



Rust/Resistance: Works of Recovery

Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE)

Twelfth Biennial Conference, June 20 - 24, 2017

Wayne State University

Detroit, Michigan

<http://asle2017.clas.wayne.edu>

[Eve](#): So this is your wilderness. Detroit.

[Adam](#): Everybody left.

[Eve](#): What's that?

[Adam](#): It's the Packard plant, where they once built the most beautiful cars in the world. Finished.

[Eve](#): But this place will rise again.

[Adam](#): Will it?

[Eve](#): Yeah. There's water here. And when the cities in the South are burning, this place will bloom.

—Vampire couple in Jim Jarmusch's film, *Only Lovers Left Alive*

In *Rust: The Longest War*, Jonathan Waldman claims that, for those who “yield to rust, find beauty in rust, capitalize on rust, raise awareness of rust, and teach about rust, work is riddled with scams, lawsuits, turf battles, and unwelcome oversight. Explosions, collisions, arrests, threats, and insults abound.” Rust is the underside of cosmopolis. Rust belts follow industry and its corruptions; the parasitic Rust fungi are enemies of agriculture. And yet there is an irenic side to rust: it inspires contemplation, the search for beauty, and the effort to defend what is threatened. As an agent of time, rust sponsors stories of collapse-and-recovery, evolution-and-extinction, but it also questions them. Narratives of progress that see rust as the enemy are not universal. In Japanese aesthetics, for instance, *sabi* is the beauty of natural aging and aged materials; what is new is not as lovely as what has weathered. In a time obsessed by environmental apocalypse, rust may reveal other trajectories for cultures of recovery. *Resurget Cineribus*, “It Will Rise from the Ashes,” is the motto of Detroit—our host city.

Long associated with steel, car culture, and the music of Motown, Detroit is also a site of struggle for racial and environmental justice, against depopulation and “ruin porn,” and for the preservation of artistic heritage. A nexus of encounters between indigenous nations and the French fur trade, it became a locus of the Great Migration, “white flight,” and gentrification. Water-rich on the strait between Lake Huron and Lake Erie, Detroit and its neighbors struggle against corroded infrastructure and government corruption. For all those reasons, Detroit is an ideal place to confer about rust, resistance, and recovery. **We invite participants to interpret the conference theme as broadly as possible and to imagine their work in terms of content *and* form.** We particularly encourage non-traditional modes of presentation, including hybrid, performative and collaborative works; panels that minimize formal presentation in favor of engaged emergent discussion; interdisciplinary approaches; environmentally inflected readings of fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, film, theatre and other media; and proposals from outside the academic humanities, including submissions

from artists, writers, teachers, practitioners, activists and colleagues in the social and natural sciences. Topics may include, but are certainly not limited to:

- **The literatures, arts, and cultures of the Rust Belt, the Great Lakes, and Appalachia.** Bioregionalism, eco-cosmopolitanism, multinaturalism, (New) historicism, material ecocriticism, posthumanism, queer ecology, postcolonial ecocriticism, new media theory, decolonization theory, geography, and geocriticism as techniques for the analysis of rust-culture.
- **Transnational rust:** Detroit and its relationship with Ontario; the borderlands of Canada and the United States; nationalist and cosmopolitan rusts; colonial, postcolonial, and decolonial rusts.
- **Elemental rust:** Rust as an element of nature writing, natural history, agrarian and wilderness literature. The nature of iron and the arts of steel; water as an agent of rust; rust as vitality, materiality, and quintessence; corrosion as hyper-object; mines, foundries, and factories; nuclear rust; rust and oil, coal, and natural gas; *Rust* as programming language; rust as the essence of the Internet; the Internet of (Rusty) Things; steampunk aesthetics; rust as waste of civilization.
- **Labor and rust:** Corrosions of justice; the literature and other arts of labor; agricultures of resistance; class as a category of environmental analysis; working class nature writing; environmental infrastructures; precarity and the corrosion of higher education; petrocultures of labor; the work of environmentalism; the energy humanities; environmental catastrophes and the working class; blue collar conservation and restoration; environmentalism and the Old Left; folk, rock, soul, funk, and other forms of music as resistance..
- **Aeons of rust:** Iron ages: archaic, classical, late antique, medieval, early modern, Renaissance, Victorian, Modernist, and postmodern rust; the aesthetics and poetics of weathering, rhetorics of collapse and recovery; periodization after the “Anthropocene;” narratives of extinction; legends of rust; rust as *telos*; rust as closure; cosmologies, cosmogonies, and eschatologies of rust.
- **The arts and sciences of resistance:** Public health and environmental justice; methods derived from climatology, paleontology, geology; changes in the weather reporting; post/industrial ecologies; urban ecology; urban nature/parks/green spaces, urban planning; planned resilience; cities and climate change; ecotopias, urban renaissance, new urbanisms; green architecture.
- **Methods of resistance:** Recovering conservation, ecofeminism, Deep Ecology, intersectionality, critical race theory, comparatism, formalism, anthropology, folkloristics, social ecology, deconstruction, eco-Marxism, Green anarchism, Writing Studies, rhetoric and composition, and other “rusty” methods for the environmental humanities.
- **Genres of resistance:** Natural histories of resistance; the poetry of witness; testimony, autoethnography, virality as modes of activism; slam and avant-garde ecopoetry; folklore; the visual arts of resistance; post/industrial photography; survivance as a resistant mode; “cli-fi”; sentimental literature as resistance; Naturalism; the proletarian novel; prison literature; resistant memoir; investigative theater; viral video; the politics of video games; the museum as target or agent of resistance; video installations.
- **Recovering ecological citizenship:** Rhetorics of citizenship; the public sphere in the age of climate change; globalization and the “global citizen”; social media as an activist tool; traditions of direct action; democratic environments; green populism; civic environmentalism; activist pedagogies.
- **Recovering lost lands:** Narratives of drowned cities and lost homelands (Atlantis, Tuvalu, Aztlan, Doggerland, Oz); the literature of hurricanes and floods; Katrina, Sandy, and the media; water rights; state seizures of local resources and governance; the environment of ethnic neighborhoods; refuges and refugia; sanctuaries; ecological sovereignty; ecological reparations; eco-cultural nationalisms: First Nations activism, gay and lesbian lands/queer territories, postcolonial recoveries; cosmopolitan alliances.
- **Recovering past and future:** Ends of environmental history; paradises born in hell; the place of the Roman and other empires in declensionist narratives; linguistic recoveries; neo-medievalisms; fantasy fiction as imagined past; science fiction as extrapolation; queer futurities; archaeology and anthropology in the environmental humanities; the corrosion and recovery of literary history.

Keynote Speakers/Panelists:

Our list of keynote speakers includes scholars, activists and writers working on/in different forms of resistance and recovery: humor and the new American nature writing; the Transcendentalist and Humboldtian lineages in the environmental humanities; poetry and urban gardening; indigenous rights, climate fiction, and climate change; the history of slavery and the Detroit River; and cultural sustainability through the Digital Humanities.

Michael Branch is Professor of Literature and Environment at the University of Nevada, Reno, where he teaches creative nonfiction, American literature, ecocriticism and environmental writing, and film studies. He is a co-founder and past president of ASLE. Mike has published three new books in the past year: *Raising Wild: Dispatches from a Home in the Wilderness* (Roost Books), *"The Best Read Naturalist": Nature Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (co-edited with Clinton Mohs, University of Virginia Press), and *Rants from the Hill* (Roost Books).

Ross Gay teaches at Indiana University and is the author of three books: *Against Which; Bringing the Shovel Down;* and *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*, winner of the 2015 National Book Critics Circle Award and the 2016 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award. He is the co-author, with Aimee Nezhukumatathil, of the chapbook "Lace and Pyrite: Letters from Two Gardens," and, with Richard Wehrenberg, Jr., of the chapbook "River." Ross is a founding board member of the [Bloomington Community Orchard](#), a non-profit, free-fruit-for-all food justice and joy project.

Tiya Miles is a professor at the University of Michigan in the Departments of American Culture, Afro-American and African Studies, History, Women Studies, and the Native American Studies Program. Her research and creative interests include African American and Native American interrelated and comparative histories (especially 19th century); Black, Native, and U.S. women's histories; and African American and Native American women's literature. She is author of *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (UNC Press, 2010), and *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (University of California Press, 2005). Her forthcoming debut novel is [The Cherokee Rose](#).

Siobhan Senier is Associate Professor of English at the University of New Hampshire-Durham. She is the author of *Voices of American Indian Assimilation and Resistance* (2001), and *Dawnland Voices: An Anthology of Writing from Indigenous New England* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014), a collection she authored with a dozen regional Native writers and historians. Currently, Dr. Senier holds the UNH Center for the Humanities Hayes Chair, which supports the [annual Indigenous New England Conference](#) and the website [Writing of Indigenous New England](#). For more information, consult Dr. Senier's blog at [indiginewenglandlit.wordpress.com](#).

Laura Dassow Walls is the William P. and Hazel B. White Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame, where she teaches 19th-century American literature and literature and science studies. Her research explores the history and future of ecological thinking, most recently in *Passage to Cosmos: Alexander von Humboldt and the Shaping of America* (2009), which was awarded MLA's James Russell Lowell Prize and the Merle Curti Award from the Organization of American Historians. Her forthcoming book is *Henry David Thoreau: A Life* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Kyle Powys Whyte holds the Timnick Chair in the Humanities at Michigan State University. He is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Community Sustainability. He is an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, and is involved in the Climate and Traditional Knowledges Workgroup, Sustainable Development Institute of the College of Menominee Nation, Tribal Climate Camp, and the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition. He is a recipient of the 2015 Bunyan Bryan Award for Academic Excellence given by Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice. Kyle's MSU faculty website is <http://www.philosophy.msu.edu/people/faculty/kylepowyswhyte/>.

Panel and Paper Submission:

For additional information and to submit a pre-formed panel or individual presentation, please visit the conference website at <http://asle2017.clas.wayne.edu>

All conference sessions will be 90-minutes long. ASLE strongly encourages presenters to create pre-formed panels and to experiment with alternative forms of presentation, discussion and engagement. Both scholarly and creative submissions are welcome. We expect to receive more proposals than we can accommodate; therefore, not all proposals will be accepted. Proposals for fully constituted panels will be given priority over individual paper proposals; please note that there are separate tabs for panel proposal submission and individual paper submission on the submissions website.

Key information (more details available on the website):

- proposals for pre-formed panels must include at least four presentations (papers, readings, provocations, responses, etc.), 15 minutes-max each, plus a chair; panel organizers must submit the proposal on behalf of all panelists (500 word abstract for the panel outlining topic, format, participants' roles; 300 word abstract for each contribution as relevant to the format; all contact information)
- proposals for panels may also include roundtables (five or six 10 minute-max presentations plus discussion) and paper/reading/hybrid jams (seven or eight short, sharp eight minute-max presentations plus discussion); please contact ASLE Co-Presidents Christoph Irmischer and Anthony Lioi at asle2017@indiana.edu to discuss other format options (e.g., author-meets-critics)
- to encourage institutional diversity and exchange, all pre-formed panels must include participants from more than one institution and from more than one academic level/sector
- individual paper/reading/performance submissions are for 15 minute presentations; potential presenters will be asked to indicate whether they would also be willing to participate in a paper/reading/hybrid jam with a shorter presentation (which will increase chances of acceptance); 300 word abstracts should describe both form and content
- only one proposal submission is allowed per person; participants can present only once during the conference (pre-conference seminars/workshops and chairing a panel not included)
- proposals must be submitted online at <https://asle.submittable.com/submit>; in cases in which this requirement poses a significant difficulty, please contact Christoph Irmischer and Anthony Lioi, as above
- ASLE policy is currently to discourage virtual participation at our biennial conferences except in extraordinary circumstances.

All proposals must be submitted by December 12, 2016. We will evaluate your proposal carefully and notify you of its final status by February 15, 2017. If you are a panel organizer and would like a panel CFP posted to the ASLE website, please use the online submission form here: <http://www.asle.org/panel-calls-for-papers/>.

Note: you must be or become a member of ASLE by the time of registration to present at the conference. Join or check your membership status at <http://www.asle.org/>.

For questions about the program, please contact 2017 ASLE Presidents Christoph Irmischer and Anthony Lioi at asle2017@indiana.edu. For questions about the conference site, field sessions, progressive event and other local activities, please contact Elena Past at elenapast@wayne.edu. For questions about ASLE and membership, please contact Amy McIntyre, ASLE Managing Director, at info@asle.org.

Travel and Writing Awards

Once again ASLE will offer a small number of Conference Awards (\$500) to graduate students and independent scholars to help defray the costs of attending the conference. The purpose of the travel award is to substantively support members who are in precarious employment or students without institutional support, and who can reasonably demonstrate that

an award will make attending the conference possible. A secondary purpose is to support members whose presence contributes to ASLE's Mission of "promoting equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility on behalf of the membership." Applications will be made through the ASLE Submittable site this year: <https://asle.submittable.com/submit>.

We will also present our biennial book and graduate student paper awards at the conference.

Information on deadlines and how to apply for these awards will be posted at the conference website.

Pre-/ Mid- Conference Seminars and Workshops: Call for Proposals

We will offer a number of pre-conference workshops and seminars on important and emerging topics that reflect the diversity of our approaches and our membership: these workshops may or may not relate directly to the conference theme (although we encourage it) and will be held on Tuesday, June 20th (the day before the general conference sessions begin). In addition, in response to participant feedback we will also hold one or two mid-conference seminars/workshops on Friday, June 23rd at the same time as the field trips (see below).

We are calling for proposals to lead these seminars and workshops, and will choose the slate of offerings from the submissions. Preconference workshop leaders will receive free registration for the 2017 conference and a complimentary year's membership in ASLE. For further information or to submit a proposal to lead a workshop or seminar, please email Greg Garrard, Preconference Workshop Coordinator, at greg.garrard@ubc.ca. Proposals should include: 1) a 500-word max description of the proposed workshop/seminar theme and structure (four hours), in addition to your particular qualifications to lead it; and 2) your vita. Pre-conference workshop proposals must be sent to the coordinator by October 12, 2016.

Information on which topics are being offered will be available in early 2017. There is limited availability (15 persons) in each workshop or seminar, so you must pre-register to reserve a spot. For further information and/or to reserve a spot in a workshop or seminar, please email Greg Garrard at greg.garrard@ubc.ca. As participants' names will appear on the program, we encourage registrants to apply to present in one of these events instead of giving a paper at the conference.

Conference Host

Founded in 1868, Wayne State University is a nationally recognized metropolitan research institution offering more than 380 academic programs through 13 schools and colleges to more than 27,000 students. WSU serves a diverse body of students in vibrant Midtown, the cultural center of Detroit. The university's mission is to create and advance knowledge, prepare a diverse student body to thrive, and positively impact local and global communities. To that end, many research initiatives currently address environmental questions, including the Flint water crisis, urban foodways, environmental stressors in urban areas, urban soils, alternative energies, and more. See the Environment Top 10 list for more: <http://wayne.edu/action/top-10/>. Wayne State University and ASLE are committed to making the conference as accessible and sustainable as possible for all participants; the conference website will provide more details.

Field Sessions, Progressive Evening Event:

We are excited to continue the innovative and popular progressive evening, inaugurated at the 2015 conference, an event that will connect the ASLE conference with local Detroit artists and businesses, on Thursday, June 22. We will also be continuing the longstanding tradition of Friday afternoon field excursions, which will include possibilities such as visiting urban research field stations, browsing the WSU Library's North American Labor Collection holdings, experiencing the Underground Railroad Living Museum, or the Arab American National Museum, going on an urban garden tour, running through historic neighborhoods in Midtown, and biking the Inner Circle Greenway. Specifics about these events will be posted at the conference website, and field trips sign-up will be available as part of registration.