The EASLCE branch of the group will be coordinated with these efforts; however, we should also think about what actions and developments we would like to see in Europe and within EASLCE. To this purpose, we are planning to hold a meeting at the upcoming EASLCE conference in

Tartu, where interested members can meet to discuss interests and possible actions. Alexa Weik von Mossner and Nicole Seymour have also offered to organize one or several preformed ecomedia panels at the conference and will post a separate CFP for those panels on the EASLCE listserv.

If you are interested in joining the Ecomedia Interest Group as an EASLCE member, please **send an email to Alexa at [Alexa.WeikvonMossner@aau.at](mailto:Alexa.WeikvonMossner@aau.at)**. You do not have to be a film or media studies scholar in order to do so – an interest in the ecocritical dimensions of film and visual culture is all that is needed!

Alexa Weik von Mossner

## International Graduate Workshop / Report

### **1st ELC Postgraduate Workshop: – Ecocriticism and Globalization – Goethe-University Frankfurt/Main, Germany, June 21-22, 2013**

The postgraduate forum “Environment, Literature, Culture” (ELC) conducted their first workshop titled “Ecocriticism and Globalization” from June 21 – 22, at Goethe-University Frankfurt/Main, Germany. The workshop discussions and poster presentations thematically dealt with issues at the intersection of ecocriticism and globalization studies. In a lively and dynamic atmosphere 17 participants, PhD students and post-docs from Germany, Sweden and Austria, discussed questions such as: in how far is ecocriticism increasingly concerned with topics of global relevance, what terminologies might be useful to discuss literature from an ecoglobal perspective, do we see the emergence of new genres and finally how are issues of environmental justice taken into consideration in recent eco-global discussions.

On Friday afternoon, the workshop started off with a keynote lecture on “Ecocriticism, Economic Globalisation, and Disaster” by Anthony Carrigan (University of Leeds, RCC Munich), which highlighted the interconnections between environmental issues and the global distribution of

wealth, especially in the context of postcolonial societies. The subsequent discussion was opened by responses by Kylie Crane (Mainz University) and Roman Bartosch (Köln University). In the poster session that followed, the workshop participants had the opportunity to present their current research projects and to continue to discuss some of the issues raised during the keynote in smaller groups. Poster topics ranged from how early depictions of the Earth from space shaped our relationship to it (Sybille Machat, Flensburg), to local instances of indigenous irrigation methods, water misuse, questions of belonging and environmental injustice in Chicano communities and literature (Isabel Perez, Stockholm) and how Louie Psihoyos’ documentary *The Cove* translates the experience of ambiguity in Beck’s “world risk society” into narrative strategies (Michaela Castellano, Bayreuth). On the second day, the workshop participants discussed theoretical papers by David Harvey, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Erik Swyngedouw and others, which dealt with conceptual questions and terminology (the global, place/space, the Anthropocene, post-humanism) as well as with the

political and ethical implications of globalization for ecocritique and how these are reflected in literary works. Moreover, Matthias Klestil (Bayreuth) and Anne Pusch (Heidelberg) used the chance to present and discuss chapters of their own doctoral research projects on the African American Pastoral and the relationship between humans and dogs from a posthumanist perspective, respectively. The workshop concluded with a session in which the postdocs very generously shared their experiences concerning academic career planning, such as publishing the dissertation, applying for jobs and writing applications for third party funding.

All participants profited greatly from this networking opportunity and found the format to be very fruitful. They have agreed that the ELC forum should aim

at organizing such a workshop annually and in the meantime use the Blog and email listserv as a basis for further exchange.

The organizers would like to thank all the participants for their engaged contributions as well as the sponsors: the Rachel Carson Center (RCC), GRADE – Goethe Graduate Academy, the Department of New English Literatures and Cultures, Goethe University, and EASLCE.

***For further information you can visit our website:***

<http://docforumelc.wordpress.com/>

Karsten Levihn-Kutzler (Goethe University, Frankfurt), Antonia Mehnert (RCC, LMU, Munich), Hanna Straß (LMU, Munich)

## Publications by Members

Elisabeth Baldauf. *Literatur und Umwelt: Schreiben gegen die ökologische Krise in Mexiko*. Investigaciones. Forschungen zu Lateinamerika. Berlin and Münster: LIT, 2013.

Greta Gaard, Simon C. Estok and Serpil Oppermann, eds. *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge, 2013

Martin Simonson, David Rio and Amaia Ibarraran, eds. *A Contested West: New Readings of Place in the American West*. Wivenhoe, Colchester: PortalEditions, S.L., 2013.

Nicole Seymour. *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013.