

EASLCE NEWS LETTER

Vol. 2.1 Summer 2007

A Biannual Publication of the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment

It seems that creating issues of the EASLCE Newsletter must be accompanied by rather spectacular weather phenomena. While the texts for the first issue of the newsletter were compiled during the heat wave that affected large parts of Europe in the summer of 2006, it was storm Kyrill that swept across Europe and caused major damages in several countries when we were putting the finishing touches to this second issue of the Newsletter. In fact, when the storm raged Thursday afternoon last week, I was giving one of this semester's lectures on "The Cultural History of Nature in the United States and Canada". My focus was – of all topics – on the genre of environmental apocalypticism and on the environmental justice movement. I had hardly begun to talk about Octavia Butler's novel *Parable of the Sower* when my students' eyes moved skywards: the ceiling of our huge auditorium had begun to move. The storm had lifted tiles from the roof, rain was pouring down and soaking the styrofoam panels which then started to tilt and allow glimpses into the dark wood-work of the building's gable. It was the first evacuation ever I then quickly organized... This immediate experience of the immense forces of nature added rather unexpectedly to our understanding of a key ecocritical premise that I had frequently pointed out in this class, of the inseparability and interconnectedness of the realms of nature and culture.

This second issue of the Newsletter provides information on activities of our members and of affiliated organizations. It starts with information on an EU sponsored project that our member Catrin Beu was part of: the Artery Riverside Regeneration

project. Between 2003 and 2006 polluted and degenerated rivershores in the UK, the Netherlands and Germany were turned into biologically, economically and culturally regenerated areas – a project that highlights once again the importance of the topic of the Klagenfurt conference. Sven Lars Schulz, moreover, sent in some information on ecocritical activities in Uppsala, Sweden. What follows are several calls for papers from Estonia, England, Germany, Northern Ireland, Turkey, Canada, Japan and South Africa as well as conference reports from the UK, from Japan and, twice, from India. The last section, finally, lists new book publications by EASLCE members and monographs that have been published in European ecocritical monograph series.

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Vol. 2.1 (Summer 2007)

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**EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF
LITERATURE, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

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<http://www.easlce.eu>

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/esml/easlce>

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Please note the **editorial deadline** for
the next issue: **15 December 2007**

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(continued from page 1)

The editors of the volumes that are emerging out of the Klagenfurt conference (a volume in English and one in German) tell me that they are making good progress. And so does the preparatory work for the next biennial conference in Alcalá, Spain. There are no dates fixed yet, but what has been decided is that this time the conference will take place in the fall of 2008. Exact information will be given in the next issue of the Newsletter, in the summer of 2007. Finally, I would like to ask members to contribute to the internationalizing of our EASLCE web site.

The section “Aims” is now in six languages, in English, German, Estonian, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. If your language is not amongst these, we would be grateful if you could translate the short text for us.

Again, I wish all of us a good and productive year 2007.

Sylvia Mayer
EASLCE President

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF EASLCE

Please, visit our web site at:

<http://www.easlce.eu>

or

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/esml/easlce/membership.htm>

For further information contact:

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International Affiliates

ASLE (USA)

<http://www.asle.umn.edu/>

ASLE-ANZ (AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND)

<http://www.asle-anz.asn.au/>

ALECC-CANADA

<http://www.alecc.ca>

ASLE-INDIA

<http://www.geocities.com/asle-india/index.htm>

ASLE-JAPAN

<http://www.asle-japan.org/english/index.cgi>.
[/index.html](#)

ASLE-KOREA

<http://www.aslekorea.org>

ASLE-UK

<http://www.asle-anz.asn.au/>

OSLE-INDIA

<http://www.osle-india.tripod.com/id7.html>

International Conferences / Call for Papers

“Poetic Ecologies: Nature as Text and Text as Nature in English-Language Verse”

**Université Libre de Bruxelles
14-17 May 2008**

In the last fifteen years, the emergence of ecocritical theory has meant a radical challenge to the anthropocentrism and dualism between Culture and Nature inherited from classical humanism. Likewise, in its attempt to initiate a much more sustained dialogue between literature and the primacy of biological networks posited by Deep Ecology, ecocritical thought has also seriously questioned the very concept of “nature writing” as traditionally understood in the pastoral and Romantic traditions.

Within the framework of an ecocritical paradigm that is still constructing itself, this international four-day conference to be held in Europe’s capital city wishes to explore the multiple and changing forms of ecological and ecocritical consciousness in English-language verse, past and present. As such, this forum will not only interrogate the very notion of ecology and ask what actually constitutes “ecocritical” and ecologically-engaged poetic practice; various panels/sessions will also seek to shed light on the ever so complex issue of “Nature” versus “Text” and on the possible interrelationships between ecological texts and textual ecologies, between the systems of Nature and those of Culture.

The conference will not privilege any English-speaking poetic tradition in particular, but invites papers from all areas of the Anglophone world, from Canada to the Antipodes. Poetry will be given precedence over other genres, but papers devoted to texts breaking down the traditional boundaries between prose and verse or exploring poetry within the framework of multimedia experimentation (including digital and performance poetry) are also welcome. More theoretically-oriented papers whose insights are mainly based on poetics and poetic corpora will likewise be considered. Contributions from poets addressing the questions of ecological/ecocritical aesthetics and compositional practice are equally encouraged.

Across the wide body of poetry produced in the English language, possible topics and areas of investigation include (but are not limited to) the following:

- “Ecological texts” versus “textual ecologies”
- “Shallow” versus “Deep” Ecology

- The influence of ecological systems on textual ecologies
- Nature as “representation” versus Nature as “process”
- Nature as “simulacrum” versus essentialist visions of the natural world
- The place of human consciousness in the ecological web
- Bioregional sensibilities and the sense of place/space
- Urban and suburban ecologies
- Enclosed versus open spaces
- The “wild” versus the “tamed”
- The concept of landscape: re-invented landscapes, underrepresented landscapes, the interaction between “mindscape” and landscape, “landscape” versus “environment”
- The poetic shattering of the realist-naturalist “mirror of Nature”
- Verse experiments transcending the pastoral legacy; experiments in “cooperative” writing with Nature
- Contemporary ecologically-engaged poetic practices and aesthetics
- The interaction between scientific and poetic discourses
- The fluid boundaries between human and non-human organisms
- The utopia of biocentrism; the myth of anthropocentrism
- Eco-metaphors and the problem of translating Nature into Language
- Evolving images/metaphors of Nature within a given culture; parallel and contrastive images/metaphors of Nature across different cultures and poetic traditions
- Postcolonial challenges to traditional understandings of categories like “wilderness,” “species,” and “dwelling”; re-invented images of the postcolonial wilderness and of the “natural Other”
- The possible intersections between postcolonial and ecological discourses of emancipation
- Ecofeminist perspectives
- Mysticism, “ecopieties” and nature religions from First Nations to postmodernity
- Judeo-Christian versus non-theistic discourses on Nature

The conference will include a series of plenary lectures by noted scholars and poets as well as a number of parallel paper sessions. To further enhance the sense of eco-community amongst the participants, the programme will also fuse praxis and pleasure by offering, on the Friday afternoon, an outing to the estate of Meise, which houses the national botanical gardens of Belgium, listed as one of the most important botanical collections in the world.

A selection of papers presented at the conference will be published in conference proceedings.

Twenty-minute paper proposals should be received no later than 31 October 2007. Please kindly e-mail abstracts of approximately 250-300 words, together with a short biography, in RTF format to:

Dr. Franca Bellarsi
Université Libre de Bruxelles
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures
fbellars@ulb.ac.be

Crisscrossing Word and World: Ecocriticism, Crisis, and Representation

The Fourth Tamkang International Conference on Ecological Discourse
Tamsui, Taipei Country, Taiwan
May 23-24, 2008

Global warming, extinction of species, pollution of nuclear waste, shortage of water resources-these are no longer science-fictional scenarios or theoretical speculations, but established facts that confront us today. As a form of intervention, ecocriticism needs to “crisscross word and world,” bringing to bear a plurality of perspectives (scientific, economic, political, religious, and ethical, literary and poetic) for an integrative-realistic-sustainable approach. In an age of globalization and virtualization, how can ecological discourse (re)define “nature,” “space,” “body,” and even “humanity”? How do we meet with the challenges at hand to achieve sustainable cultures and societies? How can language stimulate vision, imagination and creativity? Is it possible to reach any balance between sustainability and excessive materialism, to find a “third-way” alternative to both mystico-spiritual ecology and technophilic embrace of cyborgian existence? What, indeed, is the future of ecological discourse?

Papers Addressing the following topics are welcome:

1. utopia/dystopia in literature, films, and other media
2. humanities and sustainability

3. environmental ethics and justice
4. comparative religious and spiritual perspectives on Eastern and Western ecological discourse
5. ecopsychology and its compatibility or discontent with psychoanalysis
6. nature in colonialism and postcolonialism
7. artificial environment and cyborg criticism
8. consumption of Nature in global capitalism

Those interested please submit an abstract (250-300 words, with a title) and a short bio before 31 August 2007 to: peter@mail.tku.edu.tw

The notice of acceptance will be issued by the organizing committee by 30 September 2007. The full paper is due by 2 May 2008.

For further information and registration forms see

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International Conferences / Reports

“Ecocriticism: Retorica E Immaginario Dell’ Ambiente Nel Canone Letterario Occidentale”

Sapienza, Università di Roma
Facoltà di Scienze Umanistiche
Roma, 26-27 Giugno 2007

The University of Rome “Sapienza” organized, for the first time in Italy, an international conference on environmental criticism, whose title was “*Ecocriticism: retorica e immaginario dell’ambiente nel canone letterario occidentale*”. It took place in “Villa Mirafiori” on June 26-27. The program was divided into three panels, the first of which was more interdisciplinary than the others, hosting Scott Slovic with an introducing speech on the evolutions and aspirations of ecocriticism, Francesco Spada, botanical biologist, who spoke about ecology in the natural sciences, Daniele Guastini, philosopher, who explained the philosophical origins of ecological thought, Roberto Della Seta, national president of “Legambiente”, the largest and most influential non-profit environmentalist organisation in Italy, who’s speech concerned the relationship between ecology and politics, Lorenzo Franchini, historian of the Italian Enciclopedia Treccani, who talked about the concept of environmental conservation in Christian culture. The other two panels were more literary: the first concentrated on European literature, with Robert Harrison, author of the famous book “*Forests. The Shadow of Civilisation*”, this time with a speech on

gardens in the western imagination, Emilia Di Rocco, comparatist, who talked about medieval interpretations of the myth of Tiresias, Caterina Salabè, comparatist, who talked about chivalric literature and ecology of mind, Francesca Orestano, anglicist, who talked about romantic poetry in the Lake District, and, finally, Andreas Trojan, comparatist, who talked about Baudelaire’s “Correspondances” and European nature lyric after 1945. The second literary panel focused on American Studies and hosted Serenella Iovino with a speech on the culture of ecocriticism, Giorgio Mariani, Americanist, who spoke about Indian American literature, Anna Re, Americanist, who talked about Thoreau and nature writing, Nadia Inserra, americanist, who related about literature and ecology in the Hawaiian scenery, and Piero Marietti, physicist, who talked about mathematical models and mental models.

The conference was organized by Caterina Salabè and Emilia Di Rocco, and coordinated by Rosy Colombo.

“Local Natures, Global Responsibilities” Annual conference of the Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English (GNEL/ASNEL)

Friedrich Schiller-University of Jena, Germany
May 17-20, 2007

This year’s annual conference of Germany’s branch of the international Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English was dedicated to exploring ecological issues and the intricate and culturally inflected constructions of “nature” in literary and cultural texts. In many New Literatures in English nature has long been an issue of paramount importance: the environmental devastation brought about by colonial regimes has often continued or even intensified in postcolonial times, and global ecological hazards often have

particularly disastrous consequences for the most vulnerable parts of the world’s population. At the same time, far-reaching social and cultural transformations have also led to changed perceptions and representations of nature in postcolonial cultures and literatures. It thus seemed timely to place the topic of the environment at the centre of literary and cultural studies at GNEL/ASNEL’s annual conference. Jena’s conference aimed at contributing to the global debate on nature and the environment by

highlighting how local natures are culturally constructed and how insights into different forms or concepts of nature in literary texts and other (“old” or “new”) media can contribute to a greater sense of global responsibility. Apart from more than twenty-five individual presentations by academics from German speaking countries, but also from Italy, France, the UK, Africa, Australia, Asia and North America, the conference featured well-known writers such as Drew Hayden Taylor (Canada) and

Anthony Joseph (Trinidad; UK) and an array of prominent keynote speakers, including Ursula Heise (Stanford University), Vernon Gras (George Mason University), Hubert Zapf (University of Augsburg) and Serenella Iovino (University of Turin).

Laurenz Volkmann, Jena

Publications by EASLCE Members / Recommendations by EASLCE Members

Hannes Bergthaller.

Populäre Ökologie. Zu Literatur und Geschichte der modernen Umweltbewegung in den USA.

Transcription. Cultures, Concepts, Controversies. Vol. 2.

Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2007.

ISBN 978-3-631-56087-7

This section provides information about recent book publications by EASLCE members. If you would like to have your publication included, please send bibliographical information (including ISBN) to Sylvia Mayer at [sylvia.mayer\(a\)split.uni-bamberg.de](mailto:sylvia.mayer(a)split.uni-bamberg.de)

VERDENERO. “ECONOIRS” ITALIAN STYLE. A SERIES OF “GREEN” COLLECTIONS OF SHORT STORIES. ED. BY PAOLA FRASCHINI

There is a word with which Legambiente, the leading environmental NGO in Italy, usually refers to environmental crimes as a whole: “Ecomafia.” Illegal traffic and dumping of toxic waste, animal racket and gambling, systematic destruction of the territory for abusive building developments, traffic of endangered animal and plant species, as well as of stolen works of art: all this is ecomafia. But ecomafia is also next-door illegality, a culture which legitimizes the primacy of private interests over the common good. However, the environment is the common good. Confronting ecomafia thus means developing an environmental culture which helps restore the concept of the common good.

Legambiente, in cooperation with *Edizioni Ambiente*—an Italian publishing house expressly devoted to the study and the communication of environmental

sustainability—, proposes a literary way to implement environmental culture: it has started to publish *VERDENERO*, a series of collections of short stories on ecomafia. The genre or style adopted is that of the “noir”, and the issues addressed by some of the most popular Italian “noir” writers, do, in fact, point toward documented instances of “ecomafia.”

VerdeNero is an initiative of cultural literacy on ecomafia. It entails the explicit political and cultural commitment to restore the sense of the common environment as a social good. In doing this, it is also an attempt to break the silence about ecomafia, its absence from the cultural scene. Verdenero is a unique example of how literature can act as a form of “eco-resistance”: a form of civil courage that passes through culture, and aims at speaking on behalf of nature and society.

The first three volumes of the series include “Bestie” by Milanese writer Sandrone Dazieri, about zoomafia; “Fotofinish” by Sicilian writers Giacomo Cacciatore, Valentina Gebbia and Gery Palazzotto, addresses the connection between mafia business and illegal horse races; “Melma” by Eraldo Baldini, a “science-fiction noir” is based on the real story of the Porto Marghera

Petrolchimico, the most polluting and dangerous chemical industry in Italy. Forthcoming volumes include tales by Niccolò Ammaniti, Giancarlo De Cataldo, Carlo Lucarelli, Wu Ming, Marcello Fois and many others.

See the VerdeNero website: www.verdenero.it

Serenella Iovino