

EASLCE NEWS LETTER

Vol. 6.1 Summer 2011

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

Dear EASLCE members,

Summer is here and many of us are finally enjoying our much deserved holidays. These past six months have witnessed an almost frenetic pace of work with EASLCE-related activities which demonstrate the growth and visibility of our association, and I would like to take this opportunity to share with you all these advances. Within a few weeks we hope to have our new website up and running. The website has many features, prominent among them a section for members in which we hope to both provide useful resources for members and facilitate membership renewal. The website will also feature conferences and other activities, a section for students and a special place where European research groups and networks can announce their activities and attain greater visibility. This website has meant a lot of work, and I would like here to expressly thank our past President, Serenella Iovino, and our current Vice-President, Hannes Bergthaller, who have taken on this challenge and have put a lot of time and effort into it.

This past half year has also seen the publication of the third issue of *Ecozon@* and the fourth issue is well underway. Special focus themes are already lined up for 2012. The journal is increasingly receiving more submissions, thus allowing the editorial board to choose quality articles and work. The number of scholars willing to review articles has also grown significantly. The creative arts sections are allowing all of us to see the wealth of creativity in the arts related to the environment. The book review section is very active and is providing a show case for our European publications. At this point we already have over 600 registered readers and receive over 1000 visits each month, and we have begun to work on getting the journal widely indexed. Again, I would like to encourage all EASLCE members to submit their work and I need to express my very deep gratitude to the whole editorial board, including our guest editors, whose continuous work is making this possible.

Many EASLCE members attended the ASLE conference in Bloomington—a report of which follows. But here I would like to stress EASLCE's presence. This year, as at the previous conference in Victoria, EASLCE

co-sponsored the International Reception. Likewise EASLCE was asked to participate actively in other events, among which were a few words in homage to Larry Buell, participation in Award commissions, graduate student panels and so forth. Many ASLE members already are familiar with *Ecozon@* and I feel interest is growing. As a result, the general EASLCE assembly, held on June 23 (where both members and non-members were invited to attend), was more than full. There were people on the floor, standing in the hall, and some left because there was simply not enough room. I believe that it is the first time an off-year meeting has had so many attendees and hopefully our membership will increase as a result.

Soon the deadline for our first graduate student paper award is due and we hope to have several submissions. And finally I wish to address future activities. As many of you know, our plans to have the 2012 conference in Norway (a country still reeling in shock as I write and to whom we all extend our sympathies), failed. As a result, the Executive Committee and Advisory Board set out to find a new venue. So, I am happy to announce that the 2012 conference will be held in Tenerife (Canary Islands) from June 27-30 with the theme "*Natura Loquens: Eruptive Dialogues and Disruptive Discourses*".

(continued on page 3)

On the Inside...

EASLCE Conference Tenerife / Call for Papers	4
Projects / Information	5
Ecozon@ / Information	6
EASLCE Graduate Essay Prize / Information	6
International Conferences / Reports	7

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Vol. 6.1 (Summer 2011)

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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: **December 15, 2012**

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

You will find the CFP in this newsletter. I wish to thank our organizer, Juan Ignacio Oliva, for his willingness to host this conference at rather short notice. So, please reserve those dates and we hope to see you all in the Canary Islands next summer. Another new activity which will be announced more specifically in September is the beginning of a virtual workshop series, via skype (or similar) for EASLCE members. We hope these will provide cost-free participatory forums for debate on specific issues, whether for graduate students at a more introductory level or for specialized debates among a small group of scholars. We are also working on a mentorship program to help graduate students throughout Europe.

All these activities are testimony to EASLCE's growth, vitality and increasing visibility. Many of our members are actively engaged in these efforts (and among these I need to thank Sylvia Mayer for continuing with the Newsletter) and we hope more will come forth with ideas and willingness to contribute to our association.

However, all these activities are not simply about an association, but about our field, ecocriticism, and our role as scholars in the humanities. In closing, I would like to share with you the inspiring words of our fellow ecocritic, Elizabeth Ammons in her recent book *Brave New Words. How Literature Will Save the Planet* (2010): "The tremendous value of the humanities and especially of the study of literature resides in the power of texts to teach us about ourselves, individually and corporately, including systems of injustice that we as human beings create. But the value of the humanities also resides in the power of words to inspire us, to transform us, to give us strength and courage for the difficult task of *re-creating the world*" (14). In our times, fraught with diverse crises, these words renew our faith in what we do and why we do it. I hope you enjoy your holidays and come Fall, have the energy to continue with enthusiasm our shared endeavors.

Carmen Flys-Junquera

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.org>

ASLEC-ANZ (AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND)

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

ALECC-CANADA

<http://www.alecc.ca>

ASLE-INDIA

<http://asleindia.webs.com>

ASLE-JAPAN

<http://www.asle-japan.org/english>

ASLE-KOREA

<http://www.aslekorea.org>

ASLE-UK

<http://www.asle.org.uk>

OSLE-INDIA

<http://www.osle-india.org>

EASLCE Conference Tenerife / Call for Papers

**“NATURA LOQUENS:”
ERUPTIVE DIALOGUES, DISRUPTIVE DISCOURSES**

Contributions are invited for the 5th EASLCE International Conference on “*Natura Loquens: Eruptive Dialogues, Disruptive Discourses,*” to be held in Tenerife, Canaries, SPAIN, 27-30 June 2012. The event is organised on behalf of EASLCE (the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment) by the University of La Laguna, Faculty of Philology, and the Department of English and German Studies, in the island of Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain.

There is an ongoing debate nowadays over the agency of Nature and the necessity of reopening the definition of what counts as speech. One would need to differentiate between new insights about animal communication and the idea that non-animal and inanimate nature “signify,” or the suggestion of biosemiotics that life itself is a process of signification. Thus, Nature often presents articulated reactions which can be both eruptive and disruptive. We expect to bring to the arena of this academic meeting, placed at the very foot of Mount Teide (Spain’s highest volcanic peak, with an altitude of 3718 m.), as manifold eruptive dialogues as possible. Attention will focus on the contrasting relationship between Nature and humankind, ever in perpetual and delicate interrelationship since the history of humankind and especially after the emergence of the so-called Anthropocene Era (P. Crutzen). In effect, the ability to speak and communicate made it possible to detach this *Homo sapiens* genus from other animal species, establishing thus a hierarchy that has been working until present day. Such Aristotelian human “loquacity” is based on a “great chain of being” (A.O. Lovejoy) that places this *Homo loquens* in a superior position, being able to structure and articulate the universe. If we were able to deconstruct and reverse this idea in order to acknowledge Nature’s ability to speak out (Christopher Manes, David Abrams), then multiple and creative conversations could be established, so as to reconstruct the natural order of things. While environmental concerns grow louder and more frequently today, traditional disruptive discourses

that posit the idea of nature as an impediment to human progress do continue to emerge and spread out. The main purpose of this conference is then to reenact, rethink and fluidize the dialogic balance between Nature and human knowledge, engaging in an intellectually fairer and more empathetic communication.

Proposals for papers (EITHER standard papers 2500 words/20 minutes OR contributions to paper jam sessions 1250 words/12 minutes) and panels (3 papers OR 5 jam session papers) are now invited. Topics will include but not be restricted to:

- Ideological, philosophical, political and cultural uses and/or misuses of the concept of Nature as the material reality of the sum of all organic and inorganic phenomena, including human beings.
- Description of Nature’s “agency” in cultural, artistic, literary and filmic representations of the anthropocentric canon in diachronic and synchronic historical periods.
- Dialogues and discourses regarding either subalternity or supremacy of Nature in historical, sociological, economic and artistic documents and other media.
- The interaction of Nature and Humankind in the creation/destruction of the world, as depicted in sci-fi, catastrophe literature, and trans- and post-human utopias/dystopias.
- Lead metaphors and metonymies, and other semantic tropes, structuring our perception and comprehension of the natural world, and the human capacity to transform the environment.
- Material/spiritual approaches to the natural world and their political and ethical contestations.
- The “retaliation” of Nature, especially in the 21st century: climate change, the ozone hole, “nukes” and quakes, eruptive ash clouds and other “apocalyptic” signs.

- The mirage/miracle of Nature: biodiversity & homogenization, global and local phenomena, human-made/destroyed landscapes, eruptions and erosions...
- The seemingly "pathetic fallacy": Speaking animals, plants or inanimate objects in literature and the arts.
- Theoretical & critical approaches to Nature, and discussion of their frailties and strengths in contemporary debate: postcolonialism, environmentalism, ecological feminism, material

ecocriticism, toxicity and discourse, biosemiotics, ecopedagogy, eco-translatology, and others.

The primary conference languages will be English and Spanish, but (following our practice at previous EASLCE conferences) proposals for panels in other European languages are also welcome.

Please submit proposals for panels or individual papers (title plus 250 words), together with a brief bionote (4-5 lines), and complete contact data, to Professor Juan Ignacio Oliva <jioliva@ull.es> by 31 January 2012, indicating your IT requirements.

Projects / Information

ARCADIA:

Online Explorations in European Environmental History

"Arcadia: Explorations in European Environmental History" will be a new online European environmental history resource with encyclopedia-like articles, images, and links about any site, event, person, organization, or species as it relates to both nature and human society. We expect to launch the project with the first entries in spring of 2012.

The project is a collaboration of the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society (RCC), Munich, and the European Society for Environmental History (ESEH). Initial contributions will come from ESEH members and will focus on the field of European environmental history. In the future, the project will expand to include non-ESEH contributors and cover all world

regions. To the extent possible, each entry will include time, theme, and location data in order to make it viewable on map- or timeline-viewers, and searchable and browsable as part of the RCC [Environment & Society Portal](#).

For further information, or to learn how to contribute, please contact:

Andreas Grieger (Arcadia project coordination) - andreas.grieger@carsoncenter.lmu.de

Preliminary Arcadia website:

<http://www.environmentandsociety.org/arcadia.html>

Ecozon@ / Information

ECOZON@
EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT
HTTP://WWW.ECOZONA.EU

Volume 2, Number 1
“Literary Landscapes and the National Imaginary”

Volume 2.1 (2011) of *Ecozon@* presents the special focus section “Literary Landscapes and the National Imaginary,” edited and introduced by José Manuel Marrero Henríquez. Following the guest editor’s introduction, five essays by Ana Isabel Queiroz and João Carrilho, Santos Casado de Otaola, Astrid Kirchhof, Reinhard Hennig and Rosemarie Rowley shed light on the nexus of landscape and local, regional, and national identity, on the link between natural environment, social organisation, and cultural construction, with reference to landscapes in Spain, Portugal, Iceland, Germany and Ireland.

In addition to the special focus section, *Ecozon@* 2.1 consists of a General Section, a section on Creative Writing, a section on Visual Arts – featuring the work of Marta de Menezes -, and a number of book reviews.

Future numbers

The next numbers will address the theme “The Invention of Eco-Futures: Ecocriticism and Science Fiction”, with Ursula K. Heise as guest editor (autumn 2011) and “Writing catastrophes: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on the Semantics of Natural and Anthropogenic Disasters,” with Gabriele Dürbeck as guest editor (spring 2012).

EASLCE Graduate Essay Prize / Information

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. The prize will be awarded every two years. It consists in a bursary of 400 Euro to help cover the costs of attending the next EASLCE conference, as well as publication of the prize-winning essay in the EASLCE-affiliated journal *Ecozon@*.

All EASLCE members currently enrolled in an M.A. or Ph.D. program at a European university are eligible. The essay must be previously

unpublished and should engage with European ecocriticism. It must be written in English, following the author guidelines of *Ecozon@* (available at www.ecozona.eu).

In order to allow for a greater number of submissions, we have extended the deadline to September 30th, 2011. The winner will be announced on the EASLCE webpage by December 30th, and the essay will be included in the Spring 2012 issue of *Ecozon@*.

Please email submissions to Hannes Bergthaller at: hannes.bergthaller@ecozona.eu

International Conferences / Reports

International Conference: Zoosemiotics and Animal Representations

University of Tartu, Estonia, April 5–8, 2011

The international conference “Zoosemiotics and Animal Representations,” organised by the Department of Semiotics at the University of Tartu and the Estonian Semiotics Association, was held in Tartu, Estonia on April 4–8, 2011. It was most probably the first conference explicitly dedicated to the study of zoosemiotics ever. Sections devoted to ecocritical studies were also included in the conference program. The working language of the conference was English.

Sixty presentations were divided into eight thematic sections: “Theory and history of zoosemiotics,” “Perspectives in zoosemiotics,” “Philosophical perspectives,” “Cultural and anthropological perspectives,” “Domestication and hybrid environments,” “Communication in animals,” “Animals and literature,” “Animals and art.” Roundtables were held on the topics of “Futures of zoosemiotics,” “Zoo as a semiotic environment,” and “Animals and ecocriticism.” Plenary lectures were delivered by cognitive ethologist Colin Allen, postcolonial ecocritic Graham Huggan, biosemiotician Jesper Hoffmeyer, and philosopher and musician David Rothenberg.

Papers on animal representations from the ecocritical angle included treatments of 18th century British poetry and maritime literature (Ann Milne, Tobias Menely, Killian Quigley), works of

H.D. Lawrence (Laura Byrne) and A. S. Byatt (Wendy Wheeler), animals in fantasy literature (Sandra Grötsch, Maria Laakso), poems (Karoliina Lummaa), and autobiographical narratives (Tajja Kaarlenkaski). The array of species included insectoid characters in sci-fi movies (Larissa Budde) and the cultural trope of the “insect world” (Adam Dodd), sheep as represented in Japanese literature (Maki Eguchi), the rhetorics of whaling (Jesse Bia), and human–fish communication (Kadri Tüür). Animal names as components of swear words were examined by Dagmar Schmauks.

The program and abstracts of the conference can be found at the conference web site, http://www.ut.ee/SOSE/conference/2011_zoosemiotics/index.html. The event was supported by EU structural funds, the University of Tartu, the Estonian Science Foundation, and the Estonian Gambling Tax Council.

A selection of conference papers focusing on zoosemiotic theory will be published as articles in the international journal *Semiotica*, and a volume on animal representations will be published in Rodopi’s *Nature, Culture and Literature* series.

Kadri Tüür
University of Tartu

ASLE 2011 Conference: Species, Space, and the Imagination of the Global

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, June 21–26, 2011

Last June, ASLE held its 2011 Biennial Conference with the very suggestive title “Species, Space and the Imagination of the Global”. The University of Indiana campus received hundreds of scholars from all parts of the world interested in establishing fruitful debates on issues ranging from the

traditional discussion on the theory and practice of ecocriticism to climate change or food politics.

The conference started with its traditional pre-conference workshops and a reception to honor Lawrence Buell. During the following days, the

organizers scheduled a highly interesting cast of plenary speakers, catering to such a wide range of interests. Prominent scholars such as Una Chaudhuri, Helen Tiffin, Robert L. Fischman, and Marc Bekoff together with literary or artistic voices such as Zakes Mda, Scott Russell Sanders, Rubén Martínez, Subhankar Banerjee and Allison Wallace contributed to turn this event into a showcase of the colorful mosaic that ecocriticism already is in the twenty-first century. An innovative approach was taken in the design of the program by structuring the panels into thematic threads, so conference attendees could choose to follow their interests in the related panels. This together with the 750 papers that were presented at the conference is evidence of the size and momentum ecocriticism has acquired over the years.

It was also at this conference that EASLCE's representation reached a proportion never imagined before by gathering around fifty to sixty people in its Membership Meeting. Its presence was also outstanding in the International Reception where its online journal *Ecozon@*, an already established site for European ecocriticism, was the object of praise of many of the attendees. Some of EASLCE's founding members and scholars also featured prominently in some of the best attended panels, namely those on figuring out the contours of

ecocriticism and proposing new directions for such a booming field.

Last but not least, this year ASLE invited panels in Spanish for the first time. This call was well received by scholars working on both sides of the Atlantic, although only two panels organized by members of the Spanish research group GIECO were listed in the conference program. These as well as other panels in English on Latin American and Spanish literatures became the site of enthusiastic debate regarding future collaborations among the many ecocritics who share Spanish as a common language. A sign of this is Laura Barbas Rhode's posting of July 21st in ASLE Diversity Caucus blog <http://www.aslediversity.org/> where she asks everyone interested in joining the conversation to send their contact information to her at barbasrhodenlh@wofford.edu. This has been ASLE's first step towards opening up to other languages, a much needed factor in internationalizing ecocriticism.

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