



Dear EASLCE members,  
Happy New Year of the Horse! Chinese astrologers tell us that the “casual and outdoorsy Horse year is about freedom, returning to nature, and enjoying life and life’s adventures.” As it so happens, this is not the only sign that this will indeed be a good year for EASLCE. First of all, I should mention that preparations for the conference at the University of Tartu are well on track. With more than 140 papers, this will be by far the largest conference EASLCE has ever held – and there were many more paper proposals which the selection committee had to turn down, since we will already be straining that venerable institution to the limits of its capacity. We chose the theme for the conference (“Framing Nature”) and formulated the call for papers specifically with an eye towards promoting interdisciplinarity, and it appears that we have been successful in this regard: I haven’t taken an exact tally, but it is safe to say that an unusually large share of the papers fall within the wider ambit of the environmental humanities, rather than environmental literary studies in a narrow sense.

This will be the first EASLCE conference to include a poster session, coinciding with a reception for graduate and postgraduate students, on April 29th, 6:15-7:30pm. If you would like to present a poster there, please don’t forget to email the pdf-file to the conference organizers at [framing\\_nature@semiootika.ee](mailto:framing_nature@semiootika.ee) by **March 25th**.

The conference will also host EASLCE’s annual general membership meeting. I will soon send out the agenda for the AGM via the listserver, and it will also be posted on the website. Among the most important items will be the elections of new members to the advisory board, the president, and

a new vice-president. In keeping with our procedure in the past, the current vice-president, Juan Ignacio Oliva, will step up to the position of the president, and the executive committee proposes a candidate for the vice-presidency. We have asked Serpil Oppermann, who has already been serving on the organization’s advisory board for the past four years, whether she would be willing to stand for the vice-presidency, and are very pleased to announce that she has accepted our proposal. You can find her self-introduction in this newsletter, and it will also soon be posted on our website. On my own behalf, I would like to add that I consider Serpil to be in many ways the ideal candidate: not only is she a widely known presence in the international ecocritical community, but she has also been involved in the organizations’ affairs for many years. Anyone who has met her at international conferences will have noticed that she rarely travels without a flock of graduate students in tow – and this is only the most visible indicator of her long-standing commitment to support the next generation of ecocritics. Graduate students, take note!

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

**June 15, 2014**

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

Speaking of which: One of the significant changes marking this year will be that EASLCE's webinars will from now on be hosted jointly with the Postgraduate Forum "Environment, Literature, and Culture" (<http://docforumelc.wordpress.com/>). Hanna Strass and Michaela Castellanos have generously volunteered to coordinate these events. Our hope is that this will help to make them more attractive to graduate students and young researchers. The announcement for this year's first webinar, which will be hosted by Professor Hubert Zapf of the University of Augsburg on February 27th, can be found in this newsletter, as well as on our website.

On a related note, I am pleased to announce the winner for the 2013 graduate student essay award: it goes to Pippa Marland, of the University of Worcester, for the essay "'Heaps of scrap metal and defunct machinery': assemblages, ethics and affect in W. G. Sebald's Orford Ness." The essay will be published in one of the next issues of *Ecozon@*. Should you feel the urge to congratulate her in person: like last year's awardee, Christopher Schliephake, Ms. Marland

will attend our conference at the University of Tartu.

In closing, I should note that this will be my last column for the newsletter: Since the Tartu conference falls a little earlier than EASLCE's previous biannual conferences, Juan Ignacio Oliva will already have taken my place by the time the next newsletter appears. It seems that this cannot be what the Horse's years "freedom" is supposed to signify, since our organization's presidency never felt much like a yoke to me. I will miss the many opportunities to interact with you that came with this function, and I will always remain deeply grateful for the invaluable experience that you allowed me to gather over the last one and a half years. I hope that you share my sense that EASLCE has moved ahead during that time.

So let me wish a healthy and successful (not to mention casual and outdoorsy) year to EASLCE and all of its members, and I look forward to seeing many of you in Tartu!

**Hannes Bergthaller**

## EASLCE Elections 2014

### – Nomination of Prof. Dr. Serpil Oppermann for EASLCE Vice-Presidency –

I am honored to have been nominated for EASLCE's vice-presidency and feel very excited about this opportunity to serve my colleagues in this function. EASLCE has been important to me ever since I became a member, and I have been closely involved with the organization since I joined the advisory board in 2010.

I am a full professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, at Hacettepe University, Ankara. Since the time I co-organized Turkey's first international conference on ecocriticism ("The Future of Ecocriticism: New Horizons," held in

November 2009 in Kemer on the Mediterranean coast), I have been actively involved in promoting ecocritical studies and getting my graduate students involved in various projects, one of which was editing a book of ecocritical essays written by them, *Ekoeleştiri: Çevre ve Edebiyat* (Phoenix, 2012). At present, we are working together on EASLCE's Keywords translation project. Coming from Turkey, which has always been a geographical and a cultural bridge between the West and the East, I naturally endorse building bridges across cultures, disciplines, and among scholars from around the world. In this capacity, I

would like to develop more cooperative ties with other ASLE affiliated organizations internationally and stronger ties with scholars working in the Environmental Humanities and Science Studies. I believe a stronger focus on interdisciplinary liaisons would create more opportunities for European ecocritics, and am deeply committed to fostering such forms of scholarship. As a long-term participant in international conversations about ecocritical theories, I have had the chance to form fruitful dialogues and warm friendships with science studies scholars such as Karen Barad, as well as with other prominent theorists and ecocritics. These collaborations and my position as a Turkish ecocritic bridging continents and cultures are at the heart of the contributions I hope to make to EASLCE.

We know that EASLCE's prestige lies not only in its institutional recognition worldwide, but also, and more importantly, in bringing the European

dimension of ecocriticism to the forefront of discussions. I would cherish the opportunity to serve as VP at EASLCE and work collaboratively with the President, the other officers, the Advisory Board members, and everyone associated with EASLCE, in order to carry forward the European momentum, with special regard to the following goals: increasing the disciplinary and international diversity of our membership, and acclimatizing transnational perspectives; exploring web-based tools for future conferences to reduce our carbon footprints; giving graduate students a greater voice and creating new avenues for their participation in the organization.

I hope you will provide me with the opportunity to work towards these goals over the coming years.

**Serpil Oppermann**

## Webinar 2014

### – Literature and/as Cultural Ecology – University of Augsburg, Germany, February 27, 2014

#### **First EASLCE Webinar 2014**

**“Literature and/as Cultural Ecology”,**

**Host: Prof. Dr. Hubert Zapf, University of Augsburg, Germany, February 27, 2014**

The webinars that EASLCE offers its members are going into a new round. The webinars provide an opportunity for discussion of various aspects of ecocriticism amongst scholars that might otherwise not get together that easily. Especially students and young researchers are invited to engage in conversations with senior professors outside of their home universities or countries. Webinars will be conducted via Google+, which allows free group video chats.

Each webinar will be led by the guest expert (host)

and moderated by one of the EASLCE webinar coordinators. The webinar host will suggest beforehand a set of readings for all participants and a set of questions to be addressed. After an initial statement by the host (about 15 minutes), the floor will be opened for discussion. Webinars are expected to last approximately 60-90 minutes. It is also our intention to record the sessions and eventually make them available to all EASLCE members in the members' area of our organization's website.

The 2014 webinar series will start off with a webinar hosted by Prof. Dr. Hubert Zapf (University of Augsburg, Germany) on Literature and/as Cultural Ecology. This 5th EASLCE webinar takes place on February 27th at 4:00 pm (Central European Standard Time). In the webinar,

Prof. Zapf will position the concept of “literature as cultural ecology”, which he has developed in some of his recent work, within the field of contemporary ecocriticism and critical theory. Between an anthropocentric cultural studies perspective, in which nature is dematerialized into a discursive human construct, and a fundamentalist ecocentrism, in which cultural processes are subsumed under naturalist assumptions, cultural ecology looks at the interaction and living interrelationship between culture and nature, without reducing one to the other. Literature is seen as a cultural form in which this living interrelationship is explored in specifically productive ways, providing a site of critical self-reflection of modern civilization as well as a source of creative cultural self-renewal. This is not merely a question of thematic orientation or content but of the aesthetic processes staged in imaginative

texts, which in this sense can be described as functioning like an ecological force within the larger system of cultural discourses. Prof. Zapf will illustrate this approach with examples from American literature.

Webinar participants are required to prepare a set of texts, which will be made available by the moderator in advance. Participation is free and open to all EASLCE members, with preference given to graduate students. The number of participants is limited to six.

If you are interested in participating in the webinar, please register by writing an email to: [easlcewebinars@gmail.com](mailto:easlcewebinars@gmail.com)

Registration is possible **from January 19th to February 15th.**

## International Conferences / Call for Papers

### **III. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE – THE AMERICAN LITERARY WEST: A TERRITORY WITHOUT BORDERS? – UPV/EHU (UNIVERSITY OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY) VITORIA-GASTEIZ, SPAIN, OCTOBER 8-10, 2014**

The III. International Conference on “The American Literary West,” organized by the REWEST research group (UPV/EHU, University of the Basque Country, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain) will address the literary representation of the American West, centring on the different meanings, connotations, and implications of the term “border” in our present century when used in connection with this peculiar region. We invite papers exploring theoretical and practical aspects of the West as a pluralistic literary space, with a special attention to twenty-first century western texts that renew and revise the traditional imaginary of western American literature. The symposium will privilege transnational and interdisciplinary approaches aiming to understand properly a genre

whose iconography has moved well beyond both national limits and literary borders. Of particular interest will be the complex relationships between literature and a series of socio-political, economic, and cultural events that have taken place in the present century, as illustrated by 9/11 and its aftermath, the economic recession, globalization, immigration, feminism, interculturality or the contemporary environmental crisis. Similarly, we will also examine the transnational characteristics of the American West, discussing the literary representation of the American West beyond US borders. The conference will also extend the analysis of western iconography to other artistic manifestations beyond writing, exploring the cultural transfers between literature and other



cultural phenomena. Certainly, the long-lasting cultural transfers and intertextual links between western writing and western movies will be a major issue in this conference. However, this forum will also address other cultural and artistic manifestations that interact, overlap, and interrelate with western writing in complex, often dialogic ways, as exemplified by television, music, photography, art, digital art, video-games, the internet, sports, comics and graphic novels, or translation. We welcome presentation abstracts on these and related questions. Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- the influence of the cultural myths of the Old West and the western in the present century
- the West as an exceptional region as opposed to the West as an inherent part of American culture
- motion vs. roots in the American West
- the impact of urbanization and technology
- the interaction between identity and the western landscape
- changing interpretations of sense of place in the American West
- migrations and diasporas in the West
- minority western narratives

- environmental literature of the American West
- voices of protest
- reimagining women in the West
- western masculinities
- bordercrossing
- western mythologies
- the American West in popular culture
- science fiction and the West
- Western American Music or Music and Western images
- the West in the Web
- Digital West
- western images in comics and graphic novels
- sports and the West

Please send 300 word abstracts (also a short bio and five keywords, not included in the 300 words limit) to the following email address: [rewest2014@gmail.com](mailto:rewest2014@gmail.com) by **April 30, 2014**. Papers may be presented in English, Spanish or Basque, though the official language of the conference will be English.

## International Conferences / Reports

### – Turin, Ecological ContaminA(c)tions: Food, Natures, and Cultures –

#### **ContaminAzioni ecologiche: Cibi, Nature, Culture Ecological ContaminA(c)tions: Food, Natures, and Cultures**

University of Turin (Italy), 5 December 2013

The conference ContaminAzioni ecologiche: Cibi, Nature, Culture (Ecological ContaminA(c)tions: Food, Natures, and Cultures) was organized by Daniela Fargione (University of Turin and EASLCE member) with the support of the Department of Humanities of the University of Turin, EASLCE, the

Italian Celiac Disorder Association, the Italian Meteorological Society, Slow Food, Legambiente, and NovaCoop. At the center of the conference was the idea that the self-referential approach of traditional thinking and of cultural paradigms focused on bipolar, mutually exclusive alternatives, is not adequate to assess the multifaceted plurality of our interconnected world. As a response to this inadequacy, scholars, journalists, and professionals gathered to discuss the intertwined dynamics of food, environment, and cultural

texts within a transdisciplinary frame and with an ecocritical approach. The outcome was a fruitful “ContaminA(c)tion” of ideas, namely a constructive awareness of critical issues studied from different perspectives and aimed at actively merging into one another.

The conference was opened by Michela Benente (Italian Celiac Disorder Association) who talked about the celiac disease, an autoimmune disorder that damages the small intestine and interferes with absorption of nutrients. The yearly increase in the number of certified patients in Italy clearly proves the severity of this phenomenon, so much that this is now considered as a “social disease”. Then, Fabio Dovana (Legambiente), Enrico Nada (NovaCoop), and Cinzia Scaffidi (Slow Food) participated in a rich dialogue on food and sustainability. This first session was closed by Paola Loreto (University of Milan), who gave a talk about food, contamination, and purity in American literature, with a focus on the rhetoric of Benjamin Franklin and Henry David Thoreau. Adele Tiengo (University of Milan, EASLCE member) opened the second session with a talk about “cannibal narratives,” spanning Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, the Victorian debate on John Franklin’s

lost expedition in the Arctic, the Canadian myth of the Windigo, and texts of science fiction of the 19th century. Then, the film-makers Carola Benedetto and Igor Piumetti (Gruppo del Cerchio) presented the screening of their documentary on Pierre Rabhi – “Il mio corpo è la terra” (My Body is the Earth). The last session was opened by the environmental journalist Claudia Apostolo (Rai3 – Ambiente Italia), who held presentation on cohousing and community gardens. Serenella Iovino (University of Turin and EASLCE’s former president) gave a talk on material ecocriticism, showing how interpreting “embodied” stories of contaminations may lead us to rethink our convictions about agency, text, and narrativity. Then, the climatologist and writer Luca Mercalli (Italian Meteorological Society) gave voice to the “desperate warnings” coming from the scientific community, while Aurelio Angelini (University of Palermo) tackled the issues of food and fuels with a sociological approach. Finally, Maria Cristina Caimotto (University of Turin) closed the conference with a linguistic analysis of climate change and greenwashing.

**Adele Tiengo**

## Publications by Members

Sibylle Machat, *In the Ruins of Civilizations: Narrative Structures, World Constructions, and Physical Realities in the Post-Apocalyptic Novel*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2013. 314 pages.